

Political Exiles as Colonial Agents*

: The Russian Geographical Society and Its Exile-Explorers in Siberia, 1860s-1890s

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1. Myths of Siberian Exile

In Russian history, Siberia has often been placed in the realm of the mythical. From the time when the first Cossack brigands led by Ermak Timofeevich crossed the Urals in 1581/82 to defeat the khanate of Sibir, Siberia has been seen both as Russia's "gold mine[*zolotoe dno*]"¹⁾ as well as a "vast prison house for the exiles."²⁾ The conventionally accepted narrative of the conquest states that in less than 100 years, Russians conquered Siberia--excluding Kamchatka, the Amur region and Sakhalin--with relative ease and managed to force the indigenous populations to become tribute[*yasak*]-paying subjects of the Russian tsar.

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1) James Gibson(1993) "Paradoxical Perceptions of Siberia: Patrician and Plebeian Images up to the Mid-1800s," *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture*, eds. Galya Diment and Yuri Slezkine, New York: St. Martin's Press, pp.67-93.

2) K. F. Ryleev(1971) "Voinarskii," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Leningrad, p.192. Quoted in Marc Bassin(1991) "Inventing Siberia: Visions of the Russian Far East in the Early Nineteenth Century," *The American Historical Review*, 96:3(June), p.774.

In the 17th century, the indigenous subjects and Russian trappers provided the metropole government with “soft gold,” i.e., pelts particularly from sable and fox, hunting the fur-bearing animals to virtual extinction by the end of the century.³⁾ During this time the Russian state also began to exile the unwanted elements of society to Siberia. In 1648, Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich first decreed that criminals be sent to Siberia to banish them from society and as a means of colonizing the supposedly “empty” land.⁴⁾

In the 19th century, starting with the Decembrists, the narrative of political exile in Siberia acquired a romantic hue. Influenced by German Romanticism, the Decembrists wrote poems, prose and letters of their heroic suffering in the savage wilderness.⁵⁾ The Decembrists themselves have been much romanticized in subsequent historiographies. They as well as other political exiles have been portrayed as a Prometheus-like force of enlightenment in Siberia. One historian of Siberia at the turn of the 20th century wrote,

Which of us, Sibiriki,⁶⁾ does not know either in our families or those of our acquaintances the beneficial cultural influence of the Decembrists, the Poles, the Russian liberals and revolutionaries. From them our

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- 3) See Raymond Fisher(1943) *The Russian Trade, 1550-1700*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 4) George Kennan(1891) *Siberia and the Exile System*, Vol. 1, London: James R. Osgood and McIlvaine, pp.74-75.
- 5) Harriet Murav(1993), “Vo Glubine Sibirskikh Rud’: Siberia and the Myth of Exile,” *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture*, eds. Galya Diment and Yuri Slezkine, New York: St. Martin’s Press, pp.95-111. See in particular poems by A. A. Bestushev-Marlinskii(1961) *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvoreniï*, Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel’.
- 6) The term “Sibiriak”, which is translated as “Siberian”, connotes only Russian/Slavic inhabitants of Siberia. The indigenous Siberian peoples were called inorodtsy. Yuri Slezkine translates the term as “aliens”, which may be the most appropriate English translation, but it does not, in my view, express the otherness imbedded in biology and blood that the root rod in inorodtsy implies. See Slezkine(1994) *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p.53.

grandmothers and mothers learned music and painting, learned to be interested in books and received the skill to read. Our grandfathers and fathers had in these people the first tutors....⁷⁾

In Soviet historiography, political awakening was added to the narrative of cultural enlightenment, supposedly brought to the remote corners of the empire by the political exiles agitating for a revolution.⁸⁾

Another prevalent view on pre-revolutionary life in Siberian exile was expressed by George Kennan in his 1891 publication of the two-volume *Siberia and the Exile System*.⁹⁾ As an American journalist well acquainted with Russia and particularly Siberia, Kennan published this condemnation of the autocratic legal structure and the exile system of Russia after he traveled across the empire in mid 1880's. The book describes overcrowded, unsanitary conditions of the exile transport system, in which people were being herded like cattle, dying of exhaustion, disease, and mental breakdown. In his encounters with the political exiles, Kennan appeared genuinely surprised that these "nihilists" were so well educated and "civilized," invariably falsely accused or harshly punished for minor offenses. He described their dire living conditions and declared that the fact that the Russian state allowed the country's most educated youth to wither away in exile, often in the hands of cruel, uncultured local officials, was a travesty. When a local official told a group of exiles that they should "hire themselves out to the Kirghis as...laborers'" as a means of making a living, Kennan exclaimed, "This was almost as cruel and insulting as it would be to tell post-graduate students of the Johns

7) N. N. Kozmin(1910) "M. V. Zagoskin i ego znachenie v istorii razvitiia sibirskoi obshchestvennosti (iz istorii oblastnogo dvizheniia)," *Ocherki proshlogo i nastoiashchego Sibiri*, Saint Petersburg: Tip "Pechatnyi Trud," p. 166.

8) For example, see L. M. Goriushkin(ed.)(1989) *Politicheskaiia ssylka i revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii konets XIX - nachalo XX v.*, Novosibirsk: Nauka Sib. otd.

9) George Kennan(1891) *Siberia and the Exile System*, 2 vols. London: James R. Osgood and McIlvaine.

Hopkins University, who had been banished without trial to the mountains of the Sierra Nevada, that if they needed employment they might catch grasshoppers for the Digger Indians.”¹⁰⁾ In short, Kennan unequivocally declared the Russian exile system barbaric and unjust.

Amidst these grand narratives of Siberian exile lies another, perhaps more mundane and contradictory, story of life in exile. The mundane aspect, as reflected in the above comment about working for “the Kirghis as...laborers,” was the basic fact that these exiles needed to eke out a living somehow. In the latter half of the 19th century, a small group of exiles managed to make a living by working for the Eastern Siberian Branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society (RGS), which played a major role in the process of empire-building in the region. Here lies the contradiction. Why would these political radicals, who were supposedly exiled for inciting anti-state activities, want to work for a state-sponsored institution whose research was to benefit the Russian state? On the other hand, why would the Imperial Russian Geographical Society that bore the seal of the tsar allow people that had been banished by the tsar to go on state-sponsored expeditions and publish their results not only in the publications of the Society but in popular journals and newspapers? If, as many scholars have recently argued, the production of geographical and anthropological knowledge is a major component in the colonizing process,¹¹⁾ one has to accept that these exile-explorers contributed to the Russian colonial project as de facto agents of the state. If so, in what ways were they colonial agents? This paper attempts to address these

10) Kennan, vol. 2, p.41.

