

## Historical Realities and Historical Myths of the Colonization of the “Russian North”: from the Initial Settlement to the Post-Soviet Retreat

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This article uses the ideas put forth by Hill and Gaddy in their book “Siberian Curse” to discuss the stages of colonization of the European north of Russia. Discussing different components of the colonization process, the authors argue that the initial colonization of this region could not have been carried out earlier than the Neolithic, because in their understanding settlement is the economic development of the territory, and therefore the first attempts to penetrate the primitive collectives to the North cannot be interpreted as either the initial settlement or the initial development. It also refutes the assertion that the colonization of the European north basically ended by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is argued that the ‘Stalinist industrialization’ in the North cannot be regarded as a modernization process, but it is logical to consider it as the next stage of colonization – penal colonization. An analysis of modern social processes in the European North suggests that the processes of colonization retreat are becoming a sustainable development trend in the regions of the European North.

**Keywords:** colonization, decolonization processes, European north of Russia, ethnicity, ethnic group

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## INTRODUCTION

Among numerous studies of Russian colonization of the European North and Siberia, its past, present and future perspectives, few have caused such a massive, turbulent and mostly negative reaction in Russia as “Siberian Curse: How Communist Planners Left Russia Out in the Cold” by Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy (Hill & Gaddy, 2003).<sup>1</sup> It would be enough to say that the prestigious Russian economic journal “EKO” devoted as much as five (!) issues to a discussion of this book,<sup>2</sup> while two leading economists found it necessary to publish a special book with a characteristic title “Siberian Blessing” (Zubov & Inozemtsev, 2013) to deal with the statements by Hill and Gaddy. Furthermore, some ideas of the book, although often in a distorted form, have been circulated and discussed in Russian internet blogs and networks. It seems like the infamous fake claim that Russia should surrender Siberia to international control (which was often falsely attributed in Russian internet to Condoleezza Rice and caused a particularly negative reaction among Russian internet users) also originated from this book or rather from its incorrect translation into Russian.<sup>3</sup>

The reaction of the wide society, despite the fact that it was certainly disproportional, still could be seen as rather natural: as Hill and Gaddy noticed themselves, the size of Russian territory and the harshness of its climate are an integral part of Russian national and sometimes even ethnic identity (Hill & Gaddy, 2003: 73). It is certainly not a good idea to tell people with such an identity that “in essence, to become competitive economically and to achieve sustainable growth, Russia needs to ‘shrink’” (Hill & Gaddy, 2003: 5), even if the word ‘shrink’ is given, as it is in the text, in inverted commas. The reaction by the scholarly community is more difficult to understand. It is particularly noticeable and pity in this respect that the discussion of the text by Hill and Gaddy involved economists, political scientists and the general public, but, with very few exceptions (e.g. Zuliar, 2011) did not involve historians and social scientists. Indeed, the economic analysis (including

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1 The Russian translation of this book titled “Sibirskoie bremia: Proschety sovetskogo planirovaniia i budushee Rossii” (lit. “Siberian Burden: miscalculations of the Soviet planning and the future of Russia”) was published in Moscow in 2007. As its title suggests, the translator sometimes took quite a bit of freedom towards the text under translation and some of the criticism mounted against the book in Russia could be due to the obvious mistranslations.

2 Issues 6, 7 and 8 of 2004 and issues 1 and 2 of 2005. For a review and a round-up of this discussion see (Melnikova, 2005).

3 This suggestion that Russia should surrender Siberia over to a UN protectorate has been found in the text of the book also by serious commentators (Zuliar, 2011: 130). Being completely absent from the English original, it represents a mistranslation of the authors’ claim that, along with military measures to strengthen the border regions, one way to address security problems in Siberia available to Russian government is “the designation of Siberia as a world heritage site and specially protected territory, through a United Nations or other convention that also underscored Russia’s stewardship of this unique ecological zone and all of its resources” (Hill & Gaddy, 2003: 10). In the endnote to this sentence (strangely missing in the Russian translation) the authors write that “Several distinct regions of Russia have already been designated as UNESCO World Heritage sites: the Virgin Komi Forests in the Urals in 1995, Lake Baykal in 1996, the volcanoes of Kamchatka in 1996, the Golden Mountains of Altai (southwest of Novosibirsk) in 1998...” (Hill & Gaddy, 2003: 269), which shows clearly what kind of ‘protectorate’ they have in mind.

the famous 'temperature per capita' /TPC/ concept) takes up only about a half of the book. Another half is devoted to a detailed and careful analysis of the history of Russian colonization of North and Siberia, of concepts and ideas involved in it, of its cultural and social meaning. This analysis, which almost all critics prize for its rigor and detail, plays a great role in the overall argument of the book and in the much criticized conclusions and suggestions by the authors. Still, it seems like most Russian historians and social scientists have chosen to ignore the book and the stormy discussion it provoked in the Russian society. Even those who did take part in this discussion mostly joined economists and political scientists in their attack on the economic and political arguments of the book.

This lack of interest – or rather deliberate neglect – of the work by Hill and Gaddy cannot be explained by the same nationalistic sentiments as we supposed for the general Russian public. This becomes obvious if we compare this reaction to the reaction by Russian historians and the social scientists to the more recent work by Alexander Etkind (2011). By any reasonable standards, this is much more critical to the Russian State than the work by Hill and Gaddy: in fact, Etkind treats colonialism as the main if not the only ideological axis of the Russian State, describes the whole totality of relations between this state and its subjects as colonial and does not hesitate a moment to use such terms like genocide and clearance when describing Russian colonization of the European North and Siberia. It should be added to this, that in contrast to the work by Gaddy and Hill, the book by Etkind arrived in the period when the traditionalist and nationalist turn in Russia had gained momentum. Still, the Russian version of the book by Etkind, which was first published in 2013, has endured several re-prints<sup>4</sup> and has become a must read for anyone claiming membership in educated circles, despite provoking bitter criticism among some Russian historians. A sharp contrast to the work by Gaddy and Hill is obvious. The reason is, in our opinion, that on one hand, the argument put forward by Hill and Gaddy is rooted in a set of statements Russian historians would wholeheartedly agree with. Thus, the main argument of Hill and Gaddy is that Russian colonization of Northern and Siberian territories has not been a free movement of capital and people guided by the 'invisible hand' of the market and self-interest from a place with less advantage to a place with more advantage in economic, institutional or security terms. Rather the movement has always been guided by the state, which in the best case directed the otherwise voluntary movement to the territories of its own choice or, in the worst case, initiated this movement by the means of rude force. This colonization policy has never been informed by economic and/or security considerations only, but also by ideological concepts and perceptions. In this respect, Russian colonization of territory differed to colonization projects of European countries, which were much more 'natural' and less ideologically driven. This idea, in its essence, is not new: many Russian historians in fact took pride of the fact that, in contrast to European colonists in America, Africa and Asia, Russian colonists were not driven by mercantilist interests of self-profit but rather by ideas of a higher order. Western scholars, e.g. Slezkine (1996) and Forsyth (1992), had to go to lengths to refute this and to prove that the drivers of Russian colonization did not differ essentially to those of Europeans. In contrast to them, Hill and Gaddy support the idea but the conclusions they make from it are both quite logical and absolutely unexpected for the Russian colleagues: as a result of this largely centrally planned and largely or (in the case of the Soviet Union) predominantly ideologically-driven

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<sup>4</sup> In the rest of this paper we refer to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Russian edition of this book, which was published in 2013 and, as the author explains in its preface, contained changes and additions made in response to the scholarly reaction to the English original (Etkind, 2016: 136).

colonization process, the modern distribution of population and capital in the Russian North and Siberia is completely irrational from the economic point of view: not only have these regions too many people, but these people live in places which would ‘normally’ never have been inhabited, where no industry would naturally (that is under the influence of the laws of the market only) develop. It is this conclusion that Russian historians seem to find problematic: some of them regard the colonization as a great achievement of the Russian state and its people(s), while others, in line with Etkind, lament it as an evil crime and use it as a starting point of criticism against the state; in both cases, however, the colonization is perceived as deeply significant and meaningful process revealing something very important about the Russian state and its people. The view that the vast expanses of modern Russia are a result of a foolish miscalculation, an irrational deed and a stupid mistake seems to be unacceptable both for the Russian nationalists and their critics.<sup>5</sup> However, since this view makes perfect sense from the viewpoint of the mentioned historical arguments, they can do nothing but attack it on economic grounds.

One consequence of this rejection is that historical and sociological arguments put forth by Hill and Gaddy have been left largely unexplored in Russian science. To the best of our knowledge, there have been no attempts to probe these notions and analytic schemes in historical and/or social analysis and to assess their utility in making sense of empirical data. In our opinion it is unfortunate, because the instruments and results of the historical and social analysis performed by Hill and Gaddy can be valuable independently of the correctness of their main argument about the Russian North and Siberia being overpopulated and of their suggestion that Russia needs to shrink. The principle aim of this paper is, therefore, to partially fulfil this gap and discuss how the ideas about Russian colonization put forward by Hill and Gaddy allow making sense of historical data and how these ideas can be developed further. By focusing our discussion on ideas of Hill and Gaddy, we do not wish to deny significance of the numerous more recent works on Russian colonization, such as the abovementioned work by Etkind. As Etkind points out, Russian colonization of the Eastern part of Eurasia, Russian imperial history and attitudes, have replaced Russian revolution as the main topic of interest of specialists in Russian history since the 1990s (Etkind, 2016: 10) and a lot of important contributions to the topic have been made both in Russia (e.g. Remnev, 2004, Etkind, 2016: 6–7) and abroad (e.g. Bassin, 1999, 2016). Our concern is exactly that the contribution by Hill and Gaddy remains underexploited on this background and this explains the choice of our topic. We would also like to stress that in our analysis we do not take any position towards both the economic arguments and the main conclusions and suggestions of the “Siberian Course”: assessing them would mean engaging with the economic debate mentioned above, for which we do not have enough competence.

