

# The Foreign Sloboda As a Historical Russian Experience for Present Times

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## **Introduction**

**A**CCORDING TO the observers<sup>1</sup> of the economic and political events of 2014, approximately 0.5 m citizens of Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand left Russia. The number of German citizens decreased by 100,000 people: from 348,000 in January 2014 to 240,000 in January 2015. In recent decades, this has been the first mass exodus of experts from scientifically and technologically developed countries.

That being said, we think that the exodus of citizens from developed countries only worsens the existing structure of incoming migrants, which is of little promise for the technological and innovative development of Russia (including those migrants who become new citizens of our country). We suppose that expatriation to Russia (for permanent residence) should significantly compensate for the demographic losses of the '90s and early 2000s, which continue with a

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drain of qualified Russian scientists towards foreign countries (USA, Germany, Great Britain, China, etc.) regardless of the establishment of the Skolkovo, innovation centers within universities, and of the state support for the research centers (Naukograd) from the Soviet era.

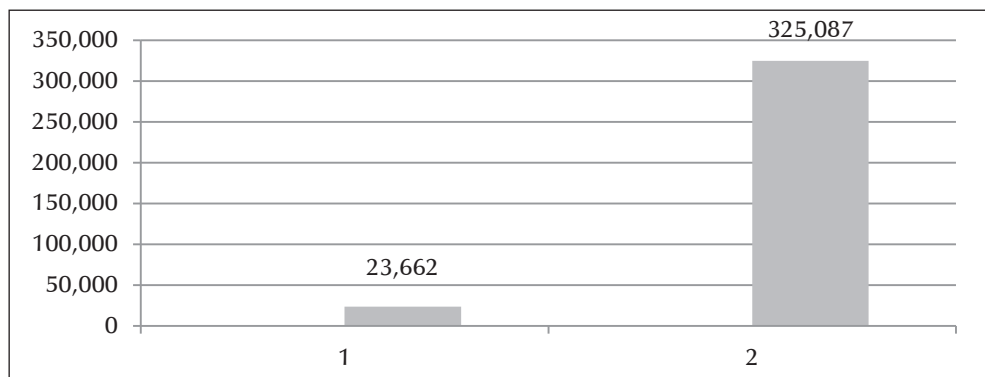
It is obvious that foreigners from more economically developed and rich countries can bring into Russia not only their business skills, but also a part of their private assets, as well as the skills necessary for the implementation of investment projects.

However, out of the total number of foreigners coming for permanent residence in Russia in 2011–2013,<sup>2</sup> only 23,700 are citizens of countries with a per capita GDP higher than that of Russia (the target group of foreigners),<sup>3</sup> meaning 6.8% of the total number of those arrived (see Fig. 1). The main countries outside of the CIS whose citizens arrived for permanent residence in Russia in 2011–2013 are China (10,640), Mongolia (9,400) and Turkey (7,080). As to the CIS countries, most migrants come from Kazakhstan (86,400), Belarus (62,140) and Ukraine (61,170).

We suggest that a complex set of measures for the development of the Russian legislation regulating the inflow of investments, citizens, technologies and skills from the target group of countries (Switzerland, Israel, Germany, France, Italy, etc.) can be used to bring in citizens from the abovementioned countries.

The existing structure of migration can be justified by the system of Russian migration legislation, which is currently a separate branch of legislation.<sup>4</sup> According to experts from the institute for legislation and comparative jurisprudence within the Government of the Russian Federation, the establishment of new legal statuses for migrant workers and the new categories of migrant workers (highly-skilled professionals, skilled professionals, key personnel, patent workers etc.) simplified, on the one hand, the previous administrative procedures but, on the other hand, did not lead to a desired influx of highly-skilled workers or people willing to develop their business—primarily high-tech and export-oriented—in Russia.<sup>5</sup>

FIG. 1. THE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN CITIZENS FROM COUNTRIES WITH HIGHER (1) AND LOWER (2) PER CAPITA GDP (COMPARED TO RUSSIA), IN USD, 2013



