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NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN RESEARCH

TITLE: SIBERIA'S CHANGING URBAN GEOGRAPHIES: SEVENTY YEARS OF SOVIET RULE

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NOTE

This paper supplements, and in some of its data on urban growth in Siberia, duplicates the Final Report entitled "Siberian Urbanization Since Stalin" by the same author, distributed earlier. It contains a brief description of basic urban growth trends from the late tsarist period, observations about the degree to which development of the settlement system, especially after 1959, represents continuity or change, and concludes that, while the potential exists for greater efficiency and higher standards of living through perestroyka, in the near future its impact will be negligible.
During the Soviet period, the evolution of the urban settlement system in Siberia has not only been the result of changes in central government policies, but has also influenced the development of those policies. This has been especially true for the 30-plus years since the 20th Party Congress in 1956, when Nikita Khrushchev reinstated urban planning as an important component of the overall planning process. In addition to the effects of re-legitimization of urban planning in the USSR, urbanization in Siberia has also been affected by increased emphases on resource exploitation and greater integration of the region into the Soviet and world economies.

Yet, within the context of the entire history of Siberia, these kinds of interrelationships — between government policies and the basic character of the region, and between the urban network and Siberia's changing roles within the empire and state — are not singularly applicable to the Soviet period.

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Throughout four centuries of Russian presence, the settlement system in Siberia has served as the skeleton for exploitation and development. While Soviet rule has brought about many changes, there has been a high level of continuity with the tsarist past. Certain characteristics of Siberian development have persisted throughout, regardless of the kind of government in power. In contrast, some aspects of Siberia have changed markedly as a result of Soviet rule. Because of the need to balance continuity and change, it is essential to lay a solid historical foundation as the basis for an examination of contemporary trends.

My paper examines the growth of the Siberian urban network, with particular attention to the period since the death of Stalin. This study represents the initial stage of a more comprehensive research project, funded by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, that will examine Siberian urbanization since Stalin. Although the project for the National Council focuses specifically on the period since the death of Stalin, this preliminary compilation of data provides the necessary historical background. As it should, the compilation of these data raises as many, if not more, questions than it answers.

By using the tsarist urban network of 1911 as a baseline, this investigation emphasizes the continuity and change found when comparing recent urbanization trends with trends during the earlier Soviet period, as well as with trends during the tsarist
period. Recent and proposed changes in the Soviet economy resulting from the policies of Gorbachev, and as embodied in perestroika, promise to have profound and long-lasting effects on the nature of Siberian urbanization. Yet, rather than representing a "turning away" from Siberia, as some have suggested, policies based on uskoreniye and intensifikatsiya seem to echo, rather than contradict, traditional Russian and Soviet approaches to Siberia's development.

I will begin, then, with a description of basic urban growth trends in Siberia during the tsarist period. This will be followed by a description of trends during the Soviet period. The paper will conclude with a number of observations about the degree to which the development of the settlement system, especially after 1959, represents continuity and/or change. For today, "Siberia" refers to West and East Siberia and the Soviet Far East.

The data base for the study so far includes only officially-designated goroda (cities) and does not address the issue of other urban places, specifically poselki gorodskogo tipa (urban-type settlements). We must be careful not to underestimate the importance of urban-type settlements in Siberia -- far more so than in the European regions of the country. Often, in Siberia, the introduction of industrial activities or resource exploitation initiates a new urban-type settlement that eventually evolves into a full-fledged city, thus serving as a possible harbinger of urban growth. This is an area for further
research of which I am aware, but which must await phase II of the research project.

Background: the Settlement System in Late-Tsarist Siberia

The Russian conquest of Siberia, which began in the late sixteenth century, precipitated specific "geographic manifestations," which were political, economic, social, cultural and psychological. These geographic manifestations changed over time, producing "a series of changing geographies."\(^1\) There was no single colonial economic geography of Russian Siberia; it was a constantly changing economic landscape, which interacted with a constantly changing political landscape, which interacted with a constantly changing cultural landscape.

One of the most important changing geographies under tsarist rule was the settlement system -- the towns and cities that served as the backbone for development, exploitation and control. It was here that most of the changing political, economic and cultural geographies were concentrated. In the late-tsarist period, the settlement system had been most immediately affected by major political and economic events of the second half of the nineteenth century, namely Emancipation in 1861 and the construction of the Trans-Siberian railway in the 1890s and early twentieth century.

