

# Those Elusive Scouts

## Pioneering Peasants and the Russian State, 1870s–1950s

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Accounts of peasant migration to Siberia and the Russian Far East frequently mention the figure of the *khodok*, who traveled in advance to identify and lay claim to land appropriate for settlement. The word has had many applications, but when used in connection with peasants, it has been rendered as messenger, emissary, or envoy.<sup>1</sup> Following Donald Treadgold and others who have written on Russian peasant migration, I am translating it as “scout.”<sup>2</sup> Who were these intrepid travelers? How were they chosen, or did they choose themselves? What was the nature of their interactions with other peasants, state officials, previous (“old”) settlers, and people indigenous to the regions in which they sought land? Because few scouts have left a written record of their journeys, one must rely mainly on secondary, albeit contemporary sources to track these fellows down.<sup>3</sup> But what might be thought of as a liability turns out

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Acknowledgment is made to Michigan State University’s HARP grants program for supporting the research that went into this article and to Irina Lukka of the Finnish National Library’s Slaavilainen Kirjasto and the staffs of the Russian State Archive of the Economy in Moscow and the Russian State Historical Archive in St. Petersburg for their assistance. Many thanks to Leslie Page Moch and Willard Sunderland for their advice on earlier drafts, and to Ben Sawyer for obtaining a key text.

<sup>1</sup> *Khodok* is derived from the common noun *khod* meaning motion, or the root verb *khodit’*—to go on foot. Akademiia nauk SSSR, Institut russkogo iazyka, *Slovar’ sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo iazyka*, 17 vols. (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1950–65), 17:295–98, gives ten different meanings.

<sup>2</sup> Donald W. Treadgold, *The Great Siberian Migration: Government and Peasant in Resettlement from the Emancipation to the First World War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 34; Willard Sunderland, “Peasant Pioneering: Russian Peasant Settlers Describe Colonization and the Eastern Frontier, 1880s–1910s,” *Journal of Social History* 34, 4 (2001): 899.

<sup>3</sup> G. I. Uspenskii, “Pis’mo pereselentsev (zametki o tekushchei narodnoi zhizni),” *Russkaia mysl’* 12, 1 (1891): 215–16; G. T. Khokhlov, “Puteshestvie Ural’skikh kazakov v ‘Belovodskoe tsarstvo,’” *Zapiski Imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva po otdeleniiu etnografii*

to have an ancillary benefit. For in writing about scouts, commentators revealed complex attitudes not only about the individuals and the services they performed but also about the entire enterprise of resettling so many of the empire's rural inhabitants and thereby colonizing its vast territories to the east.

Because scouts facilitated the massive eastward movement of predominantly Russian peasants, they could be considered agents of the tsarist state's expansionary efforts.<sup>4</sup> That indeed is how many officials viewed them. Yet, if agents, they were unwitting ones, and any analogy with the Daniel Boones and Davy Crocketts of legend and fact is clearly strained. *Khodoki* were above all peasants and usually family men, perhaps not entirely "ordinary people" but not that extraordinary either.<sup>5</sup> They typically neither blazed new paths nor explored new territory but rather inspected land already marked by surveyors for new settlement or tried to gain entry for their families and other clients to communities of previous settlers. If intermediaries, then they negotiated not so much between the state and aboriginals confronting peasant colonization and subjection to imperial rule but between state officials and settlers themselves.

More than a million scouts registered with officials as they crossed over into Siberia from European Russia during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but scholars have given them only fleeting attention.<sup>6</sup> When mentioned at all, they appear either as instruments in imperial authorities' attempts to rationalize the resettlement process or as a statistical subset of settlers, who numbered in excess of five million.<sup>7</sup> This article, part of a larger

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28, 1 (1903); M. Sumkin, *V Sibir' za zemlei (iz Kaluzhskoi gubernii v Semipalatinskuiu oblast')*, *zapiski khodoka* (Moscow: Zemliak, 1908).

<sup>4</sup> For the nexus between peasant resettlement and colonization, see Nicholas Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Uillard Sanderlend [Willard Sunderland], "Imperiia bez imperializma? Neodnoznachnyi kharakter kolonizatsii v tsarskoi Rossii," in *Novaia imperskaia istoriia postsovetского prostranstva*, ed. Il'ia Gerasimov et al. (Kazan: Tsentr issledovaniia natsionalizma i imperii, 2004), 459–72; A. V. Remnev and N. G. Suvorova, "Upravliaemaia kolonizatsiia i stikhiinye migratsionnye protsessy na aziatskikh okrainakh Rossiiskoi imperii: Otsenki i prognozy imperskikh ekspertov," in *Migratsii i diaspor v sotsiokul'turnom, politicheskom i ekonomicheskom prostranstve Sibiri rubezhi XIX–XX i XX–XXI vekov*, ed. V. I. Diatlov (Irkutsk: Ottisk, 2010), 35–40.

<sup>5</sup> For a useful discussion of this construction, see Yanni Kotsonis, "Ordinary People in Russian and Soviet History," *Kritika* 12, 3 (2011): 740–54.

<sup>6</sup> A. A. Kaufman, "Pereseleniia i pereselencheskii vopros v Rossii," *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Granat* (Moscow: R. B. I. Granat, 1910–48), 31:549. Kaufman recorded 1,016,000 scouts between 1885 and 1913.