Our analysis in this paper focuses on the European North of Russia, so called “Russian North” (Laruelle, 2015: 28; Shabaev, Zherebtsov, Zhuravlev, 2012). This choice of focus can be justified by the following considerations. First of all, despite the work by Hill and Gaddy featuring Siberia in its title, the authors actually focus their discussion on a much wider region and consistently include the North of European Russia into it. Russian critics

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5 In this respect it is interesting to note that Etkind, who otherwise carefully reviews an impressive amount of literature, refers to Hill and Gaddy only once in his book and even this reference is rather strange: the work by Hill and Gaddy is presented as saying that “the huge territory of northern Eurasia remains sparsely populated and underdeveloped” (Etkind, 2016: 136), which of course hardly does any justice to the argument of the book.

consistently take issue with this “inconsistency of terms” (Melnikova, 2005; Zuliar, 2011), but from an historical and cultural point of view this approach in fact makes perfect sense: the colonization of the European North and Siberia was a unified and single process and it is difficult to separate the two. Furthermore, as some economists pointed out (see Melnikova, 2005), the real problem of Hill and Gaddy is not so much the failure to separate the European North and Siberia, but rather the failure to separate North and South in the Asiatic part of Russia: indeed, it seems like many arguments put forward by the authors (including the overpopulation argument) could make perfect sense for the Russian Arctic and Subarctic (including its European part) but fail in southern Siberia. Therefore, the choice of the European North as the focus of discussion not only does justice to Hill and Gaddy, but arguably does this to a greater extent with the focus on Siberia (including its northern and southern parts). Second, the colonization of the Russian North started earlier than that of any other part of modern Russia and, in many respects, the colonization of Siberia can be regarded as a continuation of that of the Russian North.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the focus on the Russian North can provide a longer and richer perspective in cultural and historical terms.

Of course, no analysis can include everything. Our analysis in this paper also focuses on four basic themes inspired by the work by Hill and Gaddy. This includes first of all the concept of ‘*osvoenie*’ with its rich ideological meaning and its relation to the notion of colonization and to the state policy. Secondly, we discuss the problem of social and administrative ‘separateness’ of the northern territories and its relation to ideological concepts of administration. Third, we analyse the ‘forced’ colonization of the north and its relation to industrialization and capital distribution. Finally, we discuss the current processes of ‘colonization retreat’ and its implications. All these themes are discussed below in separate paragraphs followed by conclusions.

## 1. WHEN DOES COLONIZATION START? OSVOENIE AS A TRIGGER OF RESETTLEMENT AND A TITLE TO TERRITORY

In modern Russian, the word ‘colonization’ (*kolonizatsia*), at least when it is applied in the political and social realm (as opposed to, for example, microbiology, e.g. bacterial colonization), has clear negative connotations. Maybe under the influence of the communist-time propaganda with its anticolonial stance, most Russians perceive this word as denoting an unlawful and politically corrupt conquest and subjugation of less powerful groups of people by more powerful states. In this respect, the modern Russian concept of colonization is very close to the one of Alexander Etkind (2016), who, broadly following Edward Said (1994), defined colonialism as consisting of three principal components: political domination, cultural hegemony and economic exploitation. In other words, colonization is perceived first of all as establishing and maintaining certain relations of inequality between two groups of people: the colonizers and the colonized.

However, it has not always been this way. Thus, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Vasilii Kluchevski, one of the most well-known Russian historians, famously said that “The History of Russia is the history of a country which colonizes itself” (Kluchevski, 1956: 31). In 1852, Russian Tzar Nikolas I said that Caucasus, the trans-Caucasian territories as well as the eastern

<sup>6</sup> As Hill and Gaddy point out, “the first Russian movement across the Ural Mountains into Siberia was a logical progression from the exploitation of mineral and forest resources in the ‘Russian North’” (Hill & Gaddy, 2003: 75).

Siberia, “due to their remoteness and natural location” were Russian colonies, while the north of European Russia and the Western Siberia, “due to their closeness to the inner governorates, their transportation system and their population” should be included into the imperial ‘heartland’ (Remnev, 2004: 37). Despite Etkind referring to statements like this (particularly to the statement by Kluchevski, which plays an important role in his analysis) as disclosing something about social relations of the time and particularly about the relations between the state and the people (hence the whole of his concept of “internal colonization” / “self-colonization” as the *modus operandi* of the Russian State), an analysis of the contexts in which these statements were made clearly signifies that the word “colonization” here has a very different meaning to what Etkind, Said and other anti-colonialist writers usually have in mind. Rather than referring to a specific relationship between different groups of people or between the State and the people, this term is used to signify a specific relationship between (or a process that occurs between) the state and the geographic space (see Bassin, 1999 for an extended discussion). This understanding of colonization is in fact rather close to the initial meaning of the word in Latin,<sup>7</sup> as well as to the way it was understood in the European literature of the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Thus Anatoli Remnev, a well-known Russian specialist on colonization, argued that Russian colonization typically included the following stages: 1. the military conquest of the territory (which might or might not involve actual fighting), establishment of military bases and a demarcation of a new external military frontier/border; 2) structuring the territory by establishing cities, which served as political, economic, cultural and military centres for certain areas, which became their ‘peripheries’; 3) creating administrative structures (which often incorporated local power institutes and elites) and infrastructures (roads, churches, post offices, etc.); 4) voluntary or forced re-settling of population (mostly peasants) from the central part of the country to the new territory, which served as a pre-condition for a reform of the administrative system and bringing it in line with that of the imperial core (Remnev, 2004: 16–17). Certainly, this multi-stage process pre-supposed establishing relations with the local population and we do not have any intention to deny that these relations always included political domination, often included cultural hegemony and not infrequently included economic exploitation (however, see the famous discussion of the “inverted gradient” of Russian colonization in Etkind, 2016: 227–229). What we want to say, however, is that establishing these relations (except, probably, political domination) was usually not viewed as the aim or even a necessary part of Russian colonization as it was understood in the 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even the famous discourse of the “white man burden”, despite it being certainly present in Russia, emerged there rather late and arguably did not play such an important role as in European colonial powers. An important consequence of this is that once the term “colonization” became discredited as the result of the communist and post-communist anticolonial stance, it could be dropped without compromising the concept it used to refer to. The concept of the relation between the State and the territory, on the other hand, has survived and, as far as we can judge, it is this concept Hill and Gaddy refer to, when they speak about Russian colonization in their book.

Instead of the term ‘colonization’, three different Russian words are currently used to refer to this concept or, more correctly, to different stages of the colonization process as defined

<sup>7</sup> The word colonization originates from Latin “colere” (to cultivate land, to till land) and, in the late Roman time, it came to refer to bringing virgin lands (which, of course, were situated mostly in barbaric countries far away from the Roman heartland) under cultivation, for which cultivators of course had to come and settle there.



by Anatolii Remnev (see above): *pokorenie* (lit. subjugation), *zaselenie* (lit. settling) and *osvoenie*. *Pokorenie* is usually used to refer to the early stages of Russian colonization and designates the process of establishing military control and political sovereignty of the Russian state or its predecessors (e.g. Novgorodian Republic) over the new territory. As such, the process of *pokorenie* of the North and Siberia (except Chukotka and some territories of Southern Siberia) was over by the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, which, of course, was not the end of Russian colonization of these territories. ‘Zaselenie’ means the movement of population into new territories, which, as Remnev has demonstrated, is considered an integral part of colonization but is still not sufficient for its completion. Finally, the word *osvoenie*, which is often used to refer to the process of colonization as a whole, is the most difficult to translate.

It seems like *osvoenie* represents the process by means of which the territory over which the sovereignty of a state is established and in which some subjects or citizens of this state have settled really becomes a part of the state. In other words, it is through *osvoenie* of a new territory rather than simply subjugating and settling it that the Russian state really acquires the title on it. This is further emphasized by the morphology of the word, which originates from the Russian root *svoi* (one’s own) and, therefore, etymologically means “making something one’s own”. Despite its etymology, however, *osvoenie* cannot be translated into English as “appropriation”. Although the Russian word for “appropriation” – *prisvoenie* – has the same root, it features a different modifier. The difference between the two seems to be that *osvoenie* pre-supposes a certain modification of the objects themselves – rather than just of the relation between them in terms of property, cf. *odomashnivanje* (domestication, turning a wild animal into a domestic one), *ochelovechivanie* (humanization, turning into human), etc. In other words, if *prisvoenie* (appropriation) of a certain object means a change of the owner of the object (it used to be possessed by someone else but changes hands and becomes one’s own property) but not of the object itself then *osvoenie* of an object means the change or modification of the object (or, sometimes, of the subject) and it is by virtue of this change only that the object becomes the ‘subject’s own’. This explains why this word is rarely used when one speaks about discrete material objects such as tables or shoes, but mostly when one speaks about ideas, knowledge, raw materials or resources (e.g. *osvoenie zapasov uglia* – lit. ‘osvoenie of coal deposits’). When it is used in relation to a discrete object (e.g. *osvoenie kompiutera* – lit. ‘osvoenie of a computer’), it usually refers to acquisition of specific skills and/or knowledge necessary to use the object – and, therefore, changing oneself into a person able to use it as one’s own, – rather than to acquiring the right of property over it. Hence the usual translation of this word into English as ‘mastery’, ‘mastering’ or ‘assimilation’.

