

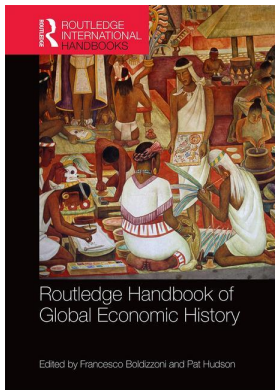
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### Economic History from The Russian Empire to The Russian Federation

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# ECONOMIC HISTORY FROM THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

*Leonid Borodkin*

Economic history as an academic discipline started in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century when Prof. M.I. Tugan-Baranovsky (1865–1919) published his fundamental works on business cycles in the economic development of England and other Western countries and on the evolution of Russian manufactures at the early stage of industrialization (Tugan-Baranovsky 1894, 1898, 1912). Being a prominent economist he belonged to the Legal Marxism school (and was criticized by V. Lenin for his views).<sup>1</sup> A further mark of the emergence of the field was the first course in Russia on the history of the economy. This was taught in 1885 by V.F. Levitsky (1854–1939) at the Demidov Law Lyceum in Yaroslavl city (Levitskij 1890; Majdachevskij 2011).

Several books were published in St. Petersburg and Moscow before 1917 on the economic history of Russia and Europe. An important contribution was that of M.M. Kovalevsky (1851–1916) who was the first prominent Russian sociologist. He developed social evolution ideas and believed in progress as one of the inevitable laws of history. According to Kovalevsky progress depended upon population growth as its main driving force. He supposed that the growth of international trade would bring world economic integration eliminating the causes of wars and leading to ‘a world federation of democratic states’. After 1878, Kovalevsky read lectures in law at Moscow University and he published books on the economic growth of Europe, before the emergence of a capitalist economy, and on the evolution of the economic structure of the Russian Empire (Kovalevskij 1898–1903, 1900).

P.G. Vinogradoff’s works on the social and economic conditions of early medieval England became very well known not only in Russia but in England and other European countries (Vinogradoff 1887, 1911). Vinogradoff (1854–1925) was a famous Russian historian who represented liberal–positivist historiography. In 1884 he became professor of history at Moscow University but in 1902 after conflict with the minister of education he was obliged to leave Russia. Having settled in England, Vinogradoff became a professor at Oxford University in 1903, and a fellow of the British Academy. In 1908 he returned to Moscow University (keeping his position at Oxford and combining teaching at both universities). Vinogradoff studied the peasantry of the feudal age and the village community in England in detail showing that the typical Anglo–Saxon settlement was a free community and not a feudal manor.

I.M. Kulisher (1878–1933) was an economic historian of the next generation in pre-Revolutionary Russia.<sup>2</sup> He published his books on the history of customs policy, on the

evolution of capital gains, in the context of development of European industry and trade, and on the history of economic life in Western Europe (Kulisher 1903, 1906, 1908, 1909, 1911). He did not follow a Marxist approach; he opposed the Marxist labor theory of value, the theory of surplus value. He denied the impoverishment of the proletariat under capitalism and considered advances in science and technology (and not the exploitation of workers) to be the main source of profit.

In this chapter we analyze distinctive features of economic history in Russia during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. The focus is upon the impact of Russia's modernization process which covers one hundred years starting from the middle of the nineteenth century. Characterizing this historiography one should take into account the political context which changed dramatically during the twentieth-century development of Russia. As one of the leading Soviet economic historians, Yu. Rozaliev noted in 1992: 'Our economic history as a science has a nice pre-Revolutionary past to be proud of. After the Revolution (1917) it suffered the bitter fate of many areas of social science' (Rozaliev 1992).

### **Economic history in 1920s and 1930s: from 'soft' to 'hard' Marxism**

In early Soviet Russia (in the 1920s, during the New Economic Policy [NEP] period) economic history developed quite actively. It was mostly undertaken by economists who belonged to the pre-Revolutionary generation of scholars. In that period state control was not yet too strong so publications on Russia's economic history were mainly based on solid statistical sources formed by Tsarist Russia's state institutions. Among authors of those works we should again mention I.M. Kulisher who continued his studies on Russian and European economic history, concentrating on the history of Russian industry and on the economy of Ancient Greece (Kulisher 1922, 1923, 1925a, 1925b, 1926). Most economic history published in the 1920s was clearly of Marxist orientation. K.A. Pazhitnov (1879–1964) published his first book in 1906 on the material conditions of Russian workers before the First Russian revolution (1905) (Pazhitnov 1906). In the 1920s he continued studying Russian workers during the serfdom period, the comparative history of workers' organizations in Russia and the West and, later, the history of the Russian oil industry (Pazhitnov 1924a, 1924b, 1940). S.G. Strumilin (1877–1974) who in the 1920s and 1930s was Head of the Department of Statistics of the People's Labor Commissariat, a Deputy Chairman of the USSR State Planning Committee and Professor of Moscow University, published his major works on the history of wages in Russia, on the quality of harvest statistics before 1917 and in the NEP period, and on the history of ferrous metallurgy in the USSR (Strumilin 1930, 1924, 1935).

In the 1920s the Russian/Soviet economist Nikolai Kondratiev (1892–1938) studied the dynamics of prices and interest rates in different countries from 1790 and revealed the long economic cycles (K-waves) which were considered to be phenomena of the world economy. He published his results in *The Major Economic Cycles* (1925) and in other works written in the second half of the 1920s (Kondratiev 1925, 1926, 1928). In May 1928 he was dismissed from his post as director of the Institute of Economic Conjunction and in June 1930 he was arrested. At the beginning of 1932, Kondratiev, like a number of leading Soviet specialists, especially in agriculture (including A.V. Chayanov), was convicted as one of the leaders of the so-called Labor Peasants Party which never existed – and was imprisoned for eight years. In September 1938 Kondratiev was sentenced to death for 'anti-Soviet agitation in prison' but his work has remained influential to this day, well beyond as well as inside Russia.