<sup>7</sup> The fullest treatment is in Sunderland, "Peasant Pioneering." See also Treadgold, *Great Siberian Migration*, 34–35, 120–22, 163; George J. Demko, *The Russian Conquest of Kazakhstan*,

project on migration in 20th-century Russia, considers scouts in relation to what has become one of the major issues of imperial Russian historiography—the extent to which tsarist state policies and informal social institutions interacted with and shaped each other. Rejecting previous notions of a largely inert peasant society that for better or worse resisted outside officials’ attempts to refashion it, historians more recently have stressed peasants’ complicity in day-to-day rural governance. Despite considerable differences in method of inquiry and analytical framework, works by Jeffrey Burds, Jane Burbank, Corinne Gaudin, Aaron Retish, and others have demonstrated that peasants partook of political, economic, and cultural developments within the empire on an increasing scale from the serf emancipation on into the Soviet era.

What, among other things, is striking about this literature is how frequently one encounters individuals serving as links between their communities and outside forces. Burds, in discussing the contractual relations between seasonal migrants and employers, refers to middlemen (*posredniki*), contractors (*podriadchiki*), foremen (*desiatniki*), and “labor brokers.” Burbank identifies peasant judges at the township (*volost*) level as “intermediaries” and township courts as lying “at the intersection of popular and state institutions.” Gaudin notes that village elders and scribes were subjected to both internal and external pressures, sometimes perceived as comprising the “highest organ of peasant self-government” and at others “the lowest echelon of the bureaucracy.” Tracking the peasants of Viatka province through the revolution and Civil War, Retish registers the success of the provincial Soviet government “in drawing support from key segments of the village population, who agreed to be the administrative links between peasants and power.”<sup>8</sup>

Except, of course, that power did not reside exclusively with state authorities. One of the axioms of migration history is that state power almost always finds itself conditioned by the aspirations of migrants themselves. It is only by looking beyond the “official dimension,” writes Willard Sunderland with reference to state peasant resettlement in early 19th-century Russia, that

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1896-1916 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), 59–60, 88–89; François-Xavier Coquin, *La Sibérie: Peuplement et immigration paysanne au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Institut des études slaves, 1969), 430–32, 490; and Barbara Anderson, *Internal Migration during Modernization in Late Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 129, 141.

<sup>8</sup> Jeffrey Burds, *Peasant Dreams and Market Politics: Labor Migration and the Russian Village, 1861–1905* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), 106–12; Jane Burbank, *Russian Peasants Go to Court: Legal Culture in the Countryside, 1905–1917* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 270; Corinne Gaudin, *Ruling Peasants: Village and State in Late Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007), 61–84; Aaron B. Retish, *Russia's Peasants in Revolution and Civil War: Citizenship, Identity, and the Creation of the Soviet State, 1914–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 212.

“we discover a different, much more dynamic world in which state policy interacted with timetables, arrangements, and initiatives established by the peasant settlers themselves.” For David Moon, who cites Sunderland’s comment approvingly, the settlement of “Russia’s outlying regions ... between the late sixteenth and late nineteenth centuries” can best be explained by “the combination of actions by the state and peasant-settlers ... and the constant interaction between them.”<sup>9</sup>

This article builds on these insights by locating scouts at the intersection of both state and popular practices. Scouting (*khodachestvo*) long predated its inscription into state law and official practice, but its formalization imparted new powers and responsibilities to scouts. Identifying scouts as key elements of a more organized method of land management (*zemleustroistvo*) and settlement, resettlement authorities sought to employ them to better control peasants’ migratory movements. Scouts, however, often failed to fulfill officials’ expectations or conform to their rules. They traveled “irregularly,” eschewing the reduced fares available on state railroads and steamers. They staked claims for more families than officials thought wise, and sold claims their families could not use. Eventually, they sabotaged a settlement scheme that was designed to overcome their noncompliance and that foreshadowed the planned recruitment campaigns of the Soviet era. This dynamic evolution is related to broader and long-lasting patterns. Just where peasant self-government ended and the guardianship of the state began remained a question that the 1917 revolution did not resolve. Peasant institutions that had worked in tandem with both state authorities and private employers could easily adapt to Soviet conditions, at least for a while.<sup>10</sup> The latter part of this article will address how and why scouting survived so far into the Soviet period.

In the arena of peasant resettlement, scouts embody the unruly nature of human mobility.<sup>11</sup> Serving as a link between their community and hoped-for future property, they gathered information essential to their fellow villagers and negotiated both tsarist and Soviet state regulations meant to guide, aid,

<sup>9</sup> Willard Sunderland, “Peasants on the Move: State Peasant Resettlement in Imperial Russia, 1805–1830s,” *Russian Review* 52, 4 (1993): 484; David Moon, *The Russian Peasantry, 1600–1930: The World the Peasants Made* (London: Longman, 1999), 54.

<sup>10</sup> For the example of the *artel*, see Hiroaki Kuromiya, “Workers’ *Artels* and Soviet Production Relations,” in *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 72–88.

<sup>11</sup> For the reference to human mobility as an “unruly phenomenon,” see Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe since 1650*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 18.

and control them. Some abused the trust placed in them, absconding with substantial amounts of money they collected from relatives and neighbors. Middlemen in the flow of information about new possibilities, scouts remained elusive to state authorities, while they communicated with the families they represented and the communities into which they disappeared when their work was done. By their very nature, then, scouts complicate both the hoary dichotomy of state and society and the revolutionary divide in Russia's history.

