

DOI: 10.7596/taksad.v7i4.1853

Citation: Dorozhkin, A., Filatov, V., Tomarov, A., Kozyr, A., Velikanova, S., & Chernykh, O. (2018). Stolypin's Resettlement Policy and the Problem of the Land Issue Softening in European Russia: Assessments of the German-Speaking Russian Studies of the 20th Century. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 7(4), 324-330. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v7i4.1853>

Stolypin's Resettlement Policy and the Problem of the Land Issue Softening in European Russia: Assessments of the German-Speaking Russian Studies of the 20th Century

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Abstract

In Germanic studies of Russia, the issue of the resettlement movement to Asian Russia prospects was regarded at the beginning of the twentieth century, which became much more active during the years of the Stolypin reform, to defuse the acuteness of the agrarian issue in the European part of the empire. In this regard, the attention was drawn to the extent of migration to Siberia and to the categories of migrants. After a long break, the interest to the problem resumed in the German-speaking historiography during the 60-70s of the 20th century. The researchers of Germany, and somewhat later of Austria, paid a close attention to the factor of "back migration", the return of migrants to their former place of residence due to unfavorable circumstances, to these very unfavorable circumstances, largely in solidarity with Soviet historians during the explanation of the reasons for re-immigration. And not without the influence of the latter, the possibilities of resettlement to contribute to the mitigation of the agrarian problem in European Russia were usually considered skeptically. However, since the mid-1980s, there has been a clear overcoming of pessimistic assessments and conclusions. The Austrian historian A. Moritsch and the West German researcher D. Landgraf drew attention to the place of origin of the peasants who moved to Siberia and the Far East, analyzed the causes of "back migration" more closely, stressed that, with all the difficulties of adaptation to life in a new place, the majority of migrants still did not repatriate, which had a positive effect both for the progress of agriculture in Asian Russia, and (with all possible reservations) for the situation with the agrarian issue in the European part of the country.

Keywords: Russia, Siberia, Far East, Resettlements, Agrarian issue, German-speaking historiography, Stolypin.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Problem

Mass migrations, incl. internal ones, are generated usually by a complex set of causes and can be stimulated and inhibited by government policy. In the Russian Empire, in the 19th - the beginning of the 20th century the latter has undergone the changes - from a restrained and sometimes prohibitive attitude towards the resettlement of some European Russia rural population to Siberia, to an active assistance for migrants and migrations. The latter became particularly evident after the beginning of the Stolypin agrarian reform in 1906. The tsarist government was guided here by its considerations, not least of which was the desire to weaken the agrarian issue in the European provinces of the empire by "removing" the excess part of the rural population from the Asian regions, especially to Siberia and the Far East. The issue of this measure success is the subject of discussion among both domestic researchers and foreign experts of Russia.

1.2 Problem Relevance

The problem of migration, incl. internal ones, is one of the most significant problems of our time - this thesis is true for Russia. In this regard, the importance of migration historical experience study is obvious. Domestic experience is extremely interesting here; it should be remembered that one of the most mass immigration movements in history took place in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century, due to P.A. Stolypin's agrarian policy. Thus, the appeal to the Russian example is important and significant in scientific and practical terms; it also makes it possible to trace the possibilities and the limits of migrations to ensure the mitigation of social tension within the country. It is no accident that a lot of attention was given to the analysis of the Stolypin's resettlement policy and its social consequences both in Russian/Soviet and in foreign historical science; among the scholars who addressed the problem, there were also the researchers from German-speaking countries. At that, the latter, especially during the last third of the 20th century, were also interested in the ability of the resettlement movement for social problem solution experienced by the Russian village in the European part of the empire. This article analyzes the assessments of the resettlement policy effectiveness of 1906-1914 by German (partly Austrian) researchers.

1.3. Problem Study

The foreign historiography of the Stolypin agrarian reform has been actively analyzed by domestic historians since the 1970s. The main attention, however, was paid to the consideration and the criticism of English-speaking researcher concepts concerning the problem. This topic was described in the studies by P.N. Zyryanov (1973), N.B. Selunskaya (1992), E.B. Shashina (1992), and O.V. Efimov (1995). In the context of the historiography of reform analysis, the issue of resettlement was also analyzed; on the contrary, in the fundamental work by V.G. Tyukavkin the foreign historiography of the Stolypin agrarian policy was considered in general form, without a special reference to the resettlement theme (Tyukavkin, 2001, pp. 26-31). The German (and German-speaking historiography in general) issue, especially in the context of the proposed article topic, was covered worse; a thorough review by T.L. Moiseenko is worthy of attention concerning the monograph of the Austrian historian A. Moritsch, where the interpretation of A. Moritsch's interpretation of the problem of resettlements to Asian Russia is also touched upon, but in a broad context, without a special treatment of the corresponding policy consequences for the state of the agrarian issue in European Russia Domestic history (1993, No. 6. pp. 191-193). A.G. Dorozhkin analyzes the German studies of Russia of the twentieth century, the resettlement movement in Siberia and the Far East (Dorozhkin, 2005, pp. 215-223; 2018, pp. 404-409). But until now, the problems of the impact of

