

The History of Latvian Peasant Colonies in Russia (1870-1922)
Research Problems and Perspectives in Russian Provincial Archives:
the Example of Bashkortostan

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It is possible to pose the question of documentary heritage in Russian provincial archives from different points of view. Firstly, it could be analysed as a separate complex of documents which enables us to reach conclusions about the history of Latvian or Estonian peasant colonies. Secondly, one could analyse the question in the context of other sources or historiography and list certain problems which could be solved in a more efficient manner using these documents. The second option is more useful if we wish to come to relevant conclusions about the perspectives researchers of peasant colonisation would have if they, for example, were to combine the rather diverse archives in Riga and Ufa. The aim of this presentation is to present possibilities and problems which arise when using Russian regional archival collections in the research of Baltic 19th century emigration history. The source material on voluntary peasant emigration during the second half of the 19th century is dispersed, and it is quite complicated to get an overview of the informational basis without any guidelines.

This article is an expansion of a presentation held at the conference “Accessing the History of the Baltic Diaspora”. It provides some general outlines and examples of this problem. The article structure is based on a chronological principle which divides into four periods – the foundation of the peasant colonies, the development by the time of World War I, World War I and its refugee movements, the period of the Russian Civil War and the re-evacuation of the wartime refugees.

The example of Bashkortostan¹ is used firstly because the Baltic peasant colonies in Siberia currently attract more interest than those in the European part of Russia. Secondly, it allows us to point out the most important historical problems, from the settlement of the colonies to the Russian Civil War.

¹ The research mainly used documents of the Central State Historical Archives of the Republic of Bashkortostan (Centraljnii Gosudarstvenni istoricheski arhiv Respubliki Bashkortostan CGIA RB).

When characterising the context, it must be pointed out that the migration to the Ufa governorate was but a part of the 19th century migrations. After the 1860s reforms in the Russian Empire, the social mobility and migration of the Baltic peasants increased significantly. After the 1860s, the number of Latvian peasants who chose to emigrate to the neighbouring governorates – Vitebsk, Pskov, Novgorod or Kaunas – hoping to improve their socio-economic situation increased. Simultaneously, the number of Latvian peasants who migrated to towns or chose a professional career as teachers, seamen, in the military or as office workers increased. At the end of the 1870s, the migration from the Baltic to Inner Russia remained a voluntary mass phenomenon and a specific part of the modernisation process which had become a significant part of Baltic everyday life by World War I.² Peasant emigration had been a reality since the 1840s, but those emigrations were sporadic periods of mass emigration campaigns rather than a permanent social alternative.

By World War I, over 20 colonies of varying sizes had been established in the Ufa governorate (located in Southern Russia between Volga and the Ural mountains); the maximal number of Latvians in the Ufa governorate (*gubernya*) was reached at the end of World War I: 15 - 18 000. The first certain information about Latvians in the Ufa governorate stems from 1877. The Latvian peasant colonies were located quite near Ufa and the Trans-Siberian railway. Their location was economically profitable, but the colonies were neither isolated from the historical consequences of revolutions and war nor from the movements of wartime refugees. Due to the rather complicated and multi-faceted history of the Latvian peasant colonies in the Ufa governorate, the issue relates to broader aspects of Baltic history as well as to general theoretical problems such as the modernisation in the Baltic region and its migration component, societal judgements about emigration, features of the economical development in the colonies, the echoes of the 1905 revolution in the colonies, and the Bolshevik and anti-Bolshevik positions.

I. Peasant Emigration and the Settlement of Colonies.

The problem of emigration policy is a very complex issue, relating not only to the founding of peasant colonies but also to certain dimensions of Baltic social and economic

² Data on the dynamics of peasant social mobility using the Order registration books (*Okladnie knigi*) and other documents of the Livonia Provincial Office of the Treasury (*Gubernskaya Kazennaya palata*) – Latvian State Historical Archives (*Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs, LVVA*), fonds 77, descriptions 1 and 14.

development, the attitude towards it and the mechanisms of emigration. In this context, one could ask whether any punctual, organised migration policy existed at all.

