

Editorial

PROFESSOR GENNADY FEDOROV: LEGACY OF SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE AND PERSONAL MAGNETISM

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Holding the title of Merited Scientist of Russia, Dr hab. Prof. Gennady M. Fedorov, who passed away prematurely at the height of his creative powers in the year of his 75th anniversary, was an unparalleled figure in Russian education and human geography, acclaimed nationally and internationally. The scope and productivity of his research, and academic and organisational contributions place him among Russia's most distinguished human geographers. The founder of the unique Kaliningrad school of geographical thought, exemplifying excellence in education and research, he stood as one of the most active integrators of human geography in north-western Russia and the Eurasian region.

Prof. Fedorov's contribution to Russian human geography is both fundamental and indisputable, with his scientific legacy encompassing comprehensive geo-demographic studies, analyses of trends and development priorities in the Kaliningrad region — a territory that became an exclave in the early 1990s — and works on cross-border regionalisation in the Baltic Sea area, particularly notable in light of the geoeconomic and geopolitical transformations of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. He left behind an extensive body of publications exploring the influence of the 'maritime factor' on the socio-economic dynamics of territories, investigations into the socio-economic resilience of regions to external and internal challenges, and a broad spectrum of other subjects.

All of Prof. Fedorov's works were, in many ways, pioneering, characterised by a blend of methodologically rigorous approaches and a strong practical focus. His publications tackled urgent administrative challenges while advancing the development of a modern, cohesive and realistic geographical perspective of the world.

The foundation of Prof. Fedorov's multifaceted and fruitful creative career was laid at Leningrad State University. His education started at the university's boarding school specialising in physics, mathematics, chemistry and biology, the predecessor of today's Academic Gymnasium of St. Petersburg State University. From 1967, he studied at the Faculty of Geography at Leningrad State University, where, from his second year, he focused on economic geography under the guidance of Dean Prof. Boris Semyansky. As a student, his primary scientific interests were shaped by his academic mentors, and esteemed authorities in population geography: Associate Prof. (later Full Prof.) Anatoly Anokhin and Prof. Nikolai Agafonov, under whom Gennady Fedorov wrote his coursework and diploma thesis. He regarded them as his teachers throughout his life and maintained close relationships with them.

A key influence on Prof. Fedorov's development as a researcher was his involvement, beginning in his student years, with the Population Geography and Demography Laboratory at the Research Institute of Geographical Economics at Leningrad State University. Headed by Profs. Nikolai Agafonov and Sergey Lavrov, the laboratory was one of the USSR's leading centres for research in the field, initially specialising in issues related to the North-Western region. The laboratory naturally served as the breeding ground for the topics of student courseworks and diploma theses, including those of Gennady Fedorov. There, he became interested in the North-Western region's geography and demography, which would become the focus of his student and postgraduate research. This enduring fascination was closely tied to his beloved home region of Novgorod, where he grew up and where his family and relatives lived.

After graduating from the department in 1972 and completing his postgraduate studies in 1975, Gennady Fedorov began his career at Kaliningrad State University as a lecturer in the Department of Economic Geography, headed by his mentor and postgraduate supervisor, Prof. Agafonov, who had invited him to the position. This collaboration defined Prof. Fedorov's subsequent decades-long, fruitful career in research and education. Throughout the years, he held various roles across the academic hierarchy, both in teaching and administration, including department head, vice-rector for research, and university rector.

In embracing and advancing the ideas and approaches of his academic supervisor, Gennady Fedorov successfully defended his doctoral dissertation in 1977, titled *The Economic and Demographic Situation in the Rural Areas of the Kaliningrad Region. Demographic problems, particularly their economic-geographical aspects, continued to captivate him and remained central to his research, culminating in a series of publications, including two substantial monographs that received positive recognition from the research community. These were: Fedorov, G. M. Geodemograficheskaya obstanovka: Teoreticheskie i metodicheskie osnovy [Geo-Demographic Situation: Theoretical and Methodological Foundations]. Edited by N. T. Agafonov, Leningrad: Nauka, 1984; and Fedorov, G. M. Geodemograficheskaya tipologiya [Geo-Demographic Typology]. Edited by N. T. Agafonov, Leningrad: Leningrad State University Press, 1985.*

A key innovation in these works was the introduction of the concept of ‘**geo-demographic situation**’ and the identification of the multiple factors influencing it, including residential, economic and ecological. This groundwork allowed Gennady Fedorov to defend his post-doctoral thesis, Scientific Foundations of the Concept of the Geo-Demographic Situation, at Leningrad State University in 1987. A revised version of this work, retaining the same title, was published as an independent monograph in 1991.