Having studied the experience and history of the cooperative movement in Western Europe, Chayanov (1888–1937) became one of the most respected scholars in the field of

agricultural cooperation and the organization of agriculture; he developed a methodology for determining the profitability of the peasant economy and its components (Chayanov 1925). Chayanov believed that agrarian development should be based on the cooperative structure of peasant households. He had no doubt about the benefits of large enterprises in industry but believed that a high degree of concentration of agricultural production is not profitable, and drew conclusions about the desirability of small- and middle-scale peasant households (Chayanov 1928). One of his conclusions concerned the traditional form of peasant activity which he considered to be the result of peasants' long-term adaptation to the natural economy, the non-market economy, which arose under feudalism but remained under capitalism. As Chayanov argued, this form of economy is much older than capitalism, it has a long tradition of survival in adverse conditions; it allows a flexible response to the economic downturns by reducing peasant requirements to a minimum. The views of Chayanov and his school were denounced as anti-Marxist in the USSR. In July 1930 Chayanov was arrested and in 1937 he was shot.

'The Great Break Through' of 1929 meant a transition to collectivization and forced industrialization, to strengthening of the 'class struggle' and to rigid Communist Party control over all social and political processes. As a result economic history became more ideologically sharpened, oriented to demonstrate the 'semi-colonial' nature of the Tsarist economy and its deep dependence on foreign capital. At the beginning of the 1930s the dominant Soviet school of historical studies headed by M.N. Pokrovsky (1868–1932) was subjected to rigid criticism because his Marxist approach was regarded as too moderate. Pokrovsky was a Soviet politician, one of the organizers of the Communist Academy (1924), and a member of the State Academic Council (1919), Institute of History, and Institute of Red Professors (1921). As Chairman of the Society of Marxist Historians (1925), Pokrovsky initiated 'purges' (*chistka*) of the Academy of Sciences when the OGPU<sup>3</sup> arrested a large group of historians.

Socialism – as Pokrovsky characterized it – meant the transfer of the land and all instruments of production, factories, and so on into the hands of working people. He argued that the best social arrangement for the development of technology is socialism. According to Pokrovsky capitalism, with its fierce competition between entrepreneurs striving towards monopoly, mainly in modern times, can inhibit the development of technology in a way little worse than the slave economy. The power of 'trade capital' reached its apogee in the nineteenth century, when it became the dominant force in Europe. In the Russian Empire – as Pokrovsky argued – the development of industrial production in the second half of the nineteenth century generated class struggle associated with 'industrial capital' which entered into competition with 'trade capital' and this resulted in the victory of the former by the beginning of the twentieth century.

Given the criticism from other Marxist historians, in his last years Pokrovsky acknowledged some of the shortcomings of historical views expressed in his earlier works and tried to improve them. In the book *On the Russian feudalism, the origin and nature of autocracy* (1931) he abandoned his original understanding of 'economic materialism', expressed in an underestimation of the production aspect and hyperbolization of the circulation of money. As a result, while continuing to emphasize the importance of 'trade capital' in the development of capitalism in Russia, Pokrovsky stopped using the term 'trade capitalism' and admitted that imperial absolutism was not just an instrument of trade capital. He urged that more attention be paid to the 'creative role of the masses' in the historical process.

Wide criticism of the so-called 'historical school of Pokrovsky' started in 1936. Pokrovsky's books were removed from libraries and history textbooks were rewritten in accordance with the new historical concept. Posthumous defeat of Pokrovsky was completed in the publication

in 1939–40 of a two-volume edition titled 'Against Pokrovsky's historical concept' (Grekov et al. 1939–40). This campaign had a negative influence on research in economic history.

Rehabilitation of the Pokrovsky School started after the Twentieth Congress of CPSU (1956) and in the 1960s a four-volume edition of his collection of historical works was published. However even in the 1960s and 1970s Pokrovsky was criticized for 'eclectic attempts to connect Marxism with the bourgeois theories' and for misunderstanding historical laws identified by Marx.

Another discussion that continued for more than half a century started in the 1920s. It concentrated on the theory of the Asiatic mode of production (AMP). The first debate can be dated to the 1920s and 1930s when some Soviet historians working within the dichotomy of East–West tried to explain the uniqueness of the AMP which existed only in Eastern societies, in contrast to the mode of production established in Ancient Greece and Ancient classical Rome incorporating the slave system. This argument stressed the non-linearity of the historical process and its diversity (L.I. Magyar, V.V. Lominadze, E.S. Varga, and others). This discussion was caused mostly by the growing national liberation movements in Asia and Africa, and the desire of the Soviet leaders to export the proletarian revolution to the East (and – to some extent – by special interest in Marx in the East). The approach was opposed by supporters of the single line of the Marxist interpretation of history, which came to the conclusion that this mode of production existed not only in oriental societies, but also in humanity as a whole. In this case, the AMP was presented as an evolutionary link between primitive communism and the slave system. After the discussion, the supporters of the AMP were heavily criticized and the official Soviet historical methodology established the classic succession of five formations: the primitive communal, slave, feudal, capitalist, and communist (communism in this scheme was the initial stage of socialism). In this scheme, the concept of AMP was not used at all: all the ancient Eastern societies were assigned to the slave stage, and all the Middle Ages to feudalism.

A second debate on AMP (1957 to early 1970s) was caused by the rise of anti-colonial movements after the Second World War, publication of some early works of Marx, and revival of social and cultural life after the Twentieth CPSU Congress (the 'Khrushchev thaw'). Several rationales of the AMP concept were proposed. Ultimately, the debate turned into a discussion of current problems in the theory of the historical process including the concepts of Western authors which emphasized the similarity of AMP to the Soviet model of socialism (Karl Wittfogel, Roger Garaudy). The AMP problem was considered at the Moscow discussions (1965), attended by prominent historians of the Soviet Union, France, Hungary, and Germany. After the overthrow of Khrushchev (and especially after the 'Prague Spring' in 1968), the debate was gradually phased out. However, discussion of the issues raised did not stop and a final stage of this debate started in the early 1990s, with the weakening of censorship and of the Party ideological dictatorship. Many authors in the former Soviet Union began openly to speak of the importance of the AMP concept for understanding the nature of Soviet socialism and the history of Russia as a whole. It can be argued that the debate on the AMP in the Soviet Union led to a new interpretation of the history of primitive societies and of the formation of civilization.

