

## Remembering the future

The social economic development of the Russian East and Siberia has passed through a number of stages, which are quite different from one another. However, not much of the past experience may be re-enacted in contemporary conditions due to changed circumstances.

The initial stage – up to the mid- XIX century – was dominated by industrial colonization of the vast territory. Super active people risked their lives and ‘followed the Sun’ in search of better life and haul of fur<sup>1</sup>. The state participation in the economic process at this stage was limited to fiscal functions (taxation was in kind – paid off in furs) and development of external trade primarily with China<sup>2</sup>.

Later on, ‘the movers and shakers’ turned their attention to the land and its deposits. At first, crop and cattle farming along with some mining a bit later formed the bulk of Siberian people’s activities. The exploration of the vast territory was immensely accelerated by construction of the Great Siberian Railway<sup>3</sup>. This signified transition of the State from indirect influence to direct participation in reclaiming the territory. “The second stage features an inflow to Siberia of large masses of migrants, explosive development of arable farming, which pushed aside all other colonization incentives. Crop farming and partially cattle farming... becomes the central axis of development for the Siberian economy as it became a typically agrarian colony”<sup>4</sup>.

At the same time, the State not only contributed to the critically important infrastructure but also actively participated in shaping conditions for use of the arising natural resource potential. “Striving to save these lands one should set certain conditions in order to preserve the national interests and ensure cautious distribution of land. On this side it was noticed that neighboring lands to the Eastern limits of the

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<sup>1</sup> P. N. Butsinski Settlement of Siberia and way of life of its first settlers. M.: Бече. 2012. 320 c.

<sup>2</sup> K. Faust. The great trade route from Petersburg to Beijing. The history of Russian-Chinese relations in XVIII–XIX centuries. M.: Centrpolygraph. 2019. 447 p.

<sup>3</sup> Siberia and the Great Siberian railway//The Ministry of Finance. The department of trade and manufactures. 2-nd edition. Amended and supplemented. St. – Petersburg: Publishing house of I. A. Yefron. 1896. 283p.

<sup>4</sup> V. V. Pokshishevski Settlement of Siberia (historical-geographical reviews)//Edited by V. A. Krotov. Irkutsk: Irkutsk regional state publisher. 1951. 208 p. [P. 201].

empire belonging to China are quickly populated and that is why the seacoast and the Amur oblast in their turn require dense population. For this reason distribution of State lands in large plots to a single person would not comply with the interest of the land”<sup>5</sup>.

A flexible combination of direct and indirect measures of the state policy ensured a fast growth of economy and living standards in Siberia. “From the moment of launch of the Siberian Railway to the latest years when the spread of agricultural machines made a giant leap in the core of Russia, the agricultural economy of Siberia was better developed compared to the lands of their settlers’ exodus in terms of improved tools used <...> The economic order of Siberia that existed in free conditions could not stay intact; gradually the natural fertility of soil declined, there was less land available due to its growing demand <...> In the course of the 1890-s, the Tobolsk province established 33 Banks (7 of them in the Ishim District)”<sup>6</sup>.

In the final part of this stage we see development of industries based on primary processing of agricultural produce and mining output. Their crucial economic feature lay in broad proliferation of cooperation forms – in butter manufacture, forestry and mining. The cooperation was based on combining efforts of individual entrepreneurs as well as those of manufacturing, financial and trading enterprises they had created. Cooperative structures were highly adapted to the local economic landscape and featured high flexibility to changing market conditions. State investment into development of the vast territory’s economy was practically non-existent.

The impressive results of the Asian part of the country’s development allowed the great Russian scientist (born in Tobolsk, Siberia) D. I. Mendeleev to insist at the start of the XX-th century<sup>7</sup>: “shifting of economic centers to the East must be considered the principal trend of the country’s economic development... In the north-east of Russia, tundra and forests embrace lower latitudes as compared

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<sup>5</sup> Supplement # 13 On measures taken by the government for development of private land ownership in Siberia, p. 97–123 [P. 120]. Addition to the most loyal report of the Minister of land husbandry and state property after a trip to Siberia in the autumn of 1895//The Ministry of land husbandry and state property. St.-Petersburg: Publishing house of V. Kirshbaum. 1896. 158 p. Supplement of 123 p.

<sup>6</sup> The Asian Russia. Volume 2. Land and economy. St.-Petersburg: Edition of resettlement department of the main office of land management and land husbandry. 638 p. [P. 405, 450].

