

THE CENTRALIZATION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE IN RUSSIA

No matter what one thinks of the principles and actions of the group of Russian revolutionaries with *Narodnaya Volya* [*The Will of the People*] as its organ, it cannot be denied that it is of great importance as the most active of the numerous anti-government forces at the present time. By its energy alone it attracts the most fervent elements of opposition in Russia. Although the literary exposition of the political ideas of this group has always been of less importance than its actions, these are nevertheless capable of fascinating a certain part of society, the young people in particular. This fact directs attention to the political theories and plans expounded in *Narodnaya Volya* as ones which to a large degree determine the practical activity of some of those who are striving to overturn the existing order in Russia.

Therefore it is particularly important not to overlook two articles in the latest issue, No. 8-9, of *Narodnaya Volya*: the leading article and the one following. Here this paper presents (with a clarity not often encountered in the recent Russian revolutionary press) its views on the organization of the revolutionary movement in Russia and the immediate plans of the *Narodnaya Volya* Party.

The following words from the leading article are especially interesting in this connection:

Our immediate task now is the organization of a plot to overthrow the present State system. At the present time the work of the *Narodnaya Volya* Party is primarily directed toward uniting all active opposition forces, welding them into a firm centralized organization capable of assuming the initiative for rebellion at the crucial moment, and capable until such time of engaging in successful conspiratorial activity, no matter what the persecution by the government. Successful completion of this task is possible if *fighting forces are concentrated* only at those points where each step will draw us nearer to the goal, where every action will be of importance in the near rather than the remote future. For this reason we are grouping active, consciously revolutionary forces in the government centers, including those on the periphery, in proportion to their importance, and are engaging in organizational work only among those elements which will play a direct part in the *coup d'état*.

The practical necessity for such an arrangement arises from the fact, among others, that rural upheavals, movements from the border areas, without an insurrection in the administrative and industrial centers, are always quickly suppressed and have almost no effect on the cause of popular liberation. The drawbacks of this method will constantly increase with the modernization of the technical refinements at the disposal of the central government, while the living conditions of the peo-

ple will prevent them from organizing. Moreover, organization of the peasant forces does not enter into our consideration. Although the increased popularity of the party because of terrorist incidents has cleared the way for direct action among the people, we consider it essential to limit our activity in this respect to explaining the true meaning of our demands and to protecting the peasantry from the reactionary intrigues of the enemies of the people at the moment of rebellion. This will ensure the success and duration of the *coup d'état*.

Thus far the notion of metropolitan centralism is somewhat obscured by the reservation: "we group the active, consciously revolutionary forces in the government centers, *including those on the periphery*," etc., but further on, at the end of the article, this centralism appears in all clarity. *Narodnaya Volya* speaks frankly of the "provisional government" by its party. At the same time the paper hopes that in the economic field the role of this provisional government will be strictly formal (we should call it superfluous). To use *Narodnaya Volya's* words there is a "favorable mutual relationship between political and economic factors in Russia," allegedly consisting in the fact that "at the same time that the Social Revolutionary Party inflicts blows on the government authority, hatred of the ruling, privileged caste will increase among the people, as will a persistent striving for a radical change in the economic structure." This favorable mutual relationship permits *Narodnaya Volya*

to hope that when the revolutionary organization is able to effect a political *coup*, the people will know how to bring about an economic revolution and then the provisional revolutionary government which has seized power will only have to sanction the economic equality won by the people from their age-old oppressors and exploiters. . . .

Narodnaya Volya continues:

But if circumstances prove less favorable, the provisional government will, along with the political emancipation of the people and the establishment of new political institutions, carry out an economic revolution; it will destroy the right of private ownership of land and the means of large-scale production. Then the true representatives of the politically and economically emancipated people will appear in the *Zemsky Sobor* [National Assembly] which will be convened, and life will begin to be regulated by the unmanipulated *will of the people*.

