

The Russian Government Resettlement Policy and Development Features of Russian-German Relations in the 19th – Early 20th Centuries

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Polyethnicity is a distinctive feature of the population in the south of Russia. It has been forming for several centuries. Representatives of Russian ethnos, Indigenous people, and people from eastern and western countries settled in this territory as a result of colonisation processes. They took part in the development of this territory and the realisation of its potential. The relocation to this territory was not accompanied for everyone by a transition to Russian citizenship. The nationality of the German immigrants, as well as ethnicity, was not unified but still foreigners became its integral element in the process of forming its population.

Key words: *German colonists, settlement, resettlement, agrarian sector, Russian government*

Introduction

The government relied not only on economic activity creating the German colonies in the South of the Empire. Taking into account the religiosity of the German colonists, they believed that foreigners would contribute the mountain people to the Christianisation and thereby accelerate their integration into Russian society. But the missionary activity of the colonists was unsuccessful. At the same time, their experience of social and economic adaptation in foreign confessional environments today actualises a scientific interest in studying the activities of the



German colonies as an important part of culture and self-expression of one of the groups of Russian society - ethnic Germans. This interest is due to the genetic connection between different historical eras, within which attempts to stabilise the socio-economic situation in polyethnic regions were made to achieve mutual understanding and tolerance among representatives of different nations. Modern Russia needs experience in the formation of high adaptive opportunities for individual social groups, which will help to increase the level of mutual understanding between the participants of interethnic and intercultural interaction.

In this connection, the process of social and economic adaptation of the German colonies formed in the South of Russia in the 19th and early 20th centuries was chosen as the object of study. The formation stages of German settlements in the southern regions of Russia, the forms, methods and conditions for the implementation of state policy in this direction, the regulatory framework as well as the practice and results of the activities of colonists in rural areas are defined as a subject of research. It also includes issues of administrative and public colonies management, general and specific trends of the problem in various regions of southern Russia, its political background, spiritual, moral and religious aspects.

The period from the second half of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century until the beginning of the First World War was chosen. The separation of the mentioned time period was due to the fact that under Emperor Alexander I a regulatory framework was made that regulated the creation of German colonies in the southern Russian regions, including the Caucasus. Over the course of a century, the Germans were resettled to the south of the country from the southwestern and central provinces. By the beginning of the new century, the structure of the German colonies in the studied region had a stable area of location, the legal status of German colonists had changed significantly, and the state policy regarding them had been adjusted. The feasibility of completing the chronology of the study period of the First World War is due to a sharp change in the legal and socio-economic status of foreigners.

Within the framework of the allotted period, the goal was set to investigate comprehensively the causes and factors of the resettlement of German peasants to the southern regions of the Russian empire in the context of the intensification of their economic development at various stages of the selected period; to study the legislative base, features, economic and legal activity aspects of the German colonies, related organisations, administrative and material issues.

Materials and Methods

The present study was based on the principles of science, historicism and system, which allowed a comprehensive and adequate consideration of the process of formation of foreign population in the South of Russia and determine its role in the development and realisation of the potential of the region. Since the formation and development of the German colonies in the



South of Russia were studied in a broad historical context with consideration of the experience of various historical eras and regions, a concrete historical approach prevails in the framework of which each method was used separately to solve the scientific problems. There is no doubt that this was facilitated by varies in characteristic, content and purpose sources. In this capacity, funds of the central and regional archives, published collections of documents and statistical data, periodicals of the period under review were used.

