

LEASECON 2020**International Conference «Land Economy and Rural Studies Essentials»****SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION AND POLITICAL
ORIENTATIONS OF THE RURAL POPULATION**

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Abstract

The paper examines the effect of economic and social relations on political orientations of the rural population of Western Siberia in the period from 1990 to 2000. During this period, the Russian Federation passed through radical reformation of the entire economic system and the agrarian sector in particular. The paper attempts to analyze a mutual effect of economic conditions and political processes through the example of the rural population of Siberian regions. The results of election campaigns – from the elections of local self-government bodies and heads of administrations of the subjects of the Federation to the elections of deputies of the State Duma and the President of the Russian Federation in Omsk Oblast and Altai Krai – show that during socio-economic transformations in the agrarian sphere, rural residents primarily preferred strong business executives. Moreover, political orientations were directly dependent on the rate of real economic power wielded by elected candidates. The rural population voted for definite individuals, regardless of party affiliation, who were hoped to change life in the countryside for the better. Thus, in the 1990s, rural residents of the target regions did not support the majority of representatives of political parties advocating radical reforms in agriculture. In the early 2000s, rural residents also gave their political preferences to “business executives”, but to the representatives of the United Russia party. The paper states that optimization of political and socio-economic relations in rural areas through an effective agricultural policy is one of the factors to ensure sustainable development of agriculture.

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1. Introduction

The paper explores the effect of the socio-economic situation of the rural population on its political orientations during the years of agricultural reformation. Reorganization was declared to trigger the development of a multi-structured economy in the agrarian sector of the country and empower each rural worker to freely choose the form of land ownership. The agrarian industry was restructured in the context of modifying state structure and political regime in the country and its regions. Under these conditions, sustainable development of the Russian countryside depended on political sentiments of its inhabitants.

2. Problem Statement

It is believed that radical economic reforms were supported at all stages of their implementation, albeit insignificantly, but by the majority of the Russian population. However, regional and social components of this support were missing. In Western Siberia, there was a so-called “red belt” – Altai Krai, Kemerovo, Novosibirsk, Omsk Oblasts, traditionally voting for the left. In the 1990s the majority of the villagers voted against radical reforms and their political representatives. Despite the above facts, the reformers succeeded in reorganizing the agrarian sector while maintaining political stability in the countryside. This is what makes it topical to study the correlation between the socio-economic situation and political orientations of the rural population in the years indicated.

3. Research Questions

The subject of research is political orientations of the rural population. The authors address them against the background of the socio-economic situation of the villagers. A villager has traditionally participated in three-level election campaigns:

- elections of deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, deputies of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation and Russian presidential elections;
- elections of deputies to the legislative bodies of the subject of the Federation and elections of the head of administration (Governor);
- elections of deputies of local councils and elections of heads of district administrations.

During the above election campaigns, there was support or no support by residents towards the direction of reforms in general and the transformation of the agrarian sector in particular. Voting records give grounds to determine political orientations of the rural population.

4. Purpose of the Study

The paper aims to identify the effect of the socio-economic situation of rural residents on their political orientations, establish the relationship between political and social orientations of the rural electorate, and forecast the development of social and political relations in rural areas.

5. Research Methods

With regard to modern times, research methods are used within the principle of historicism, which provides for a study of social, economic and political institutions from the time they were founded to the current historical period; analysis of the socio-economic, socio-political life of the country, given a chronological sequence and specific historical conditions. This approach helps to consider qualitative changes: the development of socialist farms in the countryside, the search for ways to improve, the transition to a multi-structured economy in the agricultural sector and the start of the formation of a private economy.

History is partly a descriptive science, this is its peculiarity. The paper is based on the findings of the Department of Regional Development of the Omsk State Agrarian University under the scientific topic on Problems of the Integrated Development of the West Siberian Region: History, Economics, Politics. It resulted in a series of monographs, and establishment of a reserve P 3733 Documents of the Socio-economic and Political History of the Districts of the Omsk Oblast (1996 – 2018) in the Historical Archive of the Omsk Oblast. The paper used materials of the Altai School of Political Research (Barnaul) and the Siberian Foundation for Political Research, published in the information and reference publication Political Chronicle of Siberia – “Polykhron” (Novosibirsk).

The paper relies on the problem-chronological, historical-system, historical-typological research methods. They help to identify and consider Russian patterns and regional features of the development of the village during socio-economic, socio-political reforms, in relation to the target period.