The current migrant legislation stimulated a rise in xenophobia,<sup>6</sup> which forces the Russian Government, on the one hand, to increase the quality of sociocultural adaptation for migrants, and, on the other hand, to make administrative and financial efforts to develop a tolerant attitude in society towards the representatives of other cultures. The development of modern Russia as a country of migrants (including migrants from Islamic countries) also involves the additional risk of imported extremism, which took ordinary citizens and the power elites by surprise.<sup>7</sup>

## The History of the Development of Slobodas

**I**N ORDER to find solutions to current problems, researchers often refer to past epochs. This approach, in particular, is used to put into perspective the development of the Russian diaspora in France, which greatly influenced the cultural and scientific advancement of this European country.<sup>8</sup>

Referring to the historical experience of Russia, we see that since the times of Peter the Great and, largely, Catherine the Great, the rulers of Russia pursued a policy of bringing in foreign experts for military and civil service, and of settling foreigners as colonists in undeveloped Russian areas in the Volga region, Novorossiia and Siberia. Thus, until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the foreigners were for the most part settled in specially organized “foreign Slobodas.” This generated a great number of historical figures who are considered to be Russians but have foreign surnames. There are a number of them in our military history, science, art, literature, architecture and constructions, or medicine.

What mechanism was used to bring foreigners in? What comes to mind are the foreign slobodas—for example, the German sloboda of *Kukui* (see Fig. 2). The word “sloboda” (Rus. Слобода) is an old Russian one, which phonetically (in the Russian language) and semantically is perceived as indicative of a “lessening” (послабление), or a place where certain norms, rules or other obligations are suspended. Except for Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, this word is also used in Croatia, Serbia and other countries of the former Yugoslavia. In Romania and Moldova there is a word, “slobozia” (slobodzeya), with a similar meaning, which is found in the names of many settlements (for example, Slobozia Veche, Slobozia-Adjud). In Slovenian, Serbo-Croat and other Balkan languages, the primary meaning of the word “sloboda” is “freedom”. (In the Czech language the word “freedom” (Rus. свобода) sounds the same—“svoboda,” as well as in Bulgarian. However, there is no such notion or “sloboda” settlement, nor any of its derivatives. The same is the case in the Polish language.) Thus, in most countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the semantics of the word “sloboda” is quite similar.

The origin of this word in the Russian language<sup>9</sup> shows very little variation. In the 11<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries (until 1649), a sloboda was defined as a “free settlement”—free from serfdom and taxes. As a rule, slobodas were established by the state as commons or by great landowners in order to attract different craftsmen.

FIG. 2. GERMAN SLOBODA.  
 "DEPARTURE OF TSAR PETER I FROM LEFORTOVO PALACE." ARTIST: BENOIS



It should be noted that synonyms of “sloboda” such as *bronnitca*, *butyrka*, *kukui*, *posad*, *rabad*, *slobodka*, *forshstadt* are out of use and have been substituted by the following notions: settlement, purlieu, or township. It is possible that the phenomenon of foreign slobodas as compact settlements for foreigners in Russia contributed to the preservation of this word in modern Russian, even in names of popular foods (mayonnaise, vodka), construction materials and numerous hotels. The word “sloboda” can also be found in the names of dozens of settlements in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

The remarkable thing is that slobodas started to appear in Russia in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. There used to be “white slobodas” and “black slobodas”. (The other notion, “belomesttyc,” is from old Russian legalese. It used to denote town dwellers, exempt by a diploma or an edict, for special services, personal or inherited, from all or some of the taxes. Thence, the household of these people were called “belomestnyi dvor,” as opposed to “chernoslobodskii”—taxpaying.) In “white slobodas” there were no state taxes except for fees to the landowner—that is, a “special tax treatment.”<sup>10</sup> In “black slobodas” there used to be a system of state taxes, but the land was public. However, craftsmen were bound to the place of residence and could not leave it. Thus, the residents of “black slobodas” were in fact bondsmen, but not to the feudal lord. In this context, the commons bore state taxes.

