

# The Origin and Decline of Russian Economic Geography

Levintov A

Geography, independent researcher, Russia

**Corresponding author**

Levintov A, Geography, independent researcher, Russia.

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**Annotation**

*Economic geography in Russia was shaped by German geographers or under their strong influence, although Germany itself was not a world leader in world geography. The secondary nature of Russian geography was especially acutely felt in theoretical terms and in the orientation of this science to the needs and orders of the state. After perestroika and the collapse of the USSR, geography ceased to be a monolithic front, but, unfortunately, it is struck by scientific inbring and a massive flow of fictitious and demonstrative works. The war in Ukraine and the associated international isolation is becoming a decisive factor in the extinction of Russian economic geography.*

**Keywords:** Standart Theory And The Theory Of Territorial-Production Complexes, University And Academic Science, Scientific Inbreeding, State Monopoly In Science

Here is a table built on the basis of a not quite decent source, Wikipedia, more precisely, articles, "Famous geographers" of four countries: Germany, Great Britain, France and the United States:

	Germany	United Kingdom	France	United States
Number of named geographers	73	33	38	38
Of these, known to the author	Alfred Göttner Alfred Weber Alexander von Humboldt Walter Kristaller August Lösch Peter Simon Pallas Friedrich Ratzel Carl Ritter Johann von Tünen	Peter Haggett Richard Chorley	Jules Verne Paul Vidal de la Blanche Elise Reclus	Walter Izard William Bunge Benjamin Franklin David Harvey Chauncey Harris Theodore Shabad
Also known to the author but not included in Wikipedia lists	Immanuel Kant	Didley Stamp		Carrie
altogether	10	3	3	7

The author is almost apologetic of his relative ignorance in the arrangement of authorities and ratings of Western geographers:

- he is a specialist in the geography of the USSR/Russia
- he is an average geographer, only 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 welcomed.

Both in objective and subjective assessments in Russia, German geography is clearly better known and popular than other national geographical schools. Pallas lived in Russia for many years and even became very rustic, A. Humboldt made a very fruitful and useful expedition for Russia, dedicated to the ore deposits of the Urals. F. Ratzel’s two-volume “Ethnography” (St. Petersburg,

1903) adorns the home library of the author of this note. K. Ritter (one of the ideologists of geographical determinism) was an honorary academician of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences and, although he had never been to Russia, did a lot on the geography of this country. The works of I. Tyunen, A. Weber, V. Kristaller. A. Lyosha is not just a classic, but a fundamental classic that any economic geographer and even every school geography teacher must know. And without the standards of A. Weber, the theory of energy-production cycles and production-territorial complexes of N.N. Kolosovsky, the only theory in Soviet economic geography, could not have been born. In the mid-20s of the 20th century, the work of A. Weber was translated and published in the USSR [1]. The “father” of Soviet economic geography, N. Baransky (a Bolshevik and Lenin’s personal friend), warmly recommended it to all his

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colleagues. However, later everyone who read it was shot – practically for this reading. In the USSR, only the lazy and only the lazy were not blamed for Hetnerianism and geographical determinism.

In addition, many of the most outstanding geographers of pre-revolutionary Russia, especially those in St. Petersburg, received their geographical education at German universities: A.A. Grigoriev studied at the Universities of Berlin and Heidelberg (a student of A. Göttnner), A.I. Voeikov studied at the same two plus the University of Göttingen, P.P. Semenov-Tyan-Shansky - at B. Yerlin University – and so on in abundance. It is important to emphasize that nowhere abroad, except in Germany, domestic geographers did not receive and did not replenish.

Strictly speaking, the situation with geography is not at all unique: transport science in Russia and the USSR is of German origin, rocket technology and the atomic bomb come from Germany (G. Grettrup and von Ardenne, respectively), almost all engineering is from there. Until the end of the 50s, the German language in schools and universities was predominant – despite the fact that Germany was the opponent of our country in two world wars: yes, it was the language of the enemy, but the concept of teaching German was based on the ability to read and translate scientific and technical texts from Germany.

Germany had long since lost its hegemony in geography, and it is doubtful that it had it: the two largest colonial empires, France and Great Britain, by necessity had excellent geography, and the United States, aimed at world intellectual, including scientific leadership, also long ago began to have the most developed geography in the world.