As a result, massive peasant migration, increased
interaction with China and other countries of the Pacific Rim, and increased levels of industrialization all transformed the role of Siberia into one which was more multifunctional than it had been in the past. Towns and cities, which continued to link Siberia to the European heartland, became more multifunctional as well.

Several large cities, most of which grew upon the sites of the original Cossack ostrogi, dominated the settlement system. There were, however, numerous smaller towns beginning to fill in the hierarchy. Figure 1 illustrates the basic structure of the Siberian settlement system in 1911. If we were to compare the population data for these cities with data from the 1897 Census, we would see the rapid rate of growth taking place during the first decade of the twentieth century.

For 1911, Aziatskaya Rossiya enumerated fifty-six cities and towns in what we now refer to as Siberia. Three cities -- Tomsk, Omsk and Irkutsk -- already had populations in excess of 100,000. These were the major economic and administrative centers of western and eastern Siberia. Another six cities -- Novo-Nikolyevsk, Barnaul, Krasnoyarsk, Chita, Blagoveshchensk and Vladivostok -- had populations between 50,000 and 100,000. And an additional seventeen cities were between 10,000 and 50,000. Thus, twenty-six of the fifty-six cities of Siberia accounted for 93 percent of the urban population of the region. In other words, there was already an inclination for the urban population of Siberia to be concentrated in the larger cities of
Another apparent trend regarded the distribution of cities. Particularly with the construction of the Trans-Siberian, Siberian cities had a definite southern orientation. Important resource centers were found along the major rivers in the north. But, the largest centers were in the south, and, to a great extent, along the route of the railway. Thus, three transportation features were strongly correlated to town and city location -- rivers, seacoasts and railways.

The kinds of activities associated with Siberian cities had diversified by the twentieth century. The original impetus for conquest had been the fur trade, supplemented and replaced in importance by silver and gold. Added to these were increasing levels of exploitation of other mineral resources, particularly coal, agricultural products, primarily for regional use, and industrial activities.

Although the construction of the Trans-Siberian increased the ability of the government to exploit these resources, the resource base, in turn, had been a major reason for the construction of the Trans-Siberian. The other major reason for construction was the importance of increasing ties with the other countries of East Asia, especially China and Japan, and to consolidating Russia's hold on the region, especially after abdicating control of Russian America. Siberia had become not only an increasingly important treasure trove of resource wealth, it had also become an important political realm to the empire and
the church. As a result, the settlement system became ever increasingly important to the economic and political well-being of the Empire.

The Siberian Urban Network
Under Soviet Rule

During the Soviet period, we can divide the evolution of the settlement system into four general periods, the exact limits of which are determined by the various Soviet censuses. There was an initial period from the Revolution to 1926, roughly approximating the periods of "War Communism" and the "New Economic Policy," a second period from 1926-39, roughly approximating the first five-year plans, a third from 1939-59, encompassing World War II and the late Stalin years, and a fourth period from 1959 to present, the post-Stalin era. This analysis stops with 1985. Such timing is not only in anticipation of a possible plethora of data from the 1989 census, but also to signal the beginning of a new era, which to now may be termed the Gorbachev era, or era of reform. Because of the lag time between a change of leadership and the implementation of policies, 1989 may well serve as the benchmark for the transition from "Brezhnevism" to the years of perestroyka.

The Period from the Revolution to 1926

The initial decade of Soviet rule, as we would expect, saw
little activity in Siberia with respect to the growth of the settlement system. Only nine new cities were established, several of which had been urban settlements previously. World War I and the Civil War apparently brought urbanization to a standstill, or, in some cases, actually set it back. Although there was modest population growth in administrative centers such as Kemerovo, Tyumen', Ulan-Ude, Khabarovsk and Vladivostok, there were overall population losses in Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk and Blagoveshchensk, and substantial losses in Irkutsk and Chita. Only Barnaul, with an increase of 22 thousand, Omsk, with an increase of 34 thousand, and Novosibirsk, which doubled its population to 120 thousand, experienced sizeable gains by the time of the 1926 census.

The Period 1926-39

With the onset of rapid industrialization and the first five-year plans, urban populations exploded and the urban network expanded. Siberia was no exception. Two major trends can be detected -- designation of many new cities and the dynamic growth of major cities already in the urban system. Between 1926 and 1939 there were 33 new cities in Siberia -- specifically, Kemerovo region and the Far East benefitted the most. Also, it was not unusual for cities to more than double their populations. Barnaul, Chita and Vladivostok all doubled their populations, while Omsk, Tomsk and Tyumen' showed healthy growth. More dramatic gains were experienced by Kemerovo (six times),
Novosibirsk (almost four times), Ulan-Ude (four times), Krasnoyarsk (almost three times), Irkutsk (two and a half times), Yakutsk (five times) and Khabarovsk (four times). The major driving force, as it was throughout the country, was resource extraction and industrialization.