After the 17<sup>th</sup> century the slobodas started to lose their meaning as exemptions from general rules. After the “white slobodas” were abolished in 1649, this word was mostly applied to city quarters united by a common activity and having a right to local government—for example, marksman slobodas, horse slobodas etc. At that time, in Moscow the streets were starting to take shape: Kuznetsky Most, Pushkin-

skaya, and others. The *Kukni* was established in Zamoskvorechye district. It was a compact settlement of foreigners, later called “the German Sloboda.” Foreign slobodas can be considered the major exceptions to the general rule, as they used to enjoy freedom of religion and local government. For example, in slobodas where ethnic Germans and Dutch lived there were Lutheran churches (it should be noted that back then Lutherans were oppressed by the Catholic Church; in Germany there are still two separate zones: the Catholic one and the Protestant/Lutheran one).

Peter the Great established a new state institution—the Burgomaster Chamber,<sup>11</sup> overseeing territorial and tax administration (later becoming the seat of local government). Its main task was to set a fair system of taxation for the permanent residents of the slobodas and the temporary residents or “guests” (in medieval Russia, the commune [Rus. *Община*] was the main “tax agent,” and the resident was the taxpayer, attached to the place of residence after 1649). The German slobodas also came under the control of the Burgomaster Chamber, losing a part of their self-regulation in what concerns economic decisions. On the modern territory of Moscow, the German sloboda was located in Baumanskaya street and included *Aptekaskiy* passage (“the Pharmacy passage”) named after a private pharmacy of Ya. G. Gregory, opened there in 1701 (see Fig. 3).

According to historians, the German sloboda was home to military experts, but after the 16<sup>th</sup> century other craftsmen working in metal were also actively brought in, as well as artists, sculptors and carvers. Afterwards, the foreigners residing there were allowed to provide services not only within the court workshops and cannon yards, but also at home in the sloboda.<sup>12</sup>

FIG. 3. THE GERMAN SLOBODA, 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY



The foreigners were allowed to invite masters and journeymen from abroad for private hire, as well as to take apprentices from among the residents of the German sloboda and the local people. By doing that foreign craftsmen could produce and sell their products to private persons, expanding their business. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the craftsmen business was already an important factor of development in Russia.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, a foreign craftsman was invited by way of a state order, which allowed him to settle down at a new place. Later he helped the local market to develop and provided his produce, passing his skills on to the local people and journeymen.

Furthermore, after the time of Peter the Great (characterized by the active engagement of foreigners, mainly for military and civil service), Catherine the Great issued several manifestos in 1762, 1763, 1764, 1770, and 1782 to attract a massive number of foreigners of different religions (including Christian sects) as colonists for the underpopulated Russian territories (the list of territories can be found in the manifesto of 22 July 1763).<sup>14</sup>

Mass migration was organized for groups of people, united by a common feature—creed. This promoted their settlement in new places.

It should be noted that the migration of these nations—not only Germans, but also ethnic groups from modern Netherlands—was comprehensively organized.<sup>15</sup> The Office for the Patronage of Foreigners (Rus. Канцелярия опекунства иностранных) was established as a ministry with a high status and with the possibility to directly address the empress. (The annual budget of the ministry is estimated to have been approximately €36 m in today's money. After 1802 the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia was in charge of the settlements, then this function was passed on to the Ministry of State Property. In 1857, in order to regulate the life of isolated colonists, the Charter on the Colonies of Foreigners in the Russian Empire was adopted. It provided for the governance of the colonies, their division, property rights, and the responsibilities of the colonists.) Within this program different grants and loans were provided (large sums to ease the difficulties of the early stages; equivalent to app. €53,500 today), as well as land for 1,000 families, taking into account the probable increase in population. Thus, for one household (family) there were 30 arpents of land (or 33 ha), as well as “free land, representing a sixth of the whole of delineated grounds for increasing population of a given settlement” and “the same amount of land for craftsmen and other masters.”<sup>16</sup>

In addition, because of poverty and of the needs of those arriving, the government defrayed part of the expenses for pastors and offered credits for the construction of churches, “furnishing it [a church] with all the necessary things.” Government expenses were to be repaid after the exemption period was over with a sum of money added to the existing debt of every household.

