

The Program of Urbanization of Russia in the Activities of S. Yu. Witte and P. A. Stolypin (Late 19th – Early 20th Century)

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ABSTRACT

The article describes the role of the most important Russian politicians of the late 19th – early 20th century, S.Yu Witte, and P.A. Stolypin, in the urbanization of the country. Beside the fact that their strategic initiatives were oriented at the development of Russian economics, and the safety of the country first of, they predetermined the evolution of the urban planning basics, and the urbanization of numerous regions for a long period. The intense railroad construction works united the space of Russia, promoted the growth of the Russian raw material and processing industry, the idea of the Northeast Passage, and the migration politics which gave impulse to the development of the lands of Siberia; all those crucial state tasks and their resolution were directly connected with the activity of S.Yu Witte, and P.A. Stolypin.

Keywords: urbanization of Russia in the late 19th – early 20th century, program of the railroad development by S. Yu. Witte, the Trans-Siberian Railway, the Northeast Passage, migration politics by P. A. Stolypin, program of urbanization of Siberia and the Far East

I. INTRODUCTION

Using the concept of ‘the program of urbanization’, we make a certain exaggeration. There was no such concept at the time in question, as well as the concept of ‘urban planning’; but all the block of problems connecting with these concepts nowadays have been existed. It is obvious, that the process of urbanization depends directly on economic and military strategic interests of the state, i.e. it is a part of the general foreign and domestic affairs of the state. The important role in such field is always played by specific persons. On the administrative skies of Russia of the late 19th – early 20th century there were two such individuals: Sergey Yulievich Witte (1849–1915) and Piotr Arkadievich Stolypin (1862–1911). Their importance for the pre-revolutionary Russia was explained not only with their high positions (both were in some moments at the posts of minister of domestic affairs, state secretary, chairman of the Council of Ministers), but mostly with their state talents, and a special gift of long

political prognosis. Let us note those state initiatives of the both ministers, which produced the biggest influence at the development of urbanization of the country.

II. THE ROLE OF S. YU. WITTE IN THE GROWTH OF THE RAILROAD CONSTRUCTION IN RUSSIA

The author of the constitutional Russia, and initiator of numerous reforms inside and outside the country¹, S.Yu. Witte made a great input into the final transferring of the Russian economics on the capitalist way. At the first glance, his state career depended on

¹ They included the reform of the State Bank, the conversion of the state debts, changes of tariffs, a large-scale money reform, introduction of the Vodka monopoly (it gave 25% of the state budget income), organization of the net of commercial schools, composition and editing of the Manifesto of October 17, 1905, as well as some other principal state documents of 1905–1906, the Treaty of Portsmouth after the lost Russian-Japanese War without annexations and contributions, the billion-scale French Credit of 1906 providing the stability of the country for the following ten years. Noteworthy, it was Witte who became the author of the idea of the united Europe — he shaped it in his talk to Kaiser of Germany Wilhelm as early as in 1894. See [3].

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occasions: after graduating from the university, he entered the administrative staff of the private South-Western Railway; soon he caught the specifics of that business and published a book titled 'Principles of the Railway Rates' (Kiev, 1883) where he offered a project of a new Rule for Russian railways. Ideas of that book could stay on paper, but in 1888, Witte got a position of the Director of the newly founded Department of Railways, and later — Minister of Railways of Russia. His principles of the railway rates were implemented in 1891; they provided great incomes for the state and stimulated the further development of the net of railroads.

The main fruit of his efforts was a large-scale system of construction works in the sphere of the railway transport. In 1893, Witte became Minister of Finances and submitted Emperor Alexander III a broad program of the industrialization of the country. Its basic idea was that one: "For the sake of Russia, backward in comparison to the West, first of all, it is necessary to stimulate its productive forces. For that aim, its manufacturing industry and transport should be developed" [1]. He believed by right that on the vast space of Russian Empire construction of railways was of special importance — for many regions it was almost the main mean of stimulating their industry and trade, and the only one way to the people's welfare through the usage of colossal natural wealth of the country.

1890-s were the years of the real railway boom in Russia. For those ten years, the general length of the railroads has grown at 70%; the speed and the general scale of the railway construction in Russia were higher than in any other developed country of the world, including the U.S.A. Thanks to the efforts of Witte, by 1900, the most part of unprofitable private railways were acquired by the state; it created favorable conditions for getting state profits from them. Railroads became literally the life arteries of the process of urbanization — they provided the growth of existed cities and the creation of new ones on the base of developing fabrics and former small settlements.