### Who Were Scouts?

Russian peasants had been migrating to open or "free" land since before the era of serfdom and continued to do so despite restrictions on the movement of seigniorial peasants. When peasants first started sending people from their midst to find land to settle was already a matter of conjecture in the late 19th century. An official publication from 1897 refers to the "sending of scouts" as a practice "from long ago" that the "population itself preferred as a means of familiarizing itself with new places and ensuring the success of settlement."<sup>12</sup> Alternative sources of information about places to settle and the conditions of settlement clearly existed. They included what literate members of society tended to refer to as "rumors" that reached villages via peddlers, pilgrims, coachmen, seasonal migrants (*otkhodniki*), ex-soldiers, and others who had spent considerable time on the road.<sup>13</sup> The ethnographer Nikolai Mikhailovich Iadrintsev noted with reference to peasants on the move in the 1870s that "people often [were] led by someone who earlier had been to a certain place working for a wage; ... one saw that it is easier to live there and invited others."<sup>14</sup> This is a classic example of how chain migration begins. Writing in the mid-1880s, the Riazan' zemstvo statistician Vasilii Nikolaevich Grigor'ev included 26 letters sent by relatives or fellow villagers (*zemliaki*), most of which extolled their new settlements.<sup>15</sup> As the extensive surveys conducted in

<sup>12</sup> *Spravochnye izdaniia Pereselencheskogo upravleniia Ministerstva vnutrennikh del. Sibir'*; no. 1: *Obshchie zamechaniia o Sibiri i pereselenii* (St. Petersburg: MVD, 1897), 73.

<sup>13</sup> M. K. Churkin, "'Situatsiia riska' kak faktor formirovaniia i realizatsii migratsionnogo potentsiala zemledel'cheskogo naseleniia evropeiskoi chasti Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX–nachale XX v." in *Migratsii i diaspory*, 66–69.

<sup>14</sup> N. Iadrintsev, "Nashi vyseleniia i kolonizatsiia," *Vestnik Evropy*, no. 6 (1880): 449–50. For a fictional representation of one such itinerant who persuades arrears-owing and otherwise miserable villagers to depart, see the short story by S. Karonin, "Kak i kuda oni pereselilis'," in *Krest'ianskie sud'by: Rasskazy russkikh pisatelei vtoroi poloviny XIX veka*, ed. Iu. I. Lebedev (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1986), 355–72. The story originally appeared in 1880 in *Otechestvennye zapiski*.

<sup>15</sup> V. N. Grigor'ev, *Pereseleniia krest'ian riazanskoi gubernii* (Moscow: Mamontov, 1885), 76–77, 106–10, 112, 156–91.

Tobol'sk and Tomsk provinces in the mid-1890s made evident, many settlers first learned about the availability of parcels (*uchastki*) of land by this means.<sup>16</sup> Prospective settlers thus did not necessarily need scouts, although it is clear that some of the letter writers had performed the function of scouts even if they were not identified as such, and that some of those who had learned by letters about opportunities to settle sometimes sent scouts either to confirm the claims or obtain legal permission.<sup>17</sup>

Scouts first appeared—albeit by another name—in a legal document in 1822 when a decree by the Siberian Committee, newly formed under Mikhail Mikhailovich Speranskii, granted state peasant communes the right to send “agents” (*poverennnye*) to choose land.<sup>18</sup> Throughout the 19th century, people chosen to perform this function were known by a variety of terms. The French historian Francois-Xavier Coquin lists reconnaissance scout (*razvedchik*), quartermaster (*sadchik*), detective (*syshchik*), pleader (*khodatel*), and principal (*doveritel*). Differences in usage depended on region, specific function, and whether the term was employed in formal or more colloquial speech.<sup>19</sup> This by no means exhausts the linguistic possibilities. Iadrintsev mentions encountering “peasant-pioneers” (*krest'iane-pytovshchiki*) and “wanderers” (*stranniki*) searching for land in the Altai region, while the peasants from Riazan' province whom Grigor'ev cites used both “lookout” (*ogliadchik*) and scout (*khodok*).<sup>20</sup> The wider usage of the latter term toward the end of the 19th century reflected greater involvement by the state in setting the conditions of scouting.

<sup>16</sup> Andrei Stankevich, *Materialy dlia izucheniia byta pereselentsev Tobol'skoi gubernii za 15 let, s kontsa 70-kh po 1893 g.* (Moscow: Tipografiia Obshchestva rasprostraneniia poleznykh knig, 1895), 18, 31, 33, 39, 42, 53, 63, 104, 299, 333, 338, 371; A. A. Kaufman, *Khoziaistvennoe polozhenie pereselentsev vodvorennykh na kazennykh zemliakh Tomskoi gubernii po dannym proizvedennogo v 1894 g. po porucheniiu g. Tomskogo Gubernatora, podvornogo issledovaniia*, 1: *Opisaniia otdel'nykh poselkov i poselennye tablitsy* (St. Petersburg: V. Bezobrazov, 1895), pt. 1: 23, 33, 49, 67, 84, 150, 155, 297, 341; pt. 2: 2, 11, 28, 37, 44, 67, 75, 105, 122, 126; pt. 3: 3, 42, 69.