Of course, we must add a note of caution. It is becoming apparent that the data reported in the 1939 census is not reliable. I have chosen to leave it in the analysis for a number of reasons. Although more correct data might change the specific rates of growth, they would not change the overall magnitude of change. Also, the number of cities established, which also reflects the increased pace of urban growth throughout Siberia during this period, was probably not altered.

The Period 1939-59

The two decades preceding the 1959 census were greatly affected by World War II. For Siberia, this meant increased interest in locating strategic activities, including industrial activities, further to the east. In many cases, this meant Siberia.

On average, over three new cities per year appeared on the map of Siberia. All regions of West and East Siberia were affected. Additional cities were added as a result of the Soviet acquisition of Tuva (1945) and Sakhalin island at the end of World War II. In all, twenty cities, almost one-third of all "new" cities for this period, were added in this manner.
Additionally, established cities grew as well. Barnaul doubled, Kemerovo and Novokuznetsk more than doubled, as did Novosibirsk, Omsk and Krasnoyarsk. All other major cities showed healthy rates of growth for the period.

As a result, by 1959 the map of Siberia's settlement system showed a pattern that reflected both the basic nature of Siberian development and the main transportation lines. In fact, by 1959 the basic form of the settlement system was set, even though another 53 cities would be added after 1959. Once again, most of the major administrative centers showed healthy increases, many of them doubling in population during the period.

The Post-Stalin Period, to 1985

The period from 1959 to 1985 is the longest period in the history of the Soviet State free from major disturbances, such as wars or collectivization, and as such, provides a base for examining urban growth under relatively normal circumstances. The year 1959 was also a turning point in Soviet urban development as urban planning was acknowledged as an important component of national economic planning for the nation as a whole.5

From 1959 to 1985, relative growth for Siberia paralleled growth for the country as a whole -- 35 to 32 percent for overall population increases, and 78 to 80 percent for urban increases, respectively. This healthy relative growth for Siberia accounted for an increase in urban population of 7.9 million. This
compares to an urban increase in European Russia of 32.5 million. By 1985, over 70 percent of all Siberians (22 of 30 million) lived in urban places.

At the interregional level, the growth in Pacific Siberia, the term used to describe the eastward-oriented regions of East Siberia and the Far East, compared favorably with European-oriented West Siberia. In both cases, the greatest growth occurred after 1970. The larger proportion in Pacific Siberia can be related to the emphasis on the BAM zone, Pacific ports, and increased interaction with Japan and the Pacific Basin, conditions which have since diminished in importance. The increase in West Siberia can be related to resource extraction, primarily oil and gas.

Several high growth regions emerged in Siberia. Two regions added over one million urbanites between 1959 and 1985: Tyumen' Oblast in West Siberia and Krasnoyarsk Oblast in East Siberia, where Irkutsk Oblast was close with an urban increase of 961 thousand. Although no administrative region of the Far East increased by one million, Primorskiy Kray showed a very healthy absolute increase of 736 thousand. The Far East had particularly high growth in the period 1970-85, especially 1970-75, because of increased Japanese relations. East Siberia also showed a very high relative increase for 1959-70 and during the early 1970s because of coal mining and development of the Bratsk industrial complex.

Tyumen' Oblast also had the largest relative growth as well,
with an increase of 429 percent. Several other Siberian regions also showed high relative increases in urban population. Omsk in West Siberia was the next largest with a relative increase of 90 percent. Five others had relative increases of more than 100 percent, i.e., they doubled their populations during the period 1959–85. These were Buryat and Tuva ASSR's in East Siberia, and in the Far East, the Yakut ASSR and Magadan and Kamchatka oblasts. Only two Siberian regions had urban increases of less than 50 percent. Kemerovo Oblast in West Siberian and Sakhalin Oblast in the Far East both suffered from the adverse effects of a stagnant coal industry.

The above administrative regions led the way in the increase in urban growth in Siberia. The urban population showed impressive gains in its share of the total population. By 1985, Tuva ASSR in East Siberia was the only oblast-level region with less than half its population (45 percent) living in cities. In only one other region, Altay Kray (55 percent urban), is the population less than 60 percent urban.

Except for the Buryat ASSR and Chita and Tyumen' oblasts, all administrative regions of West and East Siberia showed higher rates of growth for before 1970 than after. Regions of the Far East were more varied. The trend toward slower growth rates after 1970 reflects an overall slowdown in population growth for the USSR as a whole after 1970.

