

## Origins and Sunset of Russian Economic Geography

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Received date: 5 September 2022; Accepted date: 10 September 2022; Published date: 15 September 2022

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### Abstract

Here's a table based on a not quite decent source, Wikipedia, or rather the articles, "Famous Geographers" of four countries: Germany, UK, France and USA (Table 1):

	Germany	UK	France	USA
Number of geographers named	7 3	33	38	38
Of these, those known to the author	Alfred Goettner Alfred Weber Alexander von Humboldt Walter Kristaller Augustus Losch Peter Simon Pallas Friedrich Ratzel Karl Ritter Johann von Thunen	Peter Huggett Richard Chorley	Jules Verne Paul Vidal de la Blanche Elise Reclus	Walter Isard. William Bunge Benjamin Franklin David Harvey Chauncey Harris. Theodore Schabad
In addition, those known to the author but not listed on Wikipedia	Immanuel Kant	Deedleigh Stamp		Carrie
total	1 0	3	3	7

The author is almost apologetic about his relative ignorance of the rankings and authorities of Western geographers:

- He's an expert in the geography of the U.S.S.R.
- He's an average geographer, just a PhD candidate.

- He is an old geographer and lived most of his life behind the Iron Curtain, when foreign contacts and foreign literature, to put it mildly, were not welcome.

Both by objective and subjective estimations in Russia the German geography is obviously better known and more popular

than other national geographical schools. Pallas lived in Russia for many years and even got heavily crucified, A. Humboldt made a very fruitful and useful expedition for Russia devoted to the ore deposits of the Urals. The two-volume book "Natural History" by F. Ratzel (Spb, 1903) graces the home library of the author of this note. K. Ritter (one of the ideologists of geographical determinism) was an honorary member of St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, and, though he has never been to Russia, he did a lot about the geography of this country. The works of I. Thunen, A. Weber, W. Christaller, A. Loesch is not just a classic, but a fundamental classic, which every economic geographer and even every school geography teacher must know. And without A. Weber, the theory of energy-production cycles and PTC of N.N. Kolosovsky, the only theory in the Soviet economic geography could not be born. In the mid-20s of the 20th century, A. Weber was translated and published in the USSR [1]. The "father" of Soviet economic geography, N. Baransky (a Bolshevik and personal friend of Lenin) warmly recommended it to all his colleagues. True, later all those who had read it were shot - practically for this reading. Only the lazy and only the lazy were not accused of Gettnerianism and geographical determinism in the USSR. Besides, many, the most prominent geographers of pre-revolutionary Russia, especially those from St. Petersburg, got their geographical education in German universities: A.A. Grigoryev studied at Berlin and Heidelberg universities (A Gottner's pupil), A.I. Voyerikov studied at the same plus Göttingen University, P.P. Semenov-Tyan-Shansky - at Berlin University - and so on in abundance. It is important to emphasize that the domestic geographers were not educated and supplemented anywhere abroad except in Germany. Strictly speaking, the situation with geography is not unique at all: transport science in Russia and the USSR is of German origin, rocket engineering and the atomic bomb come from Germany (G. Grottrup and von Ardenne respectively), and almost all engineering is from the same place. Until the end of the 50s German in schools and universities was predominant - despite the fact that Germany was the enemy of our country in two world wars: yes, it was the language of the enemy, but the concept of teaching German was built on the ability to read and translate scientific and technical texts from Germany. Germany has long lost its hegemony in geography, and it is doubtful that it had any: the two largest colonial empires, France and Great Britain, by necessity had superior geography, and the United States, aiming for world intellectual, including scientific leadership, has also long ago become the most developed geography in the world. Secondary character of Russian geography in comparison with German geography caused its obvious provinciality and natives, insurmountable nowadays scientific in bringing in university science. With hand on heart, one can say that there are not even a hundred of geographers-scientists in the country, and all the rest

are school and university teachers of geography, the latter being assigned to research before the war with Ukraine, but these articles, monographs and dissertations have almost nothing to do with science. Looking for confirmation of my thesis, I came across an article by my old colleagues [2]. This article, in addition to confirming the thesis about the German origin of Russian geography, confirmed the thesis about total in bringing of native science: from 10 literary sources 9 are self-cited, and one

- On neighbours from Moscow State University - and not a single foreign source, though the theme and content of the article calls for it.

Soviet geography zealously served the state, was full (as it is now) of ideological myths and cliches, rumours, intrigue and gossip, ready to lie down under any power dope flowing down from above: five-year and long-term plans, plans for transforming nature, turning Siberian rivers, building cascades of hydroelectric power stations on lowland rivers, the great construction projects of communism, economic zoning as a means of governing the country, composing regional concepts, turning a scientific subject into a means of introducing patriotism, chauvinism and xenophobia, and now digitalization as the numerization of everything and everything.

Characteristic features of Soviet geography were:

- Bar-dotted information support of science (strictly classified were statistics and any information about the military-industrial complex, especially nuclear missile weapons, nuclear energy, non-ferrous metallurgy, aircraft and automotive industry, shipbuilding, most chemical industries, etc., up to a ban on the disclosure of any information about sports clubs Zenit (rocket production) and Krylya Sovetov (aircraft industry))
- Indispensable references to Lenin's works and party-state documents as sources of truth
- The Siberian Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences held 25 sessions to justify the construction of the Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM), the last "great construction site of communism" (construction began in 1972), and never once expressed any criticism of this insane and senseless project. It was only in 1988 that an article critical of BAM appeared, for which the author almost went to prison [3].
- Total and indispensable use of N. Kolosovsky's theory of energy-production cycles, which is an ideologized exposition of A. Weber's Standart theory. Weber and proving that the formation of large economic regions is possible only under the conditions of planned socialist economy, because these regions are based on territorial-production complexes; surprisingly, in the Soviet economic geography two dogmas were approved:

territorial-production complexes have a natural and objective nature and are formed in accordance with some laws of economy of location, on the one hand, and on the other hand, are the objects of planning, design and management [4].

