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Between Ocean and Mainland: Versions and Diversifications in Industrial Development of the Kola Peninsula

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Abstract. The article deals with the economic specifics of the peninsula's territory, which is closely related to the resources of both the mainland and the ocean. Using the example of the Murmansk Oblast, an approach is proposed to study the industrial development of the peninsular region in the Soviet period, taking into account the competition of two versions. One of them was aimed at creating an "oceanic" economy – the fishing industry and marine transport. Another version served the "mainland" economy, represented mainly by mining industry. Specific historical materials are used to examine the pendulum effect, i.e. the fluctuations between these two versions and the formation of prerequisites for diversification. Of particular interest is the experience of combining two versions, which appeared in 1923, when an industrial transport and colonization combine was created on the basis of the Murmansk railway, and later, during the industrialization of the 1930s. It is debatable whether the two old versions were successfully transformed into the third "ocean-mainland" one, based on the idea of the integrated development of the resources of the Kola Peninsula and the seas surrounding it, which was most noticeably manifested during the Soviet economic reform of 1957. The prospects for studying this issue may be related to the use of methods of historical and economic analysis.

Keywords: *economy, industry, Arctic, strategy, politics, natural resources, sea, ocean, continent, subsoil, Barents Sea*

Introduction

If we recognize the influence of geographical conditions on history, we should accept that life on the peninsulas differs from other places on the continent. Any peninsula is contiguous with the sea or the ocean, which gives the history of the people living on its territory a specific identity. A peninsular community cannot exist without a fleet and migrations, without trade and travelers. On the other hand, peninsula is an unconditional continuation of the mainland. Its dualism of ocean and land is an interesting phenomenon, manifesting itself not only in socio-cultural, but also in economic dimensions.

P.N. Savitskiy raised the question of the existence of countries with a continental type of economy and countries whose economic life is integrated with the ocean. Taking into account the large area of land territories in Russia, the author neglected the importance of coastal outskirts and referred Russia to the first group [1]. At the same time, the historical experience of the Rus-

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sian peninsulas reveals a different nature of the Russian economy, tied both to the mainland and to the ocean.

In Soviet times, the Kola Peninsula became one of the most populated and urbanized regions of the Arctic. Through the prism of Lenin's theory of building socialism, the industrial development of this region has traditionally been seen as a progressive, planned and linear process: from construction of socialism to full-scale building of communism.

The apogee of such approach can be found in the works of V.P. Pyatovskiy, who presented the development of productive forces of the European North as the realization of the plan proposed by V.I. Lenin. Although such a plan does not exist in nature, V.P. Pyatovskiy found in Lenin's works a significant number of references to the development of the productive forces of the European North, brought these quotes together and saw in this nothing more than a program [2]. This was one of the approaches of Soviet historiography on this issue.

However, if we abandon the strict adherence to the ideological and theoretical heritage of V.I. Lenin, it will hardly be possible to understand the development of Soviet industry in general and the industry of the North in particular as a systematic and linear process. Researchers who have studied the history of the Soviet economy know that the dynamics were often uneven and rather "nervous".

On the Kola Peninsula, during the entire Soviet period, industry developed between two perspectives, alternatives, versions. The first one is so-called arctic or "oceanic" version, associated with the transformation of the Kola Arctic into a base for the development of the Northern Sea Route and the Arctic Ocean and, consequently, with the development of the railway, the port, the entire port and fleet infrastructure, as well as establishment of the fishing industry. The second version — "Eurasian", or "mainland" — provided for the extraction of minerals in the depth of the Kola North. It is clear that the "oceanic" and the "mainland" versions had little in common, since both required training of completely different staff, application of different fields of scientific knowledge, use of different technologies.

Although the "oceanic" version itself was ultimately aimed at serving the mainland — the territory of the Soviet Union, for the coast, it meant just the creation of a certain base for the development of the ocean. Within the peninsular territory, the "oceanic" version differed greatly from the "mainland".

Hence, the creation of a regional model of industrial development required a determination of which version to follow. If both versions were to be used, which should be prioritized and which should be subordinated? Considering that the development itself proceeded under conditions of a constant lack of resources, was determined by changing ideological and political views of the authorities, and to some extent depended on the global situation, it is easy to understand why the process of industrial development of the Kola North represented certain fluctuations between these two versions, which usually ended in transition or redistribution between them, causing periodic diversification in the development process.

At the origins of the peninsular industry

The emergence of industry in the Kola North dates back to the end of the 19th century and is associated with the appearance of sawmills, which was a reflection of the “mainland” version of industrial development [3, Ushakov I.F., p. 423–426].

