Ecological specialization as a desirable future for Russia

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The author believes that in the future Russia can become a global environmental donor preserving the biosphere of the whole planet for the country's vast territories and natural landscape have changed little under the human activities. Today in the global economy, Russia plays mainly a role of an exporter of exhaustible energy resources, which puts its future in a risky dependence on various unstable factors affecting the extraction and consumption of such resources. The article proposes a project of changing and expanding the role of Russia as a supplier of natural resources and conditions necessary for the survival and future development of the humankind. The author considers as the main wealth of the country not some minerals, vegetable or animal raw materials, but the entire natural landscape and all natural components of the cultural landscape. The preservation and maintenance of the natural landscape as the most important element of the biosphere, its material, spiritual and information consumption without destruction and depletion should become a priority branch of the Russian national economy. The accumulation of population in urban agglomerations, the lack of population and roads in the former rural areas, the vast military ranges consisting of forests and steppes, and the wild landscapes along the administrative borders of settlements and regions contribute to the transformation of the significant part of Russia into nature reserves and parks, and to the preservation of nature in hunting and fishing grounds for the eco-friendly land use and nature management. The ecological specialization and recreational role of the suburban area of the eucumene-polis can become priorities of the Russian national economy and provide the country with a unique and indispensable place in the global community

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To ensure the preservation of biosphere and the survival of humankind, a quarter or even a third of the terrestrial land is to consist of more or less natural forests, steppes, prairies, meadows, tundra, highlands with glaciers and snowfields, and other natural landscapes with their inherent wildlife. Such an approximate environmental norm has been typical for the scientific discourse for almost half a century, and it is used in the article as an important quasi-postulate (Rodoman, 2002). It is desirable that the natural landscapes penetrate even the highly urbanized and densely populated areas at least in the form of narrow corridors. Though for many regions of the world it is impossible, there should be an environmental compensation at the territories around in natural landscapes, which makes them of the international importance. Russia is among the few large countries (Canada and Brazil) that can become a 'professional' environmental donor for the global community, i.e. Russia needs an ecological specialization at the global scale (Rodoman, 2004, 2006) to turn most of its territory into national parks, nature reserves, hunting, fishing and other semi-wild bioresources' lands used within the reasonable limits of the biomass natural increase. Further, I will consider the arguments for such a nonstandard suggestion.

Shrinkage of the inhabited area

The Russian Empire occupied more lands than it could master and populate. The Soviet command-administrative campaigns for the development, settlement, mastering and amelioration of various territories often led to their devastation. The inhabited area within the Russian Federation is now shrinking and being fragmented (Kagansky, 2001). This process became obvious already in the Soviet period, especially after the enlargement of collective farms and declaring small villages unpromising; after the collapse of the USSR, such tendencies intensified. In contemporary Russia, more or less 'civilized life' (according to the western standards) is possible in big cities and partly in their suburbs and along the largest highways, while the rest of the country is used even less than before the Revolution of 1917.

The decline of the village is a worldwide process, the other side of the global urbanization, but at the same time it is a chronic, millennial Russian disease caused by the continuing violence against the peasants, who were not granted independence and were constantly suppressed and ruined by taxes, duties, reforms, and repressions. In the XX century, the village in the central part of Russia survived about twenty fatal blows: the Stolypin's reform, the World War I, the October Revolution and civil war, peasant uprisings, collectivization with dekulakization, famine, the Soviet-German war, guerrilla actions in the occupied regions, repressions against real and imaginary collaborators, resettlement to deserted villages from other regions, an acute shortage of men, passportization (equivalent to the abolition of serfdom for it allowed collective farmers to flee the village), enlargement of collective farms with the liquidation of 'unpromising' villages, 'amelioration', chemicalization, privatization that led to the collapse and rebirth of collective and state farms, mess with the property rights and distribution, and seasonal suburbanization (Mahrova et al., 2008) turning the traditional village into a summer settlement for urban dwellers.