At the conclusion of the second article we find similar ideas in almost the same words, with the addition of a few objections to decentralist strivings, which the author rejects at least for the present and the immediate future, stating decisively that:

for the entire period of struggle up to the first lasting revolutionary victory, we consider the strictly centralized type of organization the best, and the only one leading to the goal.

The author of the article makes the following objections to opponents of the principle of centralization:

It is often said that the *Narodnaya Volya* Party neglects the local peculiarities of the Russian periphery and that it strives to subordinate the other nationalities to the Great Russians. It is unnecessary to prove that as a socialist party the *Narodnaya Volya* Party is alien to all national partiality and considers all who are oppressed and dispossessed as its brothers and comrades, irrespective of origin; that the use of racial hostility, and even more its augmentation, does not at all enter into our plans; that we will not take such a step regardless of the temporary advantage it might be expected to bring our party.¹

The other aspect of the national question concerns the future condition of the nationalities which have become crystallized in the course of history. It is self-evident that we do not deny to any nationality the right to complete political independence, leaving to its good will to enter into whatever relations it pleases with the other nationalities.

But we maintain that the unified, friendly efforts of all the component parts of the State must be directed against the common enemy; disunity in the struggle will weaken our forces and postpone victory. We also insist that the triumph of revolutionary and socialist principles can be consolidated only if common efforts are not limited to destructive work, but are continued in the creative work as well, i.e. in the elabor-

¹ Let us postpone our criticism of the main premises of these two *Narodnaya Volya* articles, but meanwhile we cannot help remarking on such details as these last lines. It is obvious that they by no means refute statements known to the author of the article about the neglect by Russian revolutionaries of the peculiarities of the Russian periphery, better called the non-Great Russian areas of Russia. Of course these statements do not ascribe either to Great Russian revolutionaries in general or to *Narodnaya Volya* adherents in particular the intention of "using racial hostility and even augmenting it" (although such a reproach could be made in connection with *Narodnaya Volya's* ill-considered proclamation to the Ukrainian people about the anti-Jewish riots). It was merely pointed out to the Russian revolutionaries that the exclusively Great Russian character of their activity cut off its roots in all non-Great Russian regions, which comprise almost half of European Russia and the Caucasus, and left the forces in the non-Great Russian provinces favorable to a political and social revolution unutilized. Such exclusiveness is unjustified, for the ranks of the Russian revolutionaries contain a good many representatives of non-Great Russian regions who have been denationalized as a result of governmental policies. It is equally unfavorable to the course of the revolutionary cause in Russia, but it will increase in proportion to the centralization of the revolutionary work in the capitals, which are situated in Great Russian territory. The present *Narodnaya Volya* adherents can hardly vouch for the attitude of the Great Russian masses or of their representatives in a future *Zemsky Sobor*, nor for the attitude of the government this *Sobor* might establish, toward the strivings for autonomy of the border peoples. The champions of national and regional autonomy have good reason for looking into the future with a considerable degree of uneasiness, all the more so because recently even the revolutionary Great Russians do not display any marked sympathy for the principle of regional autonomy. They at least make concessions to the superstitious belief in the unity and indivisibility of Russia, if they do not support it outright.

ation of a constitution by an *all-Russian Zemsky Sobor*, which will replace the provisional revolutionary government and will have jurisdiction over the territory of the entire State. Only after the consolidation of the revolutionary gains, after the firm establishment of the common bases of the new system, should individual nationalities be granted the right² to determine their political relationship with the entire State. Otherwise the dark forces of reaction will certainly find their *Vendée*, from which they will launch a campaign against the dismembered revolution.

