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To the History of N. D. Kondratieff's Private Collection in the Russian State Archive of Economics

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The Russian State Archive of Economics

Abstract

The article presents the history of the return of the name of an outstanding scientist N. D. Kondratieff to economic science. The Russian State Archive of Economics together with the International Fund named after him took an active part in the preservation of the famous economist's legacy. The 'Selected Works' of N. D. Kondratieff published in 1993 contains a section with the documents from the funds of The Russian State Archive of Economics. The acceptance for permanent storage of the collections of repressed economists and especially N. D. Kondratieff's private archive, as well as the publication in 2004 of his 'Suzdal Letters' was a significant event for the archive. The author introduces the reader to the unpredictability of archival research, the importance of 'discoveries' that constantly accompany archivists in their work.

Keywords: *rehabilitation of economists, theory of planning, People's Commissariat for Agriculture (Narkomzem), the First Five-Year Plan, State Register of Unique Documents.*

Thirty years ago, in the midst of Gorbachev's perestroika, I heard about Nikolai Dmitriyevich Kondratieff for the first time. At that time, I was working as deputy director of the Central State Archive of the National Economy of the USSR. My scientific supervisor, Doctor of Historical Sciences V. P. Danilov together with Academician of the VASKhNIL (the Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences) A. A. Nikonov participated in the preparation of the rehabilitation of a group of economists repressed in the 1930s, such as A. G. Doyarenko, N. D. Kondratieff, L. N. Litoshenko, N. P. Makarov, A. A. Rybnikov,

Kondratieff Waves: Kondratieff's Theoretical Legacy 2023 63–73

DOI: 10.30884/978-5-7057-6273-6_05

P. A. Sadyrin, A. V. Chayanov, and L. N. Yurovsky. Their names were unknown to me. I began a search for documents in the archives, based on the assumption that the rehabilitated economists might have worked in the Soviet People's Commissariats.

It turned out that the archive had personal collections of two of the listed rehabilitated economists A. G. Doyarenko and A. A. Rybnikov. Perhaps, when accepting these personal archives, the archivists did not know about the fate of these agricultural economists and assessed first of all the informational and scientific significance of the documents received for state storage.

This was the first archival discovery, followed by others. While studying the documents on the history of agrarian planning (this topic was chosen for my dissertation), I found the document 'Plan for the development of agriculture and forestry of People's Commissariat of the RSFSR for 1923/24–1927/28' (RSAE. Fond 4372. Series 1. File 172). Its authors were employees of the Zemplan of the People's Commissariat of the RSFSR Professors N. D. Kondratieff and N. P. Oganovsky. One of them, N. D. Kondratieff, was mentioned in the list of the rehabilitated. The first experience with the bibliography of these authors' works dispelled all doubts. These were outstanding scientists, who were already famous before the revolution and worked in the field of agrarian economics and statistics, as evidenced by their published works.

Clarification of the fate of the First Five-Year Plan for the development of agriculture and forestry turned out to be a fascinating process. Firstly, its main author was the world-famous economist, the author of the theory of long waves, N. D. Kondratieff. He drafted the fundamental sections of the plan outlining the methodology and basic principles of planning. Secondly, the perception of the plan in the People's Commissariat for Land of the RSFSR and Gosplan of the USSR was ambiguous. According to many contemporaries, as provided by this plan the agrarian sector of our country had been developing for five years, but the official assessment of the plan at a meeting of the Presidium of the State Planning Committee of the USSR in the summer of 1925 was contradictory: the plan was approved and at the same time was recognized as minimalist and ineffective (*Ibid.* File. 230. P. 14; File 231. P. 11). All these circumstances only strengthened the desire to understand the revealed contradictions. In the process of writing the dissertation it was possible to trace the fate of the plan and find out the tragic fate of its author N. D. Kondratieff, a scientist-economist, who, taking the path of cooperation with the Soviet authorities, tried to build the First Five-Year Plan of agriculture based on the application of the principles of new economic policy and world agrarian experience. He chose the method of combining genetic and target planning as the main method of planning.

As we have already noted, at the time of work on the plan, N. D. Kondratieff was already an established scientist. Even while studying at the Faculty of Law of St. Petersburg University he was distinguished by his ability to combine abstract research (in the field of methodology, theory of cognition, *etc.*) with specific statistical and economic analysis, to see the development of more general trends behind the established statistical dependencies. The scientist rightly believed that the basis of practical activity should be correctly constructed scientific methodology and specific scientific knowledge. It is not without reason that his thesis 'Economic Development of the Zemstvo of Kineshma in the Province of Kostroma' immediately attracted wide attention as a serious statistical-economic and historical-ethnographic research (Kondratieff 1915). In 1916, while continuing his scientific work at the university, N. D. Kondratieff became head of Department of Economic Statistics of the Union of Zemstvos of Saint Petersburg, a public organization created during the war to help the wounded and organize the work of the home front.