In one sense or another, we can find a normal 'healthy' agriculture outside the Black Earth and the North Caucasus only at the suburbs of big cities, while the versatile peasant life and demographically stable rural population are still present among some non-Russian peoples in the Volga Region, the Urals and Siberia as rather a relic of the past than as an ethnic feature (Nefedova, 2003). Such rural communities still prefer large families and a patriarchal way of life that were typical for the Russian peasantry in the early XX century (intrafamily division of labor, labor migration to the cities, etc.). For instance, the Volga Tatars successfully combined agricultural production that involved all members of the family with the work of men in construction in the cities (construction companies in the Russian capital adapted to such a shift work) (Nefedova, Pallot, 2006).

Today the non-Russian peoples of the Volga and Ural Regions are worthy heirs of the dying peasant culture (Kagansky, 2003; Kagansky, Rodoman, 2005; Rodoman, 2003), while many Russian rural dwellers have already moved to the cities for good and lost touch with the land for they preferred to work at factories, communist party structures, state security and elite army units, and to scatter around the vast country. Small nations hold on to their native land as a unique and irreplaceable small homeland, while in the rest of the countryside, the population is declining and depredating: in many villages, there are only pensioners, and working age men living on casual earnings for they cannot find job or cannot compete with the cheap migrant labor.

Commodity agriculture leaves the village for the city suburbs and becomes a professional occupation of urban dwellers. In most of the Russian Non-Black Earth Region, the village has not yet disappeared completely and became a relic surviving by the summer activities of urban dwellers transforming the former villages around the cities into summer *dachas* (Gorod… 2001; Mahrova et al. 2008; Rodoman, 2002a). Thus, today the hopes for economic and social development of Russia are associated with big cities and their suburbanized nuclei around Moscow and strong regional 'capitals' (administrative centers of the subjects of the Federation). However, what should be done with the rest of the country, its outer and inner periphery occupying millions of square kilometers? I believe that such areas of economic decline should be turned into a prosperous natural landscape.

Abandoned lands, and renaturalization of the landscape

In Russia after 1991, the social-economic polarization, i.e. the differences and the gap between the rich influential minority and the poor disenfranchised majority, increased. At the same time the contrast between the capital and the provinces, centers and periphery aggravated at all levels: within the country, in all regions (subjects of the Federation), (rural) administrative districts, and cities. In all geographical areas of different size and rank, the relative development of the centers is accompanied by the decline of their peripheries. Thus, there are new 'wastelands' suitable for (self)-restoration of natural biocenoses.

The acute polarization of the Russian society led to the ecological polarization of the landscape, vegetation, and wild animal world. In the Non-Black Earth Region, the cultivated lands created by the labor of many generations (arable lands, hayfields, pastures) disappear in different transport-geographical conditions: on the one hand, far from big cities and main roads; on the other hand, in the pernicious proximity to the greedy urban developers. In the remote rural areas, especially in the west of Central Russia, the fields overgrown with weeds, shrubs and trees form areas of temporary successive vegetation and landscape that are metaphorically called by geographers a 'Russian savanna' (Rodoman, Kagansky, 2004).

The polarization of animal world develops in a different direction: the demanding 'aristocrats' die out (such as the leopard and tiger, though many naïve sponsors allocate considerable sums to preserve them), while the omnivorous 'plebeians' adapted to the co-existence with people survive (the number of boars, foxes, hares, elks, and sometimes even wolves changes for they either return to former habitats or prefer new ecological niches, such as the wolf that successfully crossbreeds with the dogs gone wild at the suburban dumps).

Despite considerable achievements in the environmental legislation, its application is still far from being effective. Russian laws and customs do not protect biosphere; its elements are preserved only due to the relatively poor transport accessibility, i.e. the lack of roads and the high transportation costs turn out to be environmentally friendly. The relatively poor transport accessibility of vulnerable natural objects can be maintained by speeding up and by reducing the costs of transportation within the existing rare but powerful network of a few major highways, i.e. by improving the existing roads instead of building new ones. All this would make trips to the remote peripheries slow, long, difficult and requiring excessive expenditure of precious time.

The ability of the natural landscape to self-repair should not be underestimated. In Russia, there are areas of extreme pollution and ecological disaster, vast territories with severe damage and replacement of natural vegetation, and at the same time, many landscape components that can be restored though the forests would be secondary and not wild.