<sup>7</sup> D. I. Mendeleev Learning about Russia. St.-Petersburg: Pub. A. S. Suvorin, 1906. 156 p. [P. 142].

to the north-west, so the center of Russia's surface capable for settlement lies about 56 degrees of northern latitude and 46 degrees of eastern longitude. Thus, a little to the north of Omsk. One may believe that in the near decades the center of modern settlement in Russia would be shifting there with some slant towards the south...".

Somewhat later, a pupil of D.I. Mendeleev, an outstanding Siberian scientist B.P. Weinberg formally proved the validity of those conclusions<sup>8</sup>.

The third stage incorporated accelerated industrialization and spectacular progress of manufacturing and agriculture as part of socialist construction. The main forces at work here were the 'economies of scale', state investment (and associated with it centralization of decision-making and accumulation of economic results), high rates of recruiting labor from other regions of the country as well as from Siberian rural areas. Until the 1990-s, despite all transformations and hard times Siberian towns and villages remained the backbone of stable demographic situation in the Ea

By virtue of Siberia's geographic, economic and strategic scales (no matter in what borders we may consider it) once it starts slowing down, or worse, drifting, Russia cannot develop at a high rate. Over the whole of the last century this statement held true – Siberia was developing at an accelerated pace, which in its turn determined the rates of economic and social development of the country as a whole. Alas, from the start of the XXI century and resulting from 'radical' economic transformations the continent of Siberia switched from a purposeful movement in a given direction to drifting 'at the mercy of wind and waves'.

During the latest stage Siberia started losing its pace of growth and also becoming a stable outsider of economic development in our country (the paper by Yu. S. Yershov and O. V. Tarasova). One of the reasons for this is absence of adaptation mechanisms that were created and implemented at the initial stage of Siberian industrialization. Approaches to organization and operation of leading industries of Siberian economy that were developed in the 90-s do not take into consideration the 'burden of distance' (and the time factor). For this reason, the consequences of hyperinflation together with centralization

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<sup>8</sup> *B. P. Weinberg* Statements of the center of Russia's surface from the start of Moscow's kingdom to now // The news of the Imperial Russian Geographical society. Vol. LI. Iss. VI. St.-Petersburg, 1915.

of financial-economic results outside of Siberia proved disastrous. The population of Siberia and the Far East started falling as a result of those. The Rosstat data of the country's population dynamics published in 2020 revealed that Siberian regions (Omsk, Kemerovo regions and Altai krai) became 'leaders' in rates of depopulation.

The following factors characterize the peculiarity of the current stage of the social-economic life (not development) of Siberia.

1. Predilection for local (within separate subjects of Federation) projects and decisions.

2. Absence of projects aimed at joining efforts of Siberian regions in order to achieve a synergy effect from their cooperation (such as specialized machine building for implementing projects in mining, forestry and agricultural sectors of the macro-region's economy; development of timber processing for house construction, etc., etc.).

3. Neglecting peculiar features and nature of Siberia's internal market – its potential for creating, development and augmenting the competitive capacity of the macro-region's economy as a whole. потенциала для создания, развития и повышения конкурентоспособности экономики макрорегиона в целом.

4. Failure to address practical issues of frameworks and forms of support of cooperation and integration for manufacturers and providers of various services (by way of targeted forms of financial support and scientific-technical follow-up within the whole chain of interaction participants of this or that process (the paper by Z.B.-D. Dondokov).

5. Unresolved issues of coordination and targeted follow-up on behalf of macro-regional level for implementation of inter-regional projects. и адресного сопровождения со стороны макрорегионального уровня вопросов реализации межрегиональных проектов.

6. Exclusion of science and local expert community from the process of discussion, follow-up and implementation of project solutions.

Stable and progressive growth – for example, as part of the megaproject “the Russian Ark” (the paper by A.N. Klepach and N.N. Mikheyeva) is only possible on the basis of a game-changing new type of development. It includes many of the approaches that have been successfully tested by Siberians. The crucial resources for development is cooperation and trust, a focus on balanced social –economic development of the whole Siberia (with reciprocal

enrichment of economies of separate regions and various levels of spatial hierarchy in the whole macro-regional economy – from agglomerations to towns and villages).

We hope that acute problems represented on the pages of ECO concerning issues of socio-economic development of Siberia will help consolidate the efforts of specialists, experts and all interested readers in search for ways to get the macro-region out of prolonged drifting. It is time for development that follows a clear and decisive route.

Editor in chief of ECO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V.A. Kryukov', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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