The use of this concept in relation to territory and its role in the notion and process of colonization can be best illustrated by the so called “problem of initial colonization” (*problema pervonachalnogo zaseleniia / pervonachalnogo osvoenia*) of a territory, which consists of establishing when people first colonized a certain territory and who those people were. This problem is often declared by Russian historians as one of the most important research problems in local and regional history. Interestingly, it is usually supposed that to solve this problem, it is not enough to point to the earliest evidence of the presence of humans in the territory. Thus there is evidence that the North of European Russia was visited by Palaeolithic humans or maybe even late Mousterian Neanderthals at least 38 – 33 thousands years ago (Slimak, Svendsen, Mangerud, Plisson, Heggen, Brugere, Pavlov, 2011; Gribchenko 2014; Pavlov, 2015), while in Mesolith, by approx. 8 millennia BC when the last glacier completely melted, even the northernmost part of the region – the Kola Peninsula – was populated by humans (Sapelko, 2014). However, all the Mesolithic sites discovered in the region are in fact nomadic camps, which were occupied temporarily, probably seasonally,

for several years or decades and then abandoned for decades, centuries or permanently. The general picture that can be built on the basis of archaeological evidence is that of a very sparse and fluid population, which came to a certain territory when conditions were favourable, 'stayed' there, or, more correctly, constantly migrated over it exploiting seasonally changing resources, as long as it was economically profitable and left for good once resources depleted due to their overexploiting or due to environmental breakdowns. It is not clear if these visits worth being named 'populating' or 'settling' the territory (*zaselenie*). What is certain, however, is that they cannot be named *osvoenie* of the territory. Indeed, as it was said above, the concept of *osvoenie* presupposes a transformation of the object (in this case the territory) and/or of the subject (in this case the new settlers, at least in the sense of their acquiring knowledge and skills necessary to exploit the territory), which would enable the subject (the settlers) to make the object (the territory) 'its own'.

In a sense, this *osvoenie* is not dissimilar to the concept of 'dwelling' famously introduced by Tim Ingold (2000). The difference between the two is that while Ingold focused and stressed first of all on acquiring knowledge and skills by people (transformation of the subject), the concept of *osvoenie* as it usually used in Russian literature when speaking about territory puts emphasis on the transformation of territory / landscape, its 'acculturation' by introducing new elements (e.g. artificial buildings, roads, paths, fields, villages, towns, mines, factories, etc.), changing its biosphere, creating new borders and distinctions in it. This transformation of a territory from its natural to 'acculturated' state gives the human owners of the culture indisputable control over the territory, makes the territory 'their own'. As already mentioned Vasilii Remnev noted, Russian imperial policy and ideology has been dominated by the stereotype that "only the land touched by the plough of a Russian cultivator (*gde proshel plug russkogo pakharya*) could be considered a really Russian land" (Remnev, 2004: 45). Russian academician V. A. Tishkov argues along the similar lines: "We are interested not in the simple physical space, but in the spatial environment constructed by people, the specific physical and mental expression of the space being organized by humans. We consider not simply the natural landscape and, more broadly, natural environment, but the ways the space is thought about, constructed and used on its different levels, from that of global universe to that of an individual" (Tishkov, 2003: 289). The territory of Mesolithic mobile hunters was radically different: since the population was so fluent and no territory was inhabited by people for a long time, the territory could not be fully enculturated and controlled. The *osvoenie* was absent, which means, that we cannot speak about a colonization of the territory in Mesolith. It was only in Neolith, approximately 3–4 thousands years ago that *osvoenie* could occur in the North, at least in some of its territories, which were most suitable for living: in that time (3<sup>rd</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> millennia BC) "large long-term dwellings or seasonal nomadic camps occupied every year for long periods of time with thick cultural layers with huge quantities of sea mammal bones appeared" (Krupnik, 1989: 179). Therefore, it was in that period that the initial colonization of European North really occurred in the strict Russian sense of this word.

## 2. 'FIRST' PEOPLE AND TERRA NULLIUS: MEDIEVAL COLONIZATION OF THE 'RUSSIAN NORTH'

As it has been said above, the problem of initial colonization as it is formulated in Russian science has two aspects: the timing (when colonization happened) and the group (who the colonizers were, e.g. how they are related to the currently existing groups, particularly to



the ethnic ones). From the point of view of the public discourse, the second aspect has a particular significance, because the *osvoenie* of a territory by a particular group is believed to give the descendants of this group a right to claim this territory as *svoi* (their own). Therefore, the group that colonized the territory first is believed to have more rights on it than any other group. Certainly, Russia is not the only country where the argument of ancient settlement is regularly used to substantiate the group rights. However, probably due to the long tradition of essentializing ethnicity, Russia is particularly consistent in using this argument for ethnic groups: although the ethnic rights over territory are not officially recognized by Russian law, they are consistently referred to in public discussions and invoked in popular actions. As will be said below, this logic was operative in the communist reform of Russian administrative territories in the 1920s–1930s. Therefore, reconstruction of so called ‘ethnic history’ of a territory is commonly believed to be highly important business – indeed one of the most important tasks of cultural anthropology, – which gives rise to intensive scientific research as well as non-scientific speculations.

Among such reconstructions related to the north of European Russia, one of the early expansions of Uralic (Finno-Ugric) speaking people should be particularly mentioned (Haidu, 1985).<sup>8</sup> Most modern researchers would agree that the motherland of the proto-Uralic people was in the middle and southern Urals (Haidu, 1985). It is less clear when their spread from this territory occurred. Some researchers, mostly from Finland and Estonia,<sup>9</sup> would argue that the spread of Uralic-speakers followed the retreat of the glacier and therefore they were the first people who populated the region after it was freed from ice. This idea is of course very pleasant for representatives of the modern Finno-Ugric ethnic groups (including one of the authors of this paper), because it means that their groups are indeed the very First People on the territory of their modern habitat, that in contrast to other groups, they colonized the Terra Nullius in the most strict sense of this word. However, as any statement about linguistic or cultural affinity of the very mobile and fluid Mesolithic population, this theory is highly speculative and it has significant problems with evidence. Most modern scholars, linguists as well as archaeologists, believe that the proto-Uralic community emerged several millennia later than the region was de-glaciated and that its spread can be linked with the spread of the Neolithic Comb Ware pottery cultures, which occurred approximately 6 thousand years ago (Vilkuna, 2001: 75). It is clear, however, that by the late Neolith – early Bronze Age period, Uralic (by that time already Finno-Ugric) people populated most of the current Russian North, which, taking into account the arguments put forward in the previous paragraph, makes them the best candidates for the ‘initial colonization’ of this territory. The most important exception was the tundra zone in the far north, which, as it seems, was populated by Paleoasiatic speaking semi-sedentary sea mammal hunters till at least the first millennia AD (Dolgikh, 1970; Krupnik, 1993). In the first millennia AD, this remote tundra part of the region was penetrated by Samoyedic-speaking nomadic hunters and reindeer breeders, the

8 In accordance to the mainstream view, the Uralic linguistic family is divided into Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic branches (Haidu, 1985). The best known representatives of the former branch are Finnish and Hungarian languages, but it includes also Estonian and a number of smaller languages spoken in the European part of Russia. The biggest (as far as the number of speakers is concerned) representative of the Samoyedic branch is the Nenets language spoken by nomadic reindeer herders.

9 Here we speak first of all about Kalevi Wiik and his followers (e.g. Ago Künnap), who base their argument partly on linguistic and partly on genetic studies (e.g. Wiik, 2008). However, there are also some archaeologists, who develop similar arguments on the basis of archaeological evidence (e.g. Nunez, 1987).

predecessors of modern Nenets, who, in accordance to the mainstream view, came from the Southern Siberian Sayany region (Dolgikh, 1970; Vasilyev, 1980), pushed the previous population, which is known in Nenets folklore as Siirta / Sihirta (e.g. Lashuk, 1968) to the regions' margins and finally assimilated it. By the way, Nenets are not the only group in the North of European Russia, whose folklore contains evidence about previous, autochthonic population of the territory this group is living now in. Thus, many Finno-Ugric peoples of the region have legends about Chud (Tschud, Tsudi, etc.), the 'old people' who inhabited their territory before its current population arrived. Thus in Komi folklore, the 'previous people' - Chud buried themselves in the ground or left because they did not want to be baptized (Shabaev, 2015). It is interesting, that in the folklore of northern Russians as well as in Russian medieval documents, the word "Chud" is used as a generic term referring to Finno-Ugrians (Drannikova, 2008).

It was only in the second millennia AD that the Russian colonization of the Northern Europe started. Although a large part of this region became politically subjugated to the Great Novgorod rather early – this fact is reflected already in the earliest Russian chronicles – it was still perceived as culturally marginal territory which was not a part of the 'Russian lands'. An ancient portage (in Russian – *volok*) connected the Sheksna River, the northernmost part of the Volga river basin populated by Russians, to the Onega Lake and the lands to the north and east of it. In the 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, this territory came to be known as Zavolochie (lit. the land behind the portage), while in the next centuries this term broadened its meaning to include the Onega and Dvina river basins and, a bit later, the land to the east of Dvina river all the way to the Pechora River. In other words, the term Zavolochie came to signify most of the North of European Russia. The population of Zavolochie was known as Chud or specifically Chud Zavolochskaia, which indicates that it consisted predominantly of Finno-Ugric peoples (Efimenko, 1869). Zavolochie, therefore, referred to the territory politically subordinated to the Russian state but still not colonized by Russians.

