

# Role of Rail Transport in Organizing the Transportation of Peasant Settlers from 1906 to 1916 the Eastern Movement Area

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**Abstract**—The article deals with the organization of transportation of peasant settlers in the years of the Stolypin agrarian reform along the Trans-Siberian Railway. It considers the dynamics of the process of transportation of settlers by rail and the role of resettlement organizations in this case.

**Keywords**—movement of settlers, resettlement areas, resettlement centers, Stolypin agrarian reform, Trans-Siberian Railway

## I. INTRODUCTION

The resettlement of peasants from the European part of Russia to the Urals was an important part of the Stolypin agrarian reform. In the course of the reform, the government tried to solve the most important problems - economic and geopolitical - to economically develop the outskirts of the state, assign Asian property to Russia, maintain and "complete" the Trans-Siberian Railway, reduce land "hunger" in central regions of Russia, destroy the peasant community, introduce capitalist forms of manufacture in agriculture and many others. According to Stolypin, Siberia was supposed to become one of the main agricultural regions of the country; therefore, it was peasants whose resettlement to Siberia was given a lot of value.

Until 1906 and before the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, the process of moving peasant settlers to Siberia was rather difficult and long. Most of them moved on horses and by foot, carrying children and property in carts. The cattle were driven close by. At a day, these large groups of settlers (from 40 to 100 families) could travel no more than 35 - 40 miles [1]. This journey could take up to 5-6 months [2]. Not everyone would dare to go on such a long and risky journey with family and cattle. It is for these reasons that many tsarist officials and Russian historians often explained the small number of settlers to Siberia until the beginning of the twentieth century.

The construction and commissioning of the Trans-Siberian Railway largely changed the process of moving settlers to Siberia and significantly reduced travel time. The increase in the number of relocatees forced the government and the Siberian Railway to organize the process of transporting

peasants by rail, to make it cheaper, to possibly organize the transport of livestock and equipment in the same trains as the owners, to organize hot meals and medical care on the way.

In this article we planned to consider the transformation and dynamics of the organization of the promotion of settlers by rail to Siberia in the years of the Stolypin agrarian reform.

## II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

When writing this article, we used the following set of cognitive methods: philosophical-logical (deductive, inductive analysis and synthesis), special historical (retrospective method, historical-comparative, historical-systemic, quantitative, historical-typological), and general scientific (comparison, juxtaposition, generalization).

## III. RESULTS

The state strongly encouraged the resettlement of peasants to the Urals. The government was especially interested in the settlement of the regions of Trans-Baikal and the Far East, stimulating peasants with loans and privileges, cheap tickets for scouts and peasant relocatees [3]. These measures yielded positive results. Millions of peasants were involved in the resettlement process outside the Urals. They still needed to be delivered to the plots to which they had been assigned. Sometimes the railway could not cope with the huge and unorganized flow of those who wanted to move beyond the Urals. In such cases the state and officials of the Central movement department acted as a regulator, trying to streamline this process.

In 1906, by the order of the government, two areas of movement for settlers were established: Western area included all routes in the European part of Russia to Irkutsk; Eastern area included routes from Irkutsk to Vladivostok. In addition, heads of movement areas were appointed in order to organize work. They should have been located in the cities of Chelyabinsk and Irkutsk, respectively. [4] The heads of the movement areas were assigned the most important task: to provide all kinds of assistance to the relocatees on the way (food, medical, administrative). In addition to the above mentioned aspects, it was necessary to track the dynamics of resettlement and the conditions of advancement in order to

"make attempts to facilitate and speed up transportation" in the future" [5]. The leadership of the movement of settlers on the Trans-Siberian Railway from the "Chelyabinsk" station to the "Irkutsk" station was assigned to officials who were already engaged in managing the resettlement business in the areas of accommodation [6, p.22]. The job description ordered them to monitor all movements of settlers by railways and waterways, to observe the "proper" transportation of both direct and return settlers, the work and condition of the settlements, to "smooth over" possible conflicts with railway leaders, and "bring to the attention" of the central movement agency about the most significant conflicts. Heads of movement areas issued "travel" loans, informed settlers about the conditions of "accommodation", and provided informational assistance to both scouts and relocatees [6].