11) There is an extensive body of work on the topic of the relationships between colonialism/empire-building and the production of knowledge. For example, see Bernard Cohn(1996) *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, Princeton: Princeton University Press; Timothy Mitchell(1988) *Colonizing Egypt*, Berkeley: University of California Press; Nicholas Dirks (ed.)(1992) *Colonialism and Culture*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press; Anne Godlewska and Neil Smith (eds.)(1994) *Geography and Empire*, Oxford: Blackwell.

questions by examining the history and mission of the Russian Geographical Society and its Eastern Siberian Branch and the activities of a few prominent exile-explorers. It argues finally that the scientific, rationalist idealism of the exiles complimented the imperial strivings of the Society to serve the purpose of the Russian empire-building.

2. The Founding of the Russian Geographical Society and the Siberian Branch

The Russian Geographical Society was founded in 1845 in St. Petersburg by a small group of celebrated military explorers, eminent academicians, and high-level bureaucrats as part of the general European trend to create learned societies and institutionalize scientific research.¹²⁾ As one of the first scientific societies in Russia, the RGS was a source of international prestige that was regarded as an important step in placing Russian science on a par with the rest of Europe. A more immediate concern of the founders, who were predominantly of German descent, was the perceived lack of accurate geographical information about Russia within the European scientific community. The RGS was meant to remedy that situation.¹³⁾

While the founders modeled the RGS after the Royal Geographical Society in London, the RGS differed greatly from the other geographical societies in Europe in its declaration to concentrate its work almost exclusively on the territories within the boundaries of its own empire. The

12) For a thorough history on the founding of the RGS, see P. P. Semenov-Tian-Shanskii(1896) *Istoriia poluekovoi deiatel'nosti imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva 1845-1895, vol.1*, St. Petersburg: Tip. Bezobrazov, pp.1-18; Nathaniel Knight(1994) *Constructing the Science of Nationality: Ethnography in Mid-Nineteenth Century Russia*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, pp.211-232.

13) Imperatorskoe Russkoe geograficheskoe obshchestvo(IRGO)(1845), *Vremennyi ustav Russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva*, St. Petersburg, p.1.

RGS' goal was to conduct what Admiral F. P. Ltke(Litke), the first vice-chairman of the Society, called "geography of the fatherland [*otechestvennaia geografiia*]."14) In his inaugural speech on the opening of the RGS, he proclaimed,

Our fatherland, stretching...half the circumference of the earth in longitude,...represents a special part of the world with all the varieties...in climate, geographical configurations, organic forms of nature,...[and] numerous tribes with different languages, customs, civic relations, and so on.....Such completely unique conditions dictate that the purpose of the Russian Geographical Society should be the cultivation[*vozdelyvanie*] of Geography of Russia, taking the name Geography in its broadest sense.15)

For the founding members, the "fatherland[*otechestvo*]" referred not only to European Russia but to Kamchatka and the Caucasus inhabited by Russian peasants as well as Chukchis and Georgians.

The explicitly stated purpose of the RGS to focus its work on the *otechestvo* meshed well with the nationalist sentiment prevalent amongst young educated Russian bureaucrats, who joined the Society in large numbers.16) This soon led to a struggle between the old German founders who emphasized the scholarly aspect of the Society and the young Russian bureaucrats who saw the RGS as a "scientific-patriotic" society whose work "should always and everywhere be for Russia and in the name of Russia[italics theirs]."17) By 1850, the young Russian "sons" succeeded in removing the German "fathers" from the positions of power. Having gained control of the organization, these so-called "enlightened bureaucrats" initiated numerous research activities particularly in the field

14) IRGO(1845) *Otkrytie Russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva (i rech' gen-adjutanta F. P. Litke na otkrytii*, St. Petersburg, p.5. The office of vice-chairman in essence functioned as the chair since the honorary title of chairman was given to Grand Duke Konstantin.

15) Ibid., pp.3-4.

16) Semenov-Tian-Shanskii, vol.1, p.57.

17) "Otchet IRGO za 1850," *Vestnik IRGO*, 1:1(1851), otdel 1, pp.4, 7.

of statistics and ethnography to enhance their reformist agenda. Under the protective auspices of science, they saw the RGS as a state-sanctioned institution within which they could study and discuss fundamental reforms in Russian society, such as the emancipation of serfs, without the close scrutiny and reprisals from the regime of Nicholas I.¹⁸⁾ Even after the reform era under Alexander II came to an end, the RGS continued to be a relatively liberal institution in its political outlook.

While this reform-driven nationalism framed the activities of the RGS in European Russia in its early years, a more imperial attitude of those working in the periphery of the empire led to the establishment of one of the Society's first regional branches in Eastern Siberia in 1851. The formation of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Geographical Society, renamed the Eastern Siberian Branch in 1878, came about largely due to the efforts of Nikolai Nikolaevich Murav'ev, the Governor-General of Eastern Siberia and one of the reform-minded members in the RGS. Having become the governor-general of Eastern Siberia in 1847, Murav'ev saw the main task of his administration as the strengthening of Russia's colonial interests in Eastern Siberia and the Far East. He saw the encroachment of other European powers deep into China as a serious threat to Russian influence in the region and appealed to Nicholas I that Russia must fortify its territory in Siberia lest Russia lose control over this vast territory. He argued that the best and most efficient means of fortifying Russian Siberia was to annex the Amur and Ussuri regions along the Russo-Chinese border from the Chinese.¹⁹⁾ After the Academy of

18) Semenov-Tian-Shanskii, vol.1, pp.108-39; W. Bruce Lincoln(1977) *Nikolai Miliutin, an Enlightened Russian Bureaucrat*, Newtonville, MA: Oriental Research Partners; Lincoln(1982) *In the Vanguard of Reform: Russia's Enlightened Bureaucrats, 1825-186*, Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, pp.91-101.