6. Findings

During the 20th century the indicated territories, within the boundaries of the modern Altai Krai and Omsk Oblast, experienced at least five migration flows:

- immigrants, including those who came during Stolypin’s reform;
- peasants, possibly wealthy, participating in the Civil War, who arrived in the region in the 1920s, in an effort to avoid the threat of possible reprisals;
- peasants, expelled dispossessed or escaped collectivization in the late 1920s– early 1930s;
- migrants from the temporarily occupied territories of the USSR;
- those who worked virgin land and other groups of the population moving to the region.

These migration flows could not but affect the composition of the population, its historical memory, generation of ideas about lost life alternatives (Historical Archive of the Omsk Oblast. Res. 3733.Ser. 1.D. 115)

By the beginning of perestroika in the countryside, there were ambiguous processes:

- transformation of collective farms into state farms and the reconsolidation, not always justified;
- funds allocated for agrarian needs were often used to improve cities and regional centers;
- power structures actively intervened in economic activity, belittling the authority of rural specialists and managers;

- rural workers were increasingly alienated not only from solving any issues, but even from discussing them. The 1986 results were discussed only in 34% of farms at general meetings, and in 66% at meetings of authorized agents;

- a pay rise for rural workers, even with commodity deficit cuts, could not improve the standard of living of the villagers to the level of the urban population, the level that was shaped in the minds of the villagers. Surveys of rural senior schoolchildren showed that only 12% of them would like to have pastoral occupations. Among girls, even less – 7% (On the Threshold of the Crisis: Growth of Stagnation in the Party and Society, 1990).

The search for the most profitable forms of land ownership eventually resulted in the introduction of brigade and family contracts. Social science suggests that there was a gap between labor and the means of production in the industry, and that growing productive forces of the countryside were becoming increasingly inconsistent with production relations (Teptsov, 1988).

In 1989 *Izvestia* wrote, that any form, be it a collective farm or a state farm, an association or a cooperative of cooperatives, a multi-unit agricultural enterprise, a farming enterprise or amalgamation, a joint venture, a consortium, a family farm, a contract or various types of lease relations, in a word, any forms of property and business relations should have an equal right to exist and coexist today. Everything is acceptable, but on a strictly voluntary basis (*Izvestia*, 1989).

It cannot go unnoticed that this approach was understandable to the inhabitants of the Soviet village, where the dream of a private farm owned by a peasant farmer became popular (the image of Adriano Celentano starring in *The Taming of the Shrew*) or an advanced agricultural company with a leader receiving super profits (the image of Nikolai Eremenko Jr. starring in *Personal Interest*). None of the people living in the Soviet countryside knew who, and most importantly, how, these ideas were being implemented. As a consequence, in 1989 and 1990 voting proceeded without major incident, deputy mandates were received by representatives of the management, specialists and individual party reformers who ran in the countryside. People expected changes for the better (Novikov, 2015).

The elections of People's Deputies of the RSFSR, regional councils in 1990 gave the following view of political moods. With a voting turnout of 80.2% and 70.7% in the Altai Krai and 85.3% and 77% in the Omsk Oblast, in the first and second rounds, respectively, the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR and regional councils ended up with 80% of the members of the CPSU entering the deputy corps. The Altai regional council was made up of 92% communists. However, the village councils of the region were comprised of 40% communists, the Omsk Oblast had less than a third. In 1990, a rural voter elected by ballot a specific person rather than party affiliation. Under the conditions of the CPSU crisis, there was no need for rural specialists to join its ranks (Velichko, 2004). Notably, it was this deputy corps at the level of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR that adopted all legislative acts leading to reorganization of the agrarian sector, while local deputies participated in the reform of the agrarian sector. A political component – the refusal of the village in 1991 to vote for B. N. Yeltsin's candidacy – did not play any role in preparing legislation (Russian regions on the eve of elections – 95, 1995).

At the end of December 1991, the Government of the Russian Federation adopted resolutions on the reorganization of collective and state farms and the procedure for privatization of state agricultural enterprises. All collective farms were subject to reorganization, regardless of their efficiency. These

measures were aimed at implementing the right to freely choose the form of entrepreneurship with the assignment of property and land shares to employees being entitled to withdraw from the collective farm without the consent of the labor collective. Labor collectives assumed the right to preserve previous forms of management. The development of farming in Russia began in December 1990 with the adoption of the Law of the Russian Federation On Peasant (Farm) Economy (PFE). Thus, a legislative basis was laid for the development of a multi-structured economy in the agrarian sector and the empowerment of each rural worker to freely choose the form of land ownership.