After the February Revolution, N. D. Kondratieff became an active participant in the League of Agrarian Reforms, which included agricultural economists of various political views, from representatives of right-wing parties to socialists-revolutionaries and Marxists. Like many intellectuals of peasant origin, in his political views he was close to the socialists-revolutionaries and was even a member of the party from 1905 to 1919. In October 1917, Kondratieff was appointed a Vice-Minister of Supply in the last Provisional Government, and in November 1917 became a member of the Central Land Committee and took part in the work of the All-Russian Food Congress, where he was elected to the Constituent Assembly from the Kostroma region on the list of the SR party.

As we can see, N. D. Kondratieff not only had outstanding scientific abilities, but was undoubtedly a citizen of his country and tried to actively apply his knowledge and experience in building the future of Russia. After the October Revolution and the collapse of his failed plans and hopes, he moved to Moscow, where he began teaching at the Shanyavsky Moscow City People's University and at the same time he worked at the Central Union of Flax Producers and the People's Bank. In 1920 N. D. Kondratieff became a professor at the Petrovskaya (the Timiryazev) Academy, and in 1923 he was appointed head of the department of 'The Theory of Agricultural Markets'. During that period Kondratieff published in the Soviet press his famous works on the state of the world bread market during and after the war and the future of bread exports in the USSR (*Idem* 1922b, 1922c, 1923).

Along with teaching, N. D. Kondratieff worked in the planning commission of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture of the RSFSR, but the main

and most important for the development of the creative potential of the scientist was the formation in 1920 of the Institute of economic conjuncture study (The Institute of Conjuncture) which at first was a small research laboratory, and then became a major research unit of the People's Commissariat of Finance of the USSR (the Institute became a part of it in 1923). It was the first scientific institution of such a profile in the country, whose task was a comprehensive analysis of the economic conjuncture both in the USSR and abroad. There were well-known statisticians and economists of that time, such as V. V. Slutsky, N. S. Chetverikov, A. A. Konyus, A. L. Weinstein, M. V. Ignatiev, L. M. Kovalskaya, and others. Under the leadership of N. D. Kondratieff (at the request of higher authorities), the Institute prepared various economic reviews and reference materials and also published the journals *Ekonomicheskii Byulletyeny* and *Voprosy Konyunktury* under the editorship of N. D. Kondratieff. The activities of the Institute of Conjuncture were highly appreciated abroad.

The excursion into the biography of N. D. Kondratieff allows us to understand the level and scientific potential of the scientist, who was assigned by I. A. Teodorovich, head of the planning commission of the People's Commissariat for Agriculture and Forestry of the RSFSR, to prepare the first perspective plan for the development of agriculture and forestry. The famous statistician N. P. Oganovsky was also involved in the work. By January, 1924 the joint reports of the authors were submitted for discussion at the agricultural section of the USSR State Planning Committee and were approved. Later, on the basis of the reports of N. D. Kondratieff and N. P. Oganovsky, the 'Fundamentals of the Perspective Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Forestry for 1923/24–1927/28' were developed.

We managed to establish that the scientist's views on the development of agriculture in the USSR were formed by the spring of 1922 and were formulated by him in his report at the Third All-Russian Agronomic Congress (Kondratieff 1922a: 19–21). Later he used these ideas in the development of the plan. N. D. Kondratieff put forward the principle of development of productive forces of agriculture as a leading principle. He saw the role of state regulation in providing legal guarantees for peasant farming and, on this basis, for developing the initiative of the peasant population, awakening of the self-activity of the masses through participation in various forms of cooperation. Therefore, the central idea of the future plan was the idea of creating a bilateral industrial-agrarian type of national economy. According to N. D. Kondratieff, such a model ensured the political and economic independence of the USSR from the capitalist environment, guaranteed the economic and social stability of the state, promoted the development of the internal market, and distracted the surplus agricultural population from going to the cities. Individual peasant farms, the increase in the market-

ability of which became one of the important tasks of state policy for the creation of conditions for capital accumulation in the village, were considered as the object of planning in the plan. N. D. Kondratieff and his colleagues in the People's Commissariat for Agriculture of the RSFSR did not see objective conditions for the transition to collective farming and recommended that the transition to higher forms of agricultural labour should be carried out gradually with the development of the productive forces of agriculture.