The Russian colonization (in the sense of settlement and *osvoenie*) of the region probably started already in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Russians settled in the territories populated by Finno-Ugrians and this fact was taken fully into account in literary discourse (Vitov, 1997). The statements by Hill and Gaddy (2003: 64) and some other authors (e.g. Slezkine, 1996) that Russians considered Northern and Siberian territories as 'Terra Nullius' (empty land), which could be appropriated by anyone, and that they ignored or even denied the existence of the indigenous population there, needs some clarification to say the least. Indeed the concept of '*nichya zemlia*' (nobody's land), which these authors equated with the concept of 'Terra Nullius' adopted from the Roman Law, did exist in Russian texts and discourse. However, its application was mostly restricted to the sphere of political control: just as it was in the Roman Law, Terra Nullius referred to the territory, which was not controlled by any political power. At least till the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is very difficult to find the application of this concept in its 'second meaning' postulated by Hill and Gaddy, that is "territory on which no land was 'owned' or 'legally possessed' in the sense of private or public property" (Hill & Gaddy, 2003: 65). To say the least, such a meaning is rather alien to Russian medieval (and even more modern) 'legal consciousness', in which all the land inside the state belongs to the Prince or Tsar, and the concept of private (and even public) property over land was not sufficiently developed. Hill and Gaddy are certainly right, when they say that the Russian central power attributed great significance to the *osvoenie* of the newly acquired territories by ethnic Russians as a means of consolidating the state. However, in most cases, this colonization proceeded through cultural assimilation of the local population by Russian

settlers rather than by driving it away and replacing it with ethnic Russians. This often led to the formation of new composite identities and changed the perception of the territory and of cultural borders inside it.

Thus, the Russian colonization of Zavolochie proceeded from two centres: from Novgorod and from the Rostov Veliki lands (the so called upper and the lower colonization) (Vlasova, 2005). Over several centuries, this colonization turned the Finno-Ugric Zavolochie into the Russian Pomorie, a specific cultural province of Novgorod and then of the Muscovite Kingdom. The term 'Pomorie' is used for the first time in a Novgorodian commercial contract signed in 1459, while the term 'Pomortsy' (Pomorian People) signifying a particular geographic and maybe cultural identity can be found in the Novgorodian so called 'Chetvernaia' chronicle in the record from 1526. It is important to note, that this was not just the change of the term: the concept of 'Zavolochie' eventually came to be abolished by the late 14-th century, while the term 'Chud' dropped out of use even earlier. For at least two centuries, the population of the North of European Russia was referred to in documents by the name of the river basin in which they lived (e.g. 'Dvinane' – the people of Severnaia Dvina river basin, 'Pinezhane' – the people of Pinega river basin) or by the name of the administrative centre (e.g. 'Ustuzhane' – the people of Veliki Ustug Area). It is difficult to judge how much these terms reflected cultural or even geographic identity differences between the groups. Now, however, these groups have got a common name without references to natural landscape features, which suggests the emergence of a new community.

Two events, it seems, played a particular role in the integration of this new community. The first was the English merchants' discovery of the trade route to northern Muscovy and the conclusion of the trade agreement between Russia and England by Ivan the Horrible. This turned the Russian North from the cultural and political periphery into the zone of international trade and contacts, a European 'window' into the land of Muscovites. The second was the establishment of the city of Arkhangelsk in the mouth of Dvina River in 1584. This city immediately turned into the most important trade port of Russia: in 1585, the international fair, which had emerged in Murman, was re-located to Arkhangelsk as a response to the military threat from Denmark. Although the city was established as the centre of international trade, it soon developed into an important centre of domestic trade from which a regional network of economic relations rapidly developed. People from Dvina, Mezen, Pinega Rivers as well as from Karelia, Terski Bereg and other costal territories of the White Sea brought here fish, the production of sea mammal hunting, other products of their trade in order to exchange them with other goods. It was here that these people came to be referred as Pomors and their common Pomorian identity emerged and developed. This identity was further strengthened by the contacts with foreigners on one hand and with the merchants and officials (as well as their servants and companions) who came from Moscow and central Russia on the other. These contacts revealed cultural differences between the groups, gave rise to the opposition between 'Us' and 'Others' and forced the construction of a clear idea of 'Us'.

Although the establishment of Arkhangelsk was an important milestone in the process of the Russian colonization of the North-Eastern Europe, it was by no means its end. In the eastern part of the region, near the Urals, the settlement and *osvoenie* of the territory by Russians was encouraged by the state till the 18<sup>th</sup> century, while the colonization of Pechora Basin continued till the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, it was only in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the colonization of the Kola Peninsula started as a strategic measure of the Russian State. A special programme of the colonization of the Murmansk shore was developed by Prince S. P. Gagarin, the governor of Arkhangelsk and approved by the

committee of ministers in November, 22, 1868. Tsar Alexander II approved special legislation, which granted considerable privileges to the colonists: they were freed from taxes on hunting, fishing and trade, could use state forests free of charge, and could get loans for developing their households. Besides that, the colonists (who could be not only ethnic Russians, but also those Saami, Norwegians or Finns who were ready to become Russian subjects) were freed from all taxes and the conscript obligation for 8 years (Busyreva, 2016). In 1881, a decision about the colonization of Novaya Zemlya was taken. This decision also included various benefits for and support to prospective colonists. However, for various reasons, the colonization was not started till the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which led to Skippers' Union of Tromsø declaring the northern island of the Novaya Zemlya archipelago a 'Terra Nullius' (sic!) and to a subsequent diplomatic conflict between Norway and Russia (Beliaev, 2010: 33). This shows by the way that Russia's 'ideological obsession' with colonization and the belief in *osvoenie* as bringing entitlement to territory criticized by Hill and Gaddy were at least partly justified. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Arkhangelsk and Vologda provincial administrations supported the idea of agricultural colonization of their territories referring to the examples of Norway, Sweden and Alaska as a blueprint to follow; perspectives and methods of colonization were also debated in academic circles (Korotaev, 1998: 52–57). This forces us to reject the belief currently established among Russian historians that the Russian colonization of the European North was completed by the 18<sup>th</sup> century except the Kola Peninsula, which was colonized in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Kuratov, 2001: 191). Rather we agree with Hill and Gaddy that it continued, although in different forms, all the way till the 1980s.

To complete this paragraph, it is important to say several words about the concept of the 'Russian North' (*Russkii Sever*), which emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and which is occasionally used also in this paper. This concept, which broadly refers to the north of the European part of Russia, has never been officially recognized or scientifically defined; the geographic borders (particularly the southern and the eastern ones) of the Russian North vary between authors and can differ in different works of the same author. However, the cultural and ideological significance of this concept is huge. In modern academic literature it is often argued that the 'Russian North' as an integrated 'historical and cultural province' emerged already in the medieval time. However, as it has been already said, the term itself is much younger. Its creation and spread in historical, archaeological, ethnographic and folkloristic publications is mainly due to the works of such scholars as A. F. Gilferding, P. S. Efimenko, P. N. Rybnikov, E. N. Barsov, N. E. Onchukov, F. M. Istomin, G. O. Dutsh, A. V. Markov, A. D. Grigoriev, P. G. Bogatyrev and O. E. Ozarovskaya. These works created an image of 'Russian North' as a very special and even mysterious region, the 'cultural storehouse' (*kulturnaia kladovaia*) of Russia where the cultural heritage of Russian people is concentrated and some 'original Russianness' can be found. However, the invention of the term, as it seems, should be attributed to Engelgard, the governor of the Arkhangelsk Province, who employed this term in his travel notes published in 1897 (Engelgard, 1897). This was his contribution to the Imperial ideology, which developed by that time and to which Engelgard enthusiastically adhered. This ideology attributed to the ethnic Russians a special role of the 'cultural core' of the Empire and, as it seems, this 'cultural core' needed a geographic place where it could reside, where Russian traditions could be stored in their original purity and dominate in the every-day life. The traditionalistic North of the European Russia, where industrial development was still in its initial stages in that time and the foreign influence was minimal, fitted this role well.

### 3 BUILDING 'ARCHIPELAGO RUSSIA': THE SOVIET REGIONALIZATION AND DELINEATION OF ETHNIC TERRITORIES IN THE RUSSIAN NORTH

One aspect of the work by Hill and Gaddy, which Russian critics have paid relatively little attention to, is the notion of 'disconnectedness' of the Russian North and Siberia. The authors considered this 'disconnectedness' so important and its impacts on the economy and social life so drastic that they devote a whole chapter of their book to its analysis (Hill & Gaddy, 2003: 101–116). The problem of disconnectedness, in their opinion, has several aspects. One quite obvious aspect is the insufficiency of the transportation network (the lack of roads, their poor quality and frequent unpredictability of travel conditions, excessive reliance on air transportation) and its centralized character: the transport connectedness to the central part of the country, particularly to Moscow, is given priority over connections with other northern territories, which are often absent or unstable. Thus, it is rather a standard situation in the North and Siberia that, in order to get to a neighbouring province, one has to fly all the way to Moscow and then back. The second aspect is the poor development of communication technologies, including telecommunication, and again its centralization: almost everywhere in the North of Russia, telecommunication with Moscow is faster and of higher quality than telecommunication with villages and towns just several dozen kilometres away. Finally – and most importantly – administrative division in the Russian North and Siberia is rarely based on environmental borders or economic connections between territories. On the contrary, it often happens that a region objectively representing a single province from the viewpoint of the natural environment and/or historically established economic connections becomes divided between several administrative provinces, while an administrative province can consist of parts, which are rather poorly integrated from the viewpoint of their economy, population and environment. Since horizontal relations between provinces are rather weak or even non-existent (such relations are actually discouraged, particularly on the political level) and each province prioritizes its relations to the federal centre over its relations with its neighbours, different parts of the Russian North and Siberia become isolated islands with minimum economic and social connections to each other. The populations of these islands have very limited means to visit each other or even to communicate to each other by post or telephone and the only connection is that with the central part of Russia, which they aptly call '*Materik*' (continent or mainland). This 'Archipelago Russia' just as any poorly integrated archipelago has very limited prospects for economic and social development. Hill and Gaddy say that this disconnectedness is a product of Soviet time: its infrastructure-building policies, its hierarchy of power and the reform of administrative division which took place soon after the communist revolution. While the former two are rather easily explained by the centralized and planned economy of the time, the later remains rather enigmatic. Indeed, although Hill and Gaddy do not say this directly, the reader gets an impression that the communists deliberately drew the administrative borders in the most illogical way possible, probably to hinder the communication between people in the north and prevent popular unrest. In our opinion, however, the reasons were much more prosaic and in this paragraph we will try to analyse them on the example of the European North.