Environmental potential of administrative borders

Russian cultural landscape is the result of the interaction with nature of the centralized, authoritarian and dominating state rather than of the society (Kagansky, 2001). This is especially true after the Revolution of 1917 for both Soviet and post-Soviet society. The geographical space of contemporary Russia resembles its bureaucratic structure, i.e. there is a unique centralized totalitarian landscape, in which 'vertical' (on the map — radial) links are strong, while 'horizontal' (all other) links are weak. For example, all regions and republics are well connected with Moscow, but badly connected with each other if they are not placed along the highway to the Russian capital.

Despite the hopes for market democratization and liberalization, the totalitarian landscape of post-Soviet Russia continues to strengthen together with the 'vertical of power' due to the growing bureaucratization. The role of the officials' hierarchy and administrative barriers between territories increases. Even if this system had begun to die out, as it seemed in the 1990s, it would still have existed and affected the life in Russia by inertia for several decades. This relict archaic feature of Russia, which is apparently unknown and incomprehensible for foreign geographers, can be used for good purposes — in the interests of nature protection. The archaism of the totalitarian landscape should not be considered a problem for postindustrial (i.e. non-industrial) society for it can revive many features of pre-industrial and even 'primitive' way of life (for instance, in recreation or ecological tourism).

In a highly centralized Soviet and post-Soviet space, almost all 'productive forces' (outside the mining areas) concentrated in the centers of the 'subjects of the Federation' or, less often, in their second cities (such as Tolyatti and Cherepovets). At the regional borders, away from inter-regional roads there were sparsely populated 'dead' areas, in which traditional rural settlements in the forest zone disappeared already in the Soviet period, and the above-mentioned renaturalization of the cultural landscape and the revival of the natural landscape began.

To ensure the vitality and integrity of biosphere, natural lands should occupy a sufficient area and make up a solid massif at least in the form of green corridors. The current administrative boundaries in Russia are almost ready to form the borders of the econet, i.e. a transcontinental network of 'specially protected' (better to say 'specially saved') natural areas (SPNA) (Schwarz, 1998), which the Western Europe can only dream of for it would need to redeem and recultivate many lands and to compensate the owners for damage and lost profits, while in Russia the green border network grows by itself and outside any economy. There is a spontaneous econetization of administrative boundaries (Kagansky, 2009).

To preserve the favorable ecological potential there has to be a stable administrative and territorial division (ATD), which has not changed much in Russia since the middle of the XX century, when the regions turned into a kind of collective enterprises and feudal estates, and their borders became 'green fences' used for the now trendy national parks. The influence of administrative boundaries on the adjoining territories depends, among other factors, on the age of boundaries and their tortuosity. The ossification of cultural landscape with economic devastation, and the consequent revival of nature at the border areas are typical for old, long established and weakly meandering borders that have historical predecessors (former economic, administrative, and state borders). The nodes of the boundaries ensure special 'ecophilicity', or 'biogenicity', because the junctions of (usually three) administrative territories are especially favorable for nature reserves (we call such junctions 'middle of nowhere' or 'godforsaken place').

Environmental conversion

In no other country of the world, the military forces occupy such a huge area as in Russia, and nowhere else the shooting ranges with dangerous warehouses of weapons, explosives and poisonous substances are placed so near the capital and big cities. The Russian armed forces are the command-administrative sector of the national economy inherited from the USSR and serving the top of military elites. However, the colossal energy of paramilitary institutions can be used for more humane purposes including environmental, and at first without abolition, reductions, and dismissals.

The Russian Ministry of Defense is the world's largest consolidated land user of about one-tenth of the country's territory behind the barbed wires of forbidden zones, judging by the Moscow suburbs. The gigantic Soviet power was flush with money and the Soviet land cost nothing, which is why the military forces occupied tens and hundreds of times more space than was necessary to fulfill their functions. They hid their objects in dense forests, and drove off and deported thousands of villages, which cannot be rectified though we can benefit from the consequences of such actions. Today there are good forests and rich animal world at the dilapidated military ranges; animals and birds get along with the rumbling of tanks and explosions of shells better than with the onslaught of summer residents and cars.