resettlements during the years of the Stolypin reform on the situation with the "land oppression" of the peasants from European Russia as an independent subject of research in our country has not yet been considered by the German scholars studying Russia during the twentieth century. This circumstance determined the choice of the article topic.

1.4 Hypotheses

The study of the analysis by the historians of the German-speaking countries of the 20th century, especially the last third of it, concerning the impact Russian peasants resettlement to the Asian part of the country during the Stolypin reform on the agrarian issue state will allow to present better the state of the problem study as a whole and the significance of population migration in Siberia and the Far East for the provinces to the west of the Urals, as well as the development of world Russian science in the 20th century, its relationship with the Russian / Soviet historiography of the agrarian problem.

2. Methods

The problem posed in the article is considered in the context of the modernization of the Russian Empire, understood as the process of transition to the industrial society from a traditional one. It should be taken into account that for the main part of German experts of Russia of the second half of the 20th century, the modernization approach was natural to address economic issues, and partially, the social development of pre-revolutionary Russia. At that, in the context of resettlement impact historiography study on the state of the agrarian issue in the areas of migrant origin, it is advisable to adhere to the methodology of "intellectual history", which presupposes an appeal to the history of science (including historical one) in the course of research, including social processes.

To study this problem coverage, the German scientists of the past century studying Russia apply the scientific principles of historicism, objectivity, comprehensiveness and systematicity. The work is based on the following general scientific and general historical methods: ideographic, expressed in the description of approaches and concepts of individual Russian scientists; method of periodization, according to which the study of historiography is carried out within a certain period, which allows to analyze the changes in historiographic reality, to identify the beginning of new trends; system, historical-comparative, historical-genetic and historical-typological methods.

3. Discussion

One of the main goals of the resettlement policy of the tsarist government, which was sharply intensified during the years of the Stolypin agrarian reform, was to soften the acuteness of the land issue in the European part of Russia, especially in the crisis provinces of the Chernozem region. The issue of relocation ability to defuse the acuteness of the situation has repeatedly been raised by domestic and foreign, incl. German economists, and then historians - the specialists in the agrarian history of Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. Already in the first quarter of the last century, the researchers V.D. Preyer and O. Hatch did not appreciate the relevant possibilities of the migration policy of imperial power (Preyer, 1914, pp. 73-75; Hoetzsch, 1917, pp. 304-307). Later, in the second half of the 20th century, when interest in the problem resumed after a long break in Germanic Russian studies, J. Nötzold (1966, pp. 59-64, 94-97) gave the same negative answer, recalling that in 1896-1915, resettlements absorbed only 27.2% of the natural population increase of European Russia on the average. H. Raupach (1964, p. 14) analyzed the possibilities of migrations similarly. G. Gross also believed that with all its successes, the resettlement organization could only make a limited contribution to agrarian problem solution in the European part of the country (Handbuch ... p. 423). But an objective assessment of potential opportunities, makes it