It is well established, that one of the ideological doctrines the early communist reforms of administrative territories was built on – and one that was particularly relevant to the Russian North and Siberia – was the doctrine of 'ethnic territorialisation' (Slezkine, 1996; Slezkine, 1994). It consisted of two basic statements: 1) every ethnic group should be given



or ascribed a particular administrative territory (i.e. every group should have its own land) and 2) inside this territory, this ethnic group was given a special status of the 'indigenous group' (*korennoi narod*, *korennoe naselenie*) and certain preferences including a restricted but still quite real dominance in the political sphere, while all the other groups were declared 'non-indigenous' (*nekorennoe naselenie*) and were denied preferences (Tishkov, 1993). Following this doctrine, the new communist government established a number of ethnic territories of different status – 'soviet' and 'soviet autonomous' republics, 'national' provinces (*Natsionalnaia oblast*), 'national' (later 'autonomous') areas (*okrug*) and districts (*raion*), which were given into symbolic possession by different ethnic groups. In the modern Russia, it is often claimed that the only ethnic group denied its own ethnic territory were Russians. This statement is of course wrong: first, Russians were not the only group without an ethnic territory and a special status of, for example, Russian language inside the Russian Federative Republic was obvious even in 1920s. It is true, however, that ethnic minorities, particularly those living in the North and Siberia, were marked as 'natural allies' of proletarians in socialist reforms because many of them did not have a developed class structure. Furthermore, just as proletarians these ethnic minorities AS GROUPS were declared an 'exploited part of the society' and therefore, the basis of the new communist state. Their exploiter, in this logic, was the old empire itself represented by officials, merchants and Russian colonists. Therefore, in the North and in Siberia, particularly in the newly established ethnic territories, the ethnic distinction between Russians on one hand and indigenous ethnic groups on the other was equated with the distinction between the exploiters and the exploited. Therefore, Russians as a group were declared exploiters of native northerners (Slezkine, 1996), and this did have clear political consequences in the state where the struggle against exploiters was declared both the main political aim and the supreme ethic maxim. It should be stressed that here we speak about the first two decades of the communist rule only: the described ideological attitudes started to change already in the late 1930s and were radically overturned in the 1940s. However in the 1920s and early 1930s they were quite obvious and this has led, for example, to the disappearance of the ethnonym '*velikoross*' (lit. 'great Russian') previously widely used to designate ethnic Russians and distinguish them from Ukrainians (referred to as '*maloross*', lit. 'small Russian') and Belarusian ('*belorus*' – 'white Russian'). Closer to our topic, this attitude caused pushing the term 'Russian North' described previously out of use; it was only in the 1960s that this concept was resurrected but even then it was only in the restricted sphere of folkloristics.

It should be stressed also that in the North and in Siberia, the new ethnic territories were created not 'from below', by the will of the representatives of the ethnic groups themselves, but from above, by the will of the new political elite. Admittedly, we do not really know what the ordinary representatives of these groups thought about the attempts of the elites to grant them their own 'ethnic homeland'. No analysis of their attitudes exists in the historical literature. What we do know, however, is that their opinion was not really asked about; the questions of administrative division of northern territories were not publicly discussed or this discussion was very limited and formal. Even in Karelia, where ideas of ethnic autonomy circulated even before the communist revolution – these ideas were expressed by the Society of White Sea Karelians established by Finns in 1905, – there was no mass popular movement in support of the Karelian ethnic territory under the communist regime. On the other hand, in Karelia the so called 'Finnish factor' was significant. After the independence of Finland was accepted by the new Communist government of Russia on 4<sup>th</sup> of January, 1918, the Finns adopted the idea that it was their mission to help their 'relatives' (other Finno-Ugric peoples of Russia) to get independence from Russia as well (their desire for this independence was



not even questioned). This led to the two-year long struggle between Finland and Russia (the so called first Russo-Finnish war, 1918 – 1920) for what is now Russian Karelia (usually called “Eastern Karelia” in Finland). In Finland, Eastern Karelia was perceived as the historic homeland of Finnish-Karelian people (the runes /songs/ of the Finnish epos Kalevala so dear for Finnish nationalists were collected here) and, therefore, the war for Karelia was perceived as a holy war for the ideal Finnish state:

*Despite the government of Finland not having any evidence of the desire of Karelians to join Finland, the volunteer army campaign in Karelia was still started in March, 1918 and lasted till October that year. Diaries and memories of the participating volunteers show how deeply the nationalist ideology had penetrated the consciousness of ordinary Finns. The volunteers were inspired by the wish to free their blood relatives, brothers and co-patriots from the Russian and Bolshevik yoke. Therefore, the fact that the brothers and co-patriots were not prepared to accept their help was completely unexpected. The diaries and reports of the campaign participants... are full of bewilderment and resentment: only a small part of the local population was ready to support them (Vituhnovskaya-Kauppalä, 2010: 73–74, translation by the authors)*

It should be no surprise, therefore, that the existence of the independent Ukhta government in Karelia was rather short and the struggle for Eastern Karelia was finally lost by Finns. In 1920, the so called Tartu Peace Agreement was concluded between Russia and Finland. This agreement not only established the border between the two countries (both found this border unsatisfactory, however) but also secured cultural and political rights of Karelians and Ingermanlandian Finns living in Russia. Despite the agreement, the fight in Karelia continued in 1921 – 1922 (the so called second Russo-Finnish war) and, in some places, stopped only in 1925.

By that time – in the early 1920s – the Soviet government had started its programme of ethnic territories’ creation. Karelia became the first ethnic territory created in the North of European Russia. Indeed, the territorial autonomy of Karelians inside Russia was one of the requirements of the Tartu Peace Agreement and for communist administrators, just like for Finns before them, it mattered little what the Karelians themselves thought about this. What mattered was who was to create and manage the territory and what geopolitical objectives it could serve. The ethnic territory of Karelians was viewed, among other things, as a base from which the communist ideology and the Soviet soft power could be projected to Finland and Scandinavia as a whole. It should not be surprising that the ‘Karelian Work Commune’, as the territory created in 1920 was initially called, was led not by Karelians but by Finns. These were so-called “Red Finns”, the Finnish communists who were defeated in Finland but dreamed about revenge. It is also symptomatic that the Finnish name of the Commune was Karjalan Työväenkommuuni, that is ‘Work Commune of Karelia’ rather than of Karelians (Karjalaisen). The same can be said about the ‘Karelian Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic’ (in Finnish – Karjalan Autonominen Sosialistinen Neuvostotasavalta) as the territory was re-named in 1923. Interestingly, the territory did not have any official title in Karelian: “The Red Finns perceived any attempt to create a writing system for Karelian and Vepsian languages as well as literacy in these languages as chauvinistic and ‘aimed to confuse the illiterate masses’” (Survo & Survo, 2009: 179). This shows that the Red Finns had their own, communist version of the Finnish nationalism and that their policy was based on it. Thus, nationalistic sentiments are quite visible in the words and actions of Edvard Gylling, the former professor of the University of Helsinki (Helsingfors), the leader

of Red Finns and the first head of the Karelian Work Commune. In accordance to the Finnish historian M. Kangaspuro, in 1921, during the fourth congress of the Russian Communist Party in Petrograd, Gylling said the following:

*The <Marxist> thesis about <the negative role of> nationalism is correct. However, the problem is that right now revolution takes advantage of the awakening of Nationalism. The saying goes that the Devil is best exorcised with the help of Beelzebub. Nobody else can manage. And in any case, there is a certain amount of Nationalism in Communism (Kangaspuro, 1997: 116).*

For the sake of our argument, however, one aspect of the policy of Red Finns is important. In the early 1920s, the government of Karelia attempted to convince the central government of Russia that the Kola Peninsula to the north of Karelia should be included into the newly established territory (Butvilo, 2010). Their arguments were mostly economic: the access to the mineral deposits, the sea ports, and the huge industrial potential of the peninsula would greatly facilitate the economic development of the territory. Furthermore, from the economic point of view, the amalgamation with Karelia could be profitable for the Kola Peninsula as well: this would connect it to the Russian mainland and ensure the parallel development of the industrial centres and the supporting infrastructure. However, the claim was turned down because the inclusion of the Kola Peninsula, that time populated mainly by Russians, Saami and Komi, into the Karelian ethnic territory would have been against the Marxist national policy. The economic considerations were left without any comments. In other words, the central government was rather tolerant towards the Red Finns' nationalism – even with their apparent denial of the existence of Karelians as opposed to Finns, – as far as it was confined to their established ethnic territory. However it was not prepared to tolerate the change of the ethnic territory, the deviations of its boundaries from the ethnic borders, even if this was based on good economic arguments.