<sup>17</sup> Grigor'ev, *Pereseleniia krest'ian riazanskoi gubernii*, 161, 180; Stankevich, *Materialy dlia izucheniia byta pereselentsev Tobol'skoi gubernii*, 31, 53. For one settlement in Tomsk province populated in part by married sons with wives and children, who had been supplied with money for the road to find a place and set it up “like scouts,” see Kaufman, *Khoziaistvennoe polozhenie pereselentsev*, 1, pt. 3: 3–4.

<sup>18</sup> V. V. Kir'iakov, *Ocherki po istorii pereselencheskogo dvizheniia v Sibir' (v sviazi s istoriei zaseleniia Sibiri)* (Moscow: Kuchner, 1902), 54, 74; Treadgold, *Great Siberian Migration*, 95. The term *khodoki* appears in the 1842 “Statute on Improvements in State Settlements.” See L. Charushin, “Pereselencheskoe delo v Rossii,” *Vestnik Evropy*, no. 7–8 (1905): 144.

<sup>19</sup> Coquin, *La Sibirie*, 490.

<sup>20</sup> N. Iadrintsev, “Sud'ba russkikh pereselenii za Ural,” *Otechestvennye zapiski* 244 (1879): 149; Iadrintsev, “Na obetovannykh zemliakh,” *Sibirskii sbornik*, no. 2 (1886): 38; Grigor'ev, *Pereseleniia krest'ian riazanskoi gubernii*, 97, 111.

In all probability, the farther away the prospective place of settlement, the more would-be settlers relied on scouts. Scouting, however, was not limited to east of the Urals. When residents of Saltykov township, Riazan' province heard from a local gentleman (*barin*) about free land in Sterlitamak district (*uezd*), Ufa province, they sent two *khodoki* to investigate; these approved of what they saw and called for their fellow villagers to follow in their footsteps.<sup>21</sup> As late as 1912, one could encounter peasants identified as scouts from the southwestern and northwestern provinces of European Russia milling about the railroad stations of Saratov, Samara, Orel, Novgorod, and Pskov provinces as well as those of the Caucasus "tracking down land for sale."<sup>22</sup>

But whom did peasants choose as scouts? We know from specialists' and officials' accounts the kind of individual they thought peasants *should* choose. "A man, generally 35–40 years old, and if possible, smart, honest, and sober," A. A. Isaev wrote in the early 1890s, adding that he must be "chosen with the greatest care, preferably among the literate."<sup>23</sup> More than a decade later, the Resettlement Administration, the main state body with which scouts interacted, repeated Isaev's advice. "Scouts," opined a handbook it published for scouts and settlers, "should be sensible [*tolkovye*], literate, judicious, honest, and chosen from among the people who are settling."<sup>24</sup> This seems the very opposite of the "charismatic leaders" among whom the Russian historian of migration Mikhail Konstantinovich Churkin includes scouts, but it is impossible to determine from the sources whether scouts were charismatic before they embarked on their journeys and returned with news of what they had seen, or whether the ways they described what they had seen garnered them a certain charisma.<sup>25</sup>

The Resettlement Administration published a lot of data on scouts' activities (about which see below), but little on scouts themselves. In 1895 and 1896, the only years for which it collected such information, the administration elicited responses about their degree of literacy from 737 scouts who passed through the checkpoint of Cheliabinsk en route to or from Siberia. Of this number, 197 (26.7 percent) identified themselves as literate and 149 (20.2 percent) as semi-literate, meaning they could read but not write. Scouts from the non-black-soil Region (essentially, the north and northwestern provinces of European Russia) had a higher rate of literacy than

<sup>21</sup> Grigor'ev, *Pereseleniia krest 'ian riazanskoi gubernii*, 97.

<sup>22</sup> N. Karabanov, *Pereselenie i rasselenie krest 'ian* (Moscow: Sytin, 1912), 53–54.

<sup>23</sup> A. A. Isaev, *Pereselenie v russkom narodnom khoziaistve* (St. Petersburg: Tsinkerling, 1891), 44.

<sup>24</sup> *Spravochnaia knizhka dlia khodokov i pereselentsev na 1909 god s putevoi kartoiu aziatskoi Rossii* (St. Petersburg: Pereselencheskoe upravlenie, 1909), 23.

<sup>25</sup> Churkin, "‘Situatsiia riska,’" 71, 74.



Scouts at an unidentified “stopping point” somewhere in Siberia  
 Source: *Aziatskaia Rossiia* (St. Petersburg: A. F. Marks, 1914), 1:472

those from the black-soil provinces—34.2 percent compared to 25.6 percent. But, contrary to the above-cited advice, even the higher figure fell below the average rate of literacy among rural males (35 percent), according to the all-Russian census of 1897.<sup>26</sup>

We have several disparate images of scouts' appearance. Iadrintsev's description of the wanderers he encountered in the Altai in the mid-1880s—“bathed in sweat, wearing white shirts with knapsacks on their backs and holding staffs in their hands as they descended from the mountains”—is quite different from the group of scouts clad in bast shoes, coats, and smocks who are glancing in various directions as they proceed along a dirt path on an open field in the painting *Pereselentsy-khodoki* (1886) by Sergei V. Ivanov (1864–1910).<sup>27</sup> These in turn do not resemble the nine scouts who appear in a photograph from at least 20 years later, sitting stolidly in two rows on the steps of what is identified only as a “stopping point.” The five scouts in

<sup>26</sup> G. A. Priimak, ed., *Tsifrovyy material dlia izucheniia pereselenii v Sibir', izvlechennyi iz knig Obshchei registratsii pereselentsev, prokhodivshikh v Sibir' i vozvrashchavshikhsia iz Sibiri cherez Cheliabinsk v 1895 godu*, 5 vols. (Moscow: Iakovlev, 1898–1904), 2:86–96. On the literacy rate throughout the empire, see Boris N. Mironov, “The Development of Literacy in Russia and the USSR from the Tenth to the Twentieth Centuries,” *History of Education Quarterly* 31, 2 (1991): 235.