The undoubted benefit of the study was brought by acquaintance with publications of a general historical nature, edited by A.I. Perepelitsyn, A.N. Sakharov, V.P. Dmitrenko, I.D. Kovalchenko and others, [1] as well as the works of historians, which summarise all the components of rural life, including the region of interest. [2]

Natural interest was focused on the characteristics of the southern regions in which the German colonies were located, as well as on the problems of developing a new kind of relationship in the countryside. [3] In this regard, there were no exceptions and works containing general information about people inhabiting various regions of the Caucasus and Ciscaucasia. These include memories of I.F. Blaramberg, as well as statistical description of the Transcaucasian territory by O. Evetsky. [4] The main authors` attention was paid to economic issues, which were highlighted in conjunction with the description of national traditions in relation to specific settlements. This is confirmed by the works of A. Tvalchrelidze, I.V. Bentkovsky, N. Kirichenko, L. Rosenberg and others. [5]

Results

The historical study of the foreign population in Russian Empire is caused not only by the need to create an adequate factual interpretation of the territorial colonisation. The presence of foreigners in the composition of the main population in Russia, as well as in other countries, is a factor in the development of many positive modern phenomena, therefore the restoration of the plot of foreigners' participation in the life of the region is actualised by modernity. First of all, this is due to the fact that the presence of foreigners is a factor in a certain cultural transformation of the “titular” ethnic group and the formation of a multicultural society. In assessing the effects caused by these processes, scientists have some difficulties. It is not known yet how such transformations will affect the development of statehood, whether it will not be a factor of constant social tension, what impact will be made on the state of basic social institutions, etc. The organisation of a modern scientific study of the phenomenon undoubtedly requires adequate historical knowledge. This knowledge allows us to trace the phenomenon in the process of development. Partial completeness of such process also allows us to make the necessary analytical generalisations.



In our opinion, the novelty of the research results is determined by the fact that it considers complex legal and socio-economic issues reflecting the peculiarities of creation, arrangement and livelihood of the German colonies in the southern regions of the Russian empire in the 19th - early 20th centuries in the context of their integration into the Russian agricultural system. In this sense, the periodisation of the problem of settling German colonists in the southern Russian regions was carried out. In contrast to the existing scientific developments of this direction, the geography of their distribution in the southern regions of the state is determined, the features of their socio-legal and economic adaptation in the mountainous areas and in the Cossack territories are highlighted.

To achieve the research goal, a number of tasks were required. First of all, the dependence of the intensity of German peasant resettlement flows to Russia on foreign policy factors and the state of Russian-German relations in the study period was substantiated. In this context, the main stages of spreading the German colonies in the southern direction as an integral part of the policy aimed at the economic development of new territories in the south of the Empire were revealed. This made it possible to trace the evolution of the economic activities of the German colonies through the analysis of statistical characteristics to determine its importance for the development and improvement of the culture of agricultural production in the region. The taken measures to organise the resettlement and settlement of German peasants in the South and North Caucasus were examined from the point of view of revealing the true intentions of the state to use them, including in conducting missionary activities in the mountains.

In addition, it was possible to compare the scale and results of the German peasants' resettlement process in different regions of southern Russia; to show the structure of the colonies, to determine their adaptive capabilities; to identify traditions in the organisation of the economic, social and spiritual life of the colonists. In addition to these, the main trends in the development of economic ties between German colonists and local population were identified, paying particular attention to the specifics of the relations between the Germans and the Highlanders. The analysis made it possible to determine the criteria for the distribution of German immigrants in the southern regions of Russia, their compliance with the regulatory and legal framework of the state, the relationship with the creation of prerequisites for increasing the level of mobilisation of free state and private lands.

Discussion

At the beginning of the 19th century Russian-German relations were severely tested. Together with Austria and Prussia, Russia opposed Napoleon I's claims to European domination but the Allied forces suffered a crushing defeat. Germany was not only under the occupation of France but was also used by it for the intensive preparation of attack on Russia. As in the last century



the whole process was accompanied by a widespread anti-Russian propaganda, the dissemination of information among the population about the insidious intentions of St. Petersburg and Moscow to subdue all European states. The Russian people were presented as a born aggressor, which seeks to destroy civilisation in Europe. In this way, Napoleon tried to find support for himself and to impart the character of a common European struggle against the inevitable invasion of "barbarians from the East" to the impending war.