The location and borders of special areas do not depend directly on the ATD, and the nature management there does not depend on regional authorities, which is best for the effective protection of nature. The military forces' territories of Russia are potential nature reserves by both their landscape and geographical location. It is in our interests that the military departments retain these lands as long as possible, until better times, because private owners would cut down the forests and build up the whole territory very quickly. Many Russian nature reserves and national parks include military facilities and shooting rangers, i.e. are used for their camouflaging on the geographical map. Thus, there is already some coexistence of natural landscape and military 'specially protected areas'. The very word 'protected' usually means the presence of armed guards (at military ranges, government dachas, hunting reserves, manors of 'oligarchs', and sometimes 'special natural areas').

The military forces do not at all look like friends of nature, and it will be hard to re-educate them in the ecological direction. Military towns' dwellers cut down forests and sell timber, pollute the soil and ponds, poison the air, break the rules of hunting, stifle the fish, etc., which is stable, habitual and lesser evil compared to what will happen under the wild sale, privatization and residential development of these areas by private traders. Whatever the brave Russian warriors do at their shooting ranges, they unwittingly perform an important ecological task of keeping strangers out of the forbidden wooded areas. Today the military forces preserve the natural landscape better than the nominal nature reserves and national parks that have turned into corrupted privileged hunting grounds and forestlands with a miserable staff of dependent and powerless researchers. Certainly, there is no need in providing the military forces with more lands for the protection of nature; it is enough to preserve the existing situation for the lesser evil is the most accessible good.

At the external borders of the Russian Federation, the armed forces must retain their former functions and develop the new ones such as to defend the country against environmental aggression, undesirable immigration, and environmental and demographic pressure of the neighboring countries. The social task of self-preservation of the traditional military community is quite achievable provided the gradual transformation of some part of the Russian army into a subdivision of the international environmental police (Kagansky, Rodoman, 2004) fighting against both the buyers of the country's raw materials and Russian poachers and compradors.

The armed forces participation in the protection of nature cannot hurt their honor and dignity for the armed forces of all countries fulfill many diverse functions. The wars they are prepared to are rare and usually differ from the expected course of events, that is why in peacetime there is always a temptation to distract soldiers from their direct duties, which has been widely practiced in Russia since the Soviet period. Moreover, there are many professional security structures fulfilling a kind of intermediate functions between the real 'field' army and the police (such as border guards, internal troops, gendarmerie, units of the Ministry of Emergency Situations). The military forces are often used to help during natural disasters, forest fires, floods, earthquakes, which are all environmental issues. The current global ecological crisis can be considered an important, long and huge natural disaster requiring the help of military forces.

Interethnic division of labor and mentality

The multiethnic empires often developed an interethnic division of labor: the ruling ethnos consisting of the direct descendants of conquerors usually preferred officials and landowners positions; foreigners were engaged in various crafts, trade, and unskilled work. In the medieval society, such a division of labor was reinforced by the system of estates, castes, and confessions. In the contemporary society, it is informal due to the different access of ethnic groups to resources and according to the distribution of economic niches. In the Russian Empire, the interethnic division of labor flourished in the western and southwestern provinces, Crimea, Lower Volga Region, Caucasus, and Central Asia. In the delta of the Volga, which I studied in 1952 and 1954 during the Caspian expedition of the geographical faculty of the Moscow State University, before the Revolution of 1917 the Tatars used to grow vegetables and melons, the Kalmyks and Kazakhs (then called Kyrgyzs) were engaged in cattle breeding, and the Russians were fishermen. Today, at the beginning of the XXI century, in the Volga steppes, the descendants from the Caucasus and Kazakhstan graze the cattle, while the Koreans grow vegetables (Nefedova, 2003; Nefedova, Pallot, 2006).

The Asian peoples are well adapted to the nowadays post-Soviet reality for they preserve the patriarchal-tribal way of life and clan society with the dominance of kinship ties. Such communities do not really need formal laws; under any conflicts their representatives rarely act as independent subjects; their masters, bosses, leaders of groupings, communities or diasporas negotiate and bargain with officials for them. Ethnic Russians with nuclear families do not find strong support in their relatives or fellow countrymen, they lack partners to be trusted, solidarity and unity typical for discriminated minorities, i.e. the Russians are more scattered, atomized and defenseless against gangsters, state and security officials, and, therefore, less competitive in small business. With such a set of features, it is better to be a part of the state or a powerful semi-state corporation than to take a risk of self-employed entrepreneurship suffocated by racketeering and doomed to expropriation. Thus, in today's Moscow there is almost a medieval ethnic division of labor: immigrants from Central Asia sweep the streets, the Azerbaijanis trade at the markets, the Tatars, Tajiks and Moldovans work at the construction sites, young and middle-aged Muscovites with diplomas distribute money in offices, etc.