<sup>27</sup> Iadrintsev, “Na obetovannykh zemliakh,” 36. The painting by Ivanov can be found at [www.artlib.ru/index.php?id=11&idp=0&fp=2&uid=954&iid=8477&idg=0&user\\_serie=0](http://www.artlib.ru/index.php?id=11&idp=0&fp=2&uid=954&iid=8477&idg=0&user_serie=0) (accessed 12 January 2012).



the front row are all booted and bearded. Four of the five wear the workers' peaked caps that had become common in villages by the early 20th century. The four sitting on a higher step appear younger, and only one sports a beard. They also have covered their heads, two with a peaked cap and a third by a broad-brimmed hat. The fourth wears the shawl of a Russian peasant woman or possibly a nurse. Nothing in the sources I have seen indicates the presence of female scouts, but that does not mean they did not exist or that scouts could not travel with female companions.<sup>28</sup>

Just as scouts' appearance depended on place of origin, season, and destination, so it is impossible to determine much about their average age. The arduousness of the journey and the weight of responsibility would suggest that mature men in reasonably good health would have predominated. This seems to have been the case, although *Sel'skii vestnik*, the government's newspaper distributed by the township administration, did claim that among scouts could be found "almost completely feeble old men (*stariki*) who are capable of discovering nothing."<sup>29</sup> Trustworthiness was another quality peasants relied on in scouts, for they often supplied them with substantial amounts of money. Grigor'ev cites cases of "10 to 20 and more families pay[ing] a reliable fellow 'to show places,'" and of whole communes supply[ing] an individual with 70–80 rubles "for the road to Tomsk province" in return for which he was expected to view sites and tell the commune about them upon his return.<sup>30</sup> In his ethnographic survey of settlements in Tomsk province published a decade after Grigor'ev's, Aleksandr Arkad'evich Kaufman mentions far greater sums. For example, in 1888, 200 families from a village in Kursk province supplied two scouts with "up to 800 rubles" to travel to Barnaul—only to see them return "without having secured land." In another unsuccessful venture, 45 families also residing in Kursk province provided two scouts with 500 rubles to locate land in the Altai. After they returned and advised against settlement, another scout traveled *on his own account* to Bogotol'sk district in Tomsk province "about which he had information from letters."<sup>31</sup>

The surveys of settlements in Tobol'sk and Tomsk provinces occasionally do refer to individual scouts who more than repaid their clients' investments in their services. The settlement of Vasil'evka in the Kurgan region (*okrug*) of

<sup>28</sup> *Aziatskaia Rossiia: Izdanie Pereselencheskogo upravleniia glavnogo upravleniia zemleuстроitva i zemledeliia*, 3 vols. (St. Petersburg: A. F. Marks, 1914), 1:474.

<sup>29</sup> *Svedeniia o Sibiri (Sbornik statei Sel'skogo vestnika o sibirii i pereselenii* (St. Petersburg: Sel'skii vestnik, 1897), 232.

<sup>30</sup> Grigor'ev, *Pereseleniia krest'ian riazanskoi gubernii*, 110–11. Grigor'ev gives the cost of traveling by steamer from Riazan' to Tomsk as 17–20 rubles or 30–35 rubles if the cost of food is added (120).

<sup>31</sup> Kaufman, *Khoziaistvennoe polozhenie pereselentsev*, pt. 1:67, 116.

Tobol'sk was actually named after a scout, Vasilii Romanovich Dudin, who arrived in 1881 from Tambov province and "filed many petitions necessary for the establishment of the village." By 1894, some 210 households had settled there. A man named Arkhangel'skii, a former sexton and scribe, inspected sites in western and eastern Siberia for peasants from Tambov province. He eventually settled in the Minusinsk region of Eniseisk province where he served as township scribe.<sup>32</sup> Ravaged by the famine of 1891–92, Chuvash peasants from Simbirsk province each gave 25 kopecks to two scouts to find "new places" in Tomsk. After choosing a particular parcel that a resettlement official had shown them, the two scouts returned home. One, having convinced his zemliaki to migrate, remained behind, but the other led the party of settlers to their new home. He subsequently served as agent (*doverennyi*) to arrange for the division of the parcel, as a scribe (for which he received an annual salary of 36 rubles), and occasionally as a village elder (*starosta*) in the newly formed Simbirsk commune. According to Kaufman, "the investigators confirmed that he behaves entirely honestly and is a selfless toiler for the commune, as a result of which he has little time for his own affairs."<sup>33</sup>