Prof. Fedorov remained devoted to geo-demographic research — a field he played a key role in shaping — throughout the following years. This focus later galvanised his work on ‘**rural issues**’, given the particular acuteness of demographic challenges in Russia’s non-urban areas. Prof. Fedorov advanced research in the field by adhering to rigorously applied geographical approaches, which encompassed territoriality, comprehensiveness and detailed consideration of development factors at both regional and local levels.

This work produced a series of articles, which were published in leading journals, and two conceptual, data-rich monographs. These two titles were: *Kaliningradskoye selo v nachale XXI veka: proizvodstvo, rasselenie, sotsialnye innovatsii: monografiya* [Kaliningrad’s Countryside in the Early 21st Century: Production, Settlement, Social Innovations]. Edited by G.M. Fedorov, Kaliningrad: IKBFU Press, 2022; and *Povyshenie tsennosti selskoj mestnosti v Rossii: opyt i puti vnedreniya sotsialnykh innovatsii v Kaliningradskoy oblasti: monografiya* [Enhancing the Value of Rural Areas in Russia: Experience and Approaches to Implementing Social Innovations in the Kaliningrad Region]. Edited by G.M. Fedorov, Kaliningrad: IKBFU Press, 2023.

Alongside geo-demography and its application to the study of rural areas, Prof. Fedorov consistently maintained a strong interest in **local studies**, addressing a broad range of socio-economic geography topics related to the Kaliningrad region. Yet, he did not limit himself to purely academic pursuits, giving equal attention to collaboration with government authorities — particularly in strategic planning for the socio-economic development of the region and its municipalities — and to the dissemination and popularisation of geographical knowledge. For instance, in 1982, he published the widely recognised and well-received book for schoolchildren, *Znaete li vy Kaliningradskuyu oblast? [Do You Know the Kaliningrad Region?]*, which was reissued in 2006 and 2009. Moreover, for his significant contribution to developing the Territorial Comprehensive Scheme for Urban Development in the Kaliningrad Region, Prof. Fedorov, as part of the authorship team, was awarded the First Prize by the Federal Agency of Construction, Housing and Housing Services of the Russian Federation in 2004.

In the early 1990s, the Kaliningrad region became a Russian exclave, acquiring distinctive characteristics and encountering specific challenges. This geopolitically driven transformation demanded focused attention from federal institutions and the research community, alongside the development of targeted strategies and measures to ensure the region’s sustainable socio-economic development. One of

the most significant measures within this framework, as seen by Prof. Fedorov, his colleagues and students, involved transforming the Kaliningrad region into a key communication corridor in Western Russia — a ‘region of cooperation’ or ‘island of cooperation’. Its positive future was envisioned as being closely tied to cross-border integration in the Baltic and the creation of a distinctive international socio-economic entity: the Baltic region. This concept, owing significantly to Prof. Fedorov’s scientific stance and intellectual vigour, laid the foundation for Russian Baltic studies, with Kaliningrad emerging as one of its leading and most productive centres. To advance this direction, Prof. Fedorov initiated and co-authored the book *Russia in the Baltic: 1990—2007*, first published in 2008 and reissued in an updated version in 2013. Moreover, considerable effort was devoted to defining the Baltic region, its borders, structure, economy, settlement patterns and geopolitical characteristics, often in collaboration with colleagues from Poland, Lithuania and Germany. The concept of **cross-border and transboundary regionalisation**, adapted to the Kaliningrad region, was further developed within Baltic studies. The applied aspect of this research field was closely linked with attempts to construct effective spatial structures for Russian-Polish and Russian-Lithuanian cross-border and transboundary cooperation in the form of Euroregions.

The priority given to socio-geographical structures and processes within Baltic region studies rekindled Prof. Fedorov’s interest in **maritime issues**. His first article exploring marine themes, ‘Foundations of the Geography of Population and Settlement in the World Ocean’, co-authored with prominent Russian economic geographer Prof. Vadim Pokshishevskii, was published in 1988. Prof. Fedorov’s growing focus on this topic was reinforced by his pivotal role in the Russian Scientific Foundation (RSF)-funded project Cross-border Cluster Formation in the Dynamics of Economic and Settlement Systems of the Coastal Areas of European Russia, conducted from 2015 to 2017. Yet another major project, also supported by the RSF, was carried out at the Baltic Federal University under the leadership of Prof. Fedorov. Titled *Ensuring the Economic Security of the Regions of Russia’s Western Borderlands in Conditions of Geopolitical Turbulence (2018—2020)*, it emphasised the multi-faceted socio-geographical phenomenon of **Russia’s Western borderlands**, highlighting the growing urgency of economic security concerns that intensified after 2014 amid shifting geoeconomic and geopolitical dynamics in the Baltic region and beyond. The research conducted in this area resulted in a series of books: *Problemy ekonomicheskoy bezopasnosti regionov Zapadnogo porubezh’ya Rossii: monografiya* [Problems of Economic Security of the Regions of Russia’s Western Borderlands: A Monograph]. Edited by G.M. Fedorov. Kaliningrad: IKBFU Press, 2019); *Zapadnoe porubezh’ye Rossii: modelirovaniye razvitiya i obespecheniye ekonomicheskoy bezopasnosti: monografiya* [Russia’s Western Borderlands: Modelling Development and Ensuring Economic Security: A Monograph]. Edited by G.M. Fedorov. Kaliningrad: IKBFU Press 2020; *Ekonomicheskaya be-*

