

ISCKMC 2020**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****STATE REGULATION TOWARDS LABOR MIGRATION FLOWS
DURING THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY**

Sergey Vadimovich Vinogradov (a)*, Yuliya Gennadevna Eshchenko (b),
Oleg Igorevich Zakutnov (c), Olga Aleksandrovna Dzhagaeva (d)

*Corresponding author

(a) Astrakhan State University, 20a, Tatishchev Str., Astrakhan, Russia, dissovtdm@yandex.ru,

(b) Astrakhan State University, 20a, Tatishchev Str., Astrakhan, Russia, pushistik_yuliya@mail.ru,

(c) Astrakhan State University, 20a, Tatishchev Str., Astrakhan, Russia, zakutnov-oleg@mail.ru,

(d) Kalmyk State University named after B.B. Gorodovikov, 11, Pushkin Str., Republic of Kalmykia, Elista, Russia,
jogaeva@mail.ru

Abstract

With an abundance of publications on the topic of new economic policy, we have to admit that we know little about its individual aspects at the level of specific regions of the country. As a territorial framework, we define the Volga-Caspian region, enclosed in the said period within the Astrakhan province/district. However, to address the purpose of our project, it is not an administrative-territorial unit that is important, but a geographic territory that has a set of specific, inherent properties. In the 1920s, rich natural resources were concentrated in the Volga delta and on the coast of the Caspian Sea, alongside a low population density, a high proportion of migrants and nomads (Kalmyks, Kazakhs, Nogays). In addition, the position of the Volga-Caspian region contributed to its formation as an important trade and transit point at the intersection of river, sea and horse-drawn trade flows, as a southern outpost of Russia's geopolitical interests in the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus, Kazakhstan and Central Asia. In this regard, as well as with the approaching 100th anniversary of the introduction of NEP, the study of this complex and contradictory political phenomenon is timely and relevant. A retrospective analysis of migration processes, based on the current historiographic situation, will evaluate the importance of labor migration for the development of a region rich in natural resources, which was a strategic task solved by the Soviet state. Such a scientific analysis can be in demand by political scientists, historians, culturologists and economists.

2357-1330 © 2021 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Labor migration, workforce, state regulation, NEP, commercial center, the Volga-Caspian region



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1. Introduction

Throughout the history of Russia, labor migration has been a strategically important instrument of state policy for the development and colonization of suburban territories. One of the striking examples of the effectiveness of such a policy is the Volga-Caspian region known for its fish wealth and salt reserves.

After the accession of the Astrakhan Khanate to Russia in 1556, the development of natural resources of the Volga-Caspian region proceeded due to labor migration flows from the Volga and central regions of the country. This was followed by the foundation of powerful commercial centers that effectively implemented a combination of entrepreneurial activities by local fishmongers and fishermen from among representatives of different peoples, primarily Kalmyks and Kazakhs, peasants who came to work from other regions of the country (Kovalev, 2007). This form of production was organized to quickly and efficiently establish fish and salt trades in the sparsely populated, still developing territories of the Volga-Caspian region.

However, in the early 1920s the fish and salt industries in the region were in severe crisis (fish production, for example, dropped to the level of the 1860s). The civil war, a collapse in value chains and well-established labor migration flows, a ban on entrepreneurial activity, and forced labor mobilization of the local population for fish and salt industries, carried out within the “war communism” policy, put the Volga-Caspian industries on the brink of recession.

A rapid restoration of fish and salt commercial centers in the region became an important task for the Soviet state, which began to be implemented within the New Economic Policy in March 1921.

These processes are examined inspired by the model of the Volga-Caspian basin, represented in the period under study by the territory of the Astrakhan province/district. Due to historical and geopolitical features, it was located at the intersection of migration flows in the strategically important region – the Northern Caspian Sea. Migration flows here were superimposed on the existing multinational, multiconfessional, socio-economically heterogeneous receiving environment. Undoubtedly, it seems relevant to deal with the state regulations towards labor migration flows during the NEP period in the Volga-Caspian region, which has not yet become the subject of a special study by political scientists, historians and culturologists.

2. Problem Statement

Labor migration is a relevant and important topic for the successful development of the national economy. Effective government regulation of migration processes needs to suit a whole range of complex components: uneven development of individual sectors of the economy, specific features of a particular region, the state of the labor market, etc. To comprehend these factors with a view to developing effective political and managerial decisions, it seems very relevant to turn to historical examples of effective regulation of labor migration flows, one of which coincided with the period of the New Economic Policy.