It is not difficult to see how this most active group of Russian revolutionaries arrived at the centralist ideas expounded above after the anarchical and federal ideas current among them not long ago, nor is it difficult to identify the foreign political elements which abetted the final formation of these notions. Even ignoring the inevitable influence of national traditions on revolutionaries, we see that the centripetal tendency in Russian revolutionary circles is strengthened by the present conditions of political life in Russia, which make every sort of legal opposition difficult, and incline revolutionaries toward tight conspiracies and dictatorship. However, in recent times the "terrorist" character of the *Narodnaya Volya* group necessarily makes it even more centralistic. Add to this the influence of the examples of the French Revolution of 1792-93 and the ideals of the German Social Democrats, which were formed when Germany strove for political unity, and you will easily be able to explain the origin of those statements in the St. Petersburg revolutionary paper which we have copied above.

But although they are entirely natural under such circumstances, it is our profound conviction that such ideas, accompanied as they must be by certain acts, bear within them the seeds of phenomena extremely dangerous both for the revolutionary elements in Russia and for this entire country. In the centralist tendencies expressed in this quotation from *Narodnaya Volya* we see one of many signs in support of our often expressed fear that the present ferment in Russia and the more extensive revolutionary movement which may follow it may not have any more results, in proportion to the effort expended, than did the great French Revolution. For after Jacobin centralism—to which we should deny even the name of revolutionary—became supreme,

² C.f. the above "it is self-evident that we do not deny to any nationality the right to complete political independence. . . ."

it was properly speaking already the beginning of the counter-revolution, which ended in the establishment of Bonapartism.³

Before beginning our criticism of *Narodnaya Volya's* views on the centralization or decentralization of the revolutionary cause in Russia, we must investigate, of necessity briefly, *Narodnaya Volya's* opinions, or better its hopes, with regard to the possibility of a simultaneous political and social-economic revolution in Russia at the present moment. These hopes by no means seem as justified to us as to the writers in *Narodnaya Volya*. Examples from the world over show that even with a far greater degree of development and organization than that of the unskilled working masses in Russia, the peoples have not yet brought about such radical changes in the social-economic order as those expected by *Narodnaya Volya*. Of course the peasants in Russia now talk about the general redistribution of the land, but they think of this in the most fantastic way, and in most areas expect it on the order of the tsar. It is still a long, long way from this dream to real redistribution, and even further to the replacement of private ownership of land and factories and to the organization of the national economy in accordance with the ideal of the socialists (without which economic inequality would immediately reappear). . . . It is clear that if one can (and in our opinion one must) expect popular disturbances in Russia at the present, they will not at all be the kind that would bring about a radical change in the social-economic system, which has not been done away with anywhere. They will rather be like those during the French Revolution, for example, which frightened the government, disorganized the existing political system, and made it easier for the best organized forces of opposition to seize power under the pretext of "re-establishing order." The present anti-Jewish riots in the south of Russia are already beginning to have a similar meaning. They, it would seem, show that at the present stage of development and organization of the masses in Russia the insurrections of the people can not be either progressive or positive in character. And one should not forget that the anti-Jewish riots are taking place in a region where the peasants have not been crushed completely by an age-old serfdom and are the least conditioned by the Muscovite traditions which have shaped the character of the ancient Muscovite State.

In any event, even if matters were to go as far as general uprisings of the peasants, with the seizure of lands and factories, it is hard to understand

³ If by *revolution* one understands a certain manifestation of energy for the overthrow of the old order and the establishment of another, then Jacobinism is of course doubly revolutionary; but if only progressive movements are called revolutionary, movements which establish an order which is really new in form and ideas, then of all the political tendencies of its time Jacobinism was the least revolutionary because it established an order differing least in essence from the system of bureaucratic centralization and dictatorship which also existed in the old kingdom. From this standpoint not only republican federalism but even the liberalism of constitutional monarchy were far more revolutionary than Jacobinism.

why it would be necessary to have the sanction of the central provisional government. If such a seizure did not take place, then no decree of the provisional government could dictate it, for generally such radical changes in ideas and ways of life cannot be brought about by decree.⁴ Even permanent governments lack the strength for this, let alone provisional ones. A provisional revolutionary government in Russia which relied only on the capitals, St. Petersburg and Moscow, even supposing that it had on its side all the factory workers there and even part of the army (i.e. the guards), would not have the strength to enforce a radical economic change on the entire population of Russia, or even, in the language of *Narodnaya Volya*, "to explain to the people the true meaning of our demands and to protect the peasantry from the reactionary intrigues of the enemies of the people." In order not to be carried away by such dreams it suffices merely to compare the population of the capitals with that of the rest of Russia.