It should be noted that in the middle of the 1930s an unexpected impulse was given to studies of labor history and the history of enterprises. It happened due to an initiative of the famous proletarian writer Maxim Gorki which was supported by the Party leaders who announced a program named the 'History of manufactures and plants'. This aimed to raise public interest in working-class history. Nowadays it could be interpreted in terms of business history and an early form of micro-history methodology.

## **Economic history in the period of late Stalinism**

After the Second World War the development of economic history continued to be controversial. On the one hand in 1947 Prof. I.D. Udalt'sov (1885–1958) who was a founder of the Faculty of Economics at Moscow State University and its first dean (1941–54) established the Department of History of the National Economy and Economic Thought, the first in the country.<sup>4</sup> This institution had a significant impact on the improvement of education and the expansion of research in economic history. Similar departments were established in a number of universities in the USSR and economic history became an obligatory component of the curriculum at economics faculties.

At the end of the 1940s two volumes on the history of the Russian/Soviet economy were published in Moscow (Lyashchenko 1947, 1948). They were based on Marxist concepts of economic development but contained a lot of statistical data and interpretation and they were used in economics faculties as the basic textbooks for two generations of students. The author P.I. Lyashchenko (1875–1955) was awarded the Stalin Prize (1949) for this edition.<sup>5</sup> One of his main conclusions concerned the role of government in the modernization process: slowing the process of capitalist evolution of the agricultural system of Russia, the government at the same time contributed to the development of industry. Another book on the economic history of Russia was published in 1950 embracing the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Hromov 1950). The author, P.A. Khromov (1907–87), followed the same Marxist methodology as Lyashchenko. During the 1950s and 1960s these books were in competition in their influence over economics departments.

At the same time the 1940s was marked by the campaign against 'objectivism' and 'cosmopolitanism' (1948–53) which was directed against a layer of the Soviet intelligentsia associated with pro-Western tendencies. It is often supposed that this campaign was anti-Semitic in nature. It was accompanied by accusations of 'rootless cosmopolitanism' and hostility to the patriotic feelings of Soviet citizens, on the part of Soviet Jews, as well as arrests and their dismissal from many posts. The campaign was oriented to emphasize Russian and Soviet priorities in the field of science and invention and to take administrative action against persons suspected of 'kowtowing to the West'.

The influence of those actions on economic historians was tangible. For instance at the History Faculty of Moscow University the campaign started in 1948 especially touching the Department of Medieval History. E.A. Kosminsky (1886–1959), the Head of Department, was accused of 'bourgeois objectivism'. He left his position. In his monograph on the agrarian history of England in the thirteenth century Kosminsky (as said by his critics) 'tried to replace Marxism–Leninism with economic materialism' (Kosminsky 1947, 1956). The charges were presumably based on the author's wide use of statistical calculations, his respect for historiographical traditions and his academic predecessors, as well as the absence of quotations from the writings by Stalin. Another charge addressed to Kosminsky and his colleagues was traditionalism ('denial of the fundamental significance of the Soviet science based on the only scientific methodology – Marxism–Leninism'). A.I. Neusykhin, Professor at the same Department and a prominent historian specializing in the economic and social history of early medieval Europe, was also accused of being a cosmopolitan and admiring Western bourgeois historiography.

S.B. Veselovsky (1876–1952) who worked at the Institute of History (Academy of Sciences of the USSR) in 1948 was accused of 'bourgeois objectivism'. After this, for several years, Veselovsky had very limited opportunities to publish his works on the agrarian history of medieval Russia.<sup>6</sup>

### Economic history after Stalin: from ‘Thaw’ to ‘Zastoy’ and ‘Perestroika’

During the Cold War period, one of the main tasks of Soviet economic historians was to demonstrate the achievements of the Soviet economy in competition with the West. As in the previous decades, studies of the economic history of pre-Revolutionary Russia were required to give arguments in support of the inevitability of the 1917 Great October Revolution. Most Soviet economic historians concentrated on studies of Russia’s economic development in the post-Reform period 1861–1917 (the so-called *Great Reforms* were initiated by Alexander II in 1861); on the most important periods of Soviet economic reforms; and on the *take-off* period of Stalin’s industrialization. The NEP period, collectivization, and Khrushchev’s decentralization of Soviet economy also came under the spotlight but most publications had an apologetic character. Based on a Marxist–Leninist theoretical platform authors used statistical data and illustrative cases to prove the positive results of Soviet economic development and the inefficiency of the Tsarist economy. Studies of Russian agrarian history between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries were less controlled: they were coordinated by the Academic Council on agrarian history at the USSR Academy of Sciences which was established at the end of the 1950s.

It should be noted that since the 1960s economic historians in Moscow, Leningrad, and Novosibirsk started using quantitative methods. Most of them were engaged in studies of agrarian history. The most active group was formed in the 1970s at Lomonosov Moscow State University. Ivan D. Kovalchenko, the leader of this group, established a Laboratory for the application of quantitative methods and computers at the History Faculty of the University. In the late 1970s to the early 1980s this Laboratory developed cliometric-style research of the agrarian history of Russia. To some extent it was stimulated by contacts with distinguished American cliometricians. A bilateral cooperation program was established in the late 1970s by the USSR Academy of Sciences and IREX. Quantitative economic history was chosen as the field of cooperation due to its relative political neutrality. One more driver of introducing quantification in social sciences and humanities was enthusiasm for science and technological progress in the USSR in the 1960s and 1970s, especially in the area of computing. The Laboratory for the application of quantitative methods and computers in historical research was established at the Institute of Soviet History of the USSR Academy of Sciences in 1971 with twelve new research fellows. Year by year quantitative history research attracted more and more young scholars. They published papers on rural and urban history, agricultural history, historical demography, labor history, financial history, but most work remained descriptive owing to limited application of economic theory.

