

Experience of Implementing State Policy on Life and Adaptation of Families of Agricultural Migrants from the European Part of Russia to the Far East in the 20-30s of the 20th Century

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Abstract. One of the main problems of the Far East of Russia is a tendency of long-term reduction of the population of the region. While maintaining natural loss, there is an outflow of labor resources in the central part of Russia. In this situation, it is advisable to refer to a historical experience of state policy on replenishing the region with labor. The paper focuses on a comprehensive study of the activities of government agencies on the implementation of agricultural family relocation policies from the central part of Russia to the Far East. The reasons for family relocations, contributing to an increase in the population of the region, are substantiated. Some features of the organization of the process of resettlement and adaptation of the families of agricultural migrants in the 20s and 30s of the 20th century are considered. The findings on the economic and social-legal regulation of family relocations in the 20s and 30s of the 20th century can be used in the development of federal and regional programs to consolidate the population in the Far East of the country.

1. Introduction

The development of the Far Eastern Federal Region in Russia is one of the most important long-term government objectives. The geographical location of the Far East contributes to the establishment of economic relations with neighboring countries. The region which occupies an area of 40.6% of the country is the most sparsely populated area of Russia. According to the Federal service of national statistics the population of the Far East was 8,188,623 people on January 1, 2019 with a population density of 0.1 people per sq. km. [1]. Despite natural population growth, the population of the region continues to decline due to the excess of the level of migration loss. Migration has a pronounced focus from northern to southern regions of the country. A strategic goal of the demographic policy of the Far East is stabilization of the population and its increase to 6.5 million by 2025. [2].

2. Topicality

In modern conditions state priorities are the creation of comfortable conditions in the regions of the Russian Far East. The projects financed by the state and private investors are being implemented. The scheme on granting hectares in the entities of the Far East is operating [3]. A priority goal of the program

on allocating land in the Far Eastern territory is the development of regions, attraction of investors, resettlement of citizens, improvement of the demographic situation, development of human capital. However, climatic features of the region and a number of other reasons complicated the implementation of the project [4,5,6].

The current situation indicates the relevance of an appeal to the historical experience of state policy on settlement of the region [7]. The experience deserves attention since in pre-revolutionary and Soviet periods family relocations played a decisive role in filling the Far Eastern region with labor resources.

3. Historical experience of agricultural relocations

In November 1922 the Far Eastern Republic having joined Soviet Russia ceased to exist.

The Civil war and intervention finally undermined the economic potential of the Far East, which was based on a capitalist sector with a strong influence of foreign capital. The currencies of the USA, Japan, China were in operation.

The huge sparsely populated area of the region could begin a new life only on condition of further economic development and a possibility of protecting the borders from external encroachment. It required natural and human resources. The region was rich in natural resources but it lacked human resources dramatically. In that unfavorable situation again, as before the revolution, a question of retaining the territory was being resolved.

Since a pre-revolutionary experience of resolving this issue was positive, the methods of developing the territory were the same. Only the goals were different. The colonization policy of tsarist Russia in the east had a strategic character, since military defence on the eastern frontiers was its main goal. Soviet Russia was solving economic tasks that consisted in the development of the uninhabited land, although defensive objectives were definitely present in its colonization policy.

If in the first case the settlement and development of the territory began essentially from scratch, in the second one the area was settled, though sparsely. Therefore, based on those achievements Soviet Russia could increase the economic potential of the region.

In the resettlement process family relocations remained the main form for several reasons [8]:

1. A family had less migratory mobility and as a result was a reliable object for resettlement.
2. It was more able to adapt economically, socially and demographically in a new place.
3. The provision of financial assistance to a family was justified from an economic point of view, as it guaranteed the return of allocated loans in the future.
4. Resettlement of families caused the preconditions for natural growth of the population in the new territory.

In addition, a family was a bearer of the ethnic culture; therefore, the relocation of Eastern Slavic families contributed to increasing the influence of their culture in the Far Eastern region.

That is, just like before the revolution the authorities used a family as a tool in the implementation of their plans, a family policy became part of the state policy for the further development of the territory in the east of the country.

The main figure in the process of colonization was a peasant family.

From the mid-20s the resettlement of individual peasant families began from agrarian overpopulated regions of the European part of Russia.

Before 1925 the resettlement to the Far East did not have an organized nature and was very small. The circumstances demanded a change in the approach to the resettlement problem. A resolution of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of July 6, 1925 "On the opening of the planned resettlement to the Volga region, Siberia and the Russian Far East" began a planned relocation to the Amurskaya and Primorskaya provinces in the Far East [10].

In 1926-1929 the families wishing to move to the Far East sent their representatives (walkers) to the region. If a family had financial difficulties in sending a walker, then it trusted to represent its interests to a walker from another family, who in turn received the status of a trustee. Having arrived to the Far East, the walker got acquainted with local conditions and, if he was satisfied with everything, applied for certain land plots for himself and the family that had trusted him their right to choose. The lands for those families were transferred to the resettlement bodies throughout the next year [11].

Before settling on the land, the arriving families were put at temporary resettlement points. Each point contained several barracks, a bathhouse, a hospital, an ambulance station and Red Corner (a recreational and reading room). The meeting party tried to alleviate the situation of the families. Thus, at the Khabarovsk resettlement point in 1927 the staff of the point and women delegates opened a playground for migrants with the funds raised from the production of paid performances. The children at the playground were fed twice a day: in the morning - cocoa with white bread and then a two-course lunch [12].