The secondary nature of Russian geography relative to German geography gave rise to its pronounced provincialism and nativeness, the still insurmountable scientific inbreeding in university science. Hand on heart, it can be argued that there are not even hundreds of geographers-scientists in the country, and all other geographers are school and university geography teachers, the last before the war with Ukraine imputed to There are research activities, but these articles, monographs and dissertations have almost nothing to do with science. In search of confirmation of my thesis, I came across an article by my long-time colleagues [2]. In this article, in addition to confirming the thesis about the German origin of Russian geography, the thesis about the total inbreeding of Russian science was confirmed: out of 10 literary sources, 9 are self-citations, and one is on neighbors from Moscow State University – and not a single foreign source, although the topic and content of the article is demanding about it.

Soviet geography zealously served the state, was full (as it is now) of ideological myths and clichés, rumors, intrigues and gossip, ready to spread under any power foolishness flowing from above: five-year and long-term plans, plans for the transformation of nature, the turning of Siberian rivers, the construction of cascades of hydroelectric power plants on plain rivers, the great construction

projects of communism, economic regionalization as a means of governing the country, writing regional concepts, turning a scientific subject into a means of introducing patriotism, chauvinism and xenophobia, now digitalization as a numbering of everything and everything.

Characteristic features of Soviet geography were:

- dashed information support for science (statistics and any information about the military-industrial complex, primarily 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 the sports clubs “Zenit” (rocket engineering) and “Krylia Sovetov” (aircraft industry) were strictly classified), as well as almost all demographic statistics, confessional, criminal and political statistics, etc.)
- Indispensable references to Lenin’s works and party-state documents as sources of truth
- a ban on criticism of the decisions taken by the country’s leadership: 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 of communism” (construction began in 1972), and never criticized this insane and meaningless project. Only in 1988 there was an article criticizing BAM [3], for which the author almost went to prison
- total and indispensable use of the theory of energy-production cycles of N. Kolosovsky [4], which is an ideological exposition of the theory of standarts by A. Weber and proves that the formation of large economic regions is possible only in the conditions of a planned socialist economy, since these areas are based on territorial-production complexes; amazing images in Soviet economic geography asserted and Two dogmas: territorial-production complexes are of a natural and objective nature and are formed in accordance with certain laws of the economy of accommodation, on the one hand, and on the other hand, they are objects of planning, design and management, while the number of such district complexes and economic areas in the territory varied from 8 to 34, and the officially adopted grid of districts suspiciously coincided with the grid of military districts.
- futile attempts to “scientifically” justify complete arbitrariness in the location of productions. In his work [5], E.E. Leyzerovich, for example, “revealed the secret” of the placement of 15 high-tech enterprises in the city of Penza: in this city 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 for a long time.

Nevertheless, since the 60s of the 20th century, Soviet geography begins to be intensively included in the world geographical science. European and American leading geographers began to visit their colleagues and students regularly. Thor Heyerdahl’s lectures at the Faculty of Geography of Moscow State University and at the Institute of Geography of the Academy of Sciences gathered huge audiences and enjoyed great success. It has become considered indecent not to have in the bibliographies for articles and monographs the works of Bunge, Heggerstrand, Haggert, Isard and

many others. However, an anecdotal incident occurred with The book of Isard [6]: the chapter devoted to the methodology of regionalistics was thrown out during translation, and the page numbering was forgotten to be corrected.

In the early 60s, Theodore Shabad began to publish the journal Soviet Geography, selecting 10% of the best publications in three leading Soviet publications:

- Proceedings of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, a series of geographies
- Bulletin of Moscow State University, geographic series
- Questions 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. Almost exclusively American authors were published here. Currently, the journal is called Euro-Asi an Geography: in the ocean of articles about China, materials about Russia appear as rare islands.