Although Soviet economic historians (as well as almost all historians in the USSR) were practically isolated from foreign historiographical influences, there were some channels for the transfer of ideas before and especially after the 1980s. First, the publication of books and articles positioned as criticism of Western bourgeois approaches was encouraged. This allowed Soviet historians to be more informed about global historiography. It included, for example, the critical book ‘Historicism against eclecticism: French historical *Annales* School in contemporary bourgeois historiography’ (1980) which gave Soviet historians an opportunity to be informed about the new methodological approaches developed by the *Annales* School in the 1970s (Afanas’yev 1980). *Annales* books were however available only for a limited circle of Soviet historians who usually did not mention those ‘bourgeois’ theories in their lectures and publications (or mentioned them only in a critical way). Some economic historians mentioned Max Weber’s methodology although they generally tried to ally him to Marx (Afanas’yev 1980: 112). Overall, due to the dominating ideology and to isolation, the Soviet approach to

economic history remained rather inflexible (and not only due to the dominating ideology). As one of the leading Soviet medievalists A.Ya. Gurevich noted, personal contacts with foreign colleagues were almost absent and those rare contacts were under close supervision (Gurevich 2004: 93). Gurevich himself was rather well informed on the methodological innovations in Western historiography of the 1960s to 1980s. He used them in his researches on the genesis of Scandinavian feudalism and medieval culture adopting a cultural anthropology approach. His articles compiled in the book *Problems in the genesis of feudalism* were sharply criticized by the Minister of Education A.I. Danilov and Gurevich was dismissed from the USSR Academy of Sciences (Gurevich 1967, 1970, 1972). The reason for that criticism was very clear: Gurevich had called into question part of the thesis of Marx and Engels – that feudalism was formed as a result of the enslavement of free peasants by barons who previously appropriated the peasants' land. According to Gurevich, under the weakness of supreme authority, free farmers seeking protection for themselves and their land voluntarily took the patronage of barons, changing freedom for security. Books by Gurevich, who used non-Marxist economic categories and concepts of cultural anthropology, were translated into several languages including English, French, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, Swedish, etc. (a rare case for historical books published in the USSR).

One more channel of international information exchange was the influence of the International Economic History Association (IEHA). Leading Soviet economic historians participated as members of the IEHA Executive Committee in its current activities (during the Cold War times two positions on this Committee were reserved for Soviet representatives and two for representatives of the USA). The Soviet delegation (usually about 40 scholars from almost all of the Soviet republics) took part in each IEHA Congress. Articles on the Congress sessions and papers were published in leading Soviet academic journals resulting in the accumulation of new information on the tendencies and achievements in the professional field in the West. A special role in this process belongs to the Fifth IEHA Congress held in Leningrad in 1970. Half of more than 1000 participants represented the USSR. It should be noted that most Soviet delegates presented their papers in Russian (which was one of the four official languages of the Congress) and the understanding of foreign papers was hampered by the language problem. However, the Congress definitely raised interest in economic history studies in the USSR, and contributed to the better understanding of the role of economic history as an interdisciplinary field bridging history and economics. A lot of Soviet scholars identified themselves now as economic historians (and not as just scholars involved in some concrete historical research).

Generalizing, one could say that in the periods of 'Thaw' (Khrushchev's time), 'Zastoy' (Brezhnev's time) and 'Perestroika' (Gorbachev's time) economic history in the USSR developed breadth and depth. A number of books were published in the field of agrarian history which was the center of attention (Yatsunskij 1973; Koval'chenko and Milov 1974; Tihonov 1974; Druzhinin 1978; Anfimov 1980; Koval'chenko et al. 1982, 1988). New results appeared in financial and banking history (Gindin 1960; Anan'ich 1975; Bovykin 1991, 1967, 1984), industrial history (Livshits 1961; Pavlenko 1962; Bovykin 1983; Simonova 1987; Solov'eva 1990), history of the labor market (Rydzunskij 1983; Kir'yanov and Volin 1983), history of internal trade and foreign trade (Semenov 1975; Kitanina 1978; Dvoret'skij 1979; Rybachenok 1982). General works on Russian economic history were also published. In 1976–80 the Institute of Economic Studies of the Soviet Academy of Sciences published eight volumes under the title: 'History of the USSR Socialist Economy' (Gladkov et al. 1976–80). The domination of ideological pressure was evident but the volumes also contained a lot of factual material and statistical tables.



During the 1970s and 1980s discussions of Soviet economic historians were concentrated mostly on the character and nature of economic development in the Russian Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of twentieth century. One group of historians considered the Russian economy of that period as semi-feudal and backward, another group argued that both agriculture and industry demonstrated positive tendencies in the development of capitalism so that by the First World War Russian capitalism had entered a more mature phase. Interestingly, the second position was more acceptable for the Party authorities because it was more consistent with the Marxist thesis claiming that socialism must win in the country with the highest level of development of capitalism. The first group was highly criticized 'from above'.

The formation of economic history as a self-sufficient developing area was prevented in the period under consideration by the 'excommunication' of economists from economic history which happened in the early 1960s. Prior to this, many economists, including such prominent scholars as S.G. Strumilin, P.I. Lysachenko, P.A. Khromov, and others, were actively engaged in economic history research. However, 'someone at the top' argued that the study of pre-Revolutionary history distracted economists from the solution of current problems, so they were quickly transferred into departments engaged in more contemporary and pragmatic research. Since that time the community of economic historians in Russia has lacked trained economists. Probably this is one reason for the growing tendency to study economic history in the wider context of political, social, and cultural circumstances and change, and mainly under the wing of history (a tendency that continued for a long time).

As one of the leading Soviet economic historians noted in 1995, 'Perhaps no other area of the social sciences has suffered so much from long-term "upper management" as economic history. The current state of knowledge in this area is a direct legacy of lengthy bans and persecutions' (Rozaliev 1996). This situation arose with the new developments in Soviet economics which was previously used to analyze large data sets and employ analytical tools to interpret them (and not just to give illustrations of orthodox approaches).