Closer analysis of the sources suggests that the largest part of the documentation concerning the juridical mechanisms of emigration has been preserved in archives of the territories from which peasants emigrated. Commissars of peasant affairs (*kommisar po krestjanskim delam*) and other structures formally regulated certain juridical formalities, but in reality the “missing souls” in parishes which were occasionally wiped off from official lists³ testified that the situation probably was different. This also means that we cannot expect a systematic or complete view on emigration judging from these documents today. The Provincial office of the Treasury (*Gubernskaya Kazennaya palata*) compiled lists of people (by parishes) which moved from one tax payer class to another or emigrated to other provinces, but unfortunately this material is not very reliable. It is not possible to obtain exact data about the number of peasants who emigrated to specific destinations in Inner Russia from the records of these institutions. The main reason for researching these documents is that they provide an opportunity to get a general overview of the types and forms of social mobility (urban migration, emigration from the native governorates, professional career etc.), the main features of the dynamics of emigration, and the modifications of the social mobility alternatives chosen. Furthermore, the conclusions of higher governorate officials concerning the arbitrariness of emigration makes one think that the regulation in this sphere was on a level which did not allow for any exact statistical data.

In general, the better-documented cases of emigration were those to coronal lands in Siberia and the Far East at the end of the 19th century. Buying or renting private land could of course not provide the officials with any formal juridical requirements. The institutionalised and partially subsidised emigration after the 1890s was a new stage in Baltic peasant emigration, in which the Siberian governorates with their vast state land properties came to the forefront. One of the consequences of this institutionalisation was an increase of documents; with this, the amount of information available to researchers today is larger and includes details not mentioned concerning previous emigrants to private lands. One of the most important details is the characterisation of the potential emigrant’s financial situation and a precise account of family members, which enables the researcher to analyse the ‘social portrait’ of the emigrant in more depth.

³ See: LVVA, fonds 630, description 1, file 23.

Territorial aspects of emigration (for example, from which parishes or regions to which provinces the peasants emigrated) are better investigated in the archives of the territories which the peasants left. There is a pragmatic explanation to this as well – it was more gainful for parishes to sign in new inhabitants than to remove a person from the list of tax-payers.

Russian provincial archives hold quite valuable information on questions relating to emigration policy on a lower level. It might just be a coincidence, but in the case of the Ufa governorate there was correspondence between different officials regarding colonisation plans in the governorate. These plans proved to be unsuccessful due to the unexpected mass of Latvian immigrants⁴. This is probably a rather specific case, but it does provide examples of wider organisational problems and the types of documents which might exist in Russian provincial archives. Echoes of this unplanned situation also reached the Province of Livonia and looked like an attempt to salvage the campaign from more failure. These questions are also connected with the image of Latvian, Estonian and German colonists – an image which was mostly positive – so the organised campaigns of colonisation were in some cases specifically directed to these „Western peasants”.

Such correspondence concerning peasant emigration amidst the official institutions of different governorates was a widespread praxis which caused some chaos, at least until the institutionalisation of the emigration process in the mid-1890s. Frequently, an individual case (already post-emigration) was reported (often jumpily) to the officials of the peasant’s native governorate, asking for help in stopping the emigration wave. Such a practice was for example widely described and condemned by the Estonian governor of that time – *knaz* Shakhovsky.⁵ Furthermore, the problem did not only lie in unwarranted, illegal peasants’ emigration, but also in appeals to emigrate, propagated by official institutions of different governorates (or as in case of the Ufa governorate – officials of the appanage property administration). Such documents are particularly valuable because they characterise the process of emigration and the problems and responsiveness of the potential colonists, but are not part of the standard, typical documentation and are often mixed up somewhere in all the other correspondence.