19) See Mark Bassin(1999) *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840-1865*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.84-101; Mark Bassin(1983) "A Russian Mississippi?: A Political-Geographical Inquiry into the Vision of Russia on the

Sciences' expedition to the mouth of the Amur reported that many of the indigenous groups were already paying tribute to the local Russian Cossacks,²⁰⁾ Murav'ev was emboldened to argue that the native populations there were already Russian subjects and their land Russian land.

Faced with strong opposition from the conservative ministers of Nicholas I, who did not wish to jeopardize relations with China, Murav'ev and other proponents of the annexation saw the Russian Geographical Society as a possible tool by which to propagate their expansionist vision. In 1850, Murav'ev proposed that the RGS open a Siberian branch under his authority. Through this branch, he hoped to provide better information about the Amur region not only to the Russian government but also to educated society and the reading public at large. The Council of the RGS agreed to open its Siberian branch in Irkutsk, the seat of the governor-generalship of Eastern Siberia. The leaders of the RGS in St. Petersburg regarded Siberia as *terra incognita* and thus an ideal region where the RGS could combine its scientific interests with the practical goals of the state to obtain geographical data on this vast territory of the empire. The RGS stated, "Siberia, in its geographical composition, forms one of the most important parts of the Asian continent, the study of which is mainly the calling of *Russian* science, and for Russians, with our close ties to Asia, it represents a topic of high interest and importance [*italics theirs*]."²¹⁾

In November 1851, Nikolai Murav'ev called to his governor-general's mansion in Irkutsk a small group of the "more enlightened" men of the region to found the Siberian Branch. These were the bureaucrats closest to Murav'ev. At the inaugural meeting, the governor of Irkutsk, Ventsel',

Pacific 1840-1865," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, pp.115-148.

20) A. F. Middendorf(1860) *Puteshestvie na sever i vostok Sibiri*, St. Petersburg, part 1, pp.159-68.

21) "Otchet IRGO za 1851g.," *Vestnik IRGO*, 4:2(1852), otdel 1, pp.18-19.

became the first elected chairman. Shtubendorf, the future governor of Yakutsk, was elected the director of affairs. Other founding members included Korsakov, the next governor-general of Eastern Siberia, and other future governors of various oblasti.²²⁾ Invoking the glories of their Russian forefathers who physically conquered Siberia, claiming it as "the eternal property of Russia," Murav'ev told these men that it was now their patriotic duty to "scientifically conquer Siberia."²³⁾

Murav'ev as well as the other founding members saw the Siberian Branch of the RGS as "a scientific department of the main administration [of Eastern Siberia]"²⁴⁾ and structured it to function as such. In the regulations of the branch charter, the Siberian Branch was placed under the direct control of the governor-general of Eastern Siberia. Election of the chairman and the director of affairs had to be approved by the governor-general. All plans of the Branch activities had to be submitted to his office for approval in an annual report. Moreover, the State Treasury was to fund the Siberian Branch with an annual subsidy of 2,000 rubles, which made up most of its operating budget.²⁵⁾ With the honorary title, the "Patron of the Siberian Branch," the governor-general had the final say in all aspects of the organization.

With the Siberian Branch in place and with the backing of the main RGS, Murav'ev engineered a series of RGS-sponsored scientific expeditions, known as the Great Siberian Expeditions (1855-63), in conjunction with his military reconnaissance missions to survey the Amur and Ussuri rivers and inform the government as well as the public of the

22) T. N. Oglezneva(1994) *Russkoe geograficheskoe obshchestvo: izuchenie narodov severo-vostoka Azii 1845-1917*, Novosibirsk: "Nauka," pp.16, 32.

23) B. V. Struve, *Vospominaniia o Sibiri* (St. Petersburg, 1889), pp.114-116. Quoted in I. P. Barsukov(1891) *Graf Nikolai Nikolaevich Murav'ev-Amurskii po ego pis'mam, offitsial'nym dokumentam, rasskazam sovremennikov i pechatnym istochnikam*, vol. 1, Moscow: Sinodal'naia Tip, p.290. Murav'ev was given the honorific of Amurskii after the annexation of the Amur region.

24) Kozmin "M. V. Zagoskin," p.192.

25) Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Irkutskoi oblasti(GAIO), f.293, op.1, d.1, ll.5-9ob.

region's natural resources and potential for Russian colonization. His plan worked remarkably well. He achieved the annexation of the Amur and Ussuri regions into the Russian empire with the Treaty of Aigun in 1858 and the Treaty of Peking in 1860.²⁶⁾ Thus, Murav'ev succeeded in utilizing the endeavors of a scientific institution to fulfill his imperial vision.

With the governor-general's patronage, the Siberian Branch quickly became of a center of intellectual and social activity in Eastern Siberia. The membership grew rapidly to include many clergy, doctors, teachers, publicists, and mining engineers from all over Eastern Siberia, while remaining dominated by government officials and military officers. Murav'ev personally persuaded senior officials, such as governors of cities and districts, to join.²⁷⁾ It is likely that many of these members joined the Society not only because of their interest in science but for the prestige of belonging to an institution under the close patronage of the governor-general. Moreover, for these men, who were mostly of European descent, living on the farthest edges of the empire, membership to the Siberian Branch provided a connection to the metropole.

With membership dominated by government officials, one of the persistent problems that the Siberian Branch faced was the general lack of scientifically trained personnel who could carry out long-term expeditions without the hindrance of government service obligations. For any of these officials to go on expeditions, it was necessary to obtain permission from the governor-general to take leave of their posts. As one founding member lamented in 1851, the work in mathematical and physical geography required people with special training whose presence in Siberia depended completely on the government. Thus, he suggested that the Siberian Branch concentrate its efforts on ethnographic and statistical work, which could be done by "anyone with a general education or who is even just

26) Marc Bassin(1993) "The Russian Geographic Society, the 'Amur Epoch,' and the Great Siberian Expedition 1855-1863," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 73:2, pp.240-256.