It is important to note that literature on Russian economic history written by émigrés of the revolutionary period (like S. Prokopovich, N. Jasny, B. Brutskus et al.), their approaches and results, were not available for Soviet scholars until the last years of *Perestroika*. Starting from the end of 1980s their works were translated and published as well as hundreds of Western works – both related to Russian economic history and more general historical and social science works. At the turn of the 1980s and 1990s personal contacts between Russian and Western colleagues became possible.

### **Economic history during post-Soviet times: decentralization and diversification of the research field**

Economic history in post-Soviet Russia can be characterized first of all as a field that is not dominated by any unique theory/methodology. The Marxist approach is now just one of many others. The concepts of modernization, dependency, and the institutionalist approach are practiced in a number of research projects. Both in late Soviet and post-Soviet times most economic historians work at history departments or at the institutes of the Historical Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. They graduated from university history departments. However the number of economists contributing to economic history research has been growing slowly in recent years.

Cliometrics methodology is developing at several universities although it is definitely not in the mainstream in Russian economic history. Business history which was an underdeveloped

research area in the Soviet period is now flourishing. However most publications in this area are of a descriptive nature; only some of them are methodologically based using A. Chandler's approach for example (Potkina 2004). More attention is now paid to the creation of large-scale data sets aimed at the study of the long-run tendencies of Russia's economic development in a comparative context. In recent years there has been substantial influence from Western approaches to global history research in Russia (including the establishment of the new specialized international journal).<sup>7</sup> At the same time a micro-history approach also became more attractive for Russian economic historians.

It is important to emphasize that starting from the early 1990s the influence of Western historians on Russian historiography became more and more substantial. Contacts between Russian and Western historians widened; they developed cooperation both in joint research and in the publication of declassified archival sources of the Stalinist period.<sup>8</sup> As a result the economic history of Russia during the last twenty-five years has been open to cross-fertilization. These two-way influences gave a lot of knowledge to both sides: more developed methodology for Russian historians, more historical context for Western colleagues. A number of Russian postgraduate students and post-doc fellows participated in economic history research and/or education programs in Western universities which gave them new methodological background. Since the 1990s economic history in Russia went global step by step but only a small minority of historians embraced Western contacts and thinking. During the last five years several all-Russian economic history conferences made it evident that there are numbers of Russian economists and economic historians who approved of Soviet economic experience and suggested going back to a command economy (Bakanov and Saukova 2013).

Since the beginning of the 1990s several issues have determined the main lines of discussion in economic history in Russia. The first one concerns the assessment of the results of two phases of industrialization in the Russian Empire and USSR (1880s–1914 and 1928–40 respectively). The discussion of pre-Revolutionary industrialization continues in principle the discussion on this issue among Soviet economic historians; however it develops on the basis of new methodology and data sources. An important impulse was given by the long delayed appearance in 1994 of Lev Kafengauz's book 'The Evolution of Russian Industrial Production (the last third of the nineteenth century to the 1930s)' (Kafengauz 1994). The book contains extended time series and a bulk of analytical material on Russian industrial production in the period 1887–1927. It was to have appeared by the beginning of the 1930s; however, it was only published half a century later. Kafengauz continued working on the monograph in prison after his arrest in 1930 but the authorities prohibited publication of his book. Data from the book made it possible to reevaluate the growth rate of Russian industrial production due to the extended set of products included by Kafengauz in numerous tables. Before publication of this book, which presented 29 products from industrial and mining branches qualifying as industries of Russia, historians had only limited time series data. The Kafengauz tables have been used to verify the theory of Alexander Gerschenkron on the relative backwardness of the Russian Empire as a latecomer on the way to industrial development. All previous estimates of the industrial growth rate of the Russian Empire in the period 1887–1913 made by Gerschenkron and other Western economists on the one hand and by Soviet economists from the Kondratiev Institute of Conjunction on the other, resulted in estimates of a 5.1 to 5.8 percent growth rate per annum. Calculation of the growth index based on Kafengauz's data gives an average of 6.65 percent. Such a rate of industrial growth in Russia for the last twenty-seven years before 1914 is comparable with that of the leading industrial countries.

However this conclusion has evoked a polemic among Russian economic historians in recent decades. Iu. P. Bokarev, one of the most authoritative practitioners, states that ‘the motives of a number of researchers, who aspire to increase the rate of industrial growth in pre-Revolutionary Russia, are entirely clear. It is very flattering to think that had there been no revolution in 1917, the unusually fast economic growth of Russia would have allowed this country in the near future to eliminate economic backwardness’ (Bokarev 2006). S.V. Il’in observed not long ago ‘the enormous backwardness of the Russian Empire in comparison with leading countries of the West’. His conclusion reflects clearly the general evaluation of pre-Revolutionary Russia’s economic development: ‘In the Soviet era, the colossal industrial and cultural gap between our country and countries of the West was on the whole closed, which was a great achievement of our people, and, above all, that part of the people that was organized in the party’ (Il’in 2004).

A different evaluation belongs to distinguished Russian economic historian V.I. Bovykin (1927–97) who published reliable data on the share of Russia, USA, Great Britain, Germany, and France in world industrial production at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. He analyzed the dynamic indicators of comparative industrial development of leading world powers noting that Russia’s relative backwardness, by comparison with Britain, fell by a third in 1885–1913 and by a quarter compared with Germany and USA (Bovykin 1996: 7).

The tradition of underestimating pre-Revolutionary Russia’s economic potential is not new. V.I. Bovykin attributed it to the 1930s, when there appeared the ‘notorious thesis of Stalin about the semi-colonial dependency of Russia’. In all books of that time indicators of gross industrial production of the country had to be substantially decreased along with Russia’s share in world industrial production. These indicators are still widely used in historical literature. From those times, when characterizing the Russian economy, ‘the accent fell on the technical-economic backwardness of the country and its dependence on foreign capital’ (Bovykin 1996: 3).

Discussing the ‘myth about the hopeless backwardness of pre-Revolutionary Russia, necessitating its path to socialism’ (Bovykin 1996: 4), Bovykin observed that ‘for our contemporaries, whose historical views were formed under the effect of this myth, it is difficult, understandably, to accept that Russia at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century was one of the most dynamically developing states of the world’ (Bovykin 1996: 4).