Alas, the same sources document more instances of untrustworthy scouts. One, who led a party of 100 families to land in Minusinsk region, Eniseisk province, that already had been assigned to other settlers, reportedly had "collected up to 2,000 rubles" for his troubles. Others took money without inspecting any land whatsoever. In one such instance, 60 families from Kazan province took more than 8 weeks and spent an average of 142 rubles to travel to a site in Tomsk region only to discover that their scout had lied to them about the availability of parcels. Another scout who deceived his zemliaki about land in Spassk township, Tomsk region, was "so hated by the entire commune" that he had to flee and seek refuge in an old settler community. All these reprehensible people were known as "scout-frauds" (*khodok-obmanshchiki*).<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Stankevich, *Materialy dlia izucheniia byta pereselentsev Tobol'skoi gubernii*, 147–49, 519. For another settlement named after a scout (Osip Brusentsov) also founded in 1881, in the Altai, see Glavnoe upravlenie Altaiiskogo okruga, Statisticheskii otdel, *Materialy po issledovaniiu krest'ianskogo i inorodcheskogo khoziaistva v Biiskom uezde (okruge)*, no. 1: Barnaul'skaia volost' (Barnaul: Glavnoe upravlenie Altaiiskogo okruga, 1898), 15–16.

<sup>33</sup> Kaufman, *Khoziaistvennoe polozhenie pereselentsev*, pt. 1:205. The same scout also is reported to have directed another group of settlers to a neighboring parcel on which a village of 30 families was established. See *ibid.*, 257.

<sup>34</sup> Stankevich, *Materialy dlia izucheniia byta pereselentsev Tobol'skoi gubernii*, 325; Kaufman, *Khoziaistvennoe polozhenie pereselentsev*, pt. 1:52, 155, 243; pt. 2:117.

We should not give too much weight to these stories, not because they may have been false, but because, as related by peasants to members of educated society, they deflected responsibility for disappointment from the aggrieved parties to the conveniently absent scouts. They also played on well-known stereotypes of peasant gullibility, on the one hand, and peasant cunning, on the other.<sup>35</sup> Finally, it is worth noting that the sources contain many more references—roughly 10 times as many among the 100 settlements surveyed in Tobol'sk, and 2.5 times as many in Kaufman's survey of the 131 Tomsk settlements—of scouts performing the tasks expected of them than of either malefactors or heroes.<sup>36</sup> Doing what was expected of them required providing for themselves for several months while they gathered information on opportunities for settlement, propitiated the elders of already existing communities with pails of vodka, traveled to the Omsk headquarters of the Resettlement Administration to obtain permission to settle, and made the return journey or at least sent word back whence they had come. But their peasant clients were not the only ones who had expectations of scouts.

### Scouts to the Rescue

In 1907, over half a million migrants from European Russia registered with authorities as they crossed into Siberia. That same year, a contributor to a new journal published by the Resettlement Administration recalled that “as late as the 1880s, the government was hostile to resettlement to such an extent that it equated so-called scouts with political agitators and hunted down settlers themselves, returning them to their native villages in stages.”<sup>37</sup> Historians have been more equivocal, emphasizing the divisions and confusion among state bureaucrats, even while more and more peasants took it upon themselves to resettle across the Urals.<sup>38</sup> As for scouts, they did not even merit a mention in the law of 13 July 1889, the first major legislation on resettlement since 1843. Requiring peasants to seek permission from the Ministry of the Interior and to have obtained a certificate of discharge (*uvol'nitel'nyi prigovor*) from their communes, the law provided for some modest monetary assistance in the

<sup>35</sup> For a perceptive analysis of such images, see Cathy A. Frierson, *Peasant Icons: Representations of Rural People in Late Nineteenth-Century Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>36</sup> These are my estimates based on cases where settlers owed their choice of where to settle at least in part to scouts.

<sup>37</sup> O. R. Shkapskii, “Pereselentsy i agrarnyi vopros v Semirechenskoi oblasti,” in *Voprosy kolonizatsii: Sbornik statei*, ed. O. A. Shkanskii (St. Petersburg: A. V. Uspenskii, 1907), 1:62.

<sup>38</sup> Treadgold, *Great Siberian Migration*, 73–80; Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 180–84; D. V. Nikitenko, “Pereselencheskaia politika v rossiiskom zakonodatel'stve, 1861–1889 gg.” (abstract of candidate's diss., Novosibirsk, 2006).

form of interest-free loans, but only if peasants agreed to settle on allotted land or join an existing community of “old settlers” (*starozhily*).<sup>39</sup>

The main effect of the 1889 law ironically seems to have been a surge in “irregular” (*samovol'noe*) resettlement. According to official figures, between 66 and 78 percent of all migrants who passed through Cheliabinsk in the early 1890s had not received permission to settle in Siberia. Some never sought it, traveling “by passport” on the pretext of seeking work. But over half of all irregulars surveyed by Anatolii Nikolaevich Kulomzin and his assistants in 1896 during an inspection tour on behalf of the Siberian Railroad Committee claimed to have “experienced delays in the satisfaction of their requests” or outright refusals, in some cases after they already had sold their property.<sup>40</sup> “The law of 1889 was hidden by our township administration,” a scout from Simbirsk complained in the early 1890s. “‘If you leave you will be ruined,’ they said. ‘No matter what, you won’t receive [assistance].’ Last year 20 to 25 people met and talked about migration and the village constable dispersed us.... Up to 15 times we requested [the right to depart] from the township officials, the governor, and the ministry but without consequence. So we went without forms.”<sup>41</sup> Settlers in three regions of Tomsk province whom Kaufman and his students surveyed in 1894—also at the behest of the Siberian Railroad Committee—reported much the same thing. They had to wait as long as three years for local officials to issue discharge certificates. Some sought to circumvent the process by sending emissaries (also *khodoki*) to St. Petersburg; others, remaining “without results,” simply departed without permission.<sup>42</sup>