27) Oglezneva, p.32.

literate.”²⁸⁾ Indeed, most members, experienced at providing descriptive reports to the government, easily adapted to the task of writing geographical and ethnographic descriptions[*opisaniia*] of the people and the land to which they were assigned.²⁹⁾

A geographical society, however, usually achieves its renown not for its travelogue-like descriptions but for carrying out major expeditions to *terrae incognitae*. Faced with a want of personnel to staff the expeditions, it seems that the presence of political exiles in Eastern Siberia provided a ready solution to the problem. They were usually well-educated, often trained in the sciences, and, needless to say, had the time to go on long-term expeditions. Another factor was that these exiles were often already living in remote parts of Siberia or willing to go on difficult journeys to get out of their current circumstances. Moreover, they usually were in dire financial straits, and the Siberian Branch provided an opportunity to make a living.

3. A. P. Shchapov and the Polish Exiles, 1860's – 1870's

One of the first exiles turned explorers in the Siberian Branch was Afanasii Prokof'evich Shchapov, a well-known historian and publicist. Born to a Russian deacon and a Buriat mother in a small village in Irkutsk province, Shchapov was a native Sibiriak. As a young professor of Russian history at Kazan University, he gave an inflammatory speech at a memorial service after the government's massacre of the peasants at the Bezdna Uprising in 1861. For this, he was duly arrested and sent back to

28) Arkhiv Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obshchestva(ARGO), f. 1-1851, op.1, d.59, ll. 24-24ob.

29) One of the first programs that the Siberian Branch carried out was called “the Program for the Description of the Districts.” GAIO, f.293, op.1, d.1, ll.143-150ob. The Branch's publication at this time was full of articles with titles that began “description[*opisanie*]” of this or that location.

Siberia in exile in 1864.³⁰⁾ As he was being sent to Irkutsk, the Minister of Interiors sent a confidential letter to the governor-general of Eastern Siberia conveying a request from the Minister of Public Education that out of respect for his scholarly work Shchapov be allowed to live in Irkutsk where he could participate in the activities of the Siberian Branch.³¹⁾ It seems that from the perspective of the state, working for the RGS branch constituted a relatively benign and harmless activity for an exile. For the next decade, Shchapov became active in both the scientific as well as administrative work of the Branch.³²⁾

At the time of his arrest and sentencing in Kazan and then in Petersburg, Shchapov had been developing a historical/anthropological theory that examined the effects of geographical conditions on the physical and economic development of the Russian *narod*.³³⁾ Upon arrival in Siberia in exile, Shchapov began to elaborate on the significance of the Russian colonization of Siberia within this organic history. He asserted that the discovery of Siberia and the exposure to its new geographical environment had aroused the static minds of the Russian *narod*. In his essay "Historical-Geographical Notes on Siberia," he wrote,

After a thousand-year stagnation of the mental faculties of the Russian *narod* in the isolated environment of the monotonous landscape of the Great Russian plains - suddenly new forms of nature, new land,

30) For a biography of Shchapov, see A. S. Madzharov(1992) *Afanasii Shchapov*, Irkutsk: Vostochno-sibirskoe knizh. idz.; N. M. Iadrintsev(1919) *Zhizn' i trudy A. P. Shchapova: Biograficheskii ocherk*, Krasnoiarsk: Izdanie Krasnoiarskogo Soiuza Sibriakov Oblastnikov-Avtonomistov.

31) A. N. Turunov(1937) "Shchapov i Sibirskii Otdel Geograficheskogo Obshchestva," *Izvestiia Obshchestva izucheniia Vostochnosibirskoi oblasti*, 2:57, pp.7-8.

32) *Ibid.*, pp.3-15.

33) For example, see his essay(1937) "Istoriko-geograficheskoe raspredelenie russkogo narodonaseleniia," *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol.2, Irkutsk: Vostochnosibirskoe oblastnoe izd., pp.182-364. Shchapov was very interested in physical anthropology and craniology.

new peoples and languages... in Siberia were discovered. In the Russian minds, the curiosity [and] intellectual thirst to see the miracle or the wonders of newly discovered nature were unintentionally awakened... Most importantly, the physio-geographical range of vision of the Russian narod widened as the result of the opening of Siberia.³⁴⁾

Shchapov asserted that the exposure to the natural wonders of Siberia aroused in the Russian mind a serious interest in natural history and science, which are markers of civilization and enlightenment. He contended that the Russian colonizers were in a monumental struggle with nature in Siberia and noted the need to employ the findings of scientific research in order to conquer it. ³⁵⁾

In exile, Shchapov became the resident expert on ethnology in the Siberian Branch.³⁶⁾ In 1866, the Siberian Branch commissioned Shchapov along with I. A. Lopatin, a mining engineer, to lead an expedition to the Turukhansk region along the Enisei River. As most of the funding for the expedition came from the Eniseisk gold-mining industrialists, the main objective was to do geological and topographical research. Nonetheless, Shchapov and his wife, Olga Ivanovna, were assigned to do ethnographic and statistical work on the indigenous populations in the region.³⁷⁾ Again in 1874, he led an ethnographic expedition to the Bratsk steppe and the Verkholensk region of the Irkutsk province to study the economy of the

34) A. P. Shchapov(1939) "Istoriko-geograficheskie zametki o Sibiri," *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 4, Irkutsk, p.174. First published in "Izvestiia Sibirskogo otdela Russkogo geograficheskogo obshchesta," 4:2(1873).

35) *Ibid.*, p.190.

36) For instance, when Czekanowski, who I discuss next in this paper, was to go on an expedition, he was instructed to consult Shchapov on all matters regarding ethnography. *Arkhiv Peterburgskogo otdeleniia Akademii Nauk(PAN)*, f. 9, op.1, ed.khr. 984/1, ll. 101ob-102.

37) Turunov, pp.8-10. I should note here that many wives of the exile/explorers went on the expeditions with their husbands and contributed greatly to the scientific research. Besides Olga Shchapova, another noted person is L. Cherskaia, Jan Czerski's Sibiriak peasant wife, who assisted him in all of his arduous expeditions.