On the basis of all that has been said, we think that those Russian socialists who have made up their minds that a political revolution is necessary for the direction of a social-economic change would be acting more rationally if they were not carried away by the hopes of the possibility of the simultaneous success of both, and especially by the dreams of the possibility of guiding the course of the social-economic change by measures of central provisional governments (decrees, commissars, and similar imitations of the implements of the conservative bureaucracy). They should direct their efforts toward a real political change, i.e. toward the establishment of real political freedom which would make possible both a future organization of workers, urban and rural, and alliance between them and the socialists among the intelligentsia. Such freedom can only follow the weakening of centralist power, the destruction of its bureaucratic machine, and the establishment of institutions guaranteeing the rights of persons and groups and the self-government of communes and regions. It will not come about through changing the central State institutions from autocratic into parliamentary or even republican ones, especially since such changes, if they preserve the machinery of government, are rarely maintained in the form established by the centralist revolution. The governmental apparatus which is retained or even perfected by the revolution almost always turns against the revolution soon afterward.

Of course adopting our viewpoint on political and social change in Russia means accepting the views to which Russian revolutionary and even radical circles in general have become accustomed to give the unflattering epithet of "gradualism". . . . But what can one do if history indicates that people progress only in a rather gradual way? Indeed, the conversion of many Russian socialists, including the most active, from "pure socialism" to the

⁴ The assumption of such a possibility also belongs to the political prejudices which are widespread at this time among the bureaucratic classes.

struggle for political freedom is nothing other than an admission of this gradualism. One must be completely logical and admit that in our time the gain for the popular cause will be great if Russia obtains even this political freedom alone. It would guarantee elementary human rights to the entire population and give the friends of the masses the opportunity of working systematically for their welfare.⁵

Centralization and freedom are mutually exclusive. Ideas, such as those in *Narodnaya Volya*, that centralization is essential at the first moment of the revolutionary struggle and until solid results have been obtained are either sophisms with which those whom centralism would benefit now and later on silence those whom it would harm, or self-deception on the part of those who think that the course of history can be held back by their own personal good intentions.

Every political configuration, once formed, seeks to consolidate itself. Nowhere has a centralized power, with the bureaucracy and army without which it is inconceivable, ever done away with itself. In the history of centralized revolutions all changes have consisted in the passing of the retained or newly-formed machine of centralized rule from one set of hands to another, for example from the hands of a king into those of a committee and then into the hands of a dictator, etc. In Russia centralization, even revolutionary centralization, is all the more dangerous to the cause of freedom because the immaturity of the masses in this country gives the greater reason for fearing a reactionary dictatorship, even following the temporary success of a progressive revolution. This is the reason why all advocates of progress in Russia, especially the socialists, must fight the principles of authoritarianism and centralization both in practice and in theory, and strive to base all their ideas and acts, *before, during and after the coup d'état*, on the opposite principles of decentralization and federation.

The opinion that federation weakens and disunites any movement is completely untrue, as is the opinion that centralization in itself constitutes strength and unity. Strength and unity accrue to the central authority only through the obedience or sympathy of the constituent parts, and in times of stress obedience alone is not enough. . . . But revolutionary circles which intend to form a government cannot claim obedience and consequently must count mostly upon sympathy.⁶ This sympathy will be the greater the closer the revolutionaries are to the various elements of the population, and the more even a central revolutionary government—if one proves necessary in the course of events or arises from them—is formed by the federative process from

⁵ It would be in accordance with this desired *gradualism*, which by no means eliminates energy or self-sacrifice, to shift the focal point of political and social action in Russia *from emotion and faith to knowledge and a discriminating mind*, and from callow youths to mature adults.

