

SCTMG 2023**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of
Modern Globalism»****E.A. PREOBRAZHENSKY FROM OSTRACISM TO
REHABILITATION AND SCIENTIFIC RECOGNITION**

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Abstract

The article touches upon the problem of theoretical heritage of Russian economists of the 1920s in the context of the "homoactivus principle", namely, scientists-innovators in the field of fundamental and applied knowledge. The fate of statesman and original economist-theorist Evgeny Alekseevich Preobrazhensky, whose conceptual speculations in the field of economic theory and practice could have become the transcendental basis of the theory of convergence of economic systems and, at the same time, the mainstream of socialist economics, is at the centre of the study. The obstacle to this phenomenal search was the bogeyman of "Trotskyist theorist" and, as a consequence, the rejection of his original hypotheses and bold ideas, both "on the right" and "on the left". The relevance of addressing the historical experience of the search for conceptual support of social transformations is dictated by a number of circumstances similar to the modern period related to the search for socially oriented economic strategies. The proposed article does not allow a detailed analysis of the economist's innovative views. The novelty of the study lies in the authors' attempt to reconstruct the conflict between the scientist and the authorities by means of introducing new archival documents into the scientific turnover. As a result of the reconstructed historical context, the conclusion is made about the tragic content of the synergistic effect of science and politics in the circumstances of bifurcation of the transitional period of society development.

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1. Introduction

The discrediting of the ideology of the "free market" and the appeal of modern socio-economic thought to the "forgotten factor of production", namely the economic significance of social equality and economic justice, were the grounds for the regeneration of the research of the age-old search for socially oriented economic strategies (Lomonosova & Petrusevich, 2020; Sukhorukova & Pogorely, 2017, etc.).

Among such strategies we can mention the ideas of the Soviet scientist-economist Evgeny Alekseevich Preobrazhensky, who, solving the unconventional task of "finishing what capitalism had not finished" (Kon, 1927, p. 143), for the first time in world practice paved the way to a state that was not only economically efficient, but also socially just. In this regard, the context of the NEP is not only "stunning fragments of a breakthrough into something new" (Gefter, 1990, p. 15), it is phenomenal material for understanding the historically conditioned social mechanisms governing the relations between power and society, power and science.

2. Problem Statement

The current emerging mainstream of economic theory has evoked the names of outstanding Russian economists who were able to predict the contours of the problems of the market economy surprisingly accurately and present hypothetical considerations for overcoming them. However, having come into conflict with then existing political regime, these scientists fell under the press of the repressive machine, and their scientific developments turned out to be unclaimed for many decades. The legacy of scientist-economist E. A. Preobrazhensky can be safely attributed to such concepts, which are extremely relevant in the context of crises of modern economic models (Manevich, 1989; Vilkova, 2024; Voyerikov, 2021).

3. Research Questions

The subject of the study in the proposed work is the demonstration of the possible negative impact of the political conjuncture in a particular state at a certain stage of its historical development on the progress of scientific research, which is banned for decades only because of the political position of their authors. This trend is illustrated by the example of the tragic fate of the Soviet scientist-economist Evgeny Alekseevich Preobrazhensky, repressed in the 1930s, whose return to historical and economic knowledge took place only in 1989 thanks to the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR "On additional measures to restore justice to the victims of repression that took place in the period of the 30s-40s and early 50s", and a detailed analysis of the content of the works is still awaiting serious scientific research (Mele, 2022; Nikulin, 2023; Rawel, 2022).

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to reconstruct the circumstances of the development of the conflict between the priorities of political expediency supporting the existing political regime and the dominant foundations of economic growth in the theoretical heritage of Russian economic science of the 1920s by

the example of the activities of economist-theorist E. A. Preobrazhensky in the 1920–1930s. It is also supposed to show repeated attempts to rehabilitate the name of this scientist on the basis of archival documents and analyse the reasons for their failure (Collet-Sabé, 2023; Manakbayeva, 2023; Sheveleva, 2024).

5. Research Methods

In order to achieve the set goals, the historical-genetic, historical-systemic and historical-comparative methods were applied. The historical-genetic method as the most widespread in the studies on historical topics allowed us to trace the evolution of relations between the Soviet authorities and the scientific community in the 1920s–1930s. The application of the analytical method helped to systematise the obtained information, which was introduced into the context of modern historical research through the method of actualisation.