Domestic positive experience in addressing similar issues is becoming an urgent task for modern Russian science, which determines the choice of the declared topic of the paper by the authors.

3. Research Questions

Migration is a kind of indicator of the political and socio-economic situation both in the country at large and in the regions at various stages of growth. In the implementation of state socio-economic policies, security, national policy, migration is one of the ways to achieve the strategic goals set. A resettlement policy is an integral part of the country's economic and social development strategy. The result of state regulation is the effective distribution and use of labor resources, improvement of socio-economic climate of individual regions, development or further development of priority sectors of the economy of a particular region.

At present, migration from the category of a socio-economic phenomenon is switching into a political one. In this regard, understanding the relationship between political processes and migration, as well as identifying the essence, nature and direction of their interaction becomes a vital ingredient in national and regional security. Migration flows have an impact on the demographic, cultural, socio-economic situation in the region. Therefore, the role of political and managerial decisions is increasing, aimed at its ordering, regulation, and control. In modern science, there is an urgent need to analyze regulation and optimization of migration policy at the level of individual regions with their specific features, to identify mechanisms that facilitate the improvement of migration and, accordingly, economic and socio-cultural components of the regional social environment.

The problem of labor migration has a long history of study. Migration processes in one aspect or another are the subject of study in many sciences – history, demography, political science, cultural studies, sociology, geography and others. A lot of modern studies are devoted to the history of migration in Russia, causes and effects of massive population movements, their impact on population settlement, the socio-economic situation of individual regions.

Despite the extensive historiography, migration processes during the NEP period, in the context of the goal stated in the paper, have not yet become the subject of special study, which updates the problem of research in the light of potential political, economic and social transformations.

4. Purpose of the Study

The paper aims to investigate the issue of political and socio-economic regulation towards labor migration flows during the NEP period inspired by the model of commercial centers in the Volga-Caspian region.

5. Research Methods

The study has a temporal and spatial localization and is aimed at state policy, mechanisms and results of its implementation in the field of organizing labor migrations during the NEP period. Hence, the historical methodology takes priority in the paper and embraces a set of general scientific principles of research (consistency, objectivity, historicism), as well as specific historical and general scientific methods exploited by social sciences.

A systemic principle is used to address the issue in the aggregate of its components, including a state-realized need to develop natural resources in the Volga-Caspian region, state regulation of labor migration flows, restoration of a favorable socio-economic climate for the development of entrepreneurship in the region after the decline and devastation of wars, revolutions, and famine of 1921.

Based on the principle of objectivity, it is possible to avoid ideological preconditions in the evaluation of the said processes and phenomena, carefully analyze a source base of the study, identify achievements and shortcomings in the state regulation of labor migration, its effectiveness and impact on the development of commercial centers in the Northern Caspian region.

The principle of historicism enables a historical retrospective to assess the significance of labor migrations in the 1920s for the political and socio-economic development of a particular region in the context of a nationwide resettlement policy.

The paper is based on a set of special historical methods. A historical-genetic method is used to identify causal relationships and patterns between the flow of labor migrants and the development of fish and salt industries in the Volga-Caspian basin. A comparative-historical method is used to identify general patterns and features of labor migration to the Volga-Caspian region during the NEP period against the background of migration processes in Soviet Russia in the 1920s.

A structural and functional analysis evaluates the New Economic Policy as a system of measures that involve a private entrepreneurship permit in the fishing industry and creation of new labor migration flows. These measures are of greatest importance because they launched successful establishment of new commercial centers and fish processing enterprises in the not yet developed, but developing territories of the Volga-Caspian region.

6. Findings

In the early 1920s, the main wealth of the Northern Caspian Sea involved huge reserves of fish, including valuable sturgeon and common fresh water species (sturgeon, stellate sturgeon, white fish, Caspian herring, carp, catfish, etc.) and table salt necessary for providing daily diet, storing fish, making various fish products, etc. The following data indicate the importance of the fishing and salt industries of the Volga-Caspian region for the Russian economy. In 1913, the fishing centers of the Volga-Caspian Sea provided 65.7 % of all fish caught in the Russian Empire, 34 % of fish products manufactured in the country (Ishin, 2001) and about 20 % of salt (Kuryanova, 2000).