In the first years of the planned relocation the enrollment and placement of the families of the displaced persons were done on the prepared colonization fund, received as a result of the land management of the Cossack and old-time population by means of sharing them with many-land villages. The undeveloped lands in already inhabited areas were used for settlement without any prior preparation.

According to the decision of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR of September 23, 1926 the families of migrants who arrived to the region for enrollment after January 1, 1925 for three years from the date of settlement enjoyed a right to receive a loan for economic arrangement of up to 300 rubles. The loans were issued through credit partnerships at a rate of 2.5% per annum. A loan was repayable 15 years later. In that case, the payment began from the sixth year after the loan was received in equal installments annually [13].

One of the main tasks of a resettlement family, that arrived at the place of accommodation, was the construction of houses and economic facilities. According to Article 24 of the Forest Code of the Russian Federation the wood intended for the migrants in the areas of colonization was sold free of charge [12].

The state bodies took into account the fact that in the first years after the placement the resettlement families would experience great economic difficulties. Therefore, special government regulations exempted families from paying a single agricultural tax for the first five years if the farm system required land users to clear or other land reclamations on land preparation. For the first three years families were exempt from the tax if the farm system required the development of virgin lands or was accompanied by the introduction of an improved form of land use, for one year if they resettled to new lands and constructed facilities necessary for their economy.

In order to increase a survival rate of relocated families, the law on compulsory military service for male migrants of draft age provided a three-year deferment from military service for the people living in undeveloped new places in forest-steppe and steppe areas, for one year in case of resettlement to plowed lands [14].

Most migrated families did not have enough money to buy seeds. Therefore, the settlers were provided with a seed loan from state funds for sowing allotted plots of land. In that case, they had to be supplied with a seed loan to the extent that they were able to cultivate and sow the plots allocated to them that spring. Seed grain was harvested through credit unions. It was mainly wheat, yaritsa and oats.

Summarizing the initial experience of resettlement of peasant families, it should be said that it was not very successful. The state bodies believed that a resettlement family was to receive a land plot specially prepared for the agricultural use. It had an opportunity to build housing, outbuildings, to purchase livestock, agricultural implements, seeds, etc., through a government loan. According to the state, that was to ensure a high survival rate of the resettled families. However, the dispersion of work on the preparation of the land fund in many resettlement areas greatly increased the cost and did not allow for a qualitative

preparation of the colonization fund. The difficulties to settle migrants in new, completely unfamiliar natural and economic conditions, the lack of housing, minimal social benefits, distrustful attitude towards the arriving colonists on the part of the old-time population that had already been devastated by the beginning collectivization, made it difficult for the migrant families to become entrenched and caused mass retreat [15,16,17].

It became obvious that the disparate resettlement of individual families did not contribute to a strong survival rate and rapid growth of the regional economy. Therefore, the state policy on the resettlement of peasant families from 1930 to 1941 was aimed at organizing the resettlement of families in organized peasant associations, such as artels, collective farms, communes [18].

From the second half of 1929 by the decision of the authorities resettlement to the Far East was financed only as part of groups.

The groups moving to the region were supposed to be allotted the best plots of land, provided with good seeds, agricultural machinery and all the necessary equipment. It was planned to give them primary assistance in the organization of subsidiary farms and enterprises of public importance, such as mills, forges, creameries, handicraft workshops. The united teams were supposed to be provided with various types of specialized assistance in such areas as agronomy, medicine, veterinary medicine and education.

The organized resettlement teams were to send workers' squads to the areas of settlement, the squads were given a responsibility of selecting suitable sites and preparing them for the arrival of the remaining members of the resettlement groups [17].

The workers' squads plowed and sowed the land, built houses, erected barns. This way the resettlement in a new place of residence of the arrived groups of people went much faster.

A tense military-political situation in the Russian Far East led to a need for active settlement of the border areas. It was decided to settle these areas with peasants who had military training and who could provide real assistance to the regular army and border guards in the event of the outbreak of hostilities.

The demobilized Red Army men who were called up for service from the countryside of the western regions of Russia became a suitable contingent.

After the end of the service the Red Army soldiers immediately entered the working Far Eastern collective farms or went home and returned from the European part of Russia with their family as part of the Red Army collective farms.

According to the instructions of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture of the USSR dated June 30, 1930 a family of a demobilized Red Army soldier in the Far East could get a loan of 800 rubles, on collective farms of Sakhalin, Nikolaev and Zeya regions - 900 rubles, and in the Kamchatka district this amount increased to 1200 rubles [19].

An arriving family of a demobilized Red Army man could use a short-term loan in the amount of 50 rubles issued for a period of 9 months to purchase food items such as sugar, tea, tobacco, concentrated animal fodder and others [20].

The actual increase in the population of the Far East of the Russian Federation in the period between the censuses of 1926 and 1939 amounted to 1.4 million people. Of this amount 600,000–700,000 were voluntary migrants [11].

4. Conclusions

The use of a family as a tool in the implementation of the state policy for the settlement and economic development of the Far East as the most distant region has justified itself.

Firstly, family relocation stabilized migration flows, giving them a more organized form.

Secondly, with the help of family relocations the authorities were able to:

a) to increase the population in the Far Eastern Territory in spite of all the difficulties and thus, by increasing the labor resources, to improve its industrial potential;

b) to carry out resettlement activities more efficiently.

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