Concerning the periodisation and institutionalisation of emigration, it is vitally important to ascertain the transformation of the attitude towards emigration in higher state institutions.

⁴ CGIA RB, fonds I-11, description 11, file 1271, page 1-2.

⁵ See: Из архива Князя С. В. Шаховского. Материалы для недавнего прошлого Прибалтийской окраины (1885-1894 гг.). Т. 2. (Санкт-Петербург: В. М. Эрикс, 1909), 3-24.

However, such directives in the provincial archives are for the most part already accessible as prepared circulars. When it comes to the highest level of colonisation policy, the most efficient way to conduct research is to use the archives of the Russian Ministry of the Interior (*Ministerstvo vnutrennih del*) and other central institutions, correlated with documents of the highest province officials in a former province of interest.

In the case of the Ufa governorate we can conclude that when considerable numbers of emigrants settled on the land of appanage properties (*Udelnaja zemlja*) (land properties of the Tsar family or other high noblemen), there was further control, which resulted in different kind of documents – reports, correspondence etc. At present, none of these materials are known; only some remarks about Latvian colonists can be found in published sources. Such documents could enable us to evaluate some of the judgements about the success or failure of colonisation from the organisers' point of view. In most of the cases when peasants rented or bought private land properties, it mainly concerned private relations between buyer and seller, and historians stand a small chance to get acquainted with more detailed aspects of the colonisation process.

The question about structural analysis of the emigrants or colonists concerns wider aspects of the social and economical situation in the Baltic region. An invaluable type of document for structural analysis are materials from the 1897 population census. Unfortunately, as in the case of Bashkortostan, these documents have not always been preserved. Population census materials from 1917 or 1920 already present a different social situation. In the case of the Ufa governorate, more perspective for a structural analysis can be gained by researching documents of the Livonia Provincial Office of the Treasury (*Gubernskaja kazennaja palata*) and by expanding case studies of a certain region or parish. Archival records stored in Latvia can enable a researcher to make approximated judgements about the social structure of emigrants in the moment of emigration, but the further development of demographical and other parameters can only be investigated using printed statistical materials (for example, the materials of the 1897 population census) or other occasional materials unrelated to professional statistics. Answers to questions about the Baltic social and economical context – the attitude towards colonisation, the consequences of emigration etc., are often searched for in vain in the Russian provincial archives. The situation in the provinces where the materials of the 1897 population census have been preserved is of course completely different, and could provide more exact conclusions on the social structure of recent emigrants.

II. The Development of the Social and Economical situation in the Colonies by World War I.

The first important question to look into when analysing the internal situation and development of the colonies is to what degree lower municipality (parish) records have been preserved. Research of these documents provide the formal core, which ought to be further completed by using other sources. In reality, the situation is quite different, and for many of the parishes there are no documents in existence today, so researchers need to use these “additional materials” to reconstruct the main features of the development of the colonies. In the case of the Ufa governorate we unfortunately face the latter situation. Without using periodicals we cannot come to any conclusions concerning the dominating cultural and economical activities, juridical problems or eventual role of Latvian colonists in the local administration. The interpretation of periodicals and memoirs is quite specific because of the specific identity of emigrants and colonists.

When studying archival records, a common question is which of the statistical materials available will enable us to make any kind of comparison. In this case, the most important statistical materials about the development of farming or lists of populated places et cetera, are quite well- edited and published.