Current discussion of estimates of Russia’s growth rate concerns not only pre-Revolutionary industrialization but Soviet industrialization as well. Estimates given by Soviet and Western economists for the 1930s are radically different. The Soviet accounting methodology and statistical estimates of GNP and its components distinguish between productive and nonproductive labor, between material product and services. Gross Social Product (GSP) was calculated as the total of material values produced. Volume of output was estimated by gross turnover, gross production, and net production, at prevailing prices. Defense expenses were considered separately from material production. The value of foreign trade is estimated on the basis of domestic prices. During the Cold War period in the West, especially the USA, a number of works were published on the construction and analysis of Soviet national accounts. The pioneer of those works (coordinated and supported by the CIA), A. Bergson, and other prominent US economists, used standard Western methodology of national accounting. In 1991 just after the collapse of the USSR this work was discontinued by decision of the US Congress. Naturally, at the same time the number of serious historical and economic researches in Russia related to this problem increased significantly. Foremost in this work

were Russian economists A. Ponomarenko, A. Poletaev, and V. Kudrov (Kudrov 1995; Ponomarenko 2002; Poletaev 2006).

Despite long-standing Soviet experience in national accounting it is clear today that official Soviet estimates of economic growth were substantially overstated. As Kudrov notes, a peculiar fact showing the internal inconsistency in the official national accounts of the USSR is that independent estimates of relative levels of Soviet Union and US national income and GNP comparisons suggested much lower growth rates (Kudrov 1995). Kudrov reviewed the history of the official national accounts in both the former Soviet Union and new Russia. From the end of the 1950s to the end of the 1980s the main source of comparative estimates of national accounts of the USSR and the USA were data published by the CIA (mostly in the yearbook *Handbook of Economic Statistics*). Official comparative assessment of the USSR Central Statistical Administration (ЦСЯ) relied partly on the calculations of the CIA (usually the comparison was made in dollars) but overall this significantly overestimated the level of economic development of the USSR. In addition, the Soviet Union made informal comparison of the economies of the USSR and the United States, the results of which were close to CIA estimates (Poletaev 2006: 30).

Poletaev filled a gap between the study of the USSR economy prior to its collapse and studies of the Russian economy in 1990 to 2000s (Poletaev 2006: 30). The objective of his research was to analyze Russia's GDP and its main components in relation to the USA using a unified methodology on Soviet (1960–91) and post-Soviet (1992–2004) periods. As a starting point for comparisons he uses estimates of GDP and its components at purchasing power parities, the so-called international dollars method Elteto–Köves–Szulc (EKS\$). Using this approach Poletaev addresses several fundamental conceptual questions. His discussion of these questions helps to understand the methodology of national accounting and the difficulties of applying it to very different economic regimes. First, is it possible to apply to a planned economy, with prices set by government, the concept of the national accounts, which to a large extent is based on the premise of market prices? Starting at least since Bergson, economists answer this question in the affirmative although this response, as Poletaev notes, seems not indisputable. The second question: is it possible in analyzing national accounts in the planned economy to use existing prices or, alternatively, to try to replace them with some other hypothetical (quasi-market) prices? Most economists inclined to the second option, but it is a difficult process and also arguable. In the economic literature there are two types of corrections of the actual prices in a planned economy. In the first version, which was proposed by Bergson, the so-called 'adjusted cost factor' is used. In the second version, which is not specific for planned economies, the assessment of purchasing power of national currencies is used. This latter approach, first proposed by C. Clark in 1940 but developed by Milton Gilbert and Irving Kravis in the 1950s, became firmly entrenched in the tools of economic analysis and it was used by Poletaev. The third of Poletaev's conceptual questions concerns the applicability of purchasing power parities (PPP): what are the limits of the use of point PPP estimates made at a given time for dynamic analysis, i.e. for interpolation, and most importantly for extrapolation of national indicators? The answer is again controversial. First, we are faced with a common problem of dynamic economic–statistical analysis: what is the duration of the period for which we can use the same weights (prices) for the calculation of time series? Second, more importantly, it is not clear whether we can basically connect estimates of purchasing power parities with estimates of rates of GNP/GDP change and its components, obtained on the basis of fundamentally different price structures.

Taking into account assumptions and difficulties mentioned above, Poletaev analyzed the trend of convergence/divergence of the economies of the USA and the USSR/Russia on the

basis of data on their GDP per capita ratios. His model shows that from 1960 to the first half of the 1970s both countries were converging but in the 1990s the divergence of the economies of Russia and the United States became evident. However, when considering the convergence/divergence of structural characteristics over the 1960s to the 1980s Poletaev's model shows that the differences between the economies of Russia and the United States were increasing; an apparent divergence of economic systems was the dominating trend (Poletaev 2006: 34).

The fact that the Soviet economy was characterized by an unusually high proportion of fixed capital formation and government military spending, and that these two related burdens to a large extent determined its decline, is well known. However, following Poletaev, it seems that the extent of structural imbalances in the Soviet economy remained undervalued by Western economists. In Soviet times price distortions did not allow recognition (even for Sovietologists) of the degree of perversity of GDP concepts when applied to a command economy (Poletaev 2006: 34–5).

The second current discussion concerns the roles of the State, foreign capital, and Russian entrepreneurs in Russia's pre-Revolutionary industrialization. According to A.S. Senyavsky, industrial modernization of the Russian Empire was not only controlled by government but was even driven by it so this process was generated 'from above' and definitely not 'from below' (Senyavskij 2009). In contrast to this point of view Yu.A. Petrov argues that the role of Russian entrepreneurs increased in the process of economic development after the Great Reforms so this force became 'the main player' in this process (Petrov 2011). He reconsidered the share of investments in Russian industry made by private Russian and foreign investors; following his estimations the share of Russian entrepreneurs was higher by 1913 (Petrov 2011: 15). At the same time Yu.A. Petrov acknowledges that to a large extent economic growth was supported by active government policy. The government promoted railroad construction, the growth of heavy industry and banks. It pursued a flexible customs policy aimed to develop domestic industrial production. Petrov does not however share Gerschenkron's concept of the decisive role of the government in developing pre-Revolution industrialization. He even suggests that Russia's industrialization could have been more dynamic and less costly to society if the government had played a less active role in its implementation and relied instead on private enterprise and free market forces (Petrov 2011: 14).