Similarly to Karelia, Nenets and Komi, the other two groups that were given ethnic territories in the North of European Russia, lacked any popular movement for territorial autonomy or any other ethnic movement of a considerable scale. The ideas of autonomy were supported by some representatives of local elites (which, in contrast to Karelia, did share ethnic background with the local groups here), but these elites were largely created by the communists themselves and the ideas of autonomy were learned by their representatives as a part of their communist indoctrination. This can be seen from the fact that these ideas were not deeply elaborated and more often than not represented either various elaborations on the imperial policies towards ethnic minorities as exemplified by the 'Statute on aliens' administration' (*Ustav ob upravlenii inorodtsev* adopted in 1822) or utopian projects not related at all to the local specifics. Thus in 1927, Nenets activists petitioned the Central Executive Committee with the demand "to give tundra back to Samoyeds to manage it as soon as possible" (Kanev, 2005: 85). This demand, as it seems, referred to the legal situation established by the "Statute on administration over Samoyeds, who live in the Mezen district of the Arkhangelsk Province" (*Ustav ob upravlenii samoyedami, obitaiushimi v Mezenskom uezde Arhangelskoi gubernii* adopted in 1835), which granted the Nenets priority rights on pasturelands and other bioresources of Malozemelskaya and Bolshezemelsaya Tundras. The Nenets wanted to get these economic rights back, while the ideas of political and cultural autonomy were, as it seems, quite alien and incomprehensible for the tundra nomads. In fact, most Nenets, as it seems, opposed the whole communist modernization programme of which the creation of ethnic territories

was a part: “their sometimes clear, but more often quite vague perception of the coming revolutionary changes forced Nenets to protest against building schools, hospitals and other ‘urban’ institutes in order to protect their traditional way of life” (Korotaev, 1998: 175). Even the members of the local soviets, who were carefully selected by the communist administration, often did not approve spreading European way of life among Nenets.

The first project of the Komi ethnic territory proposed by the local activists was truly ambitious if not utopian: the ethnic territory was to include eastern parts of the former Arkhangelsk and Vologda provinces, including Bolshezemelskaya Tundra and lower Pechora region, the northern part of the former Perm province populated by Komi-Permyak, the lower Ob region in Western Siberia, and islands of the Arctic Ocean including the Svalbard Archipelago (which that time was a contested territory and Russian rights on it were rather doubtful). This project did not take into account existing economic and infrastructural relations between territories and even from the viewpoint of ethnographic realities it was rather strange. Some scholars argue that the project was based on the historical and ideological concept of ‘the Great Perm – Biarmia’ (Kuzivanova, Popov, Smetanin, 1996: 31). However, the creators of the project could not know the modern concepts and hardly were aware of the history of Komi, which was compiled and published much later. Rather they simply wanted to increase their power by acquiring as large a territory as possible. In any case, even the territory they finally got (the Autonomous Area of Komi-Zyryans was created in 1921), which consisted of the eastern parts of Arkhangelsk and Vologda provinces, was rather poorly integrated from the economic point of view: the northern and the southern parts of this territory were poorly connected to each other in economic and infrastructural terms. In 1929, most of the Bolshezemelskaya tundra was excluded from the Komi ethnic territory and a new ethnic territory, the Nenets National (later – Autonomous) Okrug, was created in Bolshezemelskaya, Malozemelskaya and Timanskaya tundras. To give an impression of how this step looked from the economic point of view it is enough to say that nomadic reindeer herders, who constituted the majority of the population of Bolshezemelskaya tundra and of whom about a half were Nenets and the other half were Komi, mostly spent spring, summer and autumn in the tundra (which became the territory of the Nenets Okrug) and migrated to the forest-tundra and northern taiga (which remained in the Komi ethnic territory) for winter. Certainly the newly established administrative border as well as the new status of the area to the north of it as Nenets and the area to the south of it as Komi ethnic territories made very little sense for them. To make the things worse, the Komi area was compensated for the loss of Bolshezemelskaya tundra by the inclusion of a part of lower Pechora territories, the so-called Ust-Tsilma district, which was populated by Russians. The rest of the lower Pechora, also populated by Russians, was included into the newly established Nenets Okrug (the Russian-populated lower Pechora divides Bolshezemelskaya Tundra from Malozemelskaya Tundra and, therefore, the territory, which was to include the both Tundras, could not avoid including the Russian settlements; besides that, the Russians created at least some settled population in the area and the Russian settlements could be used as administrative centres). As the result, both territories, which were already very poorly integrated from the economic and infrastructural points of view, lost their ethno-cultural unity (which was the rationale behind their creation) as well.

Despite the fact that all the three ethnic territories ended up being poly-ethnic, their administrations did not make any attempt to offer a common regional identity to their populations. As P. Kauppala correctly noticed, neither Karelia, nor Komi came up with integrational ideas similar to the Finnish idea of ‘Finns’ and ‘Finnish Swedes’ making up a bilingual Finnish Nation (Kauppala, 2006). Instead they kept on insisting on the ethnic

character of the territory, that is that Karelian, Komi and Nenets territories are first of all the territories of Karelians (who may or may not be Finns), Komi and Nenets. In the 1920s – early 1930s this often led to ethnic segregation. Thus in Karelia,

*among Karelians of the northern part of the Republic, the ‘Finnization’ led to a new fashion to change their traditional ‘Russian’ surnames (Petrov, Rodionov, etc.) into Finnish ones. The ‘Finnization’ caused the segregation of population on an ethnic basis in almost all spheres of social and political life. The Finnish-speaking Karelians organized Komsomol meetings and conferences separately from Russians, Karelian children did not want to share desks with Russian children in schools. 10 out of 22 newspapers and 5 out of 8 journals published in the Republic were in Finnish language. In Reboly and Rugozero, there were no Russian books at all up until 1935 and not a single administrator spoke Russian. Russian was not taught in the schools of Reboly, Kestenga and Ukhta.* (Survo & Survo, 2009: 126).

In the Komi area, the segregation was less pronounced, but still Russian and other minority groups felt neglected as can be suggested from numerous publications in the local ‘Judyd tuj’ newspaper. By the late 1930s, the segregation stopped, while 30 years later the ‘title ethnic groups’ themselves became ethnic minorities in all the three ethnic territories. However the idea about the territories as the ethnic ones, about the ethnic rationale of their existence survived. Thus, the first post-Soviet constitution of the Komi Republic adopted in 1994 declared that “Komi people represent the basis of the Komi Republican statehood” (*Konstitutsia Respubliki Komi*, 1994, article 3). The constitution of Karelian Republic adopted in 2001 stated that “Historic and national distinctiveness of the Karelian Republic is derived from the fact of Karelian people living in it” (*Konstitutsia Respubliki Karelia*, 2001, article 5). Such statements effectively prevented other groups living in the territories (that is the majority of the population) perceiving them as ‘their land’, to affiliate with them, which further increased social disconnectedness.

The formation of the large ethnic territories disrupted the economic and infrastructural unity of the whole former ‘Russian North’. Thus, the former Arkhangelsk Province lost more than a half of its territory and came to consist of three river basins: the Onega river basin, the Dvina river basin, and the Mezen river basin (the upper part of the later was included in the Komi Republic). Out of them, the Mezen river basin, once quite a prosperous part of the province, which used to be economically related to the tundra and to lower Pechora, became an economic and social periphery without an overland connection to the provincial centre. The Onega river basin has been similarly economically damaged by getting disconnected from Karelia. The Vologda Province has lost even more territory and became one of the industrially underdeveloped parts of Russia.

#### 4. THE FORCED COLONIZATION AND THE INDUSTRIALIZATION OF THE EUROPEAN PART OF RUSSIA

The concept of forced colonization, of which the Stalin’s GULAG system was the clearest, the most recent and the most important example, plays the central role in the work by Hill and Gaddy: indeed, it is exactly by sending a mass of prisoners to the north and Siberia to build new industrial centres in the areas that would have never developed in a similar form or to a similar extent naturally, that is under the influence of market forces alone, that communists have “left Russia out in the cold” (Hill & Gaddy, 2003: 83–87). Indeed, as the

authors argue, “the GULAG and its pool of slave labour became fundamental tools in Soviet industrialization” (Hill & Gaddy, 2003: 83), and it is the use of this tool, which freed the Soviet planners from the economic checks and allowed them to follow the “Engels dictum”—Friedrich Engels’s contention that large-scale industry should be ‘freed from the restrictions of space’ and be equally distributed within and across a socialist country” (Hill & Gaddy, 2003: 88–89), that created the Siberian Curse. In the heart of this logic lies the equation of the GULAG colonization of the North and Siberia with the industrialization; an equation which is supported also by some Russian historians. However in our opinion, such an equation can be accepted only with some reservations.