Buriat population. From this research, he produced numerous articles on the communistic tendencies of the Buriat economy, which he found meritorious.³⁸⁾ Some of his resultant articles were published in the journal of the Siberian Branch. Others were sent to the main RGS in Petersburg to be published in its journal, but they were suppressed by the censors and never published. Subsequently, the Siberian Branch tried to publish Shchapov's unpublished articles, but the Irkutsk fire of 1879 destroyed his entire archive. The difference in the level of censorship indicates on the one hand that Russia did not have a set standard that applied to all areas, but more importantly, illustrates that because Siberia was seen as so peripheral to the metropole the exiles could have greater freedom to do scholarly work.

Although Shchapov did find some access to scientific activity, he held Siberia in disdain for its general lack of intellectual life. He continuously petitioned the government to allow him to return to any part of European Russia so that he could continue his scholarly work. The reply always was that he belonged to "a type of people whose presence in the capitals [was] declared impossible."³⁹⁾ After trying to eke out a life from the honoraria that he secured from his publications and receiving repeated rejections to his petitions, he died in poverty in 1876. His case illustrates the harsh conditions under which exiles lived, even those working in the Siberian Branch.

In the late 1860's and 70's, numerous Polish exiles, banished to Siberia after the Polish Uprising of 1863-64, worked alongside Shchapov in the Siberian Branch. After struggling for Poland's independence from the Russian empire, thousands of young Poles were exiled to the other end of the empire. A number of them found work in the Siberian Branch. One

38) A. P. Shchapov(1937) "Buriatskaia ulusno-rodovaia obshchina (gl.I i II iz raboty 'O Lenskoi obshchine' 1874 g.," *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol.4, Irkutsk: Vostochnosibirskoe oblastnoe izd., pp.198-223.

39) A. P. Shchapov(1938) *A. P. Shchapov v Irkutske (neizdannye materialy)*, ed. A. N. Turunov, Irkutsk: Irkutskoe oblastnoe izd., p.98.

such figure was Aleksander Czekanowski(Chekanovskii). Before the uprising, he had studied natural science at a university in Poland. Due to his family's financial situation, he had to give up his hope of becoming a geologist and was working as an engineer when he was arrested for his involvement in the uprising. In exile, sentenced to hard labor in a small village in southeastern Siberia in 1865, he conducted botanical and meteorological observations on his own. In 1868, the Academy of Sciences acquired his botanical collection and supported his transfer to Irkutsk to work at the Siberian Branch.⁴⁰⁾

In exile Czekanowski fulfilled his hope of becoming a geologist and accompanying scientific expeditions to remote places. In Irkutsk, he was commissioned by the Siberian Branch to do a geological study of the southern part of the Irkutsk province. His geological map of Irkutsk province won a gold medal of first class at the International Geographical Congress in Paris in 1875. His major expedition for the RGS was to an unexplored territory between Enisei and Lena rivers in 1873-75. In 1873, the RGS assigned him to head the expedition to conduct geological and topographical research of the unexplored basins of the Nizhnaia Tunguska and Olenek rivers. Because the government at this time was interested in gaining easy access to this region, Czekanowski's instruction was to concentrate on accurate cartographic research to mark exact routes to and around the region.⁴¹⁾ The journey was an exceptionally difficult one. One member of the expedition died along the way; another Polish exile, V. Ksiezopolski(Ksenzhopol'skii), experienced a serious mental breakdown and could not complete the expedition. Despite the tragedies, the expedition was successfully completed. The main accomplishments were a rich collection of fauna and flora and the geographical and geological maps of the region, which were used as part of the General Staff's map of Asian

40) I. L. Kleopov and V. B. Liatskii(1962) "Osnovnye etapy zhizni i deiatel'nosti A. L. Chekanovskogo," *Sbornik neopublik. materialov A. L. Chekanovskogo, stat'i o ego nauchnoi rabote*, Irkutsk, pp.8-12.

41) Arkhiv PAN, r. 9, op.1, ed.khr. 984/1, ll. 101ob-102.

Russia. The expedition also discovered deposits of hard coal and granite along Nizhnaia Tunguska.⁴²⁾

Citing his scientific achievements, the RGS and the Academy of Sciences petitioned for his pardon, which was granted in 1875. He was given a post in the mineralogical museum of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg in 1876. But only a few months after his arrival in the capital, having survived over a decade of life in exile, he fell into a deep depression, from which he had suffered intermittently, and committed suicide.⁴³⁾

Besides Czekanowski, other Polish exiles directed much of the expeditionary work for the Siberian Branch in the 1870's. Two other prominent researchers were Jan Czernski (Cherskii), who conducted geological work, and Władysław Dybowski (Dybovskii), who carried out zoological research. For their scientific endeavor, they were also supported by the RGS and the Academy of Sciences in their procurement of pardons. Czernski was given a position at the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, where he continued his research for many more years. His name has since acquired a mythical aura in Russian science because he died tragically while trying to carry out a very difficult expedition on the river Kolyma near the arctic in 1891.⁴⁴⁾ Dybowski, when given his pardon, asked to be assigned as a physician to an even more remote part of Siberia, Petropavlovsk-na-Kamchatke, where he continued his zoological research of Siberia. He eventually returned to Poland and became the head of the department of zoology at University of L'viv.

It is noteworthy that it was in exile that these individuals acquired the status of expertise in the field of science. The peculiar circumstance of scientifically-trained exiles in unexplored regions of the empire dictated

42) Kleopov, pp.8-18.

43) Ibid., p.19-20.

44) For Czernski's biography, see Obruchev(1956) "Osnovnye etapy zhizni i tvorchestva I. D. Cherskogo," *Neopublikovannye stat'i, pis'ma i dnevniki, stat'i o I. D. Cherskom i L. I. Cherskoi*, Irkutsk: Irkutskoe knizh. izd., pp.9-28.

that they acquire first-hand experience in research, which gave them a certain authority. Their scientific successes, furthermore, paved the way for their pardons and allowed them to move into positions of influence within the scientific institutions of European Russia.