The reorganization was completed by the beginning of 1994, when 95% of collective farms were re-registered. 66% of farms changed their organizational and legal status: 0.3 thousand open joint stock companies were created; 11.5 thousand partnerships; 1.9 thousand agricultural cooperatives; 0.4 thousand subsidiary farms, enterprises and organizations; 0.9 thousand associations of peasant farms; 81.6 thousand peasant/farm enterprises; 2.3 thousand other farm patterns. 34% of farms retained their status: 3.6 thousand state farms and 6.0 thousand collective farms. By forms of ownership, agricultural enterprises were grouped as follows: state – 26.6%, municipal – 1.5%, private – 66.8%, mixed – 5.1% (Kalugina, 2001).

In the target regions, the reorganization took place in the following political conditions.

In August 1991, A. A. Surikov became the chairman of the Altai Regional Council of People's Deputies. Since 1994 he was the chairman of the Regional Council of People's Deputies. In 1996, being an unofficial leader of the left-wing forces, A. A. Surikov became the governor of the region. The Regional Council was headed by A.G. Nazarchuk, a former people's deputy of the RSFSR, a deputy of the State Duma of the 1st convocation from the Agrarian Party of Russia (APR), ex-Minister of Agriculture and Food of the Russian Federation. Thus, political processes in the Altai Krai resulted in a “red-green” (the alliance of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and APR) coalition. Representatives of these parties dominated in the Regional Council (Agrarian Party of Russia, 1994; Demidov, 1993).

In Altai, at the level of regional administration, the reforms were evaluated as ill-considered, unbound with regional priorities. The land reform and the reform of social and labor relations were severely criticized. As a result, state enterprises engaged in purchasing, storing and selling food and industrial crops were preserved, and in some cases re-established. The process of reorganization of collective farms and state farms was accompanied by the “dumping” of shares leaving the village in favor of the government, which led to the transformation of the latter into large private farms headed by former managers. In some cases, collective and state farms survived until the time. There were peasant farms. Thus, the disintegration of large farms was suspended. The change in the forms of ownership did not lead, but caused the collapse of economic structures (Diary of the Altai School of Political Research, 2001). The Altai Krai remained the largest producer of organic food in Russia.

The political life of the Omsk Oblast was linked with L.K. Polezhaev, the former first deputy chairman of the executive committee of the Karaganda Regional Council of People's Deputies, who returned to Omsk in 1987. In 1990, he was the head of the economic planning department of the Omsk Regional Executive Committee, lost the vote to become people's deputy of the RSFSR. In the same year he was elected a deputy of the Omsk Regional Council of People's Deputies, on March 3 – appointed the

Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Omsk Regional Council. In August 1991, L.K. Polezhaev left the CPSU, and on November 11 he was appointed head of the Omsk administration. On the days of the 1993 crisis, he left Omsk with a detachment of OMON to help Boris Yeltsin (Polezhaev, 1994). In December 1993, L. K. Polezhaev became a deputy of the Federation Council, gaining 68.3% of the vote, as an independent business executive. During the elections to the Legislative Assembly of the Omsk Oblast (LAOO), the population elected 6 heads of district administrations, 6 heads of agricultural enterprises, 3 directors of urban industrial enterprises, 3 healthcare workers, 1 employee of the Department of Internal Affairs, the Deputy Regional Council of People's Deputies and the Deputy Head of the Regional Administration. Party affiliation was shown by representatives of the "People's Power" bloc, who received 5 deputy mandates, one of them – in the countryside. The LAOO was headed by V.A. Varnavsky, a former first deputy chairman of the Omsk City Executive Committee, first secretary of the Omsk City Committee of the CPSU, chairman of the Omsk City Council of People's Deputies, people's deputy of the RSFSR, deputy head of administration (Elections: Political Parties ..., 1996). In general, the left in the LAOO accounted for 15-30% of the deputies, while the number of villagers was equal to one (Historical Archive of the Omsk Oblast. Res. 9618.Ser. 1. D. 42). The subsequent elections of the heads of local self-government of the Omsk Oblast indicated 25% support of the representatives of the Communist Party (Historical Archive of the Omsk Oblast. Res. 3733.Ser. 1.D. 109). However, during their work, the heads of the districts changed their political orientation.