When making the plan, the issue of the rate of development was an important methodological point. Population growth, capital accumulation in the village, market development, land use were mentioned as factors determining the rate of development. Speaking at the State Planning Committee of the USSR, N. D. Kondratieff drew the audience's attention to the dynamic nature of the problem, for the optimal solution of which it was necessary to study the regularities of changes in all elements of the structure of agriculture and their interrelations (Tyurina 2006: 140). Later this complicated issue caused the main criticism from the opponents about the alleged methodological failure of the plan (Berzys 1924: 108–112). A turning point in the fate of the plan was its discussion in the Presidium of the USSR State Planning Committee in July–August 1925 which for the first time went beyond scientific discussion and moved to the level of political accusations. Despite the progressive resolution adopted by the Third Congress of Soviets on the limited use of wage labour and rent in areas of extensive farming, the representatives of the Communist Academy D. Baturinsky, S. M. Dubrovsky, L. N. Kritzman sharply opposed the implementation of this resolution in the plan, considering it as a threat to the restoration of capitalism in the village (RSAE. Fond 4372. Series 1. File 191. P. 232). The intensity of debates during the discussion of the plan did not affect the decision to approve it and recommend its implementation (*Ibid.* Series 10. File 160. P. 133). However, it was not submitted for consideration to the Council of Labor and Defense and was not approved by the Government.

Such was the fate of all the first sectoral perspective plans up to the development and approval of the first development plan of the national economy of the USSR for 1928/29–1932/33, which for the first time had a directive character and was approved by the 16th All-Union Conference and the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

Meanwhile, N. D. Kondratieff's participation in the organs of Soviet power became more and more complicated every year. His ideas and assessments did not fit into the ideology of socialist construction, put forward by I. Stalin and his entourage and formalized in the decisions of the 14th and 15th Congresses of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks which took a course of industrialization of manufacturing and collectivization of agriculture. In April 1928,

Kondratieff was dismissed from his post as a director of the Institute of Conjunction of the People's Commissariat of Finance of the USSR. The notorious conference of the agrarian Marxists held at the end of 1929 put an end to his work and creativity. Stalin defined his activities as wrecking, and N. D. Kondratieff's scientific ideas for many years were called 'Kondratievshchina' (Kondratievism). In July 1930, Kondratieff was arrested. After his stay in Butyrskaya prison and investigation, he was sentenced in the case of the 'Labour Peasant Party' to eight years of imprisonment in Suzdal Politisolator. In September 1938, he was executed by firing squad.

The acquaintance with the scientific works of economists repressed in the 1930s provided impetus for the search and accept for eternal storage in the Russian State Archive of Economics the collections of great scientists, whose works enriched world economic science, but were unwelcome in their country, which in the 1920s had the task of building a new type of state.

In 1992, the International N. D. Kondratieff Foundation was established in Russia, headed by Academician L. I. Abalkin, Chairman of the Academic Commission on the Scientific Heritage of N. D. Kondratieff. His great assistants in the work of the Foundation were its director, Candidate of economic sciences V. M. Bondarenko and Doctor of Economic Sciences, Professor Y. V. Yakovets, at the same time president of the Sorokin–N. D. Kondratieff International Institute.

In the same year, the International Scientific Conference 'Cycles, Forecasts, Conjunction: Theory and Research Methods', dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the birth of the great scientist, was held for the first time in Moscow, in the Hall of Columns of the House of Unions. And in 1992 in Montpellier (France) an international conference devoted to the N. D. Kondratieff's large cycles of conjunction was successfully held. All interested economists and historians were involved in the research into the scientist's works. One should mention N. A. Makasheva, S. L. Komlev, N. K. Figurovskaya, V. V. Simonov, Y. V. Yakovets, Takeo Nikamuro and many others.

As early as 1991, N. D. Kondratieff's monograph *Basic Problems of Economic Statics and Dynamics. A Preliminary Sketch*, which was not published during his lifetime, appeared (Kondratieff 1991). We learnt about the existence of this manuscript from the preface by Y. B. Kochevrin, Doctor of Economic sciences, to N. D. Kondratieff's book *Selected Works*, published as part of the series 'Economic Heritage' in 1993 (*Idem* 1993). The manuscript was written by the author in Butyrskaya prison and was given to his wife before his transfer to Suzdal prison. This was an important discovery for us and confirmed the presence of the scientist's archive preserved by his family. The name of E. N. Kondratieva, Academician of the USSR Academy of Sciences, a daughter of the

great scientist, was included in the editorial board of the *Economic Heritage* and the team of contributors.