⁶ Not to mention the fact that premature claims to obedience can only make the claimants appear ridiculous.

the bottom up rather than by the process of centralization from the top down. This is why those revolutions which seemed most hopeless in view of their initial weakness succeeded through decentralization and federation: this is the way the Swiss cantons repulsed their strong neighbors, this is how the united Netherlands liberated themselves from Spain and the United States of North America from England, how the *juntas* (provincial alliances) of Spain overcame the armies of Napoleon I, etc. It is noteworthy that even in the offensive war of 1870-71 a Germany which was federative in its way defeated a strictly united France.

It is precisely centralization that weakens social forces, reducing personal and regional initiative, isolating those near to each other and compelling them to await orders from a distant center; it is precisely centralization that disunites, gives birth to disagreements, for it is the nature of centralization to strive for the reduction of all differences to a single pattern, to elevate secondary questions to positions of eminence, to confuse means and forms with ends, etc., and thereby to cause irritation among forces which otherwise would act in unison. All separatism is the product of centralization; disagreements among parties which are essentially close and differ only in minor matters usually result from centralizing tendencies which compel them to advance their peculiarities as something generally valid. And it is worth noting that these instincts develop with particular force in centralized countries, namely where "provisional" governments, immediately after they were formed, sought to copy the old governments, like children their elders. . . .

In addition to these and other general considerations which speak against the centralistic doctrines of the *Narodnaya Volya* adherents, the particular conditions of life in Russia bear no less strong witness to the inapplicability of centralization in this country, not only in order to consolidate and preserve freedom (it seems that even the St. Petersburg *Narodnaya Volya* group still believe that centralization as a permanent system is incompatible with freedom), but also for a decisive revolutionary attack on the present government in order to gain freedom. . . .

We will hardly be much in error if, on the basis of the article in this St. Petersburg revolutionary paper, we imagine that it assumes the possibility of organizing in St. Petersburg or Moscow something like the Paris Commune of 1871, more or less socialist, but with the political attributes of the Paris municipality of 1792-93, which would be the basis for a revolutionary government ruling not only over the capital, but also over all Russia. But, fortunately or unfortunately, St. Petersburg is not in Russia what Paris was in France, neither by absolute or even relative population, nor in composition (number of army officers, officials, etc.) nor in character and stage of development. An insurrection of the St. Petersburg proletariat (even assuming that it would be capable of rising against the monarchy at the present time), unsupported by insurrections in the provinces, would be of no more practical im-

portance than an insurrection in any village. If the monarchy were to suppress this insurrection—and in the guards, the least hopeful part of the Russian military force from the viewpoint of popular revolution, it has the power to do so—and even if it were to destroy the entire civilian population of St. Petersburg, then the remainder of this immense and various country, especially peasant Russia, would hardly feel the amputation of this insignificant growth, surrounded by deserts as it is.⁷

It is evident that central uprisings in the capitals would only have even a remote chance of success if they were at least accompanied by insurrections in all the territory around the capitals. But it must be remembered that imperial traditions in Russia are especially strong precisely in the central Great Russian areas, where they are not only stronger than in Poland, the Ukraine, and the Caucasus, but also stronger than in the Lower Volga and Siberia. If there is any place in Russia where the conditions are suitable for the development of a *Vendée* (to use the word of *Narodnaya Volya*), it is in Great Russia and, perhaps, right in Moscow, but not in the border areas, especially in the west and south. There is no point in discussing Poland at length. Poland, if it could not be a *Vendée*, could be a refuge for the dynasty, but only if the revolution in Russia assumed a centralist and therefore inevitably a Great Russian character. In this case the Poles might well consider it advantageous to support the Romanov dynasty, just as the various peoples of Austria preferred to make a deal with the Habsburg dynasty when threatened by the centralism of the German and Hungarian liberals and revolutionaries in 1848-49. Poland will never be reconciled to the centralization of Russia. Of course at present while the revolutionary movement in Russia has a purely destructive character, the Poles, especially the young people, are able to participate in all existing Russian revolutionary circles, but neither the Polish intelligentsia nor the Polish masses will ever abandon claim to the autonomy of their country, and at the first favorable moment they will raise its banner. If, for example, a provisional government were actually formed in St. Petersburg, one which would appeal to the population of Russia to send representatives to a national assembly, the Poles would in all probability form their own provisional government and even their own *sejm* [parliament] in Warsaw.⁸