Indeed, industrialization is not simply building industrial centres and enterprises. It is

*the general process by which economies and societies in which agriculture and the production of handicrafts predominate become transformed into economies and societies where manufacturing and related extractive industries are central.... The process of industrialization is closely linked with the overall modernization of societies, especially the process of urbanization, the development of science and technology, and political modernization. Each of these changes can be viewed as either (a) a prerequisite of industrialization, or (b) a direct consequence or requirement of it, or (c) both of these. (Jary & Jary, 1991: 304–305)*

In other words, industrialization has a social aspect; it is not only economic but also a social process. It involves a transition from pre-industrial to industrial society, which involves a variety of technological, economic, social, cultural and political changes, which lead to a significant shift of the social structure and in the way of life (Balezina, 2013). As Hill and Gaddy correctly note (Hill & Gaddy, 2003: 86), in contrast to popular opinion, the largest GULAG camps containing the highest number of prisoners were situated not in Siberia or Far East, but in the ‘Russian North’, most notably in the Komi Republic, in the Archangelsk Province (where the Solovki camp, which gave rise to the whole GULAG system, was situated) and in Karelia (see also the map in Hill & Gaddy, 2003: 85). However, did the social changes related to industrialization occur in these regions? No, the social structure of the local societies did not change or changed very little. Indeed, in the Nenets area no changes in the economic life of the population and/or in social processes, which are typical for industrialization, occurred in 1930s.<sup>10</sup> In the Komi Republic, the urban population tripled by 1939, but it still constituted only 9.1% of the total population of the area. Most of the population was still involved in “agriculture and the production of handicrafts” (Kotov, Rogachev, Shabaev, 1996). In Karelia, the percentage of urban population was two times higher, but most Karelians, Vepsians and Old Russian settlers did not change their way of life and remained agrarians, while the industrial enterprises and construction sites were filled by migrants from Finland and southern parts of Russia.

In the early 1930s, the Soviet government announced the “cultural assault on the Taiga and Tundra” and the need of a fast *osvoenie* of these territories already during the first 5 year period. As it has been noted by Yuri Zuliar (Zuliar, 2011), it is very difficult to agree with Hill and Gaddy that the rationale behind this was the ‘Engels Dictum’ about the need to free industry from the restrictions of space. Indeed, this ‘dictum’ was never explicitly referred to as the basis of industry allocation strategy and it is in fact rather doubtful that

<sup>10</sup> Unless one wishes to declare collectivization and the social and cultural changes associated with it a specific form of ‘industrialization’. Although such attempts do exist, they look rather doubtful to us.

the soviet planners, who were indoctrinated Marxists but not philosophers and specialists in Marxist literature, were aware of it. The explicitly stated rationale of the Assault was the need to make the rich natural resources of the northern territories 'property' of the working people, which, as it has been described above, could be achieved by the means of their *osvoenie*.<sup>11</sup> In other words, the ideological rationale was similar to that behind the nationalization of industries: to make both the means of production and products the property of producers, the 'people's own'. In other words, in the logic of Communist ideologues, the un-colonized and unprocessed by the means of *osvoenie* (i.e. *neosvoennyye*) territories and resources do not belong to 'people', while they should... because everything should. In our opinion, this logic derived from basic Marxist texts and the traditional notion of *osvoenie* as the basis of making something 'one's own' fits the drive and slogans of the 'northern assault' much better and better explains the policy of forced colonization, then the rather mythical 'Engels Dictum' postulated by Hill and Gaddy.

The GULAG prisoners were indeed the main agents of the assault and, as far as the North of European Russia is concerned, all the industrial development that took place there between 1920 and the early 1950s was due to their labour. For a communist state, which principally denied personal freedom of all its subjects, the use of forced labour was a rather logical decision. Indeed, as Anne Applebaum has demonstrated in her now classic work, the main ideas on which the GULAG system was built – those of work as a means of redemption and tool for 're-education' of the 'class enemies' were announced already in the first decrees of the communist government, while the foundation of the GULAG system proper was laid by the decree "On forced labour camps" already on April, 15, 1919 (Applebaum, 2004: 3–18). The first 'GULAG island', the Special Purpose Solovetsky Camp, was organized in 1923 in a former monastery on the White Sea Solovetsky Islands in the North of European Russia (Applebaum, 2004: 18–40). This camp became a blueprint for the whole system of camps organized with the purpose of carrying out industrial projects. Thus, it was from the Solovetsky Camp that the first group of specialists arrived to Vorkuta River in 1929 to build the first coal mine there. In the early 1930s, groups of specialists from the Solovetsky camp were sent to build the "Severnikel" enterprise on the Kola Peninsula as well as the chain of GULAG camps along the railroad leading to Murmansk. The Solovetsky camp also became the blueprint for the Belomorsko-Baltiiski Labour Re-Educational Camp, which was engaged in the construction of a canal between the White and Baltic seas, one of the biggest construction projects of the first five-year plan period.

Gulag prisoners built the sea port of Murmansk, the ore mines of the Kola Peninsula, the coal mines and oil wells of the Komi Republic; that is virtually all the industry of the North of European Russia. By the late 1930s, a network of 'special towns' and labour camps consisting of many dozens of settlements covered the whole European Russian North; a significant part of these settlements were established beyond the polar circle. Most of the new cities in the Kola Peninsula, Komi Republic and the Arkhangelsk Province developed from these settlements. This was exactly the forced colonization Hill and Gaddy spoke about.

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11 To think about that, the notion of *osvoenie* has a lot in common with the famous labour theory of value, which opens the first volume of "The Capital" by Marx and is supposed to be the cornerstone of the Marxist theory. Recall the famous Marxist examples of resources (including Gold) turning into a commodity with a value (and hence capable of becoming a property) by the means of transforming them through labour ("The Capital", chapter 1). This explains, in our opinion, the popularity of the 'osvoenie' concept and logic among the Russian communists.



It is important to note, however, that the local population was strictly prohibited from establishing any contacts with the prisoners and the inhabitants of the 'special towns'.<sup>12</sup> Such contacts were punished in different, sometimes quite crude ways and this created a belief among the locals that the prisoners were potentially dangerous and had to be avoided as much as possible. Therefore, the North of European Russia came to have two completely separate communities: one was traditional, predominantly agrarian, retaining many elements of the pre-revolutionary way of life despite the shock of collectivization; the other consisted of prisoners, forced construction and industrial workers united by a common destiny and low social status. Interestingly, the local peasants had a higher social status in comparison to the forced industrial workers – which alone could be enough to prevent the industrialization in the social sense of this word – but more importantly the two societies were almost completely isolated. Even their censuses were organized separately. Interestingly, at a certain stage, the sizes of the two communities did not differ much. Thus in the early 1940s, the population (meaning the “free” population, prisoners excluded) of the Komi Republic was approx. 300 thousand, while the number of prisoners in the republic was 197.5 thousand (data on January, 1941). In the Archangelsk Province the figures were 500 thousand and 120 thousand accordingly, while in Karelia they were 470 thousand and 131 thousand (Kustyshev, 2011: 26). However, most of those prisoners who managed to survive were fast to leave the region once they got an opportunity and, in contrast to the popular opinion, their descendants account for a rather negligible percentage of the modern population even in such famous GULAG cities as Vorkuta and Ukhta. It was the unindustrialized local population that stayed.

The real industrialization of the European Russian North in the social sense of this word started only after the deconstruction of the GULAG system in the late 1950s. In order to replace the prisoners, the new workers were hired both from the local population and from the other regions of the Soviet Union. This resulted in a rapid urbanization of the local population and a change of its social structure and way of life. Furthermore, since the local population was rather small, while the industrial development continued on an ever increasing scale, most of the workers came from the other regions, which changed both the ethnic composition and the cultural affiliations of the local population. This has led to a crisis of traditional cultures and languages of the region, which is still continuing. The numerous attempts to re-vitalize the ethnic traditions and spread ethnic languages performed in the epoch of ‘ethnic renaissance’ of the 1990s were of a limited success. All these changes are indeed an integral part of the industrialization in the social sense of this word and, for a social scientist, they rather than anything else signify the industrial colonization of the Russian North. Note, however, that this colonization could start only *after* the forced colonization of Hill and Gaddy was over.

## 5. LEFT IN THE COLD: POST-SOVIET COLONIZATION RETREAT

Since the early 1990s, the North of European Russia has been losing its economic significance as well as its attractiveness for both migrants from the other regions of Russia and the local inhabitants. The last 30 years have seen a large-scale de-industrialization of the North: mines and factories were closed and the percentage of industrial workers decreased. Thus, in Belomorsk, the place where the already mentioned infamous canal

<sup>12</sup> This was the name of settlements where *kulaks*, that is, rich peasants exiled from the south as a part of collectivization campaign, lived.

between the White and Baltic seas ends, both the fishing fleet and the fishing port have disappeared. In Amderma, one of the settlements in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, the port, the airport (its runway used to be longest in the whole Arctic) as well as all the other enterprises have been abandoned and collapsed, while the population has decreased by 10 times. In Vorkuta, the city of coal miners, only 4 out of 11 mines survived, while in neighbouring Inta all mines were closed. All these and a number of other enterprises had to close because the expensive logistics and other forms of the 'arctic tax' made them unviable in the conditions of the market economy. The collapse of industrial enterprises has caused a massive outflux of inhabitants. It was particularly significant in the Murmansk Area and in the Komi Republic, which have lost about one third of their population. Those who stay often have to struggle with poverty: the income of the inhabitants of the European Russian North is below the Russian average (Shabaev & Podoplekin, 2017). All this looks like definite proof of the Hill and Gaddy basic idea: a region cursed as a result of un-economic colonization is left out in the cold and shrinking.