The ethnic inclination to some occupation and mentality are not fatal or innate; they are historically transient, capable of changing rapidly or reviving and reproducing under similar circumstances. Thus, being abroad as a diaspora or oppositional minority, the Russians can occupy 'unexpected' economic niches, while at home, in all regions of the Russian Federation, the 'title' ethnos replenishes the ruling nomenclature. When dreaming of a worthy future for Russia, one cannot ignore mentality and customs of the imperial people. For instance, in Russia the status of an official is still higher and stronger than that of a 'businessman' for all accomplishments and savings of private entrepreneurs can be expropriated by new generations of bureaucrats after the next redistribution of property. Therefore, a typical Russian is not an entrepreneur but an employee of the state that provides him with a share of income from non-renewable natural resources in the form of salary or allows him to 'graze and hunt', i.e. to plunder the nature and rob other people. Likewise, a petty 'businessman', an 'entrepreneur' in Russia is a *de facto* powerless shadow employee of the state and security officials. The highest state power also appoints the largest owners (billionaires) or allows them to get rich.

If the local population in some Russian regions cannot (does not want or does not know how to) use land 'culturally' and does not allow it to be used by strangers or migrants (due to the mentality of a guard, economic-ethnic xenophobia, hostility or envy of active and successful 'businessmen', etc.), it is unfortunate in terms of classical political economy but very useful for the self-restoration of natural landscape. "A dog in the manger" will become a positive description if Russia chooses the 'profession' of an environmental guard. The protection of nature at the vast and sparsely populated areas is not a business, it is a police work quite traditional for the Russians due to the millennial course of their history.

Small population as an advantage

The population of Russia (about 147 million in 2016) is spread over an area of more than one and a half Europe, but on two thirds of this territory its density is less than one person per square kilometer. The calls to stop depopulation of Russia do not correspond to the conclusions of researchers that up to 80% of the current population are economically unnecessary for they are not engaged in the oil and gas industry, not useful for top officials, and not very promising as producers and consumers. To increase population for the development of production or to develop production for the growth of population are inhumane tasks, because a man should not be an object or means of manipulations, he is to be a goal. I also consider the development of production to increase the number of jobs a harmful distortion of the market economy, which leads to clogging the biosphere with things that people can deal without if they prefer a healthy way of life. There is a humane and environmentally friendly third way — to support an economy that does not need an additional labor and can protect nature with the existing population.

In Russia, the sparse population (compared with the area of the country) is an obvious advantage for the ecological specialization. The national park should not be densely populated, and in the nature reserve there should be no settlements at all. To preserve the natural landscape and low intensive ecophilic land management just by maintaining the lack of roads and by preventing the masses of people from entering the forbidden territories, we need less workers than in agriculture and mining not to speak of industrial production, business, and bureaucracy. Unlike urban or manor parks, where the 'natural' landscape is created and supported by the painstaking work of many people, national parks and especially nature reserves do not require many workers for the wild nature works freely by itself, and our task is not to interfere. Thus, the choice is simple: (a) to develop production and increase the extraction of raw materials so as to eventually give Siberia and the Far East to China; or (b) not to carry out any activities in order to keep these lands as a nature reserve under the patronage of the United Nations, in alliance with Europe and the United States, i.e. to be responsible for the pure Sayans, Altai and Baikal to the world community.

Nature reserves and reservations

In the Russian national parks, economic activities are not prohibited but limited to the traditional rural and hunting activities of the local people, which are not only some exotic disappearing peoples for Russia is a giant natural park for the preservation of the Russians. The country needs a reliable ethno-natural reservation (specially protected areas) for those Russians who do not want to break ties with their native landscapes and rural areas (cultural heritage and a typical 'Russian' landscape imprinted in the works of artists such as old country estates and traditional Russian villages with log huts and gooses and goats at the grassy streets).