The most successful colonies—such as the Evangelists of the Sarepta colony, immigrants from Saxony—were granted a period of tax exemption and debt repayment for the community till 1806, that is, for 30 years (see Fig. 4). During that period the colonists built manufactories for the production of different goods and consumer commodities.

By the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century the colony nearly lost its isolation and the colonists developed their business activity beyond the settlement. At present there is still a memory of Sarepta, with the remnants of its buildings still identifiable in the Krasnoarmeyskiy Region of Volgograd.

In the period from 1763 to 1766, up to 6,342 German families arrived in the Volga region and settled there.

Except for financial support and pieces of land, the colonists also got: “freedom of religion; quality lands; self-governance of the colony and litigation; free trading and establishment of plants and factories; free alcohol-distillation; free fishing and hunt; a 30-year period of tax exemption, except for excise duty; no military duty and a right for free leave with a fifth part sent to treasury (in case of permanent departure).”

FIG. 4. PHOTO OF A BUILDING OF THE STATE HISTORICAL-ETHNOGRAPHIC AND ARCHITECTURAL MUSEUM-PRESERVE OF THE OLD SAREPTA, VOLGOGRAD (FORMERLY STALINGRAD)



The migration process also continued to other regions of Russia. From 1782 the flow of German colonists (mainly from the town of Danzig) was directed to the Novorossiia Region, after 1813 migrants from the Duchy of Warsaw and Württemberg started to settle in Bessarabia (Moldova), and in 1817 settlers from Württemberg appeared in Transcaucasia. In 1852 migrants from Bessarabia and the Taurida Governorate became the pioneers of German landholding in Kuban. By 1886 they had established 13 colonies there. In 1882 there were 10,142 German people in the Kuban Region.<sup>17</sup>

However, at the beginning of World War I, Russia started a campaign for land seizure from the German colonists, who by that time had become Russian subjects. There were efforts to migrate further from the probable theaters of war. Thus, it is possible to say that the placement of foreigners in the south of Russia and other border areas caused major concern in Soviet times, as well as in the czarist years, even though the historians have not found any instances of wholesale “betrayal.” Instead, the ethnic Germans-Mennonites did not participate in open battles for conscientious reasons, but worked in the corps of engineers or were sent to the Caucasus to fight against the Turkish army (allies of Germany).

Effectively, the historical experience shows that in order to make a political decision to attract people from Western Europe to Russia under new terms and to settle them on Russian territory, the historical experience and possible conflicts in wartime should be taken into account.

## Results of the Migration Policy of the Russian Empire

**T**HE MIGRATION from Germany, the Netherlands and other countries continued up to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in several stages. During 1764–1770, 117 colonies were established: 46 in the Saratov Governorate, 56 in the Samara Governorate, etc. During 1800–1850, 218 more settlements were established. In the 1860s there were 513 German colonies in Russia, with lands totaling 5 m arpents (5.5 m ha); more than 2 m were in private property or used on the basis of long-term rent. Even after the Germans almost ceased to migrate to Russia, the German population in Russia continued to increase. This is partially explained by the preferential conditions granted to colonists (large land allotments, tax exemptions, no conscription duty until the 1870s).<sup>18</sup> According to the census of 1897, the German-speaking population amounted to 1.8 m (with 1.03 m people in Moscow and 1.26 in Sankt Petersburg).<sup>19</sup> According to last complete census of 2010, the population of Moscow is 11.5 m, that of Sankt Petersburg—4.8 m, and of Russia—142.85 m. We suggest that the 1897 census underrated the number of people with nationality other than Russian, as the second generation of migrants gave Russian as their native language, but according to the modern perspective they could be considered German or French.