⁷ Let us remember that the working population of St. Petersburg is mostly recruited from the northernmost provinces, which are sparsely populated.

⁸ After what we have written in the series of articles "Historical Poland and Great Russian Democracy," we consider it unnecessary to dwell here on the complications which would be caused by such a step by the Polish autonomists, many of whom would of course be champions of "historical" Poland, i.e. of a Polish State including Lithuania, Byelorussia and half of the Ukraine. Nor need we dwell on the use which might be made of "historical Polish aspirations" by social reactionaries in Poland and political reactionaries in Moscow. It is evident that the only means of anticipating and preventing these difficulties consists in working out a federal democratic program for all of eastern Europe, regardless of all "historical" centralisms, either Polish or Russian.

As for the Ukraine, since its independence was crushed in the late 17th century and as a result a considerable part of the intelligentsia was Russianized, to their own misfortune as well as that of the masses of the Ukrainian people, it is of course not difficult to attract the Great Russianized part of the Ukrainian intelligentsia to an all-Russian centralist program. But there is no reason for expecting good to the cause of freedom in Russia to come from this desertion. Still, monarchical ideas are weaker and republican ideas stronger in the Ukraine than in any other of the eastern Slavic provinces of Russia; recently the masses of the people are showing more of the spirit of protest in just this land, in the form of agrarian disorders and city movements against the police as well as the anti-Jewish riots, which at present are wild in character, but which could be given a more rational direction. But it is precisely the program of metropolitan centralism which is depriving this land of the most conscious and organized fighters for freedom! As everyone knows, it is the Ukraine which has given a tremendous percentage of the members and the funds of all Russian revolutionary circles, both in the absolute and even more in comparison to the relative populations. The program of metropolitan centralism of the Russian revolutionary organizations not only proposes to continue the immoral and even shameful alienation of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, nourished by the labor of the people, from the population of its native land, but also tempts them to fruitless and ruinous activity in that country, Great Russia, which is far more capable of becoming a *Vendée* than this so-called border area!

However, we consider the emigration of a part of the Ukrainian intelligentsia to Great Russia, via the capitals, a matter which is inevitable and must be accepted since fate has already linked the Ukraine to the State of Muscovy. This can even be in the interest of general European culture. We consider the present participation of native Ukrainians in Great Russian revolutionary circles a phenomenon analogous to the emigration of Ukrainian clergy, teachers, and scribes to Muscovy in the 17th and 18th centuries. As a result even more of Muscovite centralization and the destruction of such cultural centers as Novgorod and Pskov, than of the Tatar invasions, perhaps, Great Russia was left so far behind the European world that it was not even able to follow its tracks without resorting to the importation of alien stock. Here the Ukrainians are the element most closely related to the Great Russians and therefore the one more able than distant foreigners to undermine Muscovite orthodoxy and autocracy and to strengthen the forces of the native champions of progress.⁹

⁹ By the way, the Ukrainian immigration to Great Russia is taking place via the educational centers which are artificially concentrated in the capitals. There Ukrainian youth is definitively divorced from its native land and people. One of the reasons why the Ukraine provides a very large percentage of young students is the presence in this country of a numerous landed petty nobility and corresponding strata of the population, which are lacking in Great Russia. We note that the Ukrainian peasants do not emigrate to Great Russia *at all*, except to the far southeast, and even there in insignificant numbers.