Unfortunately, the term 'reservation' was distorted and discredited by the Soviet propaganda. Even today, this term is considered to represent a ghetto or concentration camp with the aborigines forced to live there, that is why it is a dangerous concept to use in public. I define the reservation as a special territory (better to say it is a specially protected area), which ensures special measures for preservation and protection of some vulnerable, defenseless, weak, disappearing, relict, rare, unique or valuable elements of natural and cultural heritage (this definition applies for humans, animals, plants and landscapes). The reservations for people are to provide their inhabitants with special privileges — compensatory and protective. The former partially compensate for the damage (rather moral than material) due to the historical trauma of the people or due to their ancestors' extermination, discrimination, and so on. The protective privileges limit the strangers and outsiders activities threatening the traditional way of life or the local landscape.

In the era of globalization and worldwide standardization, it is desirable and necessary for the states to increase their social role — not as 'sovereigns' or belligerent rivals in the struggle for resources, but as defenders of their citizens and guardians of their ethno-cultural and natural heritage. Many states and ethnic autonomies play the role of reservations for national cultures and languages. Thus, the Russian Federation is such a reservation for the Russian ethnos, while the ethnic republics within the country play the same role for non-Russian peoples.

These reservations to a greater or lesser degree take care about national languages and cultures; however, they have to extend their care to the entire cultural landscape and its natural components. Without the native landscape the people as a whole cannot survive; when losing land or landscape the people survives only as a diaspora. In Russia, small nations without territorial autonomy usually disappear (as the Veps divided between the Leningrad Region and Karelia, and the Shorians after the liquidation of their national district in 1936). Today, it is difficult for the Russians to understand the need of 'indigenous small peoples' in special protection and patronage, but very soon, already in this century, the Russians will find themselves in the same position for there are about 150 million ethnic Russians (in the world), or 150 million Russians belonging to different ethnic groups, compared to three billions of the Chinese and Indians.

Forest parks of the eucumene

Let us imagine a big city with the planned or spontaneous functional zones — residential, industrial, commercial, warehouse, and recreational. In some respects, the entire terrestrial land is to turn into a world city (eukumenopolis) (Doxiadis 1968) with the corresponding large functional zones that would cover the whole countries to integrate them into the world economy. There will be nothing tragic or shameful, if most of Russia (northeastern Europe, Siberia, Far East, Subarctic, all mountains) becomes a recreational-ecological zone of the world, an ecological addition, a forest-park periphery of the Old World. The peripheral position in the global economy is favorable for ecological specialization, because a big forest park should be located on the outskirts of the city.

The archaic ways of life and the costs of modernization are pushed out of the 'advanced' countries to the 'backward' ones; the same happens with some environmental opportunities that were lost by Western Europe, but are still actual for Russia due to the sparse population, shortage of roads, harsh climate, and mismanagement. Every cloud has a silver lining, and one can turn limitations into advantages, i.e. it is better not to overcome 'negative' features of Russia that are considered the signs of its backwardness in pursuit of 'world standards' and 'world level', but to use and develop these features in order to solve new tasks.

The more people are concentrated in the west and south of Eurasia, the less industry, population and cities should remain in the northeast. Russia can conquer the humankind not with weapons, but with a unique contribution to the preservation of biosphere; Russia can become an ecological pole of the entire eastern hemisphere. Once again, we can compare the whole world with a city: it is better for health to live in a quiet and green sleeping quarter than in a noisy city center crowded with people and transport; thus, the whole country can play the role of a quiet and green sleeping quarter for the globe instead of striving in vain to become an industrial or financial world center.

Ecophilic nature management

If Russia is destined to remain a nature adjunct of the developed countries, its main export resources, unlike oil and gas, should be easily renewable or not at all consumed. The ecological specialization presupposes an ecophilic economy in most of the country: extensive animal husbandry including semi-wild livestock, fishing, hunting, gathering, fish and wildfowl farming — for consumer, sports, and commodity purposes (for domestic and foreign markets); and ecological tourism (Drozdov, 2005) — activities aimed at information and spiritual contacts with the natural landscape as a source of impressions rather than of raw materials and goods, without appropriation or destruction of natural resources (we get the same impressions in museums and at exhibitions).