To confirm his preventive intentions, Napoleon actively used the "Testament of Peter the Great" fabricated on his initiative. Its essence boiled down to the fact that Russia should wage continuous wars, educate its people in a warlike spirit and take rest only to gain strength and fight again. All Russian diplomatic work allegedly aimed at an alliance with Britain against Germany, Sweden and Poland was supposedly subordinated to the same goal. The Testament also said that step by step Russia intends to conquer Europe and then subjugate the whole world to itself. Despite the absurdity of the content of this "document", its impact on the population of European countries, especially German states, turned out to be quite strong. Enough to say that the third part of Napoleon's army was made up by the Germans, who, on the call of the French emperor "Bringing weapons into Russia" on June 10, 1812, forced the Neman. [6]

In Russia, Napoleon's tactical trick was solved quite quickly and responded with the same weapon. Germany was primarily at the sight of the Russian propaganda parties. The editors of newspapers and magazines were required to appeal, first of all, "to the Hessians, the Hanoverians, to the inhabitants of the Brunswick territories." The calculation was made on the fact that "the acts of their predecessors will be given to them by their memory and will resume." In one of the appeals to the German people it was also recalled that earlier "in the attack on France, only one song multiplied the French troops by a hundred thousand. Are the Germans now less sensitive or offended for vengeance than the French?" [7] The reproach of a recent ally has taken effect. It was reinforced by the fact that many well-known people in Germany supported Russia and its just struggle against aggression. The German publicist of the time, F. Pfuhl, poet E. Arndt, revealed the whole truth to their people. As a result, many Prussian officers went to the Russian side in protest against the alliance with France. "These fugitives, - wrote E. Arndt in their attitude, - are mostly Prussians, people who are brave and honest, intended to fight here ..." in Russia. [8] In addition to officers, prominent German politicians arrived in St. Petersburg at this time, who also did not maintain an alliance with Napoleon. The head of the Prussian government, H. Stein, initiated the creation of the German Committee, which conducted active work among German soldiers and civilians, and later - the German-Russian Legion to liberate Germany from the French occupation. With the help of H. Stein, a leaflet under a long heading was prepared: "The appeal of M.B. Barclay-de-Tolly to the Germans with a call for an uprising against the Napoleonic yoke and their entry into the German Legion." With a circulation of ten thousand copies it was distributed in the Bavarian, Westphalian and Prussian units of the "Great Army". [9]



The joint struggle of Russian, German politicians and the military forces was one of the factors defeating Napoleon. Having liberated their country, the Russian army entered Germany through Poland. Here in mid-October, 1813 near Leipzig the German-Russian units inflicted another defeat on the French army, which largely determined the fate of the entire war. After these events the authority of the Russian emperor in Germany increased significantly. Thanks to Alexander I after whom the now existing square in Berlin, Alexanderplatz, was then named, the position of the Prussian King Wilhelm III was significantly strengthened. He began to play a leading role in the newly created German Union. In peacetime, Russian-German relations gradually entered into the same course. Trade and economic ties have resumed, new areas of mutual interest have appeared. Many events of that time between the two nations still do not lose their converging potential. Thus, in the late 1990s, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, recalling the joint geographical Russian-German expedition in 1829, noted that it "is part of a solid foundation on which friendship between Russia and Germany rests." [10] There is undoubtedly some truth in this, since that time the attitude of the Germans towards the Russians became noticeably better. The higher strata of German society focused on the Russian court, as they felt the weakness of their rulers.