The reorganization of the agrarian sector led to the sale of state-owned enterprises engaged in purchasing, storing and selling food and industrial crops. The first peasant farms (PFs) were registered in the region in 1990. By 1995, there were 7717 of them, with an average land plot of 62 hectares. Since the mid-1990s, peasant farms began to decline. The fact is that the heads of peasant farms failed to enlist the support of the heads of districts, processing companies to sell products. The villagers were imposed on the scheme "Spring – fuels and lubricants (FLs) from the Sibneft company, autumn – wheat from Sibneft in payment for FLs". By 2004, large private farms provided 91.4% of all agricultural products in the region. (Azarova, Bekbaeva, Novikov, Riyanova, 2010).

The standard of living of the rural population decreased:

- seasonality of labor hid unemployment, reaching 70% of the village population;
- in the light of "commodity intervention" of the 1990s, the possibilities of selling agricultural products decreased, which reduced the income of villagers to 50% of the income of urban residents;
- funds allocated for social needs of the village from the budgets of collective and state farms disappeared, and the sharply reduced allocation of budgetary funds by the state led to a drop in the standard of living of the village population and caused an outflow of the population from the village (Diary of the Altai School of Political Research, 2001).

The elections of deputies of the State Duma in 1995 transferred the region into the so-called "red belt". In the Altai Krai, 25.98%, 12.38% and 1.7% voters gave their voices for the Communist Party, APR and "People's Power", respectively, in the Omsk Oblast – 15.98%, 5.24% and 8.44%. In the Altai Krai (4 districts), two representatives of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and one APR won; in the Omsk Oblast (3 districts) – two representatives of "People's Power" and one independent leftist candidate (Election of deputies of the State Duma, 1996). The 1996 Russian presidential election

ended in the Altai Krai with a defeat of the incumbent president when only 38.56% voted in favor; in the Omsk Oblast, Boris Yeltsin won with 47.51%, beating the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation by 1.28% of the vote. However, the rural population gave preference to Gennady Zyuganov (Russian presidential elections, 1996).

The subsequent elections of heads of administrations predetermined the election of “strong business executives” to the posts of governors. In 2004, there was a failure in the Altai Krai– the population of 49.84 against 45.98% voted for the actor, singer and TV presenter Mikhail Evdokimov, who defeated Alexander Surikov (Candidate for Governor of the Altai Krai, Mikhail Evdokimov. 2004: Jokes Aside, 2004). During his political career, the Omsk governor declared his commitment from the Party of Cooperative Unity of Russia to the Agrarian Union, with subsequent obeisances to the Russian national movement to the NDR, and United Russia he led the region until 2012 (Historical Archive of the Omsk Oblast. Res. 3733.Ser. 1.D.113).

7. Conclusion

The follow in conclusion can be drawn:

Transformation of collective and state farms into other forms of management did not respect the opinions of the bulk of the rural population and led to the establishment of large private farms, which partitioned the population from the means of production. Individual rural specialists and managers (“business executives”), participating in it, became a class of new owners;

- during election campaigns at various levels, rural population:
- at the elections of deputies of the State Duma and Russian presidential elections, villagers traditionally voted against supporters of radical economic reforms;
- at elections of deputies of legislative bodies of the SUBJECT of the Federation and elections of heads of administrations (Governors), votes were traditionally given to “business executives”. The latter, depending on their vision, aligned the reorganization at the regional level;
- at the elections of deputies of local councils and the elections of heads of district administrations, local management was transferred to “business executives” who politically supported or were supported by the administration of the region. The latter, during the reformation of the agrarian sector, evolved from the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, APR and “independent candidates” to members of the United Russia party;
- the agrarian sector was transformed mainly based on federal laws, so regional authorities had insignificant pressure on the outcomes.

The circle of party preferences was closed in the early 2000s, when a rural resident voted for “business executives” – members of United Russia.

Thus, the preferences of villagers during socio-economic transformations of the agrarian sphere from state and collective-farm-cooperative property to private property remained unshakable – the village votes for those who have real economic power in their hands. This, sustainable in the medium term, situation is not constant. However, the identification of factors that will cause its change requires further

research. Undoubtedly, leveraging political and socio-economic relations in rural areas is one of the factors for sustainable development of agriculture.

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