The resettlement department regularly issued reference books for scouts and relocatees, where, in a most detailed way, in understandable language for peasants, there was all the information needed for the "proper" resettlement to Siberia: for example, from which station, on what day and hour the train would leave. "For From April 18, 1907, special train scouts will depart daily from Vyaz'ma (Smolensk Province) at 7.30 am and from Kharkov at 4.30 am, which are faster than those for ordinary settlers." These trains arrived in Chelyabinsk on the sixth day and on the fifteenth day in Irkutsk [7, p.128]. There were recommendations in these books, when and how to send scouts, and warnings about possible frauds. "When a scout passes the Siberian city of Chelyabinsk, the first one behind the Ural Mountains, he should definitely sign up with the local Settlement Officer and ask him what he didn't understand or didn't find in this book. The main thing that he should consult about is where there are vacant lots and how to get to Siberian relocatee officials and peasant chiefs who are in charge of those lots..." [7]. The state tried as much as possible to help those who want to be relocated "properly" and establish themselves in a new place. The resettlement centers in the Western resettlement area were established in Penza and Syzran', trains with scouts and settlers arrived there, then the trains with settlers traveled beyond the Urals. There was "accounting for relocating" made at the "Chelyabinsk" station, necessary, according to the government, for the case to be better organized [7].

In order to better organize the transportation of relocatees to the Urals, an interdepartmental meeting in 1907 determines the sequence of transportation of peasants from central regions of Russia. According to the circular of the Main Department of Land Management and Agriculture of February 8, 1907, there were five lines of dispatch of relocatees, each lasting two weeks. The First was the queue from March 1-25 - for those who are "enlisted" in the lots in Tobolsk, Yenisei, Irkutsk provinces, Akmola, Semipalatinsk, Turgai and Ural regions; The second was the queue from March 25 to April 12 - for those who are "enlisted" in the lots of the Trans-Baikal, Amur and Seaside regions; The third was the queue from April 13-28. The fourth was the queue until May 15 - for those who wanted to settle in the Tomsk province; the fifth was the queue from May 16 to June 20 - was determined for everyone "who didn't want or couldn't use the move in the first four terms" [4]. These terms were often violated, as "they were not consistent with the economic considerations of the peasants." The head of land management and resettlement in the Irkutsk

province reported to the resettlement office in October 1909 that the first queue of departure of the scouts from March 10 to 25 was unsuccessful in local time, since there was "great impassability" during this period, which made access to the resettlement areas difficult. Arriving at this time, the settlers were forced to stay for a long time at the stations and in the resettlement centers, overpaying for the delivery of family and luggage to the lots. It was proposed to change the deadline for the queue, to make it in two stages. However, the resettlement department did not change the dates that were set in 1907 [8].

The peasants themselves chose the most appropriate time for departure, not observing the queue [4].

Since 1893, travel and cash benefits, medical food aid and a reduced resettlement tariff equal to 1/3 of the fare in fourth-class cars were established [6]. The preferential resettlement tariff was 0.3 kopecks per person-versts 1/75 penny from pounds of baggage and versts, 0.5 kopecks from livestock heads and versts. Children under ten years old were taken for free, as were calves, foals, lambs [7]. According to the decree of the General Directorate of Land Management and Agriculture for 1907, "requests for issuance of certificates for free travel can be granted only on special requests of the governors." European Russia received 37,403 applications for free travel, 16415 were granted [10]. Those who could travel for free by rail were most often the following categories of relocatees: families of lower ranks, wounded, or taking part in the Russian-Japanese war, as well as those to whom the land use commission issued certificates confirming that "relocating many owners, who are obviously not well-off, is clearly connected with the improvement of land tenure of the remaining ones" [9]. The opportunity to get a preferential fare was for everyone who wanted to move to the Urals, for this it was necessary to issue special documents - a pass certificate or a "travel certificate", which enumerated all family members and stations of arrival. Non-refundable loans for traveling by rail to scouts and relocatees in the eastern region of movement accounted for one ruble and seventy-one kopecks. The head of the resettlement of the Zabaikal-Manzhursky region in 1906 noted that the funds allocated were not enough. The estimate for 1906 was based on the movement of 10,000 settlers, and there were twice as much of them. About 400 families were able to receive travel allowance, an average of 6 rubles per family [9].