For the first time the section 'Problems of Economic Policy' was added in the *Selected Works* by N. D. Kondratieff, which included the documents found in the Russian State Archive of Economics that belonged to Nikolai Dmitriyevich. Together with Y. V. Yakovets, Doctor of Economic sciences, we prepared this section. The documents were the reports, theses of reports, closing remarks to the reports of the session of the Plenum of the agricultural section of the USSR Gosplan, at meetings of the Presidium of the USSR Gosplan, the board of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture of the RSFSR, at the meeting of the Price Commission of the Institute of Financial and Economic Research of the USSR People's Commissariat of Finance (Institute of Conjunction). The documents covered the period from 1923 to 1928 and were devoted to the most important problems of the economy of the mid-1920s, namely, the problems of reducing the purchasing power of prices in the agrarian sector, the principles of taxation of agricultural facilities, the problem of differentiation of peasant farms, and the methodology of future planning.

L. I. Abalkin in his foreword to *Selected Works* by N. D. Kondratieff noted that 'acquaintance with all of Kondratieff's works on planning, including archival ones, allows concluding that the scientist's position was very balanced, that in the theory of planning he significantly surpassed many scientists, having synthesized genetic and teleological approaches, practically anticipated indicative planning'. He also pointed to the fact that most of Kondratieff's legacy has been preserved and his published works and unpublished heritage are being brought together (Kondratieff 1993: 5–7).

Indeed, breaking off the fetters of ideology, the availability of studying the work of scientists who were repressed only for having their own ideas about the ways of economic development of the country and the desire to apply the vast world experience in domestic practice, became a powerful impulse for the study and collection of documents and facts from the life of scientists destroyed by Stalin's regime.

In 1994, a meeting of archivists and interested economists took place in the Russian State Archive of Economics. It was devoted to the presentation of the personality of a famous economist A. V. Chayanov, a representative of the organizational and production school. His son, V. A. Chayanov, transferred his father's personal collection to the archive and assisted in negotiations on the transfer to the archive of the personal funds of economists N. P. Makarov and the statistician L. B. Kafenhauz.

An important fact about this notable meeting was the presence of E. N. Kondratieva, an Academician of the USSR Academy of Sciences in the field of mi-

crobiology and biotechnology, N. D. Kondratieff's daughter, and T. N. Shanin, Professor of the University of Manchester (the UK) who actively contributed to the collection of documents of the rehabilitated economists. The meeting proved decisive: the scientist's daughter transferred her father's personal collection to the Russian State Archive of Economics.

The main part of his collection was transferred in 1994–1995, the remaining part in April 1996, after the death of E. N. Kondratieva. Kondratieff's collection is kept in the archive under the number 769. It counts more than 800 documents, which have been scientifically and technically described and systematized by thematic sections: *Documents of Creative Activity of N. D. Kondratieff*, *Documents of Official Activity of N. D. Kondratieff*, *Correspondence of N. D. Kondratieff*, *Photographs of N. D. Kondratieff*, *Biographical Documents of N. D. Kondratieff*, *Documents on the Conviction and Rehabilitation of N. D. Kondratieff*, *Documents of E. D. Dorf, Wife of N. D. Kondratieff, and her father D. Y. Dorf*, *Documents of E. N. Kondratieva, daughter of N. D. Kondratieff*, *Documents about N. D. Kondratieff*. The list of files of N. D. Kondratieff's collection is organized according to these thematic sections, through which researchers from all countries of the world get acquainted with the documents of our great compatriot.

In November 1995, the Russian State Archive of Economics hosted a public presentation of the scientist's personal collection. It was attended by the president of The International N. D. Kondratieff Foundation Leonid. I. Abalkin, who in his speech drew attention to the importance of continuing the search for new facts and documents about the life and scientific work of N. D. Kondratieff, and the need to search the documents in the departmental archives of the Federal Security Service and other organizations.

In the following years, at the request of L. I. Abalkin, a unique document was discovered in the Archive of the President of the Russian Federation – the letter of N. D. Kondratieff to the Chairman of the Collegium of the Joint State Political Directorate (JSPD) V. R. Menzhinsky with copies to General Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, Comrade I. V. Stalin, Chairman of the USSR Council of People's Commissars, Comrade V. M. Molotov, Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR, Comrade M. I. Kalinin. This letter is dated 17 November, 1932. On December 9, 1932 it was sent to Stalin, who, after reading it, put a note: 'To the archive. Stalin.'