zopasnost' regionov Zapadnogo porubezh'ya Rossii: monografiya [Economic Security of the Regions of Russia's Western Borderlands: A Monograph]. Edited by G.M. Fedorov. Kaliningrad: IKBFU Press, 2021; *Prigranichnoye sotrudnichestvo vdol' gosudarstvennoy granitsy Rossii. Chast' 1: Regiony Dal'nego Vostoka, Sibiri, Urala i Povolzh'ya: monografiya* [Border Cooperation Along the State Border of Russia. Part 1: Regions of the Far East, Siberia, Ural and Volga: A Monograph]. Edited by A. P. Klemeshev, Ya. A. Vorozheina, I. S. Gumenyuk, G.M. Fedorov. Kaliningrad: IKBFU, 2021.

In studying Russia's western, particularly Baltic, territories and the Kaliningrad region, Prof. Fedorov focused on **territorial resilience** to external shocks and challenges, a central theme in Russian regional studies at the time. His thoughtfully developed, analytically grounded scientific approach was reflected in numerous promptly published monographs and analytical reports, such as: Fedorov G.M., Zverev Yu.M. *Kaliningradskie alternativy: 25 let spustya: monografiya* [Kaliningrad Alternatives: 25 Years Later: Monograph]. Kaliningrad: IKBFU Press, 2020; *Vyzovy i perspektivy razvitiya Kaliningradskoy oblasti: geopolitika i geokononika: Monografiya* [Challenges and Prospects for the Development of the Kaliningrad Region: Geopolitics and Geo-economics: Monograph]. Edited by G.M. Fedorov. Kaliningrad: IKBFU Press, 2021; Fedorov G.M., Voloshenko K. Yu., Zhdanov V.P. *Strategiya razvitiya i ekonomicheskaya bezopasnost Kaliningradskoy oblasti: analiticheskiy doklad* [Strategy for Development and Economic Security of the Kaliningrad Region: Analytical Report]. Kaliningrad: IKBFU Press, 2023; Fedorov G.M., Novikova A. A. *Restrukturizatsiya vneshnikh torgovykh svyazey Kaliningradskoy oblasti (2014—2022): informatsionno-analiticheskiy doklad* [Restructuring Foreign Trade Relations of the Kaliningrad Region (2014—2022): Information-Analytical Report]. Kaliningrad: IKBFU Press, 2023; Fedorov G.M., Zverev Yu.M. *Rossiya na Baltike: 2014—2023 gody: Monografiya* [Russia in the Baltic: 2014—2023: Monograph]. Kaliningrad: IKBFU Press, 2024; Fedorov G.M. *Rossiya na Baltike — 2023: informatsionno-analiticheskiy doklad* [Russia in the Baltic — 2023: Information-Analytical Report]. Kaliningrad: IKBFU Press, 2024; Fedorov G.M., Voloshenko K. Yu., Mikhailova A. A., Novikova A. A. *Aktualnye problemy ekonomiko-demograficheskoy, prodovolstvennoy, innovatsionnoy i vneshneekonomicheskoy bezopasnosti Kaliningradskogo regiona: analiticheskiy doklad* [Current Issues of Economic-Demographic, Food, Innovation, and Foreign Economic Security in the Kaliningrad Region: Analytical Report]. Kaliningrad: IKBFU Press, 2024.

A significant portion of these works was written within the framework of another project led by Prof. Fedorov and funded by the RSF, Justification for the Restructuring of International Relations and Measures to Ensure the Military-Political Security of Russian Regions in the Baltic Amid Deepening Geopolitical Contradictions. This project, in particular, argued for the necessity of strengthen-

ing Kaliningrad's connections with other Russian regions and creating a multi-sector interregional spatially distributed cluster linking Saint Petersburg and the Leningrad and Kaliningrad regions.

Prof. Fedorov authored over 600 research and popular works, published in prestigious periodicals, such as *Regional Research of Russia*, *Baltic Region, Polis. Political Studies*, *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Earth Sciences*, *Regionalnye issledovaniya* [Regional Studies], and others. His works, with their innovative ideas, concepts and analyses, consistently garner attention, remain highly sought after and are extensively cited.