In the 1920s, migration policy of the Soviet state was aimed at overcoming the destructive consequences of the First World War and the Civil War, at bridging an internal national gap, economic recovery, and formation of the Soviet state, national economic and legal systems (Galas, 2019).

The need for the early restoration of fish and salt centers, which began to be implemented by the Soviet state within the New Economic Policy from March 1921, was due to the following reasons:

1. High-quality and cheap fish products from the Volga-Caspian fishing centers were needed to eliminate the consequences of the famine of 1921–1922, which put millions of people on the brink of survival and hit hard on the country's economy that was already destroyed by the Civil War (Knurov, 2006);

2. Rapid recovery and further expansion of the Volga-Caspian fish and salt centers was closely related to the process of further industrialization of the country, expansion of the national market, a significant demand for affordable fish products from the growing urban population;
3. Volga-Caspian fish and salt centers were able to provide seasonal work and earnings for a significant number of surplus population from the agrarian-overpopulated provinces of the Volga region and Central Russia, thus relieving social tension there;
4. Volga-Caspian delicacies (black caviar – fish products from sturgeon fish and white fish) were an important and stable source of foreign exchange funds necessary for the restoration of the country's economy and its further industrialization.

Having revived a multi-layered structure of the Russian economy, the New Economic Policy set it in motion, encouraging private entrepreneurship, competition, and well-established economic bonds between the regions of the country. By 1923, labor migration flows from the Volga and Central regions of the country to the Volga-Caspian region were mainly restored (Moiseenko, 2018), contributing to a rapid restoration of fish and salt centers.

Another significant labor migratory flow in the region was formed resulting from the policy pursued by the Soviet state towards settling the nomadic population: Kalmyks, Kazakhs, Nogays. The Caspian lands became one of the most popular places for settling nomads. Former nomads chose places to reside closer to fish and salt centers, where they could find a job (Badmaeva, 2008a, 2008b).

Restoring foreign economic relations with Persia in the 1920s returned labor migrants from this country to the Volga-Caspian region (Galas, 2011). Here they got down to business familiar from pre-revolutionary times: trade and loading-and-unloading jobs in fishing centers and ports.

The advent of mechanical aids in fish and salt commercial centers, as well as scientific exploration of the Volga-Caspian fishing basin led to an influx of qualified engineers, technicians, and scientists (biologists, ichthyologists, etc.) into the region.

The restoration of the former and creation of new labor migration flows to the Volga-Caspian commercial centers, along with the permission to run private entrepreneurial activities and state support for fishing farms, contributed to the rapid recovery of the fishing and salt industries in the region (Kotelnikov, 2015). In 1926, the fishing industry of the Volga-Caspian region reached the level of 1913 in such important indicator as harvesting of fish, thereby bypassing all other fishing regions of the country. Even earlier, in 1925, the regional salt industry reached this level (RF GosArchive, 2000).

7. Conclusion

The revolutionary events of 1917, and the Civil War that followed, led to the degradation of the country's national economy. Many economic relations between the regions, established for decades, including migration ties, were interrupted. The decisions of the Soviet government, implemented within the "war communism" policy, had a negative impact on the development of fishing and salt commercial centers in the Northern Caspian region. The experience of implementing the New Economic Policy in the Volga-Caspian region was quite successful and productive. The rejected state monopoly on the exploitation of fishing areas meant the rejection of "war communism" economic policy. This implied establishing a different relationship between the state and workers in the fish and salt industries of the

region based on a certain freedom of trade. Migration labor flows began to recover quickly. There were always a lot of people who wanted to make money on the fish and salt industries of the Volga-Caspian region in the overpopulated Volga and central provinces. Moreover, in the 1920s new migratory flows of workers for fishing centers began to shape from among former nomads: Kalmyks, Kazakhs, Nogays. That was positive for the growth of the regional economy. Private capital also developed in the fishing industry of the region during this period. In 1927, the fishing industry of the Volga-Caspian region was fully restored. In the mid-1920s, Astrakhan province (the center of the Volga-Caspian region) significantly exceeded its neighbors in terms of economic growth (Saratov and Tsaritsyn provinces) (Chernobaev, 1928). The growth rates of the fish and salt industries significantly exceeded the regional average (Razin, 1926).

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