The descendants of peasants that moved to the city do not break with the village: they visit it every summer and rebuild the old family house. Many Russians, for a long time or permanently living abroad, and their descendants will visit their 'historical homeland' as tourists; at the same time the Russian exotics, harsh nature and opportunities for extreme tourism will also attract 'real' foreigners. Under the global urbanization, Russia can take on the function of the 'suburban zone of the world' and become a source and reservoir of clean water and air, a place for physical and spiritual recovery. However, its main and primary task would be conservation of natural territorial complexes, biogeocenoses, elements of biosphere, and the global climate. Thus, Russia would have to get rid of any kind of tourism, even the most ecological, and of any economic activity, even the most eco-friendly, if they hinder the nature protection.

The key and fatal question for Russia is not "What to do?" but rather "What not to do?". The country should refrain from harmful, ecophobic activities as the Soviet maintenance of the military-industrial complex and the post-Soviet plunder of nature to receive compensation from rich, more 'developed' countries. There is an opinion that Western Europe already owes Russia as an ecological donor for the oxygen produced by our forests and swamps (Golts, 2002), and for the refusal to use in agriculture those chemicals that pollute the seas through rivers. In other words, the main source of Russian income should be benevolent non-action rather than activities.

Non-interference in the natural process is typical for agronomy, when the farmer leaves his plants alone for a while. The state's principle 'laissez faire, laissez passer' as a non-interference in the economy often determined its growth and flourishing. The benevolent inaction, or fruitful non-interference, means that we trust someone and grant him freedom for self-development and self-organization. Today it is believed that one must act and have proper financing to achieve necessary results though such a position and the corresponding course of action are destructive for biosphere and society; the humankind is mad with the mania of activity and lacks the understanding of non-action goodness.

Labor in the 'developed' countries became so productive that it denies the necessity of labor in the countries with low productivity and vicious labor relations; the world says goodbye to the dominance of wage labor and full employment (Beck, 2001). It is very likely that soon most of the world population will live on benefits. Russia is 'ahead of the planet': we have a huge territory outside the cities, whose dwellers live only on benefits and pensions that should be increased to support rural resettlement with the help of foreign sponsors interested in preserving the Russian nature. I believe that to keep the forests of Siberia and the Baikal as environmental resources of world importance rich countries should financially support several millions of Russians.

If the majority of Soviet people received state salaries for the useless and harmful pseudo-work, then why their descendants, i.e. new generations of Russians, should not receive decent salaries from other states for the useful abstinence from harmful activities? It is better to be an open, honest and legal 'unemployed', usually a workaholic of the household raising children, engaged in arts, hobbies or one's own business, than to imitate work in some state institution to fool the population, to produce tons of useless papers or to extort bribes.

Certainly, the world is on the threshold of a radical change in labor relations, but we lack adequate terms to describe the situation for our usual words 'labor', 'employment', 'salary', etc. do not help to understand the course of events. If Russia wants to become a paid ecological donor, there has to be an information campaign in the 'advanced' countries to reinforce the development of science and changes in the international public opinion. If we want ordinary people to get at least a part of the compensation for the country being an ecological donor, the state should cease to be dominant (protecting the interests of the ruling elite) and should become serving (all citizens as taxpayers that hired and control the state).

Priority of uniqueness and a 'special path' of Russia

In the middle of the XX century in Soviet Azerbaijan, the Lenkoran unique subtropical forests were cut down in order to 'fill Moscow with tomatoes', which was determined not only by the decision of officials 'from above' but also by the pressure of the people's market economy 'from below' (collective farms and household plots). A few decades later, the USSR similarly destroyed the West Siberian and Yakut taiga to fill Europe with oil and the world with diamonds. Some Russian economic geographers opposed such a conformist use of natural resources for they believed that every territory should provide only its unique production (Rakitnikov, 1970). This rule can be extended to all human activities and called a priority of uniqueness.

From the common sense perspective, the choice of specialization by a country or region is quite similar to the choice of profession. If a person has unique abilities, for instance in the arts or science, he has to be freed from earning a living by the routine work affordable by millions of other people. However, the current market or pseudo-market economy of post-Soviet Russia does not contribute to the flowering of uniqueness of either individuals or regions. The theorists of globalization advise the developing countries not to strive to do everything that the developed countries already do, but to rely on their specific capabilities to avoid the international competition. Certainly, some 'third world' countries do achieve high economic efficiency and competitiveness in some sectors of the economy based on the predatory use of non-renewable natural resources and on the violation of decent working conditions (Beck, 2001), but this is a dead-end path leading to the collapse. Russia also must begin preparations for getting off the oil-gas needle.