In the case of Bashkortostan, some the most significant materials covering the economical, social and cultural development of the colonies in the period before World War I are documents of the Peasants' Bank (*Krestjanskii bank*) Bureau in Ufa⁶. This archive mainly consists of land property documents, land maps and files describing the property type of land transformed. In Bashkortostan, land was not always bought using credits from the Peasants' Bank so these documents only allow us to glimpse a part of the situation. It is only possible to ascertain land prices, certain juridical formalities and in some cases pinpoint the geographical location of a colony. In general, the records of the Peasants' Bank Bureau in Ufa do not allow for any comprehensive conclusions but can be used as expanded examples. For instance, the localisation of colonies is a rather important question in all regions of Russia. Toponyms were severely changed and degraded during 70 years of Soviet rule, when original place names were “improved” with ideological contexts. In the former Ufa province, Arhlatvieši, later Pēteris Stučka (a Latvian communist) was changed to Maxim Gorky (Soviet writer), Livanija to Pobeda (Victory) etc. It is indeed quite complicated to locate the smallest and

⁶ CGIA RB, fonds 336.

least investigated colonies mentioned in sources or literature from the 1920s and 1930s on a map today, and this problem applies to all regions of Russia.

Sources providing information about the relationship between colonists and officials are very fragmentary, just like all sources about the development of the colonies, with the exception of the time of the revolution of 1905-1907 and a few years after it. However, there is a positive aspect to be found in published materials of the Ufa governorate officials; the farming experience of Latvian (as well as Estonian or German) peasants. Most likely, some of the *Zemstva* officials wrote reports about the situation and the co-operation with Latvian peasants and cooperatives; unfortunately, this correspondence is yet to be located. Since the image of the Latvian peasant was similar in the other provinces of Russia (as well as the strategy of intensification in agriculture), such sources could provide information about the status of Latvian peasants in other successful colonies as well.

Documents about the situation during the revolution of 1905 make up an invaluable part of the archival sources on Latvian colonists in the Ufa governorate. With some exceptions, these unique sources are only present in Ufa. They noticeably improve the overview of Latvian colonists during the time of the revolution as well as in the period preceding it.

Most of the documents consist of police or gendarmerie (*zhandarmskoe upravlenija*)⁷ reports of protocols of examinations or requisition⁸, records of court proceedings, information about political prisoners in the province⁹ as well as lists of people who are subjected to surveillance (*glasni nadzor*) where Latvians are also included.

Ascertaining the real attitude towards an undemocratic regime has always been one of the most complicated historical problems. The attitude is often simplified or streamlined without appropriate basis in historical sources. These archival records precisely depict names, places and activities and it is possible to extract social context and demands from the more expanded reports. However, it is absolutely certain that the activities, people and demands spoken of in the gendarmerie material are only a part of the big picture.

Archival sources testify that the central issue of the revolutionary activities in this case concerned the land property forms, the amount of land rent and other economical problems which had been actualised since the settlement of colonies on appanage properties (*Udelnaja zemlja*). The agitation of socialists/revolutionaries (*eseri*) and social democrats on general

⁷ CGIA RB, fonds I-187, description 1, file 277, page 84.

⁸ Ibid., file 213.

⁹ Ibid., file 277, page 84.

political and economical issues helped to increase the frustration. The context and demands also indicate differences from the revolutionary situation in the Baltics. However, these documents contain detailed evidence of flags and agitation materials with general political slogans confiscated in a Latvian colony.

From a historiographic point of view, this type of documents in Russian provincial archives change some of the stereotypes of idyllic work performed to realise a romantic longing for land of one's own, which would be one of the traditional interpretations of colony development. In fact, the political situation and political ideals in the colonies were multifaceted. Reports from the time of the revolution and the years following it when the political émigrés arrived to Latvian colonies testify to a socially differentiated community in the colonies, and also provides an understanding of the processes which started in 1917. The previously mentioned arrival of political émigrés constitutes a significant episode in the history of the Latvian peasant colonies, and depicts a broader role and importance of colonies. Apart from documents describing the period of the formation of the colonies, the records describing the revolutionary process in the Latvian colonies are perhaps the most important sources in Russian provincial archives for the period around World War I. It is the uniqueness of these documents which make them significant, not their typicality. These sources supplement the view on the 1905 revolution – one of the most important processes in Baltic history in the 20th century – with important details. They also indicate the level of contact between the colonies and the native governorates in the first and second generations of emigrants. Because of the political regime, such information was not accessible in the periodicals of that time. Sources in Russian provincial archives describing the revolution of 1905 must especially be taken into account, since the details mentioned (the motivation of the revolutionaries, the slogans, the methods and social background etc.) characterise the colonies in more depth and go beyond the traditional, very general phrases used in newspaper articles, such as “we are living quite well here”, and the like.

