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*Imperial Citizenship and Spatial Boundaries. The Background of the Siberian Land Survey*

Abstract

This essay discusses the intellectual origins of the Siberian land survey or *zemeleustroistvo* of 1896 in order to situate the late imperial policies of territorial transformation in Asia within the perspective of the peasant reforms in European Russia. It suggests a conceptual continuity between colonization of remote regions and agrarian reforms at the center of the state. It shows how attempts to superimpose a legal and spatial order onto the peripheries were rooted in views that had developed since the time of the Emancipation of 1861. The idea of establishing a legal boundary of land use was related to the elusive and never fulfilled search for a common Imperial citizenship. Both implied the sense of a top-down civilizing mission and an increasingly transformative meaning of land survey. *Zemeleustroistvo* was conceived as the gradual implementation of the rule of law in an allegedly undefined, traditional, and boundless space. This approach intensified after the revolutionary crisis of 1881 and found its most intelligent expression in N.Kh. Bunge's plans of reform. He can be regarded as the political mind behind the projects of 'managed colonization' or 'organized resettlement'. In practice, however, land norms and resettlement procedures did not conform to the lofty ideal of a 'certain' and 'definitive' legal order upon the land. Understanding why this occurred must be the subject of a separate analysis.