Russia's special path or common path with the humankind is an annoying dilemma for there is a third path — registration and use of our geographical specificity, the priority development of our natural and cultural heritage. The geographical specificity as a resource for development is excellently used by such microstates as Andorra and Monaco; the huge size of Russia makes its geographical features to be of a global importance.

Ecologization as a supporter of 'post-industrialization'

The proposed ecologization program concerns mainly the land but not the employment of the Russian population. It does not suggest that all Russians should become hunters and fishermen, watchmen and huntsmen, serve in the environmental police or portray villagers and shepherds for the fun of tourists, etc. I propose ecological specialization for that large part of Russia that is very sparsely populated (the dark part of the country on the night photos of the Earth). The remaining relatively small area, which consists of fragments scattered mainly in the southwest and is a permanent residence of the overwhelming majority of Russian citizens, must retain another specialization to respond to the challenges of the post-industrial XXI century. Thus, the transformation of the greater part of Russia into a nature reserve will rather help than prevent its big cities from becoming the centers of science and high technologies.

Moreover, the townspeople will get a healthier natural environment for everyday life and creative work; for instance, the work of an engineer, programmer, and scientist perfectly combines with ecological tourism and even seems to be impossible without it. It is no coincidence that the tourism leaders in the USSR were engineers, technicians and scientists of the military-industrial complex: they coped with their serious work, because they learned how to physically and spiritually heal and strengthen themselves in the wild nature that became for them a quasi-religion. It turns out that our 'great power' successes in the arms race and space exploration were largely determined by the hiking tourism.

Russia should not strive to return to the industrial world for it has already lost the chance. All non-military non-food goods that can be produced in Russia and be competitive would make a tiny drop in the world economy, which is not worth a try. However, Russia could focus on research, experimental small-scale and pilot production, and sell its scientific and technical achievements for the mass production in densely populated countries. Russia has already lost its 'working class' but can still ensure conditions for the reproduction of engineers, designers, and scientists. The Russians themselves are to ensure the prosperity of our big cities in the post-industrial era, while most of the country with the insignificant part of the population should be left to plants and animals.

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Экологическая специализация — желательное будущее России

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По мнению автора, Россия обладает огромными площадями мало измененного людьми природного ландшафта и потому может стать глобальным экологическим донором, обеспечивающим сохранение биосферы на всей планете. Концентрация населения в городских агломерациях, малолюдность и бездорожье в бывшей сельской местности, обширность военных полигонов, занятых лесами и степями, одичание ландшафта вдоль административных границ благоприятствуют превращению большей части российской территории в природные заповедники и парки, а также сохранению природы в охотничье-промысловых и рыболовных угодьях в целях экофильного землеприродопользования. Экологическая специализация и рекреационная роль пригородной зоны эйкуменополиса могла бы стать приоритетным сектором российского народного хозяйства и обеспечить нашей стране уникальное, незаменимое место в мировом сообществе, принципиально отличное от ее нынешней позиции в глобальной экономике как преимущественно экспортера невозобновляемых энергоресурсов, которая ставит страну в будущем в рискованную зависимость от различных нестабильных факторов, определяющих добычу и потребление данных ресурсов. В статье предложен проект изменения и расширения роли России как поставщика природных ресурсов и гаранта условий, необходимых для выживания и развития всего человечества. Автор убежден, что главным богатством нашей страны являются не отдельные полезные ископаемые или виды растительного и животного сырья, а весь природный ландшафт, или вся совокупность природных компонентов культурного ландшафта. Сохранение и поддержание природного ландшафта как важнейшего фрагмента биосферы, его материально-вещественное и духовно-информационное потребление без разрушения и истощения должно стать приоритетной отраслью российского народного хозяйства.

Ключевые слова: Россия; экологический донор; биосфера; национальная экономика; природный ландшафт; культурный ландшафт; экофильное землеприродопользование; экологическая специализация