As it was already noted, except people, resettlement groups transported agricultural implements, luggage in "chests and bales", beehives, poultry (in cages), lambs, pigs, calves of goats, cows, horses, and even camels [7]. All this living creatures also made some confusion. It was necessary to take care of them while traveling, and this also was difficult in organizing peasant resettlement to Siberia. From 1908, special trains were formed from so-called "Stolypin cars" for transportation by rail. These were wooden freight cars, equipped with an iron stove and a pipe that went to the ceiling of the car, and benches stood around the stove. The car was equipped with bunks on which the settlers slept. The luggage was kept under the bunks [11]. Government officials monitored the displacement of peasant settlers in the provinces of their departure, and throughout their journey to Siberia.

In the areas of movement of settlers there were permanent resettlement centers that worked all year, and temporary ones

that worked only during the period of heavy traffic. In the Eastern region of movement, large permanent resettlement centers (Krasnoyarsk, Yenisei, Irkutsk, Tulunsky, Chita, Sretensky, etc.) were headed by a special official - "the head of the resettlement center". At smaller resettlement centers, the management was assigned to a doctor or to someone from the economic staff [5]. The head of the resettlement center was responsible for all the work of the center, except for the "hospital affairs" in which the "center doctor" was engaged [5]. Large resettlement centers often had barracks (for temporary stops for relocatees), hospitals and baths. There, relocatees could get the necessary information, search for missing luggage or wait for relatives who had lagged along the way, get hot meals, but the main thing was that they could get medical help, since overcrowding and travel difficulties greatly affected the health of settlers [7]. During the period of intensive movement of relocatees, at the peak of the resettlement, the stations looked like a swarm of bees. The Irkutsk resettlement center was designed to simultaneously receive 700 people, but in May 1914 (during the period of intensive movement of settlers) there were about 1,500 people in it [12].

Regulating the process of resettlement to Siberia, government officials created detailed instructions that best governed the actions of local officials. In particular, the duties of the heads of the resettlement center and the doctor, as well as the entire staff of the center.

According to the instructions, the resettlement center should be kept clean, "whitened during the period of heavy traffic of settlers at least once a month, the floors and bunks had to be washed twice a week." In Soviet historiography, the opinion was firmly established about the "failure of the Stolypin agrarian reform" and the "insufficient contribution of the officials". However, it cannot be stated unequivocally. In his work V.A. Stepynin cites the following fact: "... at the centers, the houses are built without compliance with the requirements. They are not plastered, not insulated; they have bad furnaces, which make them very cold. The kitchens are dirty, there are no cellars for food storage, there are not enough rooms"[13]. In the archival documents one can find opposite evidence: "On June 17, 1909, a resettlement center was examined in the Bushulei. 1600 rubles was allocated to improve it this year. A new barrack was built, but it shrinks... A hospital and a bench was built. A house for employees is under construction. The hospital is kept clean" [9]. Seeing only several cases, one shouldn't draw unambiguous conclusions, saying that all resettlement centers did not work well.

Studying the instructions for the work of the resettlement centers, it can be concluded that a thorough approach to business, attention to even small details. Special officials - "observers of the transportation of resettlers and workers" monitored the observance of all rules of transportation, supervised the luggage of the relocatees, searched for it in case of lag or loss. Since the settlers themselves were poorly aware of their rights and could not always defend their interests, they were obliged to ensure that "the difficulties of the travel are not further aggravated by the carelessness of people serving the movement". These officials were obliged to know the statute of the railways, all existing laws and regulations on the resettlement case, which related to the conditions of transportation, the rights and obligations of the relocated

people, all the rules and instructions. They were obliged to keep track journals for the movement of trains with settlers, books on the luggage search, a register of observed violations of transport regulations [6].