It should be noted that in 1989 in the Soviet Union there were 2,040,000 ethnic Germans, 842,000 of them in Russia. However, in 20 years the German population decreased by a factor of 2.13—to 394,000 people.<sup>20</sup>

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, other groups of people from Western Europe were not very numerous: only 16,000 were French-speaking and 7,000 English-speaking. In the meantime, the issues of the Southern Railways of the Russian Empire clearly indicate that 75% of their advertisements refer to companies established by foreigners of European descent (see Fig. 5). In Sankt Petersburg there were companies with names that are still well-known: factories of the Siemens Brothers,



Erikson, the Nobel Brothers, MacPherson, as well as dozens of other companies established by foreigners.<sup>21</sup> Effectively, the agents of modernization in tsarist Russia were, for the most part, foreigners, who could bring in some know-how or commercial and industrial capital. However, the Russian merchants and nobility also made a significant contribution to the modernization of Russia (companies like those of Morozov, Strogonov, Maltsov, Putilov and others).

Migration to Siberia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century affected all groups of Russia's population. Among such groups there are several European nationalities, which established rural diasporas in Siberia: Latvians, Germans, Ukrainians, Estonians and others. Internal migration and the establishment of rural communities was promoted with the help of land reforms, government grants and a general improvement of the social and economic situation.<sup>22</sup>

It would be wrong to assert that the government of Russia does not envisage any measures besides the erroneous (in our opinion) organizational and legal mechanisms governing migration policy and the legislation meant to attract low skilled labor from CIS countries (including traditionally Islamic countries). On the contrary, the government has adopted state programs for the resettlement of compatriots (548,000 candidates for resettlement in Russia since 2006),<sup>23</sup> targeted at people living abroad and having "signs of commonality of a language, history, culture, traditions, as well as descendants of indicated people."<sup>24</sup> However, in this target group there are less than 1% re-settlers. Also, the new Russian citizens probably do not have the personal assets, business and other skills and needed for the development of businesses, not to mention large-scale investment projects.

FIG. 5. INDUSTRIAL ADVERTISEMENT OF RUSSIAN SOUTHERN RAILWAYS (1912).

SURNAMES OF FOUNDERS OF SERVICE COMPANIES: SCHMIDT, HARTMANN, RENNENKAMPF, BARY, WESTINGHOUSE

**ПРИВИЛЕГИРОВАННЫЕ ОКОННЫЕ И ДВЕРНЫЕ ПРИБОРЫ**  
**Г. ШМИДТ**  
 ШПИГЛЕТЫ, инфьющие то пре-  
 закрывают окна легко и плотно да-  
 их длину и устраниють не-  
**ПЕТЛИ ОКОННЫ** вновь изобре-  
 товъ труда опытнаго столяра, а вси  
 10 разъ быстрее всѣхъ существую-

**КИРПИЧНЫЕ ЗАВОДЫ**  
исключенно  
 Адольфа Романовича  
**РЕННЕНКАМПФА.**  
Заводские киевно в. р.

**РУССКОЕ ОБЩЕСТВО**  
**Машиностроительныхъ заводовъ**  
**ГАРТМАНА.**  
 ЗАВОДЫ: ПЕТРОВИЧЪ, КОЛОДНИЦКОЕ, Д. ПЕТРОВИЧЪ, МАШИНО-  
 ПРАВЛЕНИЕ: ПЕТРОВИЧЪ, КОЛОДНИЦКОЕ, Д. ПЕТРОВИЧЪ, МАШИНО-

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**КОТЕЛЬНЫЕ ЗАВОДЫ:**  
 въ Москвѣ, близъ Сахарова монастыря, . . . въ С.-Петербургѣ, 4-я линия Шанъ, н. д.