III. CONSTRUCTION OF THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY

The most significant action of S.Yu. Witte in the sphere of the railway construction was the Trans-Siberian Railway (the Great Siberian Way), started in 1891 for the sake of connecting the European part of Russia with Vladivostok at the Far East. The aim was to support Siberian industry and to stimulate trade communication with China. Witte believed that Russia would be the trade bridge between Europe and Asia; that is why he supported Russian-Asian banks attracting European money [2]. The Russian-Chinese Bank, created by him, helped to complete the Siberian

Railway faster: by 1900, the road achieved the Lake of Baikal.

In the frames of the general Eurasian course of Witte, there was the construction of railways in China, started in 1900: the Chinese-Easter Railway and the South-Manchurian one; Witte attached them exclusive commercial and cultural importance; he declared that any attempts to annex some territories there for Russian Empire would lead to ruinous results.

Construction of the Tran-Siberian Railway not only answered to the persistent Russian dream of the shortest and fastest travel through all the country, but it included vast urban construction: they built numerous railway supporting centres, settlements for the railway staff, the railroad security and operating personnel, new towns. Thus, a new giant infrastructure was created on the former undeveloped territories; later that system was a basement for the program of urbanization of Siberia and the Far East.

Functioning and developing of that infrastructure would be impossible without constant influx of constant population. The railway gave new chances to populate less cultivated areas of Siberia and the Far East; and it was an urgent strategic task of the government. Just after the starting of construction works at the Trans-Siberian Railway, in 1893, the relocation of landless peasants from the 'core Russian territories' to Siberia was initiated. The scale of that migration was impressive: by 1899, about 1 mln persons were relocated [3]. That program, worked out under the supervision of S.Yu. Witte and by his initiative, was of a great importance for the development of the immense space: new villages, settlements, railway centres, and towns were founded. The railway became a real communication line of culture and education which came to the former wild places.

The necessity of fast urbanization of Siberia and the Far East gave an impact for creation of general plans of new towns; at that, the speed of the process was growing obviously in the early 20th century. If in 1860-s – 1880-s, the Ministry of Domestic Affairs worked with a few of project plans of Siberian and Far Eastern towns and cities only — i.e., Nickolaevsk, Primorie Region (1860–1861), Petropavlovsk, Tobolsk Region (1858, 1861), Krasnoyarsk (1868), Enisseysk (1872), Semipalatinsk (1888), and some others (12), — after the Great Siberian Way construction, their quantity grew significantly. They prepared plans of Chita (late 19th cent.), Kuznetsk, Tomsk Region (1901), Nikolaevsk upon Amur, Novo-Omsk, and Novonikolaevsk (early 20th cent.), Alexeevka (1907) and Iman' (1908–1917) in the Amur Region, Nickolsk-Ussuriysk (1911), Blagoveshchensk (1913–1915), the point of St. Olga (1908) for the further foundation of a town, and others. [4]

Construction of railways soon transformed into a specific type of industry and naturally completed the protectionist program for the sake of Russian industry, in general. Supporting and developing it, Witte worked out a new Russian Custom Tariff, which was to “give possibly even protection for various spheres of Russian industry, from the raw materials extraction up to the production of ready-made goods” [5]. Visionary policy of Emperor Alexander III, in its significant part shaped by S.Yu. Witte, gave tangible results as early as the late 19th century.

Construction of new railways stimulated the growth of extraction of iron ore, fuel (coal, oil; from 1887 till 1897, the annual oil production growth was 510,000 tons), production of steel (from 1887 till 1897, the annual iron smelting growth was 125,000 tons), i.e. it promoted the development of Russian raw materials extraction, mining production, and also heavy industry, particularly engineering, in which the most workers were already employed [6].

The historical sense of Witte, who tried to make Russia an industrial country as soon as possible, is obvious nowadays. But his input into the program of urbanization was not limited with the implementation of some programs of industrialization and railway construction. He was the initiator of the All-Russian Exhibition of 1896 in Nizhniy Novgorod, which was very important for the development of Russian architecture and urban planning [7]. Certain input was made by him into the organization of the Russian Pavilion at the Paris World Exhibition of 1900, [8] also important from the point of view of architectural and urban planning development.