As for the policies of the tsarist government towards the German colonists inside Russia, they were filled with new content in the beginning of the 19th century that reflected the state of interstate relations. It should be noted that under Alexander I more attention was paid to the economic and domestic needs of the settlers, which corresponded to the promises given in the invitations. The decree of the emperor on May 9, 1902 foresaw the elimination of bureaucratic obstacles while entering Russia and facilitating the arrangement at a new place. The document noted in particular that foreigners "under the guise of precaution ... the frontier guards are sent on foot and under supervision through a long distance to its superiors, from there they are sent in the same way to the Zemsky police, and the police send them to the Provincial Government. Thus, traveling to a guard of several hundred miles, before they are in the opportunity to choose the kind of life, they are forced to endure all extremes of need over a long time ... ". [11]

It is important to recognise the fact that at this time there were changes in the approaches to the definition of the qualitative composition of immigrants. In this regard, it was emphasised that the previous legislation on "electing the kind of their life, limiting them to merchants, petty bourgeoisie or service, excludes the most useful part of farmers". [12] To eliminate all shortcomings, the emperor demanded first of all to simplify customs inspection at the border and after registration send the Germans without any escort to the province. They were given an entry certificate, which replaced the passport for three months and served as the basis for receiving and processing documents.



The decree also provided the settlement of German nationals on landowner lands, subject to the landowners being granted "freedom and complete freedom to transfer from one landowner to another." [13] The measures taken testified to the level of interstate relations, which even before the French aggression at the beginning of the century was distinguished by a rather high degree of tolerance.

By this time, both countries had the experience of the division of Polish territories in 1793 and 1795, which satisfied both. To tell the truth, after the death of Frederick II, Prussia itself had a ten-year period of rampant reaction, a restriction of reforms, which was accompanied by dissatisfaction with the progressive bourgeoisie and popular uprisings. Only in 1796 universal land law prepared under Frederick the Great was introduced, which unified the legal ideas that were fragmented in territorial and class relations and created the opportunity for the liberation of hereditarily dependent peasants from feudal dependence. This cannot be ignored in the characteristics of the migration flows that were sent to Russia. In addition, the Russian government in this period resolved questions not only of household amenities but also of creating appropriate conditions for the economic activities of the colonists.

In early September 1802 the emperor signed the Decree "On the Lands Satisfaction of the Saratov Province Colonists" and in December of the same year the relevant rules and regulations were approved. The Germans were provided with additional plots that were not cut during resettlement or turned out to be unsuitable for processing. The colonies located on the meadow side of the river were allocated the lands of the state-owned steppes, on which agricultural work had not been done before. [14] Now the arable land was expanding, which was beneficial both to the state and to the colonists in terms of improving the quality and results of their economic activities. In March 1803 the Russian authorities positively resolved the issue of the relocation of members of the Protestant Mennonite sect from the western part of Prussia. They were supposed to be sent to the south of the state in the Novorossiysk region to Nikolaev and Tauride provinces. There was not enough free land in the area, so Alexander I instructed the local governors to draw up an inventory of unused private property for their purchase into the government fund and the subsequent distribution to the immigrants. In this case, the Mennonites motive of leaving Germany is under great interest. In accordance with their religious beliefs, they could not participate in any hostilities, so it can be assumed that their decision was related to the growing tension in Western Europe and the forecast of the indispensable participation of Germany in the imminent war.

It is interesting to know that at the beginning of the 19th century the Russian government did not just provide places for Germans to resettle but tried to take into account the agrarian specifics and capabilities of the regions to expand agricultural production and types of products. Moreover, the specialisation of the settlers themselves was not ignored. For example, winegrowers, who were supposed to contribute to the development of wine production and

expansion of related technologies, were specially sent to the Crimea and the nearby Black Sea territories. On this occasion, Emperor Alexander I in his decree to the military governor pointed out that "if it is impossible to deliver land in the upland part of the Crimea convenient for breeding vineyards I charge you to buy the necessary amount of land without losing time, having instructed the Tavrichesky and the civil governor at the same time, that he had special care for the colonists who settled in the Crimea and would provide them with all the means to restore fallen vineyards there." [15] With regard to this category of immigrants, the government took care that "... these poor people, changing their homeland, would find all sorts of benefits and would not be subjected to the ordeal that our first colonists felt. [16]

Taking into account the changed attitude to the arrangement and the determination of the further fate of the Germans who arrived to live in Russia, in 1803 the emperor approved the report of the Minister of Internal Affairs regarding the rules for the reception and resettlement of colonists.