**АКЦИОНЕРНОЕ ОБЩЕСТВО**  
**ВЕСТИНГАУЗА.**  
**АВТОМАТИЧЕСКИЕ ВОЗДУШНЫЕ ТОРМАЗА.**

We think that the development of complex measures for the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) is more promising. As the experience of China and India shows, this direction may promote economic development in legal and institutional context,<sup>25</sup> regardless of the risks of irrational use of resources within the zone and of rental payments received by the governments. It should be noted that the rapid increase in labor migration to nearby regions is a side effect of the establishment of SEZ, as in the case of Shenzhen,<sup>26</sup> which led to tensions on the property market. Also, there is a diffusion of business activity to nearby regions, which is an additional desired effect of the establishment of modern Slobodas as European centers of business and innovation activity. At the same time, the establishment of SEZ, according to the Russian legislation, is aimed at attracting Russian and foreign legal entities, which are to register their branches in the same municipal area where the Russian SEZ is registered. We can see a fundamental difference between modern Russian SEZ and the policy of the Russian imperial governors, who were more focused on private persons, sharing common characteristics: religion, place of residence and nationality. Conversely, the new Russian Slobodas have to be oriented towards European people who feel “cramped” in modern Europe, but who are afraid of Russian realities and the legal and financial risks associated with them.

## Discussion

**W**HAT LESSONS can we learn from the past experience of Russia? *First*: the governors of Russia during the last millennium pursued a policy of attracting foreigners to work in Russia, as they brought with them modern technologies in management and military affairs. *Second*: the foreigners greatly influenced Russian technological and scientific development, not only at the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century, but even during the Petrine era and after it.

*Third*: the establishment of colonies-settlements and the mechanic adoption of a 200 years-old experience within present Russia is inadmissible for many reasons. The most important one is that we cannot allow the development of a high concentration of Europeans in the central, southern and European parts of Russia. Still, the experience of the development of Siberia and the Far East by the Europeans can present a solid counterweight to the Chinese labor migration observed during the last 20 years. It is also worth mentioning that the motivational part of the Manifesto of Catherine the Great of 22 July 1763 contained provisions which are still relevant for the present stage of development of Russia: “We are sufficiently aware of the vast extent of the lands within Our Empire . . . perceive that a considerable number of regions are still uncultivated which could easily and advantageously be made available for the productive use of population and settlement . . ., much of which hold hidden in their depth an inexhaustible wealth of metals; and because they are

well provided with forests, rivers and lakes, and located close to the sea for purpose of trade, they are also most convenient for the development and growth of many kinds of manufacturing, plants, and various installations.”

*Fourth:* the establishment of “Slobodas” or ethnically homogenous enclaves does not have a historic perspective, but can still be regarded from the point of view of the territories offering “liberalization” or “exemptions” from federal norms and rules that prevent the modernization of modern Russia. Some experts<sup>27</sup> note that a radical improvement of the business environment, capable of attracting specific groups of people, is possible within the organization of a special legal space in Russia, which would closely resemble the British legislation.

## Conclusion

**I**F WE accept the need to attract large masses of people from Europe, we should develop a complex of legal, organizational and financial tools in order to promote the successful establishment of free economic zones, innovation and technological centers, which the Russian economy currently needs (including regions of the Baikal-Amur Mainline: Ural, Siberia and the Far East). In this context the connection of foreign “Slobodas” to these zones would produce a positive effect upon their economic development.

Thus, we contend that our scientific community should think of possible tools and mechanisms for the establishment of new economic “Slobodas,” also aimed at fulfilling those ambitious tasks that will present a challenge for modern Russia in the coming decades.



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## Abstract

### The Foreign Sloboda as a Historical Russian Experience for Present Times

This article represents an overview of the assimilation of people from Western Europe, drawing on research combining migration policy and the policy of territorial and innovative development of Russia in historical perspective. We suggest that the 1897 census significantly marked down the number of people not identifying themselves as Russian, as the second generation of migrants to the Russian Empire indicated Russian as their native language. During 2011–2013, however, only 23,700 people (6.8% of the immigration total) came from countries more developed than Russia. To balance an influx of immigrants we suggest using the experience of the Russian Empire, which set up settlements for foreigners from technologically developed countries—the Sloboda. A Sloboda enjoyed a special legal status providing for the observance of foreign law, within the limits of Russian law. The Slobodas can be territories adapted to the foreign residents’ economic and administrative system, and they may complete the Special Economic Zones in the Urals, Siberia and the Far East with European centers of business and innovative activity.

## Keywords

migration, Sloboda, special economic zones, assimilation, the Russian Empire, Russia, Catherine the Great, Russian Germans, Russlanddeutsche, colonies