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the basic structure of the Siberian settlement system for the years 1959 and 1985. For
individual cities, between 1959 and 1985, 21 cities increased their populations by 100 thousand or more. These 21 cities accounted for an increase in urban population of 5.4 million, or 56 percent of the total urban increase for Siberia.

Fifteen multi-functional, administrative centers dominated the list: Novosibirsk, Omsk, Barnaul, Kemerovo, Tomsk and Tyumen' in West Siberia; Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk, Chita and Ulan-Ude in East Siberia; and Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy, Blagoveshchensk and Yakutsk in the Far East, are all capitals of their respective ASSR, oblast or kray. Only three Siberian capitals did not increase their populations by 100,000. These were Kyzyl (Tuva ASSR), Magadan (Magadan Oblast), and Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk (Sakhalin Oblast). Both Magadan and Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk had healthy increases of 80 and 72 thousand respectively. Kyzyl, although increasing in population by only 41 thousand, had a relative increase of 120 percent. Its low absolute growth reflects its small initial population rather than urban stagnation.

These fifteen high-growth administrative centers are representative of Siberian growth poles. According to Gokhman, their predominant development has led to "monocentrism" in the evolution of the Siberian urban settlement system. It is in these centers that service establishments, higher-educational and research institutes, and government and economic institutions have been concentrated, adding to their attractiveness for future investment and development.⁶
The six remaining cities that increased by more than 100,000 developed around mining and industrial enterprises, more characteristic of the "company town" approach to development. In West Siberia, the oil centers of Tyumen', Surgut and Nizhnevartovsk fit in this category, as does the coal mining center of Novokuznetsk. The two industrial centers of Bratsk and Angarsk in East Siberia owe their growth to the development of hydroelectric power.

High growth cities in the Far East are closely related to the continuing Russian and Soviet objective to find outlets to the sea. These cities include the port cities of Vladivostok and Petrapavlovsk-Kamchatskiy, as well as the inland entrepots of Khabarovsk, Komsomol'sk, Blagoveshchensk, and Yakutsk, which is the gateway to the resource potential of Yakutiya. The growth of these cities is greatly dependent on Soviet interaction with countries of the Pacific Basin, although this interaction affects cities throughout all Siberia.

Several Siberian cities have benefited from the introduction of Japanese technology since 1959. Barnaul, Kemerovo, Tomsk and Tyumen' in West Siberia, received new industrial complexes from joint Soviet-Japanese ventures. Krasnoyarsk, Angarsk and Bratsk in East Siberia, and Khabarovsk and Komsomol'sk in the Far East also benefited from joint industrial projects. This technology transfer may help explain why Kemerovo, with its new petro-chemical industry was one of the few traditionally coal-dependent cities that grew rapidly. In other cases, however,
industry seemed to be attracted to places that had already reached a positive agglomeration of economies and so were the result of a previous population and industrial concentration rather than its cause.

The largest Siberian cities followed the same general trend in average annual growth rate as urban growth in the Soviet Union in general. For both West and East Siberia growth rates were greater before 1970 with the exception of Nizhnevartovsk, a post-1970 new town. Large cities in the Far East exhibited more variation in their growth rates. Yet, overall rates of growth for large Siberian cities dropped after 1970.

Increasingly, the growth of Siberia has been concentrated not just in cities, but in larger cities, a pattern that is in keeping with urban trends for the USSR as a whole. In Siberia, the number of large cities, those with populations of at least 100,000, increased from 24 to 37, their population from 5.8 to 12.4 million, and their share of the total urban population of Siberia from 47 to 57 percent. These data underscore the increasing concentration of Siberian urban dwellers in large cities. The 66 cities with 1985 populations over 50 thousand accounted for an increase of 8.0 million, or 82 percent of the total urban increase. This is from a total of 866 urban settlements -- 202 cities and 664 urban-type settlements.

Thus, the evolution of the urban settlement system in Siberia is geographically restricted and highly concentrated, which is also characteristic for the Soviet Union as a whole,
although not quite to this extreme. Clearly, the skeleton for further growth and development of the urban network in Siberia is concentrated in large urban centers located in potential growth areas.