Irkutsk resettlement center was one of the biggest. Every year at least 55 thousand rubles were allocated for its maintenance, except the wages of the doctor and the head of the center. The resettlement center at the Chita station was worth of 2,075 rubles for the treasury [12]. For the first time, the draft estimate for 1915 included the amount for the maintenance of a shelter for settlers' children. It happened that parents fell ill and died on the way. In the explanatory note, one can read the following: "In the event of the death of both parents, young children remain completely helpless... Several of these orphans currently live at centers in the Eastern District on the private means of the staff..." [12]. This shelter was supposed to be built in Sretensk, estimates was approved by the Resettlement Board. There were help desks for scouts and relocatees at each resettlement center, there were daily lectures (readings) at the centers during the periods of movement. At the Irkutsk resettlement center in the spring of 1914, they talked about the Primorsk, Amur and Trans-Baikal regions, as the state preferred to settle this particular part of Siberia. Lectures on the Far Eastern regions of Siberia were conducted by specialists, most often topographers sent from the "accommodation" areas. The interest in them was very high. The premises often could not accommodate everyone wishing to attend [12].

The duties of the head of the resettlement center were numerous. In particular, he was responsible for feeding the settlers and patients in the resettlement center hospital, for heating and lighting in the center, for washing the hospital linen, for storing the resettlement center equipment, for food for the center employees. Patients undergoing treatment in resettlement center hospitals received food four times a day. The doctor at the center was obliged to monitor the quality of the purchased products, and was strictly responsible for this. Products for the center were purchased on a tender basis, bread and firewood were purchased only under contract. In the report for 1913, you can read the following lines: "Milk and hot food are provided to children and the poor during the journey for free. Bread is given free of charge only in case of delays not due to the fault of settlers... Hot food costs 4 kopecks per serving, while the procurement cost to the east of Irkutsk exceeds this amount" [12]. In the years 1908-1909, free distribution of food at resettlement centers was twice as high as the paid one, and in the following years the number of free meals was significantly reduced [4].

One of the most important tasks that needed to be solved when organizing resettlement by rail was medical assistance on the way and at resettlement centers. These issues were the most inconvenient. The press regularly criticized the work of resettlement officials. In 1908, the magazine "Siberian Issues" wrote about the organization of the resettlement process - "... the time when ideological young forces enlisted in relocatee organizations to serve the people and help the Siberian farmers to reach their destination safely, is now gone. When the number of officials with large salaries increasing and the entire center of gravity being transferred to the land plot allotment and the accommodation of settlers, the resettlement trains along the entire railway line are nothing more than a live load



that formed a "human reservoir" the past summer, for example, in Chelyabinsk, Omsk and other cities [8]. It was categorically forbidden to use resettlement barracks at the centers for other purposes, only the settlers could be temporarily located there. Nevertheless, during the First World War, in 1914 the year, these requirements were violated, and prisoners of war could also be located there [9]. In 1909 Glinka, the head of the resettlement administration, demanded that the manager of the Eastern area of movement take all possible and "decisive measures" to remove relocatees from the station territories, since "their prolonged stay within the limits of station constrains the work and is unfavorably reflected in the sanitary state both of the railroad staff and relocatees themselves" [9].

The interdepartmental meeting in November 1907 decided: to create on the Penza-Irkutsk line, every 120 miles of the railway, medical stations with one ambulance car and physician assistants. To engage an ambulance car to each pair of resettlement trains. Ambulance carriages were intended for isolation and transportation of patients found on the way. The physician assistants and nurses were supposed to conduct regular inspections of the trains, identify the diseased, transfer them to the ambulance car and provide them with medical assistance. However, the management of the railways did not comply with this decision; they abandoned the equipment of special ambulance cars. The resettlement department, with its own forces, was able to introduce ambulance cars later and only on state railways [5]. An urgent problem that had to be solved by doctors working in resettlement centers was infectious epidemics. As already mentioned, overcrowded environment greatly contributed to this. In Tulun resettlement center of the Eastern region of the movement, where the resettlement trains stood longer than the usual, the relocatees were regularly inspected. Often these examinations were conducted by medical students, as there was a shortage of medical personnel at the centers. In 1909, out of 909 patients found, 177 people had infectious diseases. During the four months of the movement of the resettlement trains, the doctors of the station removed 15 people from the trains. In the report on his work for 1909, a medical student Popov wrote that the resettlement trains were not always accompanied by a physician assistant and did not always have an ambulance car. Physician assistants accompanying trains No. 22 and No. 25 (transporting settlers) often did not have the most necessary medicines and dressings. The physician assistants "were negligent". The settlers themselves sought to hide their sick relatives, as they were afraid that they would be removed from the train. [14]. Thus, the behavior of the settlers themselves often contributed to the spread of epidemics. The lack of medical personnel also had its consequences. Thus, in the Irkutsk resettlement area in January 1914 there were only six doctors and 28 medical assistants [15]. However, the following case, which occurred at the Tulun resettlement center in 1909, is still known: a physician assistant Mrs. Gershevich was evicted from the center at the request of the provincial administration as a Jew, who does not have the right of residence in the province". The head of the resettlement organization of the Irkutsk province, Ivan Sofronovich Ikonnikov, noted in his report that the shortage of medical personnel at the centers can be explained by the following reasons: "Firstly, the majority of doctors in Siberia were people practicing Judaism; secondly, information about the political credibility of the candidates (mandatory for admission