The construction of the Murmansk railway in 1916 created the basis for the development of the “oceanic” version and the first industrial diversification in the history of the peninsula appeared. During the World War I, this road became an important transport corridor for communication with the allies [4, Bykov P.D., p. 6]. However, during the Civil War, it was cut off from the center of the country by a turbulent cycle of political decentralization and regional separatism.

For almost the entire 1920s, when the Soviet state experienced an acute shortage of resources, it tried to develop an “oceanic” version of the industry in the Kola North as the easiest and cheapest way to satisfy economic hunger. Already in the early 1920s, the Murmansk Railway, linking the center of Russia with the ice-free coast of the Barents Sea, has become a national transport corridor for the delivery of goods. The inertia of the World War I and the consequences of the diplomatic isolation of Soviet Russia were still in effect. During these years, the image of the “Second Dardanelles” was recalled, which was attached to the Murmansk railway back in wartime, when it provided an open access to the World Ocean bypassing the Mediterranean straits blocked by the enemy [5, Arnoldov A.M.].

In the 1920s, the development of the “oceanic” trend was not proceeding systematically either. In 1922, in the center, where the entire shortage of resources was realized, the prospects for closing the Murmansk railway due to its unprofitability were discussed ¹. If the project of turning this highway into an industrial-transport and colonization complex had not appeared in 1923, it is difficult to say how this crisis could have ended for the Murmansk direction. The 1923 project was based on the Canadian experience of using railways in the development of sparsely populated territories and assumed that the railway would not only carry goods, but would also settle the adjacent territory, develop agriculture, build industrial plants and even prospect and extract minerals. In fact, the 1923 project shows an emerging diversification, and not so much from the “oceanic” to the “mainland” version, but to an attempt to link them together. Taking into account that it was an impossible task and the project itself was not provided with sufficient funds, not only the integration of these two directions failed, but the diversification itself was practically disrupted in the 1920s [6, Fedorov P.V., p. 324–336, 339–345].

A new attempt to diversify the industrial development of the Kola North began with full-scale industrialization, i.e. in the late 1920s. The Apatit plant and the city of Khibinogorsk (now Kirovsk) began to be built in Khibiny. Thus, the Kola Peninsula begins to acquire a segment of its industrial development independent of the “oceanic” direction. After the Khibiny, during the second five-year plan, construction began in Monche-tundra, where the Severonickel plant and the city of

¹ Polyarnaya pravda. 1922. September 20.

Monchegorsk appeared. Before the Great Patriotic War, the development of two iron ore deposits (Olenye and Yonskoye) and a rare earth deposit (Alluyavstroy) was also started; infrastructure construction here would be completed after the war [6, Fedorov P.V., p. 348–352].

In the 1930s, in parallel with the rapid construction of the mining industry, the “oceanic” version of the industry developed at the same rapid pace. As early as 1926, a trawl fleet was transferred from Arkhangelsk to Murmansk, and the city began to transform from artisanal industry into a base for industrial polar fishing. In the late 1930s, two shipping companies were set up in Murmansk: Marine and Arctic (later combined into one), which became the basis for the Murmansk transport fleet base [6, Fedorov P.V., p. 337–339, 352–361].

Thus, the “oceanic” and “mainland” directions coexist with each other in the 1930s. It is possible to discuss the issue of their interconnection and correlation, but it is indisputable that the industrial model of the Kola North in this form took a complex form of multidirectionality.

The pendulum effect: oscillation as development

Subsequent changes confirmed that the emergence of a simple economic model on the Kola Peninsula is denied by practice itself. In the industrial era, development here was set by the pendulum effect, i.e., oscillations between the “oceanic” and the “mainland” models.

During the Great Patriotic War, there was a sharp shift to the “oceanic” version of the industry, which was associated with the need to serve the Murmansk transport corridor for communication with the allies [6, Fedorov P.V., p. 427–433].

After the war in the Murmansk Oblast, there was a return to the development model that existed in the pre-war period. Therefore, the “mainland” version received a new impetus. In the mining industry, the enterprises that had not been built because of the war were being completed. New industries were established, specializing in the extraction and processing of minerals. In particular, on the territory of the Pechenga region attached to the Murmansk Oblast, the Zhdanovskiy MPP (“Pechenganickel”) was built.