4. The Siberian Regionalists and Sibiriakov's *lakut* Expedition, 1880's–1890's

The next wave of exile-explorers in the Siberian Branch, renamed the Eastern Siberian Branch in 1878, came in the late 1880s and 90s. These were formative years for the Branch when it came under the leadership of the Siberian regionalists [*oblastniki*]. The Siberian regionalists, led by Nikolai Mikhailovich Iadrintsev and Grigorii Nikolaevich Potanin, were young Sibiriak-intellectuals who, as students in St. Petersburg in the early 1860's, had developed the concept of their native land Siberia as a Russian colony similar to the model of the British colonial territories in North America. While they for the most part shied away from the American revolutionary model, they envisioned the future of Siberia as part of a larger Russian federation within which Siberia would have greater autonomy in choosing its path of development.⁴⁵⁾ It is important to note here, however, that this was not a nationalist movement. They saw their patriotism to Siberia as part of their patriotism to the Russian nation, although not necessarily the state.⁴⁶⁾

45) See Stephen Watrous (1993) "The Regionalist Conception of Siberia, 1860-1920," *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture*, eds. Galya Diment and Yuri Slezkine, New York: St. Martin's Press, pp. 113-32; Watrous (1970) *Russia's Land of the Future: Regionalism and the Awakening of Siberia, 1819-1894*, Ph.D. diss., University of Washington. Besides thinkers like Herzen and Pisarev, Shchapov as a fellow Sibiriak intellectual had a major impact on the thinking of the regionalists.

46) Watrous makes this point in his essay, "The Regionalist", pp.117-18.

Although Siberian regionalism flourished only within a small intellectual circle, the Russian government saw it, somewhat justifiably, as a separatist movement. The “Siberian patriots,” as they called themselves, were quickly rounded up in 1865 and exiled, ironically, to Siberia, where they spent their time reading and contemplating the conditions and needs of Siberia. After almost a decade in exile, the regionalists in the 1870’s and 80’s moved away from their separatist tendencies and turned their attention to the issues of cultural and social development in Siberia. The development of popular education and the press became their main focus. They saw enlightenment of the Siberian *narod* as the answer to overcoming the colonial status of Siberia.

The regionalists’ call for education applied to the native populations as well. Iadrintsev, in his landmark book *Siberia as a Colony*, lamented the negative influence of Russians on the natives, who, he argued, remained backward largely due to centuries of Russian exploitation.⁴⁷⁾ He called on the moral conscience of Russians, guilty of having put the native peoples in the dire predicament, to accept the obligation to bring “civilization” to them. Yuri Slezkine states that Iadrintsev invoked a moral obligation to the natives not just from a sense of the colonizer’s remorse but out of national pride. Russians had to show that they were better, more humane colonizers than other Europeans.⁴⁸⁾ Intertwined in his humanism still remained the colonial project to integrate the native peoples more effectively into the Russian empire.

As part of their enlightenment project, the regionalists called for greater effort in gathering geographical and anthropological knowledge of Siberia. Many of them were engaged in geographical and anthropological research either on their own or for such organizations as the RGS. Potanin, who had gone on a RGS’s expedition to Mongolia before he was arrested, had

47) N. M. Iadrintsev(1891) *Sibir’ kak koloniia*, St. Petersburg, pp.146-89. This book was first published in 1882 to mark the 300th anniversary of the Russian annexation of Siberia.

48) Slezkine, pp.116-17.

already developed a reputation as a geographer. After he was freed in 1875, he became a major figure in Russian geography by leading expeditions to northwest Mongolia, northern China and eastern Tibet for the RGS.⁴⁹⁾ In 1887, while he was working in Irkutsk between expeditions, he was elected the director of affairs of the Eastern Siberian Branch, and Iadrintsev joined him there. Together they tried to enhance and increase the activities of the Branch and create local newspapers and literary journals.⁵⁰⁾

During this time, Dmitrii Aleksandrovich Klements arrived in Irkutsk to work with Potanin and Iadrintsev. Sent into exile in 1881 for his involvement in the populist movement, Klements was another exile-explorer who had led ethnographic and archaeological expeditions to the Saian and Altai mountains for the Western Siberian Branch of the RGS in the 1880s. As Potanin was leaving Irkutsk to return to St. Petersburg, he insisted that Klements succeed him as the director of affairs of the Eastern Siberian Branch. Not without internal opposition, Klements was elected to the office in 1890.⁵¹⁾ Under his leadership, the Eastern Siberian Branch carried out one of the largest ethnographic expeditions in its history-- Sibiriaikov's Yakut Expedition.

I. M. Sibiriaikov, the main financial backer of the expedition, was a member of one of the wealthiest gold-mining families in Siberia. In 1889, he suggested to Potanin, the then director of affairs of the Branch, that he would finance a major ethnographic expedition of the Yakutsk region in northeastern Siberia to investigate primarily the economic conditions of the native populations in the mining areas of the region. For years, however, Sibiriaikov could not find anyone to lead the arduous expedition to such a

49) Much of the expeditionary work in Mongolia and China at this time was in actuality part of military reconnaissance missions, as the Russian government sought a strategic position in these regions.

50) S. F. Koval'(1987) "G. N. Potanin: obshchestvennyi i politicheskii deiatel'," *Pis'ma G. N. Potanina*, vol.1, Irkutsk: Izd. Irkutskogo universiteta, pp.26-28.

51) GAIO. f.162, op.1, d.117, ll. 608-9. V. I. Vagin's unpublished diary, vol.2. (5-38)

remote territory. In 1892, Klements, the new director of affairs for the Branch, suggested employing political exiles who were already living in the region. While somewhat concerned that the use of political exiles would make the expedition appear involuntary, Sibiriakov approved the plan.⁵²⁾ Thus, from 1892 to 1897, Klements hired 14 political exiles, most of them fellow populists, to plan and carry out the expedition.⁵³⁾

Like the Siberian regionalists, these populist exiles viewed ethnographic knowledge of the peoples as a necessary element in their emancipatory project. During their stay in exile, which put them in close contact with the indigenous populations, many had taken up ethnographic research prior to the Yakut Expedition. For instance, one member of the expedition, E. K. Pekarskii, was already working on an Yakut-Russian dictionary, a project encouraged by the government, which "recogniz[ed] such works useful in purely scientific as well as practical terms and wish[ed] to have a more accurate understanding of these works."⁵⁴⁾ Another member, V. G. Bogoraz(Bogoras), who had become fluent in Chukchi after years in exile, was collecting Chukchi folklore. Under these circumstances, and probably from boredom and need for money, they were eager to participate in a scientific expedition that would bring themselves and their work together.⁵⁵⁾ The governor-general of Eastern Siberia also approved their participation under the conditions that they not be allowed to go beyond the border of their districts, that there be no gathering of exiles under the

52) GAIO, f.293, op.1, d. 829, ll.2-3ob. Sibiriakov's letter to Klements, 22 Sept. 1892.