IV. FOUNDATION OF THE PORT OF MURMANSK

As Minister of Railways, Minister of Finances, and Chairman of the Council of Ministers, S.Yu. Witte traveled much around the country, shaping new ideas, including those in the field of urban planning. It was Witte, who could be called by right founder of the city of Murmansk. As early as in 1868, the Ministry of State Property declared about the foundation the town of Alexandrovsk at the Murman coast of the White Sea for the sake of organizing the sea industry [9], in 1870-s, they decided to use it as a port.

Obviously, in 1899, several years after his visit (1895, as Minister of Finances), to the Russian North, S.Yu. Witte made a report to Emperor Nickolas II on the necessity of support of the economic development of the Murman coast and the foundation there a military port [10]. The text of that report was opened with a phrase so precious for Witte: “for the sake of the development of wealth of the North we need railways” [11]. The author reminded the emperor that a decision

to construct the Vologda-Arkhangelsk Railway had been already taken, and the survey works at the part Perm'-Kotlas were in progress, but there had not been taken a decision on the railway up to the Murman coast yet. The minister came to an obvious conclusion: the development of that region of Russia was lagging behind the necessity; he offered a preliminary program of the priority steps to that direction (relocating of the administrative centre from Kola to one of the Murman havens, building docks and repair shops for the navy, constructing a telegraph line, developing of the steamship traffic, and so on).

With an amazing sagacity (in 1890-s), Witte analyzed possible changing of the international positioning of Russia. He explained to the emperor, that in the case of worsening the relations with Germany the Russian Navy could be easily blocked in the Baltic straits. IN such situation that colossal money put in the capital reconstruction of the ports in Libau (Liepāja M.N.) and Windau [Ventspils — M.N.] would be thrown into the wind. Thus, Russia was in need to get an additional military port in the north. So, the foundation the city on the Murman coast of the White Sea (in the mouth of the river of Murman, future city of Murmansk — M.N.) could be optimal from the strategic point of view, because Murman was located in three or four days from Great Britain, and in six or seven days from the Mediterranean Sea.

S.Yu. Witte argued for his ideas also from the economic point: “Foundation of a military port on the Murman coast is connected, for sure, with big costs for driving the railway, but this task can not be perceived as military expenses only, after a while, it will get its economic significance” [12]. History proved the correctness of his sagacity views in that case as well; Murmansk was founded in the early 20th century, and now it is the main Russian northern military port.

Noteworthy is one more episode of the activity of Witte — shaping the idea of the Northeastern Passage. On his initiative an experimental icebreaker ‘Ermak’ was built; it provided the ship traffic in Petersburg and other important ports of the Baltic Sea through all the winter; but its main task was to pass up to the Far East along the northern coast of Siberia. In this project Witte was supported by Admiral S.O. Makarov (who took a direct participation in the building of ‘Ermak’), and D.I. Mendeleev [13]. It is known, that those ideas, shaped in the circle of S.Yu. Witte, were realized much later.

V. THE “STOLYPIN'S REFORM” AND THE MIGRATION POLITICS BY P.A. STOLYPIN

In spite of a small difference in their age, Stolypin happened to inherit the ideas of Witte. It was seen in various spheres of his state activity. Even his famous

program of reorganization of agriculture through the development of farms, vastly implemented in 1907–1911, (the so called ‘Stolypin’s reform’) was worked out in its general outlines by Witte as early as in 1893 (and upgraded in 1898–1899) [14, 15]. Such continuity testified a succession in the basic strategy of the domestic policy.

P.A. Stolypin succeeded Witte also in the support of the railway construction. Brilliant orator, in his first speech in the State Duma in the role of Chairman of the Council of Ministers (1907) he made an accent at the favorite issues of Witte: protection of interests of Russian trade and industry at the Far East [16], and development and amelioration of the railway net. Stolypin said in his speech: “Among the new railways which are to be constructed, I ought to note the Amur Railway, which is to be laid up to one of the final stations of the Transbaikalia Railway to Khabarovsk; its task is to create on the Russian territories a continuous line of rails connecting European Russia and the Far Eastern limits. The life interests of Russia demand it” [17].