- Futile attempts to "scientifically" justify complete arbitrariness in the placement of industries. In E.E. Leyzerovich, for example, "revealed the secret" of placing 15 high-tech enterprises in Penza: the mother-in-law of the all-powerful minister of one of the most important machine-building ministries of the USSR Parshin was in power in this city for many years [5].

Nevertheless, beginning in the 1960s of the 20th century, Soviet geography began to be intensively involved in world geographical science. European and American leading geographers began to regularly visit their colleagues and students. The lectures of Thor Heyerdahl at the Geography Department of Moscow State University and the Institute of Geography of the Academy of Sciences attracted huge audiences and were a great success. It became considered unseemly not to have in the bibliographies of articles and monographies the works of Bunge, Häggerstrand, Haggett, Eisard and many others. However, there was an anecdotal mishap with Eisard's book: the chapter devoted to the methodology of regionalism was thrown out during the translation, and the page numbering was forgotten to be corrected [6].

In the early 60's Theodore Schabad began to publish Soviet Geography, selecting the top 10% of publications in the three leading Soviet periodicals:

- Izvestia of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, geographical series
- Vestnik (Herald) of MSU, Geographical Series
- Issues of Geography of the Geographical Society of the USSR (the society has existed since 1845 and is the oldest scientific society in the country)

In 1996-2002, the journal was called Post-Soviet Geography. It published almost exclusively American authors. Nowadays, the journal is called Euro-Asian Geography: in the ocean of articles on China, Russia is a rare island.

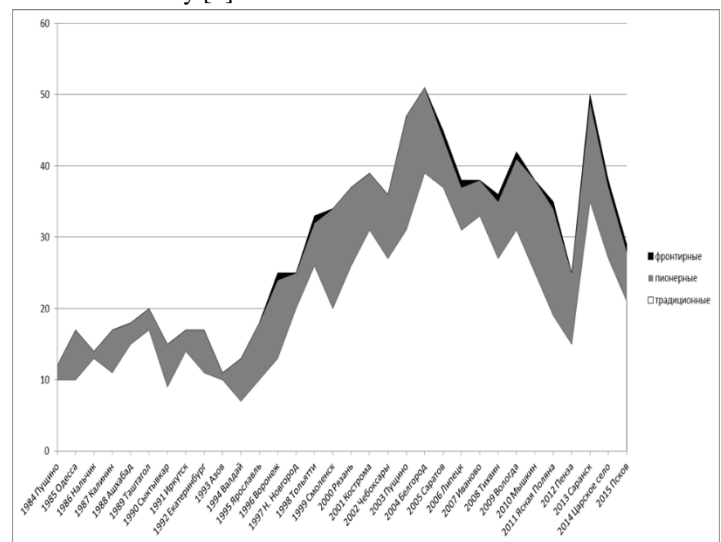
A similar trajectory with the participation of Soviet and Russian geographers in the International Geographic Congresses. The USSR joined the International Geographical Union (IGU) in 1956. In 1976 the Congress was held in Moscow, in the most prestigious public centre - the Kremlin Palace of Congresses. The 23rd Congress was attended by 6000 geographers, including 2000 foreigners from 58 countries. Almost 40 years later, in 2015 the IGU held a regional conference in Moscow on the premises of the Moscow State University Fundamental Library: there were no more Europeans, no North Americans, no Israelis, no Japanese,

no Chinese, no South Koreans: Vietnam, Mongolia, Equatorial Africa, several Latin American countries...

The collapse of the USSR led to the fact that a fairly monolithic economic geography, now Russia, rather than the USSR, fell apart into several fundamentally incompatible directions:

- "Classical" Soviet economic geography, professing the theory of territorial- production complexes (TPC), though now, in the terms and concepts introduced by M. Porter [7]. A few "independent" researchers who independently chose the field and area of research, both young (e.g., Averkyaeva) and mature (Polyana, Zubarevich, Krylov, Gontmakher, Oreshkin, Savoskul, Agirechu, etc.), quite of European and world caliber and class, but certainly not as incendiary as R. Florida's work [8].
- Orthodox-patriotic obscurantists and Putinists (Matrusov, Shuper, etc.)
- Forced geography teachers in universities (the bulk of them) to be involved in research

Many current geographers justify their existence by their search for truth, thus demonstrating their diapered existence - modern science, including geography, has long ago moved away from this naive search and is engaged not in explanation and description, but in transformation of the environment of human existence. Analysis of the publications of one of the most popular conferences on regional geography MARS has shown that the bulk of these articles is obvious "milk", carrying almost no scientific novelty [9].



- As a result of the isolation and self-isolation of Russian geography during the war with Ukraine, its complete disappearance from the world geography is quite possible, which will happen almost imperceptibly. Nobody would notice at domestic market as well, if tomorrow in Russia there would be neither geographers, nor geography, because old-fashioned bearers of geographical knowledge - coachmen, carriages and

coachmen have disappeared, and nothing. Russia no longer needs to worry about ideas, theories, methods, or new directions in geography: there are only thoughts, sometimes quite witty and interesting, but no more than that.

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