necessary to dwell on qualitative characteristics, and first of all, on the regions of Russia, crisis or "prosperous" from which peasants originated. C. Dietze pointed out that significant population transfers during the reform years took place from the South, the West and from the chernozem provinces of Russia - that is, from the most overpopulated regions (Dietze, 1920, pp. 69-70). Among the modern researchers, the Austrian historian A. Moritsch and, somewhat later, the German expert of Russia D. Landgraf devoted a lot of works on this issue. The latter noted that during the implementation of the Stolypin reform, the main places of origin of persons who moved to the Far East were Poltava, Kharkov, Ekaterinoslav, Kherson (the author mistakenly named Odesskaya) and the Tavricheskaya provinces (Landgraf, 1989, p. 812). It is significant that the first three of them belonged to the regions with the greatest acuteness of the agrarian issue. A. Moritsch pointed to the modest role of the Non-Black Earth Region (excluding Belarus) as the region of immigrant origin: the relative prosperity of the rural population of the respective provinces, which existed here largely due to fishing activities, did not particularly make the peasants to migrate to Siberia. It is important, however, in our opinion, that the peasants migrated from here to cities and industrial areas, thus, contributing to urbanization - another Austrian researcher, P. Felch (1984, pp. 249-250) paid attention to this. But the main flow of migrants rushed to Siberia from the black-earth regions, primarily from Little Russia and the central Chernozem region. But here, A. Moritsch noted, that the migrations absorbed only half of the natural population growth (Moritsch, 1986, pp. 181-184). On the whole, the outflow of the excess part of the rural population from the agrarian disadvantaged provinces relieved tension to a certain extent, although the significance of this factor should not be overestimated. At the same time, it is necessary to take into account both the accelerating rates of natural population growth in crisis areas and the return of some migrants, already completely ruined, to the old place of residence. The very impact of resettlements on the economic situation of the chernozem, including crisis provinces, was not unambiguous. For example, in the Lower Volga and in Novorossia, positive factors prevailed clearly. Migration stimulated further intensification of the economy. On the other hand, according to A. Moritsch, the wave of migrations in the Middle Volga substantially aggravated the negative consequences of the crop failure in 1911. Accordingly, the assessment of P. Stolypin's resettlement policy can not be unambiguous (Moritsch, 1986, pp. 181-184).

The possibilities of the resettlement movement for the reduction of the agrarian issue in European Russia was influenced by the factor of "back migration", the return to their native places of migrants who could not adapt to the realities of life in the eastern regions of the country. The difficulties of colonist provision with land at the simultaneous impossibility of free choice of land plots since 1906, extremely shallow, in some cases, the nature of land surveying, the conflicts with old residents and among the new settlers themselves, the lack of governmental measures to resolve these problems - all this led to the return of some of the settlers to their homeland (Landgraf, 1989, pp. 747, 751, 752; Spiess, 1980, pp. 27-28, 101). In the Far East, the same was facilitated by the provision of mostly meager or marshy, poorly suitable soils for farming to colonists. D. Landgraf saw in this circumstance the main reason for repatriation, which was accompanied by a shortage of water, including drinking water, the lack of timber, sufficient labor and capital, the general difficulties of adaptation to the local climate. It is significant that the peasants returning to their former residence disseminated information that frightened off those who wished to move. At the same time, a smaller proportion of migrants returned from the Amur general-governorate to their former place of residence as compared to Asian Russia as a whole, and since 1912 the return flow has declined in relative terms. In 1912, their share was 19.6% of all resettled to the Far East, and in 1913 fell to 10.6% (Landgraf, 1989, pp. 753, 811).

K. Spiess, D. Landgraf and L. Deeg considered the resettlements of peasants in 1907 - 1914 only within the context of the history of the Far East economic development. A. Moritsch, unlike them, analyzed the goals and the first results of the resettlement policy by P. A. Stolypin in the general context of the agrarian

reform. This historian noted the evolution of the government attitude towards the migration of peasants to Siberia, the gradual recognition of migration significance by the ruling circles of the empire to mitigate the agrarian issue in the European part of Russia. Already in 1896, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the empire established the Migration Department, reassigned in 1905 to the agriculture department, and since June 1904 the government sanctioned the free migration of peasants to Asian Russia. Since March 1906, that is, even before the appointment of P.A. Stolypin to the ministerial post, the state support was guaranteed to the settlers: the transport tariffs were lowered for them during the migration, they were given a loan, the size of which depended on the chosen place of residence. At the same time, a powerful propaganda campaign began in favor of peasant relocation from overpopulated areas of European Russia to Siberia. But not a single governmental instance was ready to such a massive influx of immigrants that followed since 1906 (Moritsch, 1986, pp. 178-179). In contrast to K. Spiess and D. Landgraf, A. Moritsch, however, points out that since 1908 the authorities have managed to improve the work of the Resettlement Department. Having reached the peak in 1908, the influx of migrants began to decline; the minimum indicator took place in 1911, after which there was the increase again, but only in comparison with the level of 1911. Like German colleagues, Moritsch stressed the factor of "back migration", finding their scale quite significant (Moritsch, 1986, pp. 179-182, Landgraf, 1989, p. 736).