The documents found in Russian provincial archives allow us to deepen our view of the colonies and their history. Furthermore, the close interrelations between the provincial departments of the gendarmerie also depict the situation in other provinces. To investigate the so-called “case of Latvian social democratic organization” in the Ufa governorate, the gendarmerie (*zhandarmskoe upravlenija*) of the Ufa governorate was in correspondence with

other provinces, which means that reports about Odessa, Tobolsk, Warsaw and other places also can be found¹⁰.

There are relatively few records concerning the cultural life and education in colonies and the self-identity of the colonists in the Russian provincial archives. An overview of identity, self-appraisal, ethnic relations and other general issues in the history of the colonies can be developed using a complex basis of sources; records in Russian provincial archives could only be used as part of the material.

In the colonies, educational and culture affairs were mainly a question of self-organisation. Therefore, the documentation of province officials hardly characterises this sphere; it is mainly a question of periodicals and memoirs. The protocols of the Ufa Latvian Society which are partly held in the archives are an exception.¹¹

Archival sources relating to religion concern the Latvian Baptist parishes, which could only be registered and exist in close co-operation with official institutions.¹²

In general, the archival sources in Bashkortostan on the development of Latvian peasant colonies in the Ufa governorate by World War I are complementary to other groups of sources, and do not form a cluster of documents which could be investigated separately and be used to draw specified conclusions about any official/unofficial policy towards Latvian colonists, their image etc. Apart from the documents on revolutionary processes, the records which stand out against the background of other sources are rather diverse. At the same time, this does not mean that research in Russian provincial archives could not provide with valuable additions to Latvian and Baltic emigration history. The situation was noticeably different in governorates where colonists settled on state property. Research in Russian provincial archives is important because of the different level of institutionalisation during this period of emigration.

III. World War I and the Movement of Latvian Wartime Refugees.

The historical situation in the territory of Latvia during World War I was very difficult and not one to envy: more than half a million people were refugees, and employees of evacuated official institutions or companies left the territory of Latvia. Industrial Riga and the agrarian

¹⁰ CGIA RB, fonds I-187, description 1, file 354.

¹¹ Ibid., fonds 420, description 1, file 1.

¹² Ibid., fonds I-9, description 1, file 833.

and now occupied Courland experienced the most untoward destiny against the background of previous achievements. Latvian colonies became a way to escape from the unstable life in the cities.

These processes were also socially specific – one of the central Latvian refugee organisation officials Kristaps Bahmanis described a situation in which distant Latvian colonies which previously had been quite distant from Baltic social life and politics became centres of national reunification when faced with extraordinary obstacles.¹³ However, it is almost impossible to investigate these little-known aspects by only using archival sources, at least in the case of Bashkortostan.

The unique documentary heritage which might be preserved in Russian provincial archives (as it is in Bashkortostan) consists of lists of refugees and their family members who lived in Latvian colonies and other places in the province. These records provide an opportunity to develop a structural analysis of Latvian refugees by classifying their places of birth, their age, their family status and previous place of residence. Furthermore, their specified time of arrival allows us to investigate or verify the different waves of emigration. This is an important issue because in Soviet historiography, the refugee movement was interpreted as one of the preconditions for support of the February revolution and the October coup in 1917¹⁴. Thus, the question about the social background of the new regime officials and the social structure of the colonies is of great importance.

The organisation of social help to Latvian refugees was mainly undertaken by institutions led by Latvian national public figures and supported by the government; the actions of these institutions can mainly be researched in Latvia.