For Stolypin the development of the Far East, inconceivable without stable and constant links with Central Russia, was the most important strategic aim of the domestic policy of the state. Relocation of peasants to the Asian part of Russia became a corner stone of his politics. Peasants needed a stimulus to go to Siberia, Altai, or to the Central Asia, loosing a support of the ‘community’ (obshchina). Such stimulus was found in the preferential terms of that migration, and in getting enough large land plots. The very construction of railroads at the eastern part of the country was to be done by those migrants, according to Stolypin. He put a special attention to that aspect: “The Amur Railway should be constructed with Russian hands. ...These Russian pioneers will build a road, they will settle along this road, they will drive into the region, and they will drive Russia there at that” [18]. It was a short version of his program of urbanization of the region.

In the early 20th century, there was serious land surveying on the vast territories of Siberia and the Far East. The Agricultural Ministry worked out plans of the whole eastern regions marking migrants’ farmers’, and additional plots, some districts with hydrotechnical and land surveying works. First of all, there were the Irkutsk, and Enisseysk Province, Transbaikalia, the Ussury, and Khabarovsk Regions [19], and some others. Those plans laid the besaement for the so called district planning of enormously large lands.

That work, started under the direct supervision by P.A. Stolypin, gave its fruits as early as by the mid-1910-s. Stolypin counted on the quality, not on the quantity of farmers, and he was right: by 1914, 42% of

active settlers produced 900 ml poods of grain² — that stock was used up to 1921. From 1909 till 1913, grain production in Russia was 28% higher than that one in Canada, the Argentine, and the U.S.A. taken together. In 1912, Russian grain export was 15.5 mln tons [20].

The most obvious results of the ‘Stolypin’s reform’ were seen in Siberia. If, from 1906 till 1915, the general productivity in the country grew on 14%, that one in Siberia — on 25%. Those results were got, first of all, thanks to the work of migrants, their quantity got 4 mln of people by the end of that period. They mined gold, exported Siberian vegetable oil to Britain.

By 1897, the biggest cities of Siberia and the Far East, centres of commercial activity and education included Tomsk (population 52,430), Irkutsk (population 51,434), Blagoveshchensk (population 32,606), Barnaul (population 29,408), and Krasnoyarsk (population 26,600) [21]. In the early 20th century, their growth had an impact with the migration of people from Central Russia coming by the Great Siberian Railway. There were obvious fruits of the policy of Stolypin and its government.

The program of urbanization of Russian included also projects of reconstruction and amelioration of cities and towns of Central Russia under the supervision of Stolypin. As a sample, the town of Kineshma can be taken: in 1909–1910, they built there a new haven, and a new railway bridge over the Kineshemka River [22]. P.A. Stolypin supported that project, important for the grain trade of the Volga Region.

Elements of urban planning can be traced in some legal projects connecting with the organization of the urban life and performed at the State Duma by Stolypin. He supported a project of municipal credits; in 1911, he offered ‘The New emergency law for the sake of the sanitation of the capital’ [23] which was to stimulate the indecisive Petersburg municipal authorities to take urgent measure against the unsanitary conditions (to build water supply, canalization, and so on). Stressing the importance of such law, Stolypin noted by right, that the state influence at the living conditions of masses of citizens was a social issue [24]. Unfortunately, he did not succeeded in the implementation of that law.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the late 19th – early 20th centuries, the structure and administering of cities and towns of Russia were still quite traditional. But the capitalist development and shaping of a new social layer, such as the commercial and industrial businessmen, as well as the necessity of growth of Russian industry led to the transformation in the scale of the country. Important state initiatives of

² One pood = 16,38 kg, or 40 pounds.

that time were connected with the activity of the greatest politicians of Russia of the epoch: S.Yu. Witte, and P.A. Stolypin. Witte was the author of the first program of industrialization, and of the developed Russian railroad net forming the safe communications between the east and the west, the north and the south of the empire, providing basements for the development of industry and trade. Reforms by P.A. Stolypin and his migration policy provided that new structure of population with human resources. The relocation of the great quantity of peasants to Siberia, initiated by Stolypin, in its turn, solved a complicated problem of the peasants' landlessness in the central regions of the country. Taken together, the sagacious activity of Witte and Stolypin laid the basement of the new urban structure of the country which was further in the base of the long-lasting program of its urbanization.

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