A similar trajectory is with the participation of Soviet and Russian geographers in the International Geographical Congresses. The USSR joined the International Geographical Union (IGU) in 1956. In 1976, the Congress was held in Moscow, in the most prestigious public center - the Kremlin Palace of Congresses. The 23rd Congress was attended by 6,000 geographers, including 2,000 foreign ones from 58 countries. Almost 40 years later, in 2015, the IGU held a regional conference in Moscow in the premises of the Fundamental Library of Moscow State University: no Europeans, no North Americans, no Israelis, no Japanese, there were no Chinese

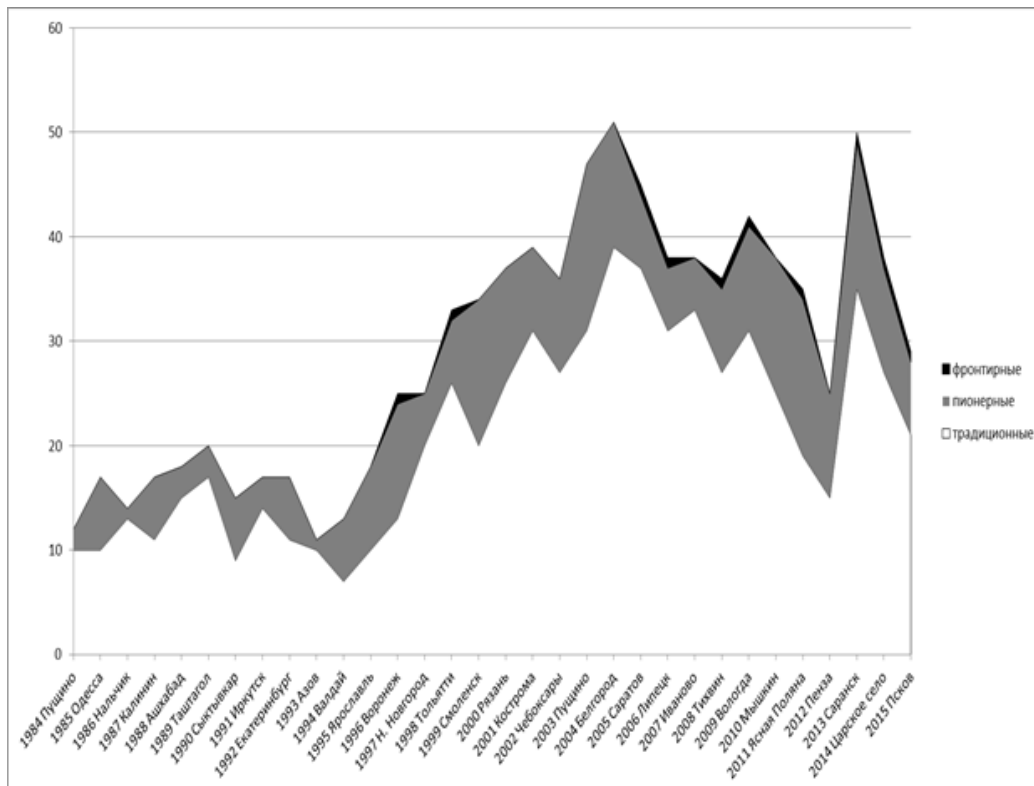
or South Koreans: Vietnam, Mongolia, Equatorial Africa, several Latin American countries...

The collapse of the USSR led to the fact that a fairly monolithic economic geography, now Russia, and not the USSR, crumbled into several fundamentally incompatible areas:

- “classical” Soviet economic geography, professing the theory of territorial-production complexes (TPK), however, now, in terms and concepts introduced by M. Porter [7]
- a few “independent” researchers who independently chose the field and sphere of research, both young (for example, Averkieva, Kamkin) and mature (Polyan, Zubarevich, Krylov, Gontmakher, Oreshkin, Slavoskul, Agirecchu, etc.), quite European and world caliber and class, but certainly not as incendiary as the work of R. Florida [8]
- Orthodox-patriotic obscurantists and Putinists (Matrusov, Shuper, etc.)
- Compulsorily involved in research teachers of geography in universities (the bulk)

Many modern geographers justify their existence by the search for truth, thereby demonstrating their diaper existence - modern science, including geography, has long left these naïve searches and is busy not with explanation and description, but with transforming the environment of human existence.

Analysis of the publications of one of the most popular conferences on regional geography MARS showed that the bulk of these articles are obvious “milk”, practically carrying no scientific novelty



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As a result of the isolation and self-isolation of Russian geography during the war with Ukraine, it is quite possible that it will disappear completely from the world geography, which will happen almost imperceptibly.

In the domestic market, too, no one will notice if tomorrow there are no geographers or geography in Russia - after all, the original carriers of geographical knowledge, coachmen, charioteers and pitmen, 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 nothing more.

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