Speaking about the reasons of the settler return to their former place of residence, A. Moritsch partly solidarized with both his German counterparts and Soviet historiography. He pointed to the shortage of funds among migrants, the lack of the necessary capital and specialists in land management from the government itself, serious mistakes of the authorities with the allocation of land to the colonists and the difficulties in land plot withdrawal that were constantly growing. The situation of immigrants who migrated to Siberia was particularly difficult in addition to official instances; this circumstance was recognized by P.A. Stolypin. According to A. Moritsch, this category of colonists gave a significant part of the returnees. At the same time A. Moritsch spoke about the need to take into account the objective factors during the study of migration to Asian Russia. So, in 1909 - 1910 the flow of "reverse relocations" was largely stimulated by a poor harvest in the Siberian provinces and a good one in European provinces. In 1911, a crop failure in the eastern and southern regions of European Russia contributed to a sharp decrease of migrant flow; in the following years, the fact of colonization by the Russian colonists of the regions, most favorable for farming and living east of the Urals was important. The reports of the Resettlement Department for 1913 indicate, according to A. Moritsch, that the areas along the Trans-Siberian route and along the coast of the navigable Siberian rivers (in the south of the region) were mostly inhabited and there were practically no free lands. To colonize the areas remote from transport highways, a considerable capital was required, which was absent among the migrants (Moritsch, 1986, pp. 179-180). D. Langdraf also stated (with the reference to the Far East) the indisputable fact of the settlement of regions located near communications by migrants (Landgraf, 1989, pp. 720, 747, 809).

The tendency towards the growth of "reverse relocations", which seriously limited the possibilities of the latter to defuse the acuteness of the agrarian issue in European Russia, occurred before 1911 inclusive; then due to the financial support of the state and the overall improvement of the organization, the changes for the better have been outlined. But, as A. Moritsch rightly noted, it is necessary to take into account the extremely negative impact of the very fact of "back migration" on the situation in European Russia. Many of the failed colonists on the eve of moving to the eastern provinces sold their holdings and, returning to their former place of residence, found themselves without the means for living. Forced to supplement the ranks of the rural - and, obviously, city proletariat, they became an explosive material, extremely susceptible to left-wing propaganda. G. Stökl paid attention to the same circumstance, who at that time noted the importance of migration of the surplus population from the European provinces of

Russia to the Asian ones both for economic and geopolitical reasons (Moritsch, 1986, pp. 179-181, 184, 194; Stökl, 1973, p. 607).

4. Conclusions

German economists and also historians (such as O. Hatch) paid attention in the first quarter of the 20th century to the possibility of resettling peasants from the European provinces of Russia to the Asian part of it to defuse the acuteness of the agrarian issue in the birthplaces of future colonists. At the same time, they mostly answered the corresponding question negatively, although C. Dietze, drawing attention to the places of origin of migrants, noted that for many of them the overpopulated gubernias of the European part of the empire were those, where the problem of land shortage was the most significant. In the 1930-1950s, among the German experts in Russia there was no particular interest for the Stolypin agrarian reform, incl. in this context, but since the mid-1960s the situation changed. However, approximately until the mid-1980s the West German studies of Russia (East German researchers did not usually address the problem) had mostly a pessimistic view concerning the possibility of successful implementation of the Russian Empire upgrade. This predetermined the negative answer to the question of the ability of resettlements to Asian Russia, including in 1906-1914, to defuse the acuteness of the problem of land shortage in the European part of the country. The modest role of migrations in the absorption of natural population growth in European gubernias was pointed out, as the importance of "reverse relocation" factor.

Since the mid-1980s in the Russian studies of Austria and FRG, there was the tendency to revise previous, unambiguously "pessimistic" assessments. However, already in the 1970s G. Stökl also recognized the positive balance of the Stolypin agrarian policy. In the next decade, D. Langdraff and A. Moritsch paid closer attention to the place of migrant origin, particularly noted (first of all, this relates to A. Moritsch) a massive arrival in Siberia and the Far East of immigrants from the agrarian provinces of European Russia. More thorough attention was paid to the analysis of the reasons for the return of some of the colonists to their former place of residence, as well as the dynamics of "back migration". The possibilities of migration to soften the acuteness of the agrarian issue in European Russia were not overestimated, but they were not denied, and the consolidation, despite all the difficulties of adaptation, of the majority of migrants in the new place of residence was recognized, and the ambiguous impact of the influx of colonists on the development of the productive forces of both European and Asian Russia. The factual data, objectively cited by German experts of Russia in the late twentieth century, called into question the former "pessimistic" assessments of the Stolypin reform as a whole, prevailing in the historiography of previous decades.

Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that the presented data do not contain any conflict of interest.

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