The lack of documents concerning mobilisation does not allow for a precise estimate of the total number of mobilised colonists. Also, the attitude towards the war and other important issues can only be described using periodicals and other sources. This type of source structure is of course connected with obstacles similar to those in the previous period, – the social aspects were not reviewed on an official level, at least not those concerning the situation of a specific colony, which means that this important question is not widely reflected in the archival records.

¹³ Kristaps Bahmanis, „Latviešu dzīves cīņa un kultūras darbi Urālu piekalnē,” *Kultūras Vēstnesis*. No.3 (1921).

¹⁴ Auseklis Spreslis, *Latviešu sarkangvardi cīņā par padomju varu 1917.-1918. g.* (Rīga: Zinātne, 1987), 34.

In general, the most important sources are lists of refugees. Their structural analysis is particularly important because the wartime economical and social changes are some of the most important preconditions for dramatic events of 1917 and later. Conclusions about the political situation or political activities of 1917 – 1918 can mainly be drawn on the basis of later reports from Bolshevik officials. The social transformations from March to December 1917 are unfortunately almost a blank page when it comes to the archival sources of that time. The huge numbers of Latvians living outside of their historical territory at the time of World War I was an unprecedented situation for the Latvians, so Inner Russia, a geographical space outside of the historical homeland, gained unusual importance.

IV. The Russian Civil War and the Re-Evacuation of Wartime Refugees.

From a historical point of view, the most problematic and important issue relating to the period of Russia's Civil war is the attitude towards the political situation during the war and after it. This situation is also connected to the issue of historiographical heritage and negative relics from the Soviet traditions of historiography, as well as to an idealistic view within national historiography. The near total dominance of Bolshevism among the Latvians in Russia turned out to be an exaggeration of Soviet historiography. The political contradictions became more acute also in the colonies precisely at the time of the Russian Civil War. The causes of this situation were to a lesser extent connected with the previous experience than with the unprecedented arbitrariness in the circumstances of civil war. This period is very significant because of the political and social conflicts it encompassed; it makes it possible to investigate how the attitude against the newly formed political regimes developed.

Valuable records from the period of the Russian Civil War are held in Latvian archives, mostly unique information on Latvian national organisations in the Urals and in Siberia¹⁵. The second part consists of fragmentary documents about the organisations of the Latvian Bolsheviks, examples of which can be found in several funds of the former Latvian Communist Party archive¹⁶. After studying archival records and other sources, the conclusions point to a situation almost contrary to the one depicted in Soviet historiography: in the spring and summer of 1918 when the Soviet institutions started their policy of requisition and terror and renewed mobilisations, the support for the Bolsheviks drastically

¹⁵ LVVA, fonds 4101, 5965.

¹⁶ Latvian State archives (*Latvijas Valsts arhīvs, LVA*), fonds PA-35, PA-45, PA-200.

decreased. In some of the Latvian colonies, an armed resistance against the regime and its policy started.

In the case of Bashkortostan, most of the archival records are materials of Soviet institutions. The largest and most valuable part is the documentary heritage of the Latvian subdivision in the National Minorities Department of the Ufa Governorate Executive Committee (*Latyshski podotdel Otdela po delam nacionaljnih menshinstv Ufimskogo gubernskogo Ispoliteljntelnogo komiteta*).¹⁷ Part of this fonds consists of reports from the Latvian subdivision's officials from the Latvian colonies. These reports are of course ideologically one-sided, but the documents from the time of the Civil War and the first postwar years are not "smoothened" or "improved". The reports did not retouche the weakly working Bolshevik cells in the country; the officials described some insignificant arguments in order to withhold the most important factors. These reports depict more of the social life and problems of Bolshevik agitation and the re-evacuation of the wartime refugees than it does real economical problems and disagreements. However, these are some of the few records where colonies are analysed or depicted as a whole, as a different phenomenon within the socio-economical life. There is no doubt about the importance of these documents for the research of the Russian Civil War period. Furthermore, the oppositional positions, attitudes and methods are used as detailed examples in the evaluations and descriptions.