Local officials were reluctant to grant certificates for many reasons—tax arrears or other debts, pressure from the local landowning nobility who feared loss of manpower or a rise in labor costs, insufficient means or no definite destination on the part of the applicants—but local officials were not the only ones alarmed by the numbers of peasants leaving for Siberia. The construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway in the 1890s tremendously

<sup>39</sup> “Vysochaisha utverzhdennoe 13 iuliia 1889 g., mnenie Gosudarstvennogo Soveta o dobrovol'nom pereselenii sel'skikh obyvatelei i meshchan na kazennye zemli,” *Spravochnye izdaniia*, 55–66. For a summary of the law, see Treadgold, *Great Siberian Migration*, 78–79.

<sup>40</sup> Komitet Sibirskoi zheleznoi dorogi, *Kolonizatsiia Sibiri v sviazi s obshchim pereselencheskim voprosom* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1900), 162–63. The Siberian Railroad Committee was founded in 1893 and until its disbandment in 1905 acted as the principal state institution for managing the affairs of the railroad, including its use in transporting and materially assisting millions of migrants. For a recently published volume of documents devoted to the committee's activities, see M. V. Shilovskii, ed., *Sibirskie pereseleniia: Komitet Sibirskoi zheleznoi dorogi kak organizator pereselenii. Sbornik dokumentov* (Novosibirsk: Sova, 2006). See also Treadgold, *Great Siberian Migration*, 107–30.

<sup>41</sup> Dmitrii Golovachev, “Pereselentsy v 1892 godu,” *Vestnik Evropy*, no. 8 (1893): 805.

<sup>42</sup> Kaufman, *Khoziaistvennoe polozhenie pereselentsev*, pt. 1:3, 12, 17, 38, 63, 80, 183; pt. 3:2.

facilitated and cheapened the cost of migration. The result was a massive increase in migrants—what one historian recently has characterized as a “resettlement revolution.”<sup>43</sup> When combined with the state’s commitment to provide 15 *desiatiny* to each adult male settler, the vast numbers crossing the Urals severely challenged surveyors’ ability to map out parcels for them and old settler communities’ capacity to absorb them. Temporary bans on migration imposed in 1892–95 in western Siberia proved largely ineffective, while the opening up of the Kirghiz steppe to new settlements progressively deprived indigenous mobile pastoralists of land on which to graze their flocks.<sup>44</sup>

In an effort to bring order into an increasingly chaotic situation, the Siberian Railroad Committee—the main legislative organ for resettlement policy in Siberia—issued two statutes in 1896. Both reflected Kulomzin’s inclination to decriminalize irregular migration, and both seized on scouts as part of a package of incentives to play by the rules of the Resettlement Administration, itself a product of the legislation. According to the law of 15 April 1896, peasants had the right to appoint scouts to inspect land determined (by resettlement officials) to be appropriate for settlement and to register the land for their clients for up to two years. By obtaining scouting certificates (*khodacheskie svidetel’sтва*), scouts had access to reduced fares on the railroad in both directions, and these were exchangeable for a travel authorization document (*prokhodnoe svidetel’sтво*), entitling their clients to reduced fares. The rescript of 7 December highlighted the role of “family scouts” in preference to those representing groups of families. By these means, as well as stern admonitions to governors and their subordinate personnel to “exercise special supervision of village and township authorities” in their distribution of the relevant documents (such as notices of absence and certificates of discharge), the government hoped to stem the tide of irregular migration.<sup>45</sup>


One of the Resettlement Administration’s tasks was to collect information on settlers and scouts passing through its Cheliabinsk and Syzran way stations. Judging by the amount of published data, it did so with alacrity. This impressive statistical output reflected what Peter Holquist has called the Resettlement Administration’s “technocratic ideology” of population alignment, and what

<sup>43</sup> P. P. Vibe, “Vliianie germanofobskikh nastroenii na pereselencheskuiu politiku v Sibiri na rubezhe XIX–XX vv.,” in *Migratsii i diaspor*, 79.

<sup>44</sup> M. V. Shilovskii, ed., *Sibirskie pereseleniia: Dokumenty i materialy* (Novosibirsk: Novosibirskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2003), 7–8. Shilovskii notes that the “district of mass in-migration became the hearth of chronic conflict” between old settlers and aboriginals, on the one hand, and new settlers, on the other.

<sup>45</sup> *Kolonizatsiia Sibiri*, 162–64; *Pereselenchekoe upravlenie Ministerstva vnutrennikh del, Sbornik zakonov i rasporiazhenii o pereselenii* (St. Petersburg: MVD, 1901), 15–16, 64–66.

Действительно по первое Августа 1909  
для зачисления долей въ Иркутской районъ.