This discussion is closely connected with the issue of modernization. Updated versions of modernization theory are considered useful by a number of Russian economic historians (Borodkin 2013; Bespalov 2014). I.V. Poberezhnikov distinguishes two interpretations of Russian catch-up modernization – optimistic and pessimistic (Poberezhnikov 2006). According to the first one, which found its most vivid and clear expression in the works by B.N. Mironov, Russian history is interpreted as a peculiar repetition of the history of the West. In other words as a delayed evolution of the same nature, and in the same direction, that had already been experienced by Western Europe and North America (Mironov 2010). According to the pessimistic interpretation of Russian history, Russia's modernization is treated as unsuccessful or even disastrous in terms of the consequences of the attempt to get to the 'normal' Western path of development (the concept of pseudo-modernization has been applied). This interpretation implies a disharmony of economic and social development: inefficiency of political, legal and social institutions, a socio-cultural split in society, and the marginalization of a large part of the population (Bespalov 2014: 9).

The third discussion concerns the evaluation of the agrarian reforms conducted by the Russian government under the leadership of P.A. Stolypin. This started in 1906. The main goals were the transfer of land allotments to the peasants, the gradual abolition of the rural community as a collective owner of land, extensive lending to farmers and land management, including the

elimination of strip farming. The attitude of Soviet historians to the Stolypin reforms initially depended upon Lenin's conclusion that the reforms failed completely. Soviet historians had no opportunity to express their disagreement with Lenin's estimates and were forced to adjust their findings even if this was in contradiction with their facts. Today Russian historians, with a wide range of opinions, on the whole view the Stolypin agrarian reforms quite positively. Two extensive special studies on the subject – by V.G. Tyukavkin and M.A. Davydov – published in the 2000s, unequivocally evaluate the reforms as useful and successful; they are based on big sets of statistical data (Tyukavkin 2001, Davydov 2003). At the same time the traditional Soviet assessment also persists in the current historiography. For instance A.Ya. Avrekh who expressed a very negative attitude to the Stolypin reforms in his works published in the 1980s and early 1990s still has followers today (Avrekh 1991; Senyavskij 2009).

In post-Soviet times much more attention is paid to financial history, banking history and the history of the stock market of the Russian Empire. Soviet historians practically ignored the stock market (it was not approved 'from above' because the stock exchange was viewed as an instrument of the capitalist economy and as an 'arena of speculation', a harmful object to be consigned to the past). In the last decade dozens of publications have touched on this topic (Lizunov 2003, 2004; Borodkin and Perel'man 2006; Perel'man 2009; Borodkin and Konovalova 2010). Borodkin and Perel'man constructed a stock index of leading industrial companies which traded on the St. Petersburg Exchange 1897–1914. The index correlates well with the business cycles which give evidence of the dominating influence of fundamental factors and not speculation as the driving force.

Banking history has also received a new impulse. On the one hand there has been a continuation of studies conducted in Soviet times by I.F. Gindin and V.I. Bovykin, on the other hand new questions have been placed on the agenda. Discussion about the differences between the St. Petersburg and Moscow models of banking has been going on for a long time. 'Cosmopolitan' St. Petersburg has been compared to 'traditionalist' Moscow since the days of the pre-Revolutionary financial press; however analysis of the differences was rare. S.A. Salomatina showed in her works that at the beginning of the twentieth century there was a gradual process of convergence of the structure of commercial banks' operations of different types, which led to the emergence of the universal type of bank (Salomatina 2004). S.A. Salomatina belongs to the new generation of Russian economic historians who apply contemporary methodological approaches accessed through participation in the international conferences and workshops and in networking activities. The relations between the Bank of Russia and commercial banks have been studied in works by Yu.A. Petrov, B.V. Anan'ich, S.G. Belyaev, S.K. Lebedev (Petrov 1998; Belyaev 2002; Lebedev 2003; Anan'ich 2006). They analyzed the process of widening networks of the regional branches of St. Petersburg and Moscow commercial banks in the early twentieth century. Another important aspect of their work related to the links between Russian banks and stock exchanges studied earlier by Salomatina.

Special attention should be paid to new studies of the economic history of the Soviet Union since the beginning of the 1990s. First of all, we should emphasize the important role of the 'archival revolution' which has radically changed and expanded the source base for researchers of the Soviet economy. Support from the Russian Foundation for the Humanities and other Russian and international foundations has resulted in hundreds of volumes of declassified archival documents being published. Removal of ideological control led to a revision of many assessments of the Soviet economy and the emergence of new research topics. As a result, a new interpretation was given to the experience of the mixed economy of the NEP period, the collectivization campaign, and the scale of demographic losses of the 1930s. The revision of Soviet data and statistics resulted in reevaluation of the industrial

growth rate in the years of Stalin's industrialization and the dynamics of the standard of living of Soviet citizens (Popov 2000; Gajdar 2005; Senyavskij 2006; Kudrov 2007; Kondrashin 2008; Borodkin et al. 2010; Rakov 2012).

In the 1990s a completely new theme of forced labor throughout the Stalinist period emerged. Researchers gained access to declassified archival materials so they could study the scale and forms of forced labor in the USSR. Particular attention was paid to economic activity in the Gulag and its role in the industrialization of the USSR. The importance and novelty of this topic have wider implications for global scholarship pertaining to unfree labor regimes.

The share of the Gulag in the Soviet economy was surprisingly low: 2–3 percent (Borodkin et al. 2005). However, in some important sectors the Gulag contributed much more significantly (for instance in industrial construction, mining, timber). Unlike free workers who demanded material incentives to work in remote regions, penal labor could be dispatched by administrative decree. The use of punishment rather than material rewards was intended to save vital resources and 'surpluses' were to be extracted from camp workers. Was that intention realized in practice in the Gulag? Following P. Gregory (Houston University) and M. Harrison (Warwick University), Russian historians applied a principal-agent approach analyzing relations between NKVD/Gulag bosses and camp administrations; this approach helped to reveal conflicts of interests in this hierarchical system.