6. Findings

The formation of a system of scientific views, which were based on the ideas of the implementation of the model of mixed economy in the realities of a predominantly agrarian country, should have provided a rapid breakthrough in the development of productive forces, without detracting from the foundations of socialist ideology. They were surprisingly combined in the fate of Evgeny Alekseevich with party and state activity. Since 1920 (in some periods Evgeny Alekseevich simultaneously worked in 12 organisations and commissions), Preobrazhensky, up to 1927, held a number of high-ranking positions, combining party, state and scientific activities (Mambetova et al., 2024; Mascareno, Chavez, 2024; Giza, 2024).

One of the evidences of Preobrazhensky's adherence to the norms of broad intra-party democracy is his report "Symptoms of the decay of our party", written for the commission of the Central Committee of the RCP(b) (Report of E.A. Preobrazhensky), included in the resolution of the IX All-Russian Conference of the RCP(b) "On the next tasks of party building".

The course of the December (1920) all-party discussion, the emergence of different platforms and the regrouping of party leaders during the X Congress of the RCP (b) found in the Preobrazhensky weak apparatus player, but a sincere and desperate fighter to save Soviet power from "rebirth".

However, his withdrawal from the Central Committee did not prevent him from being recognised as a specialist in economic and financial matters. As a Chairman of the Financial Commission of the Sovnarkom, as well as a member of the board of the People's Commissariat of Finance, Preobrazhensky, analysing the national economy of the country, developed possibilities for the implementation of general economic and, specifically, monetary reform.

The economic difficulties of 1923 revived critical sentiments within the Party. The phenomena of violation of intra-party democracy and the economic policy of the party under the conditions of the NEP were criticised at the same time. In the course of the open discussion on intra-party democracy, which began in the autumn, the positions of L. D. Trotsky and E. A. Preobrazhensky again, as in 1921, converged.

"Statement of the 46" (15 October 1923), Preobrazhensky's article "On Our Intra-Party Situation" published in Pravda (28 November 1923), Trotsky's letter to the members of the Central Committee of the RCP (b) (8 October 1923) are full of consonant definitions and conclusions about the "fundamentally unhealthy" intra-party regime and the "oburocracy" of the Central Committee, the consequence of which is the erroneous economic policy.

As a scientist and publicist, Preobrazhensky carried out his subsequent activity in the persistent association of his analyses of the state of the country's economy with the ideas of the "new opposition" and supporters of the theoretical positions of Trotskyists, Zinovievites, and so-called pests, which eventually formed the "status of an oppositionist". As a result, the impossibility of open criticism of the established orders forced the scientist to move from the position of propaganda of the "gospel of the opposition" (as opponents called Preobrazhensky's main work under the title "New Economy") to illegal activities. In September 1927, in a private flat in Moscow, a group of Y. V. Sharov, E. A. Preobrazhensky and L. P. Serebryakov set up an illegal printing house where the conceptual foundations of opposition views, Lenin's "testament" and a number of works by Trotsky and Zinoviev were printed.

The ostracism against the scientist ended with a sentence of capital punishment and continued with the desecration of his name and the destruction of his scientific heritage. The original works of the economist have survived in only a few copies. Up until the 1990s, his scientific views were interpreted one-sidedly, and statements taken out of context distorted the meaning of theoretical provisions and assumptions.

In 2009, in the fonds "Committee for Party Control under the CPSU Central Committee" (F. 6) and "Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee" (F. 3) stored in the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), documents under the general title "Documents on the Opposition Activities of Economist E. A. Preobrazhensky" were opened to the public. Such evidences of the epoch include "Extract from Protocol No. 129 of the meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of 13.X.1927 on the exclusion from the membership of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks E. A. Preobrazhensky, L. P. Serebryakov, Y. Sharov" and "Extract from Protocol No. ... of the meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of 19.I.1928" on the exclusion from the membership of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. 19.I.1928" on the exclusion from the Comacademy of a number of oppositionists, including E. A. Preobrazhensky.

The correspondence of E.A. Preobrazhensky during his exile in Uralsk deserves special attention. The surviving epistolary sources shed light on the usual accusations of "capitulation" against a number of exiled oppositionists. Letters of E.A. Preobrazhensky to his wife P. Vinogradskaya and prominent statesman and party figure K. Radek clearly show the conviction in the correctness of the implementation of socialist economy, the need to protect these fundamental positions from the so-called "right-wing bias", which (as the scientist naively believed) in the internal party transformations could be fought by the forces of the ideological potential of the opposition.

An interesting testimony to the circumstances of Preobrazhensky's life after his reinstatement in the party is the materials of his speech at the meeting of the London community, which were offered to all members and candidates for membership in the Presidium of the CCC of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks.

