

In the period between the census of 1959 and up to 1990 the population growth in Russian Asia¹ was considerably higher than the same figure for the European part. The farther to the East or the North, the more significant was the surplus. In the period from 1959 to 1989, the population of the European part of Russia increased by 21.5%, while for the Asian part it was 43.2%, comprising the Western Siberia – 33.8%, Eastern – 42.3%, and the Far East – 66.4%. The most impressive population growth took place in the district of extreme North and equal-status territories – at Chukotka 3.5 times, in Magadan region (within actual boundaries) – 2.1 times, in Yakutia – 2.3 times, in Kamchatka region – 2.2 times. Record-breaking in terms of demography were Khanty-Mansi and Yamal-Nenets okrugs – the population here increased 10.2 and 7.8 times respectively².

There are no foreign counterparts of such fast settlement of regions with extreme climate conditions. Thus, the Canadian North comprises Yukon, North-West territories, and Nunavut with a total land area of 3.6 million km², has a population of mere 107 thousand. There are no cities, transportation is chiefly by air³. The population of our Chukotka with the territory five times smaller was over 162 thousand in the early 1990-s. The American state of Alaska has a denser population but the tempo of its population growth was never so fast as in the north of the Asian part of Russia in the Soviet times, even during the oil boom, when oil extraction went from zero to 100 million tons over two decades. In the 1980-s the population grew by 36%, while in the subsequent 40 years (till 2018) – 31%⁴.

As a result, the share of the Asian part in the Russian populace grew from 19.2 to 21.9%. This change of the spatial structure of its population seemed quite natural. A diversity of various natural resources has always been the main consideration for the territories

¹ The paper refers to Asian Russia as comprising the territories of West-Siberian, East-Siberian, and Far East economic regions in the borders they had prior to their division into Federal districts – by the latest definitions this includes the Siberian and the Far Eastern okrugs plus the Tyumen oblast.

² The population size of the USSR according to the census of 15 January 1959 by republics, kraia, oblasts.... M.: Central statistical office of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, 1960. Russian statistical yearbook.

³ URL: <https://vancouverok.com/naselenie-kanady>; URL: http://www.statcan.ca/francais/Pgdb/phys01_f.htm

⁴ URL: <https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alaska>