During the last two decades a number of papers and books on the Gulag economy were published on the basis of archival documentation of OGPU–NKVD–MVD.<sup>9</sup> One of the 'discoveries' relates to the question of inmates' labor stimulation. Archival holdings contain a lot of documents tracing the introduction of wages in the camp system at the end of the 1940s and its impact on the productivity of inmates' labor. However this measure did not result in an increase in the relatively low inmates' labor productivity so the Gulag could not exist on the basis of expected self-sufficiency (Borodkin et al. 2013).

### **Developing the infrastructure of economic history research**

An important question for historians studying the economic development of the Russian Empire concerns the availability of statistical data related to different aspects of that development. During the last decade several projects in Russia have been carried out aimed at creating digital resources. Some of them have a regional scale; others are oriented to national data.

Studies of the dynamics of economic development of Russia/USSR in the twentieth century can today use a valuable resource presented in a book by V.M. Simchera (who was a director of the Research Statistical Institute at the Federal State Statistics Service). This contains much data covering the period 1900–2000 but the author did not create an electronic version (Simchera 2006). Unlike most developed countries, Russia did not initially have a sufficiently complete and detailed digital statistical resource describing economic development of the Russian Empire during the important period called the long nineteenth century (1800–1914). This made it difficult to study the economic history of the Russian Empire over the long term and to conduct comparative studies. The problem has now been resolved, in part at least because of a number of data digitization projects. The database 'Dynamics of Economic and Social Development of the Russian Empire in the 19th–early 20th centuries' produced by the History Faculty of Lomonosov Moscow State University in 2009–11 has been available online since 2012 and contains about 7000 time series divided into 15 sections.<sup>10</sup> Each indicator (time series) covers a different chronological period, depending on the data source used. Most of the indicators apply to the Russian Empire as a whole, but in

those cases where there are systematic performance indicators related to the major regions of the country, they are also included in the resource.

Another resource supported by the 'Dynasty Foundation' was put on the Web in 2015: the Electronic Repository for Russian Historical Statistics. This focuses on Russian economic and social history of the eighteenth to twenty-first centuries. The repository provides regional level data for the territory of the current Russian Federation. Data are arranged along seven principal lines of inquiry (population, labor, industrial output, agricultural output, services, capital, land) and for five cross-sections of Russian history (1795, 1858, 1897, 1959, 2002).<sup>11</sup>

A few words should be said on the organizational side of economic history studies in the post-Soviet Russia. There are two lines of such activities. The first one is associated with the Academic Council on Economic History established by the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1989. The Council which includes 30 economic historians from different Russian universities and academic institutes initiates the organization of conferences and workshops and the publication of their proceedings and journals. The second line is associated with activities of regional centers for economic history. The first of such centers was established in 1994 at the History Faculty of Lomonosov Moscow State University, initially supported by the John and Catherine MacArthur Foundation (the project leader – Prof. C. Leonard, SUNY). During this period the center's activities were coordinated by the International Council (R. Fogel and I. Koval'chenko were co-chairmen). The establishment of the center was made possible by long-term cooperation in the field of economic history between the USSR Academy of Sciences, Moscow State University, and University of California System. Within this framework, in 1984–93 several bilateral conferences were organized and their proceedings published. Since 1994 the center has organized a seminar which attracts economic historians from all over Russia. By the end of 2014 the seminar had arranged 230 meetings. About 50 papers were given by foreign economic historians. The seminar became a permanent platform for exchange and discussion of methodological and theoretical approaches in the field of economic history. Research units of this type exist now at the Institute of Economics, Institute of Russian History, and Institute of World History of Russian Academy of Sciences. During the last decade several regional centers emerged at Russian universities in Siberia (Irkutsk, Barnaul), the Urals (Yekaterinburg, Chelyabinsk), and Middle Volga (Saransk). In the post-Soviet period three journals specializing in economic history were established (as well as the *Yearbook in Economic History*, the 14th volume of which was published in 2014). Unlike the case in many other countries, there is thus evidence of the strengthening of the institutional basis of economic history in Russia in recent decades.

## Notes

- 1 In the beginning of the twentieth century Tugan-Baranovsky moved to the Neo-Kantianism that is reflected in his publications related to the cooperative movement.
- 2 Discussants at Kulisher's Master's degree defense at St. Petersburg University were M.M.Kovalevsky and M.I. Tugan-Baranovsky.
- 3 OGPU – the early security and political police of the Soviet Union (1923–34) and a forerunner of the NKVD.
- 4 I.D. Udal'tsov was 'Sovietizer' of social sciences at Moscow University from 1928 when he was appointed a rector of the University for the next three years.
- 5 P.I. Lyaschenko, a prominent expert on the agrarian history of Russia, began to publish his works before 1917 (Lyashchenko 1912). He continued this work after 1917 (Lyashchenko 1925, 1930).
- 6 For more details on this campaign, see Tihonov 2012.
- 7 *Journal of Globalization Studies*.



- 8 Prominent figures include A. Berelowitch, W. Berelowitch, R. Davies, S. Wheatcroft, A. Getty, L. Viola, M. Ellman, P. Gregory, M. Harrison, L. Conquest, L. Samuelson, T. Vihavainen, T. Emmons, C. Leonard, A. Graziozi, N. Werth.
- 9 Among other authors we could mention V.A. Berdinskikh, L.I. Borodkin, I.V. Gribanova, E.V. Kodin, G.M. Ivanova, O.V. Khlevniuk, A.I. Shirokov, A.V. Zakharchenko.
- 10 The resource is located on the website of the History Faculty of Lomonosov Moscow State University, <http://www.hist.msu.ru/Dynamics/>
- 11 Kessler, Gijs and Andrei Markevich (2014), Electronic Repository of Russian Historical Statistics, 18th–21st centuries, <http://ristat.org/>

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