The real attitude towards the "temporarily rehabilitated" economist is well traced by the declassified transcript of his speech on the Syrtsov case, Karpov's note to E.M. Yaroslavsky and the resolution of the Society's bureau: "...there are Trotskyist traces in the speech of Comrade Preobrazhensky. We ... offered him to give an explanation at the Board of the Society, which he did, but this explanation also did not quite satisfy us".

A new round of repressions against Evgeny Alekseevich testifies to how conditional the "pardon" was. In the declassified extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Party Board of the Central Control Commission of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks (b) of 17.01.1933 in connection with the activities of a counter-revolutionary Trotskyist group consisting of Smirnov I.N., Ter-Vaganyan V.A., E.A. Preobrazhensky and others wrote: "E.A. PREOBRAZHENSKY for deceiving the Party, for hiding from the Party the facts of his counter-revolutionary activity and double-crossing - to exclude from the ranks of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. As it follows from this extract, Preobrazhensky was accused of counter-revolutionary work that began in 1929 through the distribution of illegal Trotskyist literature and participation in the creation of the nationalist organisation "Peasant Ittifak" with a Trotskyist bias.

Even under the constant threat of a new arrest, Preobrazhensky made attempts to preserve the lives of similar members of the Stalinist leadership, who had full knowledge of the real state of affairs in the country's economy and of intra-party processes, and therefore fell into the category of "unreliable" persons. The situation of "vigilance" and informing about former oppositionists after the assassination of S.M. Kirov is recreated in the description of one of the many party meetings held at that time. It had one scenario at its core: collective condemnation of the anti-party activities of "Trotskyists-Zinovievites" with the demand for inevitable punishment for them, the collective scourging and self-beating of the "former". Preobrazhensky's speech at the closed party meeting on January 4, 1935 in the People's Commissariat of Agriculture was to follow the same scenario. However, understanding the fact that removal from posts and expulsion from the party is just the beginning of a repressive campaign, he in fact became the only participant who abstained from voting on the exclusion from the party and removal from all posts of fellow workers.

A year after the events described above, as part of the large-scale fight against anti-party counter-revolutionary elements, another arrest of Preobrazhensky became obvious, the grounds for which were contained in the certificates submitted to the Commission for Party Control under the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (b). Denying his participation in terrorist activities, Preobrazhensky was doomed. For the "active participation in a counter-revolutionary terrorist organisation on December 1, 1934 the villainous murder of S.M. Kirov", the scientist was sentenced under paragraphs 8 and 11 of Article 58 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR to be shot.

The label of "Trotskyist" even after the XX Congress of the CPSU was an insurmountable obstacle to the rehabilitation of Preobrazhensky neither by the commission of V. M. Molotov (1956), nor by the commission of N. M. Shvernik in 1961, working under the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee. In the materials of the fund of the Committee of Party Control under the CPSU Central Committee found appeals of Preobrazhensky's widow, P. S. Vinogradskaya-Preobrazhenskaya, to the XXII Congress of the CPSU, as well as the petition of the USSR Prosecutor General R.A. Rudenko to the CPSU Central

Committee. They requested to review the crimes, termination of criminal cases and rehabilitation of E.A. Preobrazhensky on the basis of unsubstantiated accusations against him. However, the resignation of Nikita Khrushchev, the gradual smoothing of critical assessments of Stalin and the veneer of secrecy on the materials of the work of the commissions of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee for a long time suspended the procedure of rehabilitation of the unjustifiably repressed and suppressed the research process.

7. Conclusion

In modern historiography, a symbol of revision of E. A. Preobrazhensky's scientific heritage can be considered a review of the scientist's activities by Doctor of Historical Sciences V. S. Lelchuk (2005): "A very interesting person! Reading him would bring everyone here to a certain level" (p. 167).

In the West, the renovation of research interest in the works of the Russian economist began in the 1950s and continues today. The translation into German and English of his major works resulted in the recognition of the "Preobrazhensky model", "Preobrazhensky's dilemma" (Ehrlich, 2010; Spalber, 1965).

Without going into details, as this article does not imply a detailed presentation of Preobrazhensky's economic views, let us cite the statement of the authoritative Russian economist M. I. Voeikov. Comparing the relevance of the works of the disgraced researcher with the famous party figure, N. I. Bukharin wrote that "for the history of Russian economic thought, E. A. Preobrazhensky is still poorly studied and little known great name of the Russian economist" (Voeikov, 2012, p. 1).

The authors of this article had the opportunity to research the above new archival documentary sources and publish them in full in the journal "Historical Archive" in 2017 (Bespyatova, 2016a, 2016b).

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