But excessive emigration weakens the country from which it occurs, and that moral "absenteeism" which, supported as it is by the Russification measures of the government, has become a characteristic of the Ukrainian upper classes, paralyzes all the efforts of the Ukrainian masses to improve their material and cultural situation.

This abnormal condition of the Ukraine, which we have taken as an example of the situation in many other areas of Russia—Lithuania, Byelorussia, Bessarabia and to some extent Transcaucasia—can be ended only through autonomy, which will place the masses of the people face to face with the intelligentsia and compel the latter to serve the former. *Narodnaya Volya's* centralist program does not promise any such autonomy. Even for the future it does not promise anything except an all-Russian or, as *Narodnaya Volya* says, "general Russian" national assembly to take the place of the provisional revolutionary government after the latter has itself replaced the present imperial government. This all-Russian assembly, which of course *Narodnaya Volya* imagines as all powerful, (at least we have never read in the writings of *Narodnaya Volya* adherents any indications of limitations to the power of this future sovereign of Russia) will grant the various individual nationalities (naturally only those which this assembly considers distinct or, to use another *Narodnaya Volya* expression, "historically crystallized") "the right to determine their political bond with the entire [the entire, by all means!] State," and will make this concession "only after the establishment [naturally by it, the new autocrat of all the Russias] of the general principles of the new system" (again those which it will be convenient for the future assembly to recognize as such). In other words, the various nationalities now enslaved by the State, which is really Great Russian, and administered at the discretion of the imperial bureaucracy, will receive autonomy only *when and to the degree* the new autocratic ruler of all the peoples and regions of Russia finds convenient. Judging from what all rulers, both collective and individual, have done on earth, the peoples and lands of Russia would have to wait for this *when* a long time!

There can be no denying that if the present Russian autocrat, on his own initiative or under the pressure of public opinion, agreed to even the poorest sort of national assembly, composed of delegates from the present *zemstvos*, this would be a step forward which would be joyously acclaimed in all regions of Russia. But the first act of even this assembly would have to be *the establishment of the security and freedom of persons, groups and nationalities, as well as the self-government of regions, and the establishment of inalienable constitutional rights, inviolable by anyone and anything, including the State which, in comparison with its component parts, is a fiction.*

If the sons of the nations and regions of Russia have to shed their blood in revolution in order to achieve representative rule, the acquisition of an autocratic all-Russian national assembly in which hegemony necessarily reverts to the Great Russians is too small a reward. If we must fight for the crea-

tion of revolutionary assemblies, then it is more natural for the peripheral regions to form their own. These regional assemblies will take it upon themselves to establish "the common principles for the federation of the entire State" if they consider it desirable. Only the limitation of the central government by inviolable rights of vigorous regional autonomy can protect Russia from post-revolutionary reaction and the spread of *Vendée*-style counter-revolutionary dictatorship which, we repeat, could appear more easily in the central regions of Muscovy than in the less monarchically minded peripheries. . . .

As for preparatory organizations for effecting a political revolution in Russia, we think that the most expedient approach would be the formation of regional revolutionary committees, which would of course enter into alliance among themselves. According to circumstances, the committees could render special aid to the committees in the capitals, but without *a priori* concessions to a centralist program before, during or after the revolution. . . .

The later success of the revolution would depend largely on the skill and energy of the regional committees, while the further agreement of these committees among themselves and with the central committee, if this were found to be necessary, would depend largely on the sincere acceptance by all, including the central committee, of the principle of equality of all nationalities, historical and non-historical, as well as of the principle of the autonomy of regions, in short of the federal principle. It would also depend on the ability of the central committee to distinguish between solidarity, which is essential, and centralization, which is superfluous and even downright harmful.