This process of shrinking also has a cultural aspect: the image of the Russian North as the place of historic Russianness, the place where real Russian traditions have survived, which started to resurge in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, is again disappearing. Nowadays, the north of European Russia is perceived more as a cultural periphery, a marginal and inhospitable place little suitable for living. However, despite all these – the industrial and infrastructural collapse, population exodus, deterioration of the cultural image – the Russian colonization of the region in ethnic and cultural terms seems to continue. The percentage of ethnic Russians is growing everywhere in the European north including the ethnic territories. According to the 2010 population census, the percentage of people, who declared themselves ethnic Russians was 95.6% in the Archangelsk Province, 97.3% in the Vologda Province, 89.0% in the Murmansk Area, 66.1% in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, 82.2% in Karelia and 65.1% in the Komi Republic. This can be explained by the growing use of the Russian language by the representatives of the ethnic minorities and by their increasing re-orientation from ethnic to national identity, the identity of a citizen of Russia, which is often associated with the Russian ethnic identity. Accordingly, the percentage of ethnic minorities is falling. Thus the percentage of Karelians in Karelia has fallen from 27% in 1923 to 7% in 2010. In Komi, the decrease was from 90% to 23% during the same period. The number of Karelians, Komi and Nenets who speak Russian as their mother tongue is also increasing. Therefore, despite the economic and demographic shrinkage, the Russian colonization, the *osvoenie* of the territory by Russians is continuing. Deindustrialization and decolonization appear to be just another stage of Russian colonization and this is probably the most unexpected fact the recent history of the north or European Russia teaches us.

## CONCLUSIONS AND THE PLAN OF THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

In the introduction to this paper, we stated that we do not wish to take any position towards the idea that Russia should 'shrink', made so famous by Hill and Gaddy. Rather, our aim was to use the analysis of history of the North of European Russia to see how the concepts and themes developed by Hill and Gaddy are helpful for making sense of pre-historical and historical processes that took place here. Of course, in the framework of a journal article, we could explore only part of the relevant themes and concepts. Still, in our opinion, our analysis allows certain methodological and empirical conclusions, which could be helpful for the further research on the topic of Russian colonization.

First of all, as it has been already pointed out by other researchers (e. g. Slezkine, 1996), the concept of colonization as it is used in western literature (Etkind, 2011; Said, 1994) tends to emphasize the relation between the colonizers and the colonized, while Russian literature and popular discourse on colonization tends to emphasize the relation between the State and the territory and distinguish between the establishment of political control over the territory (*pokorenie*), influx and settlement of population (*zaselenie*) and an active transformation of landscape to adapt the new territory to the needs of new settlers and/or active transformation of the culture of the settlers to adapt to the new territory (*osvoenie*). The latter has a particular significance in Russian literature, because, in accordance to both the linguistic logic and the ideological attitudes, only by the means of *osvoenie* of a territory, this territory becomes *svoi* ('one's own'). This distinguishing between the three concepts and the special role of *osvoenie* should be taken into account when analysing both the Russian colonization per se and Russian academic literature on colonization. Thus, without taking into account, let's say, the difference between *osvoenie* and establishing political control (*pokorenie*) it would be difficult to explain how the concept of Terra Nullius has been applied in the Russian colonization and why this application was different to the way this concept was used by British in their colonization of, let's say, Australia. Similarly, grasping the difference between settling on a territory (*zaselenie*) and *osvoenie* is important to understand the approach to the problem of initial colonization and the full importance of the discussions about first colonizers. It seems to us that Hill and Gaddy implicitly adopt this Russian meaning of the term, which allows them to understand the process better than many other western researchers.

Our analysis confirms the basic argument by Hill and Gaddy that Russian colonization of the European north has never been completely 'natural', that is determined by economic and social factors, and that political decisions by the state taken largely on ideological grounds largely determined both the direction and intensity of colonization. The role of the state was much smaller in the 11<sup>th</sup> century in comparison to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, not to mention the communist period, but it has never been insignificant. We would argue, however, that the ideological grounds acting as the basis of the state decisions were similar and consisted of the logic of *osvoenie* described above. Whoever symbolically 'owned' the Russian state – the Great Prince, the Tsar or the 'working masses' – they always faced the ideological challenge of making the huge territory of the state 'their own'. Military or political control over the territory or even having some settlers there was not enough for that. The territory could become truly the state's or the working class's own only after the subjects of the state or the representatives of the working class would transform it by ploughing fields, building towns and cities, roads and railroads, coal mines and oil wells. The ideological significance of this transforming could indeed greatly exceed its economic significance. Still, the transforming was worth it because, as it seems, the state believed that without *osvoenie* even the political control over the territory could be questioned. The conflict between Russia and Norway over Novaya Zemlya proves that this concern was not unjustified. This concern was shared by the communist government and it is shared by the modern government of Russia and the concern about the political consequences of the colonization retreat in Siberia (the possibility of coming under Chinese control) explains the very negative reaction towards the work by Hill and Gaddy. This concern more than anything else was operative in Russian colonization policy and this, more than anything else makes the 'shrinking' suggested by Hill and Gaddy impossible.

Our analysis confirms that the concept of disconnectedness of the Russian North and Siberia – the famous Archipelago Russia – has a great potential in explaining social,

economic and cultural problems, at least in the North of European Russia. We hope that this concept would be explored further by our Russian colleagues. On the institutional level, at least in the European part of Russia, this disconnectedness is indeed the product of communist policy and particularly of creating ethnic territories 'from above'. The modern administrative division of the European Russian North is the product of a complete triumph of an ideological dictum (each ethnic group should have its own administrative territory) over economic and infrastructural considerations. Furthermore, we cannot even say that the communists would surrender economic rationale to local nationalist sentiments, because the projects of administrative divisions suggested by the local nationalists (e.g. the inclusion of the Kola Peninsula into Karelia) sometimes made much more economic sense than the administrative division the European North was finally left with. It was the triumph of ideology (Lenin's national policy) over economy *par excellence*. The economic price of this surrender is still to be calculated.

Our analysis of the forced colonization of the north during the communist time points to the aspects, which have often been ignored in the colonization literature; namely to the almost complete segregation between the forced colonists – the GULAG prisoners – and the local population. This segregation explains why the forced colonization has left a much smaller impact on the local societies in the social and cultural sense in comparison to the more "liberal" colonization of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. We think that this aspect of the forced colonization is important for social scientists interested in the historical analysis of social and cultural processes in the Russian North and Siberia. Indeed, as Hill and Gaddy correctly noted, forced colonization is not a communist invention: prisoners were sent to the North and Siberia at least since the 18<sup>th</sup> century and they played an important role in *osvoenie* of these territories. In accordance to the estimations by George Kennan (1891) cited by Hill and Gaddy (Hill & Gaddy, 2003: 79) about one million prisoners were sent to Siberia from the 1780s till 1890s, while the forced work was also used in the European North (e.g. during the Murmansk railroad construction in 1914 – 1915) before the communist revolution. The cultural and social impact of this colonization on the local communities is still to be assessed but the social segregation should be taken into account in this assessment. We also argue that it should be taken into account when assessing the relation of forced colonization to industrialization.

Finally, our analysis of the recent tendencies in the north of European Russia shows that although one can say that the process of colonization retreat has been going on there (as well as in Siberia) after the collapse of the Soviet Union, one should still distinguish economic and demographic aspects of this retreat and its cultural aspect. Indeed, the North of Russia is shrinking in economic and demographic terms, but in the cultural terms the Russian oikumene is expanding. We hope that this can come as a relief to those many in Russia who find the recent processes in the north alarming. Indeed, even if Hill and Gaddy are right and Russia is destined to shrink, this shrink need not – and probably will not – concern all the achievements of the Russian colonization.

In the articles that follow, the reader will find detailed studies that focus on different aspects of the Russian colonization of the European north and on reaction to this colonization. Thus, the paper by Valeri Sharapov discusses how the popular visual image of the ethnic Komi-Zyrian was formed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The article shows that the formation of this image was influenced by the nationalist and anti-colonial sentiments of Finnish and some Russian researchers (Finland was a part of Russian Empire till 1917). These sentiments included a search for 'pure' and 'real' ethnic cultures and traditions, ones that existed before the 'spoiling' influence of Russian newcomers. In search

for this pure culture, Finnish researchers turned their attention to their 'relatives', the eastern Finno-Ugric people, who were supposed to be less influenced by the colonizers. However, even in the case of these people, the researchers did their best to exclude everything they observed in the field that could be related to Russian influence and to 'reconstruct' the traditional pure forms. The resulting image of ethnic culture turned out to be very speculative and it was hardly related to ethnographic reality, whether past or present. However, these images are still alive and they still inform anti-colonial sentiments, this time of Komi themselves.

In the second article, Victoria Vlasova discusses the reaction of orthodox Christians (both members of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Old Believers) living in the Komi Republic to the anti-religious measures of the Soviet Regime. As it is well known for specialists, both in Russia and in other post-Soviet republics, the policy of communists towards religion had two aspects: the first was the atheist propaganda as well as limiting as much as possible the opportunities for taking part in religious life (visiting churches, taking part in rituals, etc.); the second was intrusion into the church institution and creating official Churches, which would be loyal to the regime. Vlasova shows how the first aspect, – the atheist propaganda, closing churches, punishing priests, etc. – has led to individualization of the religious life, to the spread of hidden religious practices independent of the official church. Significantly, this compromised the position of the official Church, which was one of the main ideological instruments of the pre-communist Russia and the Church is trying to adopt the same position in modern Russia.

Finally, the paper by Natalia Drannikova deals with the members of the forced colonization: the de-kulaked Russian peasants, who were exiled to the north of European Russia and played an important role in the industrial colonization. Using narratives by the exiled peasants themselves as well as their descendants, Drannikova shows how the memory of these tragic events is preserved and what role it is playing now.

We hope that these papers will give the reader some feeling of cultural and intellectual life of the modern European North of Russia, the land that has experienced colonization and colonization retreat and is currently in the search of new ways of dealing with their heritage.

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