During the period of the Soviet economic reform in 1957, the transition from a sectoral to a territorial management model led to the creation of the Murmansk economic region, coinciding with the borders of the Murmansk Oblast. These measures represented an experiment in the creation of a peninsular economic cluster, raising the question of the possible limits of synthesis between the “oceanic” and “mainland” versions. One can even talk about the appearance of the prospect of a new, third version of industrial development — the “oceanic–mainland”, based on the idea of integrated development of the resources of the Kola Peninsula and the seas surrounding it [6, Fedorov P.V., p. 454–456; 7, Demichev E.V.; 8, Mertsalov V.I.].

However, since the 1960s the development of the mining base in the Kola North was slowed down. The authorities invested in existing mining facilities, but did not develop new territories. First Secretary of the Murmansk regional committee of the CPSU, V.A. Prokofiev, associated it with the attitude to the Kola raw materials as expensive and economically unprofitable raw ma-

terials². Ten years later, another First Secretary of the Murmansk regional committee of the CPSU, N.L. Konovalov, speaking at a session of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet, tried to return attention to the idea of development of the central part of the Kola Peninsula, where mineral deposits were discovered, but was not heard³.

Meanwhile, huge funds began to be invested in the “oceanic” direction of the industry. Thus, since the late 1950s, a nuclear icebreaker fleet was created with a maintenance base for nuclear icebreakers in Murmansk. Since the late 1970s, infrastructure for oil and gas exploration on the Arctic shelf (Murmansk Marine Geological and Geophysical Oil and Gas Expedition, Soyuzmorgeo, Arktikmorneftegazrazvedka, etc.) was developed in Murmansk Oblast. Through its efforts, large reserves of strategic fuel were discovered. Another diversification of the industrial development of the Kola North began to be prepared, this time — from the mainland to the Arctic Ocean.

Despite the fact that the development of reserves of the Arctic shelf is a matter of the future, the “oceanic” version of industry continues to be regarded today as a priority for the Kola Peninsula. Taking into account the convenient geographical location of the region, Russia is implementing a project for the integrated development of the Murmansk transport hub. The territory of advanced socio-economic development “Capital of the Arctic” was created in the Murmansk Oblast by the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation of May 12, 2020⁴.

Conclusion

The historical experience of the industrial development of the Kola Peninsula emphasizes an important feature of regional genesis. The Murmansk Oblast does not resemble agrarian regions, quite centralized in their infrastructure, the model of which consists of a main city and a group of small, subordinate cities with an agrarian landscape around. In the Kola North, the multi-directional development of the industrial base has resulted in a more complex, polycentric landscape (let us recall military cities). Despite the fact that the Murmansk Oblast organically coincides with the peninsula borders and in this sense seems to be an integral, compact and “natural” region, in reality it consists of different industrial segments, one of which is tied to the ocean, and the other — to the mainland. In modern literature, this dichotomy is considered an important factor of regional development [9, Bezrukov L.A.].

This dualism is also noticeable in the brands that were assigned to Murmansk. Until the beginning of the 21st century, the city was often called the “capital of the Soviet Polar region”. One hears more land than sea in it, so in the brand itself one can notice, therefore the brand itself

² Polyarnaya pravda. 1958. March 17.

³ Zasedaniya Verkhovnogo Soveta RSFSR sed'mogo sozyva: Vtoraya sessiya (17-18 oktyabrya 1967 g.): Stenograficheskii otchet [Meetings of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR of the seventh convocation: Second session (October 17-18, 1967): Verbatim record]. Moscow, 1968, 196 p.

⁴ O sozdanii territorii operezhayushchego sotsial'no-ekonomicheskogo razvitiya "Stolitsa Arktiki": postanovlenie Pravitel'stva RF ot 12 maya 2020 g. № 656 [On the creation of the territory of advanced socio-economic development "Capital of the Arctic": Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation of May 12, 2020 No. 656]. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/564882573> (accessed 06 June 2022).

shows if not the dominance of the “mainland” version over the “oceanic” one, at least an attempt of a compromise between them. In modern conditions, this brand has been replaced by a new image — the “capital of the Arctic”, which to a greater extent connects Murmansk with the Arctic, maritime direction of development, and not with the “mainland”. A balanced use of this image seems to be possible if the semantic boundaries of the Arctic itself are extended to include the northern edge of the mainland.

To summarize the arguments presented, it can be said that oscillations between the “oceanic” and “mainland” versions (pendulum effect) were a distinctive form of the peninsular region’s industrial development in the Soviet period. The attempts of the Soviet state to comprehensively use the productive forces of the Murmansk Oblast, which became most noticeable during the economic reform of 1957, were directed towards the synthesis of the “oceanic” and “mainland” versions. However, the success of this experience is a debatable issue that should be resolved using methods historical and economic analysis.

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