53) They were: N. A. Vitashevskii, V. G. Bogoraz, L. G. Levental', I. I. Mainov, V. I. Iokhel'son, E. K. Pekarskii, S. V. Iastremskii, S. F. Kovalik, V. E. Gorinovich, V. M. Ionov, N. L. Gekker, G. F. Osmolovskii, V. V. Livadin, and V. F. Troshchanskii.

54) GAIO, f.293, op.1, d.53, ll.291-291ob. A letter from governor-general to Raevskii, chairman of the Eastern Siberian Branch, 1888. (4-64)

55) GAIO, f.293, op.1, d.101, ll.5-8ob. Letter from N. Vitashevskii to Klements expressed his eagerness to participate in the expedition and stated that he passed on the invitation to other exiles.

guise of discussions about the expedition, and that all manuscripts be presented to the censors.⁵⁶⁾

After longer than expected duration, the expedition produced a wealth of research that went beyond the initial goal of studying the economic conditions of the indigenous groups. Besides the usual descriptive work about the daily life of the Yakuts, Pekarskii continued his work on the dictionary. I. I. Mainov conducted demographic research. N. L. Gekker took anthropometric measurements. Others worked on the issue of miscegenation between Russians and Yakuts. After the expedition concluded, many exile participants received permission from the governor-general to live in Irkutsk to work on the material that they had gathered on the expedition. The results of the expedition were published in a 13-volume series by the Eastern Siberian Branch.⁵⁷⁾

As in the case of the Polish exiles in the 1870's, participation in the Yakut Expedition provided some of its members with the training and the expertise which led to their involvement in further scientific activities. In 1895, Klements was allowed to return to St. Petersburg to work at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology at the Academy of Sciences until 1900, after which he became the director of the ethnological section of the Russian Museum until 1910.⁵⁸⁾ For two of the exile-ethnographers, Bogoraz and Iokhel'son (Jochelson), their participation in the Yakut expedition led to international renown. As the Yakut Expedition was drawing to a close, the president of the American Museum of Natural History, Morris Jesup, was organizing a joint U.S.-Russian expedition to northeastern Siberia and northwestern coast of North America to study the cultural similarities between various ethnic groups in these two regions. The Jesup North Pacific Expedition was headed by Franz Boas. With the recommendation of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Jesup asked Iokhel'son to lead the

56) GAIO, f.293, op.1, d.101, ll. 84-84ob.

57) Oglezneva, pp.64-67.

58) I. I. Popov(1925) "D. A. Klements: ego zhizn' i deiatel'nost'," *Iz proshlogo: vospominaniia*, D. A. Klements, Leningrad: "Kolos," pp.55-61.

Russian side of the expedition. Iokhel'son, in turn, invited Bogoraz to work as an ethnographer. Their participation in the Jesup Expedition resulted in the publication of seven monographs in English by the American Museum of Natural History.⁵⁹⁾ After serving in the Jesup Expedition, Iokhel'son went to New York in 1922 to work on the material that he had gathered and did not return to the Soviet Union. Bogoraz became a professor of ethnography at the Institute of Geography in Petrograd in 1922, where he trained the next generation of Soviet ethnographers.⁶⁰⁾

During the 1920's and early 30's, Bogoraz became a leading figure not only in defining the field of Soviet ethnography but also the government's policy towards the indigenous peoples in Siberia. Now an official of the new Soviet state, he was able to apply the ideas and methods that he had developed as an exile-ethnographer for the RGS. From this position, he promoted a policy that placed ethnographers, which he called "missionaries," as the primary agents to proselytize socialism amongst the indigenous groups in the peripheries of the Soviet empire. In 1926, he declared,

We must send to the North not scholars but missionaries, missionaries of the new culture and the new Soviet statehood...Not the experienced professors but the recent graduates, brought up in the new Soviet environment and ready to take to the North the burning fire of their enthusiasm born of the Revolution, as well as the practical skills perfected by revolutionary work.⁶¹⁾

Armed with the knowledge of ethnography, these Soviet missionaries

59) Liudmila P. Kuz'mina, "The Jesup North Pacific Expedition: A History of Russian-American Cooperation," *Anthropology of the North Pacific Rim*, eds. William Fitzhugh and Valerie Chaussonnet, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, pp.63-77.

60) Slezkine, pp.149, 162.

61) V. G. Bogoraz(-Tan)(1925) "Podgovitel'nye mery k organizatsii malykh narodnostei," *Sovetskaia Azia*, no.3: 48. Quoted in Slezkine, p.159. The "North" signifies the remote northeastern section of Siberia.

were to be the new vanguard force of socialist enlightenment for the native populations of Siberia.

5. Conclusion

To return to the questions raised in the beginning of the paper, the Russian state allowed the political exiles to engage in scientific activities in Siberia because it believed that the exiles were in “a part of the empire where they [could] do no harm.”⁶²⁾ With the general scarcity of scientifically trained people in Siberia, the ready-made availability of these educated exiles for expeditions was in fact seen as useful by the state. Thus, exiles like Shchapov, who belonged to “a type of people whose presence in the capitals [was] declared impossible,”⁶³⁾ could live and work as respected scholars in the periphery of the empire.

The fundamental assumption that the state and the Russian Geographical Society made was the notion that science is an apolitical, objective endeavor. At one level, the state as well as the RGS clearly recognized the value of scientific knowledge for the governance of the empire. Indeed, the RGS' mandate was to conduct practical scientific research that would benefit Russia. At the level of practice, however, it seems that the state perceived the process of scientific research as an apolitical activity and the produced knowledge to be value-free. After all, a map produced by an exile should look no different than one produced by a government official. Thus, the state could allow the exiles to carry out scientific expeditions and expect to acquire an objective set of information that could have been gathered by any properly trained persons.

