

Tor Bergeron's time in the Soviet Union under Stalin (I)

1922-35 Tor Bergeron (1891-1977) was employed at the Norwegian Meteorological Institute, first in Bergen, from 1929 in Oslo. He also spent just over a year in Moscow in the then Soviet Union. The reason why he came there was partly a coincidence.

In the spring of 1928, in the aftermath of the failed Italian Nobile expedition to the North Pole, the Soviet icebreaker "Krassin" arrived in Bergen. It had participated in the rescue expedition to Spitsbergen. With the ship was the Head of the Soviet Weather Service Dr. Puiushe. He was very impressed by the activities in Bergen and invited any of meteorologists to come to the Soviet Union and teach its meteorologists.

Bergeron jumped at the invitation. However, it would be a while before the bureaucracy paper mills had finished in Moscow. In the meantime, Bergeron accepted another invitation, now from the British Meteorological Office. They wanted to get a better grasp of the new ideas from Bergen by hiring Bergeron as a consultant.

Contrary to what is often claimed, the Bergen school pioneers did not have the entire meteorological community against them. The strongest opposition came from Germany and Austria, while eg US meteorologists were fairly open-minded. It was to spread the knowledge about Bergen School theories that Carl-Gustaf Rossby (1898-1957) crossed over to the USA in 1926

Bjerknes's ideas had a hard time making itself felt in Sweden and Denmark, but were early on accepted in Finland by Erik Palmén (1898-1985) and Vilho Väisälä (1889-1969).

Now the Met Office was planning weather service for flights to the Middle East and thus placed one of their promising young scientists, Reginald Sutcliffe (1904-91) on one of the prospective stopover sites, Malta. He was now joined by Bergeron from October 1928 to April 1929. Sutcliffe would always come to praise the benefit it has meant for his development as a meteorologist to have had Bergeron as his teacher in synoptics .

Finally came the invitation to Bergeron from Moscow and from September 1930 we find him involved in teaching there. The lectures were conducted in German. The first course, which ran throughout the autumn, covered Bergen School theory and practice. The participants, 40 meteorologists, came from all parts of the Soviet Union.

The course was very intense and concentrated . The discussions after the lectures were long and could last well to the evening, sometimes into the night. Bergeron and the audience inspired each other, and Bergeron got his needs of people who shared his interests and beliefs satisfied.

Among the participants were three synoptic meteorologists. About Boris L. Dzerdzeyevsky I have no information, but with Sergei Petrovich Chromov (1904-77) he would work quite a lot and Vera Romanovskaya (1903-85), the woman he fell in love, and would marry. (Cont.)

Anders Persson