to the public service) came with a long delay, and during that time they were looking for another place of service" [14]. Working conditions in the resettlement organization were not easy, people had to work hard enough for two. The allowance of the doctor who worked at the resettlement center was 1800 rubles in the Yenisei province, 2400 rubles in the Irkutsk province, 2700 rubles in the Trans-Baikal region and the Far East, according to the circular dated 1909. Physician assistants received from 50 to 100 rubles a month. They could use state-owned apartments, but could not have private practice [16]. Trains were examined at the Tulun station since there was a specially equipped infectious diseases hospital, which was supervised by the doctor Butorin, and since 1910 he supervised the provision of all medical assistance to settlers in the Irkutsk resettlement area. Since 1910, the resettlement centers along the railway line were placed under the authority of the head of movement in the Eastern District. The variety of reported infectious diseases is striking. At the Tulun settlement in 1909, 47 people died from infectious diseases. In the same year, cases of smallpox, measles, erysipelas, lobar pneumonia, and typhoid fever were reported at the site. People got sick with typhoid fever more often, even staff was infected; in 1909, 42 people in the Tulun infectious diseases hospital were treated for typhoid. [17].

V.G. Tyukavkin, a historian of resettlement in Siberia, believed that the main reason for all the shortcomings was the scale of the movement, which "were too stiff for the resettlement and administrative structures to handle". He recognized that "in 1913-1914, when the funds for resettlement were doubled, and the number of settlers decreased 2.5 times, the shortcomings in organizing the move became much less" [18].

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Three provinces of Eastern Siberia from 1900 to 1916 received the following number of immigrants: Yenisei - about 460 thousand people, Irkutsk - about 146 thousand people, Zabaykal - about 27 thousand people, which accounted for 14.2% of the total number who moved to Siberia. The flow of settlers to Siberia was not uniform:

- in 1906 - 217 thousand people;
- in 1907 - 577 thousand people;
- in 1908 - 759 thousand people;
- in 1909 - 705 thousand people;
- in 1910 - 353 thousand people;
- in 1911 - 226 thousand people;
- in 1912 - 260 thousand people;
- in 1913 - 328 thousand people;
- in 1914 - 128 thousand people;
- in 1915 - 111 thousand people;
- in 1916 - 86 thousand people [19].

These figures given by the authors of the monograph are not much different from the data that were voiced in their report by P.A. Stolypin, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers and A.V. Krivoshein, the Chief executive officer of land management and agriculture: "Over the 300 years of our possession of Siberia, it has accumulated only 4 million Russian people. 3 million have immediately arrived over the past 15 years. Out of them, more than 1.5 million arrived in three years from 1907 to 1909" [20]. These figures indicate a serious and thoughtful approach to solving the problem of the economic development of suburbs.

With the development of the resettlement process, resettlement bodies and the organization of the process of transportation of settlers become more rational and orderly. The difficulties that the officials faced in the process of organizing the transfer of huge human flows to the Urals, one way or another, were gradually overcome, and experience was accumulated. It should be noted that by that time no other country had this kind of experience. However, serious miscalculations were also encountered. There were infectious epidemics, documents mixed up, the resettlement luggage disappeared. However, resettlement organizations had been providing the movement of those who wanted to move to Siberia by rail, waterways, and then directly to the land plots. The resettlement centers created along the route, though not always without complaints, still helped the relocatees to overcome the long journey, providing medical care, food and information assistance.

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