Such institutions were formed in every province where the number of Latvian (or other minority) colonists and refugees was sufficiently large from the point of view of the Bolshevik officials. The leading officials of these institutions were often also the leading members of local Bolshevik organisations. Reports on the colony situations were also presented at different conferences of peasants and workers or the Bolshevik party - some of these documents are today available in Riga in the former archive of the Communist Party; the remainder of the documentation is held in Ufa. The all-encompassing ideological indoctrination and chaotic statistical data are the most characteristic features of these reports. The number of refugees who wanted to return to Latvia was decreased while the number of Latvians in Ufa province was increased to legitimate the existence of the national sections of party or other institutions.

The attitude towards the Soviet regime was frequently not kept silent, but the knowledge and attitude towards the newly proclaimed Republic of Latvia was mostly ignored in these

¹⁷ CGIA RB, fonds R-107.

documents. The Latvian anti-Bolshevist military formations and organisations and the elements of the peasant movement (or the “green movement”) are at best only noted. However, this question is still urgent in historiography and often also in the political context – it is necessary to analyse the real counterarguments to the stereotypical identification of Latvians only as Bolsheviks or their supporters. The records of the Latvian national organisations and partly also the Bolshevik documents in Russian archives show that there was a widespread dissatisfaction with Soviet policy in the Latvian colonies. In Soviet historiography, this fact was described using abstract concepts such as “counter-revolution” or “class war”. Nevertheless, it is difficult to draw any conclusion as to the social and ideological basis of this movement from the Bolshevik documents.

The other question relating to the attitude towards the Bolshevik regime is the re-evacuation of wartime refugees after the convention between Soviet Russia and Latvia about the re-evacuation of refugees in June 1920 has been concluded. In the newest historiography, this question is described in more detail than the other problems of Latvian emigration history.¹⁸ A case-study would be valuable here, since specific questions concerning the number of re-evacuated refugees, optants and questions on the policy of re-evacuation and the situation of refugees ought to be solved using examples of specific situations in each region. Also, the issue of re-evacuation was intimately connected to the decision to stay in the colonies or to go to Latvia.

In the statistical data, the lists of refugees who wished to return to Latvia is the sole source, but it is not precise enough to draw any conclusions about total numbers. Some materials relating to this problem can be found among the documents of the Ministry of the Interior in Riga¹⁹. It is however not possible to present any exact numbers from each region in Soviet Russia.

The policy of re-evacuation is better documented in the records of various offices of internal affairs. These records are mostly reports, letters and instructions. Circulars of superior officials enabling or eliminating re-evacuation of refugees of different nationalities depict the mechanism of regulation. On the other hand, already re-evacuated refugees in Latvia sent applications and reports to the Ministry of the Interior or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs²⁰ in order to help re-evacuate their relatives and colleagues or to dismiss them from

¹⁸ Tatjana Bartele and Vitālijs Šalda, *Latviešu bēgļi Krievijā 1915-1922*. (Daugavpils: Saule, 2007).

¹⁹ LVVA, fonds 3234.

²⁰ See: LVVA, fonds 2575, description 14.

Bolshevik arrest. The attitude of the Soviet regime towards the colonists or refugees and their organisations is also depicted in documents concerning the closing of non-Bolshevist organisations of the Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and other minorities.

There materials relating to the motivation to re-evacuate from Soviet Russia or to stay there after the Russian Civil War are very scarce. More relevant to this issue are the already mentioned applications and reports of the former refugees to different institutions (mostly to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) or applications of colonists to the Latvian Embassy in Moscow. Some notes on this question in documents of Soviet or Bolshevik party institutions can be found in materials from conferences and other meetings.