This letter is a rare opportunity to find out the position and views of a person who has been convicted of actions and deeds he did not commit. The investigators drew the facts for the accusations from the testimonies of other prisoners, given under torture and obtained by deception. Confused under the pressure

of the investigators, Kondratieff at first accepted the accusations of involvement in the counter-revolutionary 'Labour Peasant Party', in wrecking and preparation of armed rebellion against the Soviet power. Then, realizing the absurdity and inconsistency of the accusations against him, he wrote a letter to the Chairman of the JSPD V. R. Menzhinsky, I. V. Stalin, V. M. Molotov and M. I. Kalinin, in which he removes the moral burden of responsibility for his misconceptions. He writes, 'I hereby declare that all my personal testimony, which I gave during the investigation and by which I acknowledged for myself and a number of other persons the offences under various paragraphs of the above-mentioned Article 58, from beginning to end are not true.'

This unique document was included in no less unique edition of the Economic Heritage series *N. D. Kondratieff. Suzdal Letters* (Kondratieff 2004), prepared jointly with the International N. D. Kondratieff Foundation, the Russian State Archive of Economics and the Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The publication is devoted to N. D. Kondratieff's Suzdal letters to his wife and his daughter Alyonushka. The letters saved and published by his wife are, in our opinion, the brightest and most convincing monument to the Soviet era, when scientific genius and the beauty of the spiritual world of a person for the sake of ideology could be instantly ostracized by society and subjected to the greatest humiliation of human dignity. I think that the moral rectitude of N. D. Kondratieff's letters to his wife and daughter, from which the reader learns about everything that happened around the scientist: in prison and at large, in the field of his scientific ideas and his impressions of scientific literature delivered to him by his wife, thoughts about the health of his relatives, the loss of his father and brother, concern for the safety of his family and the health of his daughter, and much more became the impetus for the tremendous work carried out by P. N. Klyukin to explain and comment on the letters. His introductory article 'True History (on the Significance of the Suzdal Letters)' for the first time gives a complete picture of the letters of N. D. Kondratieff addressed to his relatives – his wife E. D. Kondratieva (1893–1982) and his daughter E. N. Kondratieva (1925–1996).

The publication includes 247 documents in the main text and 59 documents in the appendix. The letters cover the period from February 1932 to August 1938. The publication of the letters was preceded by thorough work on their dating and interpretation. In this article P. N. Klyukin reveals the laboratory of the scientist's thought, the changes in his views on certain economic assessments of the early period, the comprehension of new work that could change the ideas about economics as a science. He also gives a detailed description of the letters as a historical source, indicating archaeographic features and methods of solving textual problems.

The value of the publication also lies in the content of appendices to the text, which include N. D. Kondratieff's letters of the early period to his teacher A. S. Lappo-Danilevsky (1916–1919), the correspondence with his future wife in 1922, the documents about his supposed expulsion abroad (August 1922), about the scientist's stay in Butyrskaya prison, letters of I. V. Stalin to V. M. Molotov about the case of the 'Labour Peasant Party' in August–September 1930; letters from M. Gorky to I. Stalin (1930–1931); Indictment of N. D. Kondratieff (1934); List (number 1) of persons to be tried by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the Union of the SSR of 20 August, 1938; Verdict of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR on the case of N. D. Kondratieff, on which he was shot on September 17, 1938; documents on the rehabilitation of N. D. Kondratieff. The appendices include the fairy tale 'The Extraordinary Adventures of Shammi', written by the scientist for his daughter; photo archive; notes and verses of the romance 'Our meeting was not accidental' dated 26 December, 1934 and other documents of the author.

As we can see, the impetus given by the community of people who highly honoured N. D. Kondratieff's work and civil feat allowed collecting an extensive set of documents reflecting the life and tragic fate of the Russian scientist, whose ideas remain relevant. The Russian State Archive of Economics is a centre of memory of the outstanding compatriot, a meeting place for scholars from different countries of the world who wish to see the true evidence of N. D. Kondratieff's life and work. His manuscript *Basic Problems of Statics and Dynamics. A Preliminary Sketch* is included in the State Register of Unique Documents of the Russian Federation which is the basis of the national pride of our people.

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Archive:

RSAE – Russian State Archive of Economics.