The need to make changes in the resettlement policy was caused by the unfavorable state of affairs in the places of German residence on the Volga and in the southern regions of the state. While the number of invitations to move into Russia was constantly increasing, the overwhelming majority of foreigners consisted of "... from bad owners and for the most part the poorest, who have brought little benefit to the state at this time." [17]

After analysing the state of affairs in this area, the government came to the conclusion that the fund of free lands, as compared with the reign of Catherine II, was significantly reduced. In addition, the need to de-consolidate its subject population in the central provinces arose. In this regard, from the very beginning of the 19th century the resettlement process was limited only to those foreigners who "may be more useful for the local land". It concerned good farmers, winegrowers, specialists in breeding "mulberry trees and other useful plants" experienced herders. Rural specialists such as tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, braziers, weavers and bricklayers were also given the right to receive resettlement permits. As for the artisans, "who are useless for village life," from that time they were restricted from entering the country, except the cases where the expediency of their arrival was explained by the need of territory for certain specialists.

The document under consideration is also noteworthy in the sense of providing the abolition of all previously existing measures to induce foreigners to move to Russia: the creation of special commissions to call colonists, sending some abroad, etc. Now the Germans, who expressed a desire to leave for residence in Russia had to initiate the appropriate petitions to the representative offices of the empire abroad, which after determining the "usefulness" of emigrants for the Russian state and agreeing on all formalities with local magistrates, issued them passports for passing through border points. At the same time, it was taken into account



that the passage of one or two families can be fraught with difficulties, therefore, twenty or thirty families usually gathered at the border, after which they were sent to new places of settlement at the expense of the Russian government. It was also allowed to send several people first from each party of immigrants "to inspect the lands intended for them and to know their quality." [18]

Thus, at the beginning of the new century, the Russian government began to give permission selectively to relocate foreigners. It was connected, first of all, with the internal situation in the country and intentions for the economic development of the southern territories at the expense of its own human resources. Foreign residents were told that they could give permission to leave 150-200 families a year. It was also assumed that about 50 families would arrive in Russia without prior approval "from places close to the border." [19]

However, in addition to quantitative restrictions the Russian representatives at foreign courts, officially performing ambassadors by today's standards, were entrusted to control strictly the quality of the immigrants. On this occasion, a special instruction for them was developed, consisting of several points. They were instructed, in particular, that they "do not make any loan to anyone, excluding payment for ships and supplies for those who will be sent by transports." In addition, it was forbidden to give permission to leave to those who do not have and will not export with them "estates either in cash or in goods, no less than 300 guilders." Preference was given to family people and among them large families because, as it was believed, only for husband and wife "... it is difficult to maintain the household and achieve good condition without having ways to maintain workers". [20]

In addition to changing approaches to organising the entire process of resettlement of foreigners in Russia from the beginning of the 19th century new rules for their reception and placement were introduced on the basis of which it was supposed to "establish good morality in the colonies and protect local government from the troubles they had with the satisfaction of colonists or other insubordination they can meet". [21] As before the settlers were granted freedom of faith and exemption from military and civil service under duress. If someone expressed his own desire, he was not exempt from paying the debt to the treasury. Taxes and various duties were not extended to immigrants either.

After ten years they had to pay land tax to the treasury in the amount of 15 to 20 kopecks per year for every tithe of land and after twenty years of living in Russia, it was equalised with payments from state-owned villagers in a particular area. As for Zemsky duties, after the grace period expired the colonists were supposed to carry them along with Russian citizens, but their dwellings were not allowed to be used for standing and accommodating traveling or seconded officials and other government representatives.



Payment of loan money was distributed in equal parts for ten years. At the same time, the colonists received 60 tithes of land for each family for free and they used feed money free of charges from the time they crossed the border until they arrived at the place of permanent settlement. This money was calculated from them only in the case when it was due to some circumstances where the immigrants again wanted to leave Russia and go abroad.