In general, the main features of records in the Russian provincial archives from the period of the Russian Civil War are determined by the fact that they are Bolshevik documents. Ideological antagonism determined that the information on the Latvian colonies and wartime refugees was regular and quite detailed, but the conclusions are homogenous and ideologically traditional. The national non-Bolshevistic organisations can only be researched using other sources. However, the total amount of information about the Latvian colonies and refugees in 1919-1921 notably increased, and these records form a notable research basis.

V. Conclusions and Further Perspectives.

The analysis of Russian provincial archive records in the context of other sources brightly illuminates one of the most important and complicated issues in the research of Latvian colonies – the difficulties in obtaining empirical material on the history of the colonies in one region needed in order to draw conclusions about the development of their socio-economical or cultural life. The image of the development of the colonies is often rather abstract, and does not constitute a basis for any qualitative discussion in-between conclusions of different researchers. Thus, the sources are at present the only basis for research – it is evident that it is not possible to make any abstract comparisons or draw up any analogies, because we still know too little about the different ways in which the colonies developed in the different regions and the characteristics of the emigrants of each decade at the end of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th.

As far as research of the process of Baltic modernisation in the second half of the 19th century is concerned, it would be valuable to have a structural analysis and an analysis of the

dynamics of emigration. However: as previously mentioned, the archival sources in the case of Bashkortostan do not increase our possibilities to perform such research.

The documentary materials on the revolution of 1905-1907 ought to be mentioned once more as one of the most important additions to our knowledge about the history of Latvian colonies by World War I. These small but important episodes show that the “network” of emigrated Latvians in Russia was quite closely connected with the Baltics. In certain decisive situations, turning-point colonies carried a specific historic significance (the revolution of 1905, the refugee movements of World War I, and the formation of the Latvian anti-Bolshevist military units in Russia, for example).

Using materials in Russian provincial archives is a time-consuming business which requires good preliminary knowledge about the colonies in the region. One of the most important tasks is to try to include more provincial archives in the research in order to make a comparison and see if we for instance have identical population census materials in several archives.

Secondly, one could include materials of Russia’s central archives in order to draw conclusions regarding the attitude towards migration and its organisation during the period of modernisation. The information about the political context and the obstacles of Baltic emigration is still fragmentary – only a few researchers focus on this problem in Latvia (some aspects are researched by prof. Heinrihs Strods and Aivars Beika)²¹ and in Estonia (the latest addition being Kadri Tooming’s master’s thesis²² about Southern Estonian emigration and the influence of the governmental policy).

Work in Russian provincial archives is not the only effective way to do colony and emigration research, it is mostly an accompaniment. However, for several important historical problems, research based solely on sources in Latvian archives is not possible, namely structural analysis of the movements of wartime refugees, the revolution of 1905-1907 and the attitude of Soviet and Bolshevik party institutions towards the Latvian colonies and refugees. The accessibility of Russian regional archives is quite good; there are of course

²¹ See: Heinrihs Strods, „Latviešu zemnieku pārceļšanās sākumi uz Krieviju 19. gs 40.-60. gados,” *Latvijas Vēsture*. no.6(23) (1996): 24-29; Хейнрих Стродс, „Основные этапы и причины начала массового переселения латышских крестьян в другие губернии России в 40 – 60 годах 19 в.” в *Проблемы исторической демографии СССР*, (Томск: Издательство Томского университета, 1980), 191-201; Aivars Beika. „Latviešu kolonijas Krievijas impērijā. Problēmas pieteikums,” *Latvijas Zinātņu Akadēmijas Vēstis. A daļa*. no.1/2 (2003): 54-85.

²² Kadri Tooming, *Lõuna-Eesti küla Vene impeeriumi keskavalitsuse kolonisatsioonipoliitika mõjuväljas 1889-1914. Magistritöö. Juhendaja prof. Aadu Must* (Tartu, 2008).

certain local differences concerning the terms of use (the length and volume of the order, the use of digital equipment etc.), but use of these archives adds a notable perspective which can provide important answers and solutions to significant problems within the history of Baltic emigration.

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