Yet, the restricted and concentrated nature of urban growth is not singular to the Soviet period. One characteristic has been evident throughout the conquest and consolidation of Siberia into the Russian and Soviet states -- the importance of cities as the key conduits for exploitation and development. From the initial ostrogi founded by the Cossacks grew the towns and cities of tsarist Siberia and the major urban centers of Soviet Siberia. It is striking that of the twenty-one Siberian cities with populations of more than 100,000, fourteen, or two-thirds, were founded prior to the Revolution. Their geographical and historical advantages have endured to the present. In fact, the urban network established during the early centuries of tsarist rule has provided the base for Siberian development during the Soviet period.

Continuity and Change:

In addition to the strong historical ties related to the use of pre-Soviet cities as the bases for Soviet cities, there are other characteristics of Siberian urbanization that reflect a
strong degree of continuity with the past. One of these relates
to the continuity in the economic and political rationale for
urbanization. Resource exploitation remains the primary raison
d'état for Siberia's development. Although the kinds of
resources have changed over time, the economic benefits of
primary materials have long made Siberia an attractive hinterland
for the Russian/Soviet core.

In this regard, the basic nature of the relationship between
Siberia and the European USSR remains that of a core-periphery.
Although decreasing the differences in economic standards between
the European core and hinterland regions has been a goal of the
Soviet state, for the most part, Siberia still serves as a
resource hinterland, for both domestic and foreign markets.

Another facet of Siberian development continues to be the
geographic orientation of exploitation, primarily south and east.
Although the history of Siberia has seen northern exploration and
settlement, the primary focus has always been along the southern
regions and along the Pacific coast. This orientation has been
reinforced with the transportation networks, most dramatically
reflected in the late-tsarist Trans-Siberian and the Soviet
Baykal-Amur Mainline. Russian access to the countries of the
Pacific were as important to the tsars as they are currently to
the architects of perestroyka.

In this regard, one final parallel emerges when discussing
the level of foreign investment. Although years of autarky
affected the manner of Siberian development, recent ventures at
increasing the level of foreign involvement are reminiscent of
the early centuries of resource exploitation when foreign
investment played an active and important role. This trend
resurfaced in the 1970s with joint ventures with Japan and the
United States and has more recently been expanded with the
establishment of economic zones to further interaction with the
countries of the Pacific Basin.

Yet, just as there are strong similarities in the
development of the Siberian urban network, there are also major
differences between the pre- and post- Revolutionary periods.
The most obvious of these are the ideological considerations. In
theory, Siberia's role within the Soviet state changed with the
establishment of Bolshevik power. It was no longer to serve as a
colonial resource hinterland. Its economic development was now
to serve as the means for bringing the standard of living of
Siberians up to the levels of the European parts of the country.
Although this represents a major shift in orientation, a case can
be made that it was in word only and that the basic nature of the
relationship remain unchanged.

Another difference, which can be seen throughout the Soviet
Union concerns the basic nature of urbanization. The development
of urban agglomerations and Territorial Production Complexes
increases greatly the intensification of urbanization and
increases the efficiency of growth and development. These
approaches represent an attempt to more efficiently use local
resources in the development of certain key areas. As a result,
one finds a greater degree of regional variation and diversity throughout Siberia. Distinct economic macro and micro regions can be easily identified. Concomitantly, a larger number of multi-functional cities are found throughout the entire region.

Much of the evidence suggests that there is a great deal of historical continuity in the evolution of Siberia and its settlement system under tsarist and Soviet rule. To what degree, then, might perestroika affect these trends? Some have suggested that perestroika's emphasis on intensification and increased efficiency represents a "turning away" from Siberia on the part of central planners. It may be more correct to interpret the implementation of these policies as a continuation of traditional tsarist and Soviet approaches to the exploitation, development and integration of Siberia. Soviet planners seem to be formally enunciating policies that have, in truth, been in effect throughout the Soviet period, as well as throughout the entire history of Russia's conquest and consolidation.

The urban environment will continue to be paramount in the development of the region. The settlement system will continue to serve as the conduit for political economic integration to the Russian heartland and the rest of the world. Siberia resources and trade routes will continue be key factors in the potential development for the country as a whole. What may be most affected by perestroika, given the emphasis on local autonomy and decision making, is the ability of certain regions to greatly increase economic efficiency and to raise the standard of living.
for their local populations. In other words, the ideological goals of communism may be achieved only by implementing policies that do not address those goals. In the near future, however, the impact of perestroika on Siberian urban development will be negligible.


SETTLEMENT SYSTEM, 1911

POPULATION
- 100+ thousand
- 50 - 99
- below 50

UNR Geography
POPULATION

- 500 - one million
- 100 - 499 thousand
- 50 - 99
- below 50

SETTLEMENT SYSTEM, 1959