The political exiles for their part were also eager to work for the RGS

62) Kennan, vol. 1, pp.172-3. Excerpted from a quote by a government official.

63) Shchapov, A. P. Shchapov v Irkutske, p.98.

and participate in state-sponsored expeditions and activities. Admittedly, the exiles were in a position of limited choices. The financial need to make a living was imperative, and the opportunity to pursue their scholarly interests in a scientific organization was quite attractive. Moreover, their involvement in the scientific activities of the RGS often led not only to obtaining their pardons but to finding their careers as well. Many of them acquired their authoritative status as scientists and teachers of geography and ethnography only because of their experience in exile. As one exile-ethnographer noted, they were "ethnographically baptized" in the remote corners of Siberia.⁶⁴⁾

More significantly, the exiles found their work for the RGS to accord with their view of science as a universally progressive enterprise. From Shchapov to the populists in the Yakut Expedition, their radical political outlooks grew out of their belief in the ideals of enlightenment. They envisioned their scientific work as a necessary component of the enlightenment project, part of which, in the case of Siberia, was the "civilizing mission." As Iadrntsev declared, Russian intellectuals needed to have a greater knowledge of Siberia in order to bring enlightenment to the Sibiriak peasants as well as the native populations and to more effectively integrate them into not only the Russian empire but the civilized world. Although these exile-explorers did not explicitly see themselves as colonial agents, they unwittingly served that function by producing knowledge that helped to categorize, codify, and order the peoples and the land to create a more efficient governing structure. This is not to say that they were dupes of the state. Nonetheless, a fundamental convergence of values and aims between the scientific humanism of the exiles and the colonial project of the state brought the two seemingly opposing sides together, at least in the peripheries of the empire.

64) L. Shternberg, *The Social Organization of the Giliak* [Translation manuscript], New York: Archives of the Department of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History, n.d., p.1. Quoted in Bruce Grant, *In the House of Culture: A Century of Perestroikas*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.53.

After the Bolshevik revolution, some of the exile-explorers became colonial agents of another sort during the Soviet era. With the socialist ideology, the need to bring these backward peoples into the fold of the dialectics of History became even more pronounced. As official state agents in positions of political power, these Soviet scientists were able to institute the socialist "civilizing mission" as the policy of the new state.

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요약문

식민 활동가로서의 정치적 유형수
: 1860-1890년대 시베리아에서 러시아 지리학 협회의 활동과
정치범 출신 탐사자들의 역할

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이 논문은 19세기 후반 제정 러시아에서 시베리아에 유배된 정치범들이 이 지역의 탐사에 동원되면서 결과적으로 식민 활동가의 역할을 하게 되었음을 밝히고자 한 것이다. 정치범들이 시베리아 탐사에 동원된 것은 러시아 제국 지리학 협회(RGS) 시베리아 지부 - 1878년부터는 동(東)시베리아 지부 - 의 주선에 따른 것이다. 이 협회의 본부는 원래 자유주의적 성향의 인물들이 주도하였으나, 시베리아 지부는 제국주의적인 경향을 좀더 강하게 띠고 있었다. 즉 이 단체는 시베리아 전역에 대한 러시아의 지배권을 확립하는데 기여하려는 의도를 가지고 있었다. 이를 위해서는 오지·미개척지에 대한 탐사가 불가결하였는데, 이 목적을 위한 최적의 인력으로 선택된 것이 시베리아에 유배된 정치범들이었다. 정치범들은 1)탐사에 필요한 학문적·지적 능력을 갖추고 있으면서 이를 활용할 기회를 가지기를 바라고 있었고 2)유형수라는 지위에서 비롯되는 법적 제약 때문에 시베리아를 벗어나지 못할 뿐 아니라 정부의 통제 자체를 벗어나지 못하는 처지였으며 3) 그들의 궁핍한 경제적 상황 때문에 생활에 필요한 재정적 지원을 절실하게 원하고 있었다. 러시아 제국 지리학 협회의 시베리아 지부는 이들의 이러한 처지를 이용하여 이들을 시베리아 각지의 탐사에 동원하였다. 이에 따라 1860-70년대에는 역사학자인 쉬차포프, 폴란드 정치범인 체카노프스키, 크센조폴스키, 체르스키, 두보프스키 등이 시베리아 지역에 대한 인류학적, 동식물학적, 지질학적 탐사를 수행하였다. 1880-90년대에는 시베리아 지역주의자(oblastniki)에 속하는 정치범들이 비슷한 성격의 탐사를 계속하였다. 시베리아 현지 출신 러시아 지식인들로 이루어진 시베리아 지역주의자들은 러시아인들의 착취에 대항하기 위해 시베리아

현지인들을 교육·계몽할 필요성을 역설하였고, 이를 위해 역시 제국 지리학 협회의 동(東)시베리아 지부의 지원을 받아 시베리아 일대에 대한 인류학적·지리학적 연구를 수행하였다. 포타닌, 야드린체프, 클레멘츠 등이 그 대표적 인물들이다. 현지인들을 해방하기 위한 교육·계몽 목적의 탐사에는 페카르스키, 보고라스 등 인민주의자 출신의 정치범들도 참여하였다. 이들의 연구를 통해 시베리아의 주민·지리·식생·자원에 대한 광범한 지식이 축적될 수 있었다. 이러한 지식은 제정 러시아 말기, 소비에트 정권 초기에 유럽지역 러시아인들이 시베리아 지역을 효과적으로 지배하는 데 대단히 중요한 정보를 제공해 주었다. 뿐만 아니라, 이들 정치범 출신 탐사자들 가운데 일부는 자신들의 '문명화' 사명을 확신한 나머지, 소비에트 초기에 이르러서는 시베리아에 대한 유럽 러시아인들의 계몽활동의 중요성을 역설하였으며, 이로써 이 지역에 대한 러시아인들의 통제권이 강화되는 데 앞장서기도 하였다. 제정 러시아의 지배체제에 저항하여 유배된 인물들인 정치범들이 자신들의 원래의 의도와는 별도로, 결과적으로 시베리아 지역에서 러시아의 지배권이 확장되는데 일조하게 된 것은 역설적이다.

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