From the moment of the settlement until the first harvest, the foreigners were paid assistance for the residence at the rate of 5-10 kopecks per soul; the accumulated amount was returned by them gradually together with the “common loan”. Approximately 300 rubles were allocated to the colonists' families for acquiring farm and building houses, regardless of the quantity and quality that their own property imported. In addition, they could enter the goods for sale once for the amount of up to 300 rubles. Foreign colonists were given the right to "start factories and other necessary crafts, trade, join guilds and workshops and sell their products everywhere in the Empire." [22]

The new rules removed all obstacles for those wishing to travel outside Russia to their homeland or to another country, but in this case, in addition to the entire debt they pledged a lump sum payment to the treasury of a three-year tax. Analysis of the reception and settlement rules of foreign colonists introduced by Alexander I can show that they were compiled with the expectation of fully satisfying state interests and excluding possible losses and damages from the resettlement process. On the contrary, at first glance, a completely loyal attitude towards foreigners coexisted with a clear delineation of their rights and obligations, full compensation of government expenses and obtaining additional benefits from their economic activities.

The period of economic foreign colonisation, which began during the reign of Emperor Alexander I, is also distinguished by the fact that from the very beginning of the new century the geography of the German colonists expanded significantly. Immediately after the adoption and resettlement rules were approved, the Minister of the Internal Affairs prepared a report entitled “On the Places for Settlement of Foreigners”, in which it was proposed to explore the south of Russia and, above all, the Black Sea coast of the state. [23] The meaning of this proposal was that the colonists would have good opportunities to sell their products here, and after getting economically stronger, they would begin to expand their settlements inland. Emphasis was placed on the distribution in the southern regions of winemaking and horticulture, and land plots, due to the limited number of convenient lands and their increased cost, which decreased to 20 acres for each family.

It should be noted that the decision to relocate German colonists to the south of the state was made at the suggestion of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which revealed that a number of inconveniences associated with the residence of foreigners in the territories previously defined



for their settlement. This applied to the Saratov province, where most of the immigrants from Germany went to. In addition, the Crimean peninsula, which had large seaports, provided all the possibilities for the smooth export of manufactured products for sale abroad. Kherson, Yekaterinoslavskaya and Tauride provinces were initially recognised as the most suitable places for the resettlement of colonists. [24] At the same time, the government did not exclude the fact that among the displaced people there would be not only winegrowers, but also bread-growers who were supposed to be located in the Yekaterinoslavskaya province, as well as on lands that "were previously occupied by Kalmyk nomads" and on the lands of the Don Army. [25] In addition, the lands on which the Nogai settled were used to resettle the German colonists. The plots for the colonists were selected so that they were located near the city of Taganrog, in the markets where foreigners could sell their products.

Conclusion

As a result of analysing the statistical parameters of the problem, the work reflects the level of compliance of the results of the German colonists' economic activities with the goals and calculations of their resettlement in the South of Russia. The factors that had a restraining influence on the efficiency of the organisation of the agrarian production by the Germans are highlighted. The influence of the confessional affiliation of German colonists on the character of intra-ethnic interaction, the construction of their relations with the authorities and local governments was determined. A number of documentary sources from central state and regional archives were introduced into scientific circulation, as well as published materials that were not previously used in relation to the topic of this study.

As a result of the work, the following conclusions are made:

1. The period of economic foreign colonisation, which began during the reign of Emperor Alexander I, is distinguished by the fact that from the very beginning of the new century, the geography of German colonists settled significantly, including southern Russia and, above all, the Black Sea coast. The meaning of this decision was that the colonists would have good opportunities to sell their products here, and after getting economically stronger, they would begin to expand their settlements inland. Initially, emphasis was made on the spreading winemaking and gardening into the southern areas.