Responding to the challenges of evolving socio-geographical circumstances and creatively shaping the research trajectory of the teams he led, Prof. Fedorov continuously and tirelessly advanced the unique Kaliningrad (Baltic) scientific school of human geographical thought, which continues to operate productively within the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University. A researcher of exceptional professional competence and a veritable 'universal soldier' in human geography, capable of independently addressing nearly any task, Prof. Fedorov consistently cultivated and expanded his circle of colleagues and students, building a strong and numerous professional community of social geographers and regional studies experts in Kaliningrad. At the same time, he maintained strong academic and friendly ties with a wide network of friends and colleagues across many Russian regions.

Prof. Fedorov maintained particularly close and productive ties with colleagues from St. Petersburg (formerly, Leningrad), establishing a paradigm of multiple-level research and educational collaboration between the two university-based socio-geographical schools. At the undergraduate level, it includes summer field training sessions for St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad human geography students held in their respective home regions. At the postgraduate level, collaboration occurs through the annual enrolment of St. Petersburg State University graduates in IKBFU's postgraduate programme. At the research level, examples include membership in doctoral thesis committees for Economic, Social, Political and Recreational Geography at St. Petersburg State University and the Herzen Russian State Pedagogical University, regular participation in organising and programme committees for research conferences, reviewing academic publications, and acting as opponents for doctoral and postdoctoral dissertations.

In 2007, during a visit to St. Petersburg State University (SPSU), Prof. Fedorov proposed the creation of a joint interdisciplinary bilingual journal, *Baltic Region*, the idea which was wholeheartedly supported by his colleagues. The journal's editorial board included experts from the two founding universities, later joined by researchers from the Higher School of Economics, the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), the Institute of Europe of the RAS, and invited colleagues from eight universities in Baltic region countries.

The journal's first issue was published in 2009. Under Prof. Fedorov's effective leadership, it steadily gained academic prestige within national and interna-

tional research communities, becoming a key integrator of socio-geographical research in Russia. The journal quickly achieved top indexing results among geography-focused academic publications, entering the Russian Science Citation Index, the RSCI Core, the Higher Attestation Commission's list, the Emerging Sources Citation Index (since 2015) on the Web of Science platform, Scopus Q1 (since 2018), and the Chinese CNKI database.

Prof. Fedorov consistently devoted attention to international cooperation, which became one of the priorities of his work. For example, with his active involvement, the department he headed and the university joined the Baltic University Programme (BUP), initiated by Uppsala University, as early as the mid-1990s. Its Russian co-organisers were St. Petersburg State University (SPSU) and IKBFU, with their regional programme branches implementing joint academic and research projects.

Undoubtedly, Prof. Fedorov played a key role in integrating universities from the Baltic region states to pursue the study of various Baltic issues, particularly transboundary and cross-border cooperation. His most precious brainchild was the annual international research conferences on this topic, organised by the IKBFU. The most recent, eighth occurrence, titled 'Borderland Issues: New Trajectories of International Cooperation', held from 16 to 18 October 2024, was dedicated to the memory of the founder of this initiative.

One of the promising inter-university cooperation projects between IKBFU and SPSU was discussed in 2020 during the preparation of IKBFU's new development programme. It was a joint 'flagship', as Prof. Fedorov termed it, an interdisciplinary master's programme in strategic and territorial management (its name was yet to be determined) to be launched at the Institute of Regional Studies. However, this initiative ultimately did not materialise.

Another of Prof. Fedorov's cherished projects was the postgraduate programme he led in economic, social, political and recreational geography, the largest in Russia in terms of annual enrolment and graduation. The programme brings together young researchers from various universities, including human geographers from SPSU.

In 2010, Prof. Fedorov became one of the co-founders of the Association of Russian Human Geographers (ARGO) and served as its vice president while simultaneously heading the Kaliningrad regional branch of the organisation. He participated in the activities and modernisation of the Russian Geographical Society as a member of its Academic Council and the Commission on Territorial Organisation and Planning. Previously, he was also a member of the Council on Territorial Organisation Issues, one of whose sessions he organised at the IKBFU in the late 1980s, thereby introducing the university, Kaliningrad, and the region to Soviet human geographers.

Today, the professional legacy of Gennady Fedorov is successfully continued by the team of human geographers from the Kaliningrad University School of Geodemography and Regional Studies, which he founded and whose members are

respectfully referred to as the ‘Fedorovites’. A worthy successor to Prof. Fedorov’s academic and educational work is his daughter, Elena Kropinova, a professor at IKBFU and a recognised authority in recreational geography and tourism. Like her father, she defended her post-doctoral dissertation in geography at SPSU.

Prof. Fedorov tirelessly advanced our science, loved and valued the people around him, and lived a strong, productive and vibrant life. This is how we all knew him. We carefully preserve this memory by cherishing his legacy and addressing the research tasks he set, as evidenced by the special issue of the Baltic Region, prepared by Prof. Fedorov’s closest colleagues, his allies and students.

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