2. The Russian Empire needed good-quality farms and the development of new branches of agrarian production, but it was not ready to receive and resettle a large number of foreign nationals, meet their legal and domestic needs. Despite the limitations of suitable for farming areas, the autocratic government was looking for the possibility of accepting new lots of immigrants. To this aim, the colonists were equal in rights with state peasants, they were allowed to settle on private lands, buy out land plots in property, etc. Even in difficult pre-war and war years, the government did not go for the abolition of privileges granted to the colonists, although there were some adjustments to the payment of taxes.

3. The issues of settling peasant migrants from Germany to the Caucasus were rather difficult to solve due to its climatic and relief features. Firstly, at that time there was not a sufficient amount of suitable for cultivating state-owned land, therefore, instead of the 60 tithes set by the standards, only half were allocated to colonists. In addition, representatives of the poorest strata of the German peasantry, who had no alternative to moving into Russia, and the means to organise productive farms agreed to go to the Caucasus. In this regard, the state was forced to pay them additional subsidies.

4. In the rural areas of the North Caucasus, German peasants were mainly engaged in farming and animal husbandry. Given the local conditions, they showed great interest in breeding and raising horses. In this case, the Germans worked closely with the mountaineers, on their initiative and several large stud farms were established in the North Caucasus. Horse breeds bred at these factories were in great demand not only in the markets of the region but also beyond. Thanks to German immigrants, the first brick factories appeared in the mountainous regions, in which, along with red brick, tiles, ceramic pipes and other products were made. The distribution of these materials marked the onset of a new stage in the development of construction art among the mountain people.

5. Not without the participation of German immigrants in the North Caucasus, sheep breeding has been fairly widely developed, which gave good, and in sufficient quantity, raw materials for the production of leather and wool products. In this regard, the corresponding processing enterprises began to develop in some villages intensively. Many of them were engaged in processing and dressing sheepskin. This business has received the greatest development among the local highland population. They willingly adopted experiences of sheepskin dressing.

Annotation

The stages of the German settlement formation in the southern regions of Russia, the forms, methods and conditions for implementing state policy in this direction, the regulatory framework, as well as the practice and results of the activities of colonists in rural areas were the subjects of the study.

The purpose of this work is a comprehensive study of the causes and factors of the resettlement of German peasants in the southern regions of the Russian Empire in the context of the intensification of their economic development at various stages of the selected period; study of the legal framework, features, economic and legal aspects of the activities of the German colonies, related organisational, administrative and material issues.

Based on an analysis of archival sources, the authors of the article summarised the experience of the German population in southern Russia. This experience includes not only the definition of the established traditions in the economic sphere and in the field of social relations among



German peasants, but also the characteristics of everyday life, world outlook and perception expressed in everyday economic concerns. This made it possible to trace the evolution of the adaptive capabilities of the German colonists. The work reveals the substantive side of their spiritual convictions, which were directly related to economic activity and the organisation of life.

The article highlights the prerequisites first, and then shows the dynamics of development and approval of the German colonies in the structure of agrarian relations in the region. The chosen principle of constructing the study in conjunction with the use of proven methodological foundations predetermined the logic of the common idea and made it possible to identify the causal patterns of the economic activity of German peasants and their behavior in everyday life and in relations with the authorities. The results obtained significantly deepen the understanding of the life of the German colonies in the selected period. The practical significance of the study lies in the fact that its results have great potential, both in practical and historical meaning. They can be used in the process of studying the history course of the North Caucasus.

Acknowledgements

We express our gratitude to the funds of the State Archive of the Russian Federation; F-R 235, 4085, 1318, 4085; Russian State Military Historical Archive: F. 3564; Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts: F. 181.

We would like to thank our colleagues who are not the authors of the article, but with their assistance the study was conducted: T.V. Mykhortova, Associate Professor of the Chair of Linguistics and Intercultural Communication, and G.N. Rykun, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor.

We also express our gratitude to E. M. Shevchenko, Associate Professor of the Chair of Linguistics and Intercultural Communication, for valuable advice in planning the research and recommendations on the article.



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