 Земского Начальника Смоленской губернии.  
(или замѣняющаго его должностнаго лица). Духовницкаго уѣзда 2 участка.  
Адресъ: почтовый \_\_\_\_\_ телеграфный \_\_\_\_\_

1909 г. **ХОДАЧЕСКОЕ СВИДѢТЕЛЬСТВО.** № 28

1. Предъявитель сего Смоленской губернии, Духовницкаго уѣзда, Митюковъ волости, Гулянова селенія (сословіе, имя, отчество и фамилія)  
Иванъ Алексѣевъ Моисеевъ

2. Отправляется ходокомъ въ Иркутскую губернію (или область), Таманинскій уѣздъ, Ско. Таминскій подрайонъ (мѣсто жительства Завѣдывающаго подрайономъ с. Залари Таман. у.)

3. Для осмотра и зачисленія восемнадцати людей за нижеслѣдующими семьями:

№ семьи по списку	ИМЕНА, ОТЧЕСТВА И ФАМИЛІИ ДОМОХОЗЯВЪ **)	Составъ семьи.	
		Мужчинъ.	Женщинъ.
1.	<u>Иванъ Алексѣевъ Моисеевъ</u> (ходокъ)	3	4
	Довѣрители:		
2.	<u>Петръ Марсимова Иванъ</u>	2	4
3.	<u>Алексѣй Андреевичъ Петровъ</u>	3	3
4.	<u>Николай Николаевичъ Скоровъ</u>	2	5
5.	<u>Михаилъ Федоровъ Микетевъ</u>	1	4
6.	<u>Иванъ Мартыновъ Карповъ</u>	3	4
7.	<u>Василій Петровъ Занимовъ</u>	2	3
8.	<u>Александръ Алексѣевъ Моисеевъ</u>	2	4
9.			
10.			
	Всего душъ . . .	18	31

Въ удостовѣреніе всего вышеизложеннаго дано сѣ ходаческое свидѣтельство.  
„30“ дня Марта мѣсяца 1909 года.

Подпись: Земскій Начальникъ Сорокинъ  
(или замѣняющаго его должностное лицо)

М. П.

По прибытіи на Сызранскій и Челябинскій пункты, настоящее свидѣтельство предъ-  
является для отмѣтки переселенческому чиновнику, а по избраніи участка—крестьянному  
начальнику или лицу, его замѣняющему, для зачисленія свободныхъ долей и отмѣтки о  
сѣмъ на оборотъ настоящаго свидѣтельства.

Мѣсто для отмѣтки о выдачѣ удостовѣренія на проѣздъ по переселенческому тарифу.  
Тарифное удостовѣреніе выдано, за № 28 „30“ дня марта мѣсяца 1909 г.  
отъ станціи Смоленск ж. д. М. Горетск до станціи Залари ж. д.  
Сибирской Подпись Сорокинъ

\*) Число долей выданныхъ.

A model scouting certificate for Ivan Alekseev Moiseev from Smolensk province to travel to Irkutsk province to inspect land for 49 people, dated March 30, 1909  
Source: *Spravochnaia knizhka dlia khodakov i pereselentsev na 1911 god* (St. Petersburg: Pereselencheskoe upravlenie, 1911), back matter.

both resettlement officials and their supporters described at the time as an effort to achieve “correct colonization.”<sup>46</sup> Knowing how many scouts declared themselves to the authorities, from which province they originated, whether they were representing a single family or several and were traveling with or without a certificate, where they had registered land (or why they had failed to do so), and how long the journey had taken was part of the effort to align scouts’ itineraries with the administration’s notion of correct colonization.<sup>47</sup>

Within a few years of the introduction of incentives to peasants who had obtained scouting certificates, the state’s reliance on scouts seemed to have paid off. The number of people registered as scouts at Cheliabinsk rose from a mere 567 in 1894 to nearly 12,000 in 1896, over 17,500 in 1897, and an *average* of over 50,000 in the subsequent three years. This meant that whereas in 1896 people identifying themselves as scouts made up only 6 percent of the total number of migrants (or 43 percent of the number of families) passing through Cheliabinsk, two years later more than a quarter of all migrants registered as scouts and for every scout, 1.5 families migrated. Moreover, the proportion of irregular scouts dropped sharply from 83 percent in 1896 to 23 percent in 1897. Also interpreted positively was the decline in the proportion of scouts who returned through Cheliabinsk having registered land for their clients—from 38 percent in 1896 to 31 percent in 1897 and 28 percent in 1899.<sup>48</sup> This, so the Siberian Railroad Committee averred, was the “best proof of [scouts’] circumspection [*osmotritel’nost*] and conscientiousness in relation to a difficult task.” Thanks to them, settlers did not wander about exhausting their supplies of money and livestock in search of land, or worse, give up and return home empty-handed.<sup>49</sup>

Reviewing the same statistics, Kaufman noted that they actually underestimated the number of successful expeditions because a “significant part” of scouts who registered shares of land or joined existing old settler communes remained in Siberia to await the arrival of their families and therefore were not counted.<sup>50</sup> He nevertheless invoked Malthus by regarding

<sup>46</sup> Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, 183–85; Peter Holquist, “‘In Accord with State Interests and the People’s Wishes’: The Technocratic Ideology of Imperial Russia’s Resettlement Administration,” *Slavic Review* 69, 1 (2010): 151–52.

<sup>47</sup> These were the major columns in the tables containing data for 1894–98 that were published in all five volumes of Priimak, *Tsifrovyyi material dlia izucheniia pereselenii v Sibir’*.

<sup>48</sup> *Kolonizatsiia Sibiri*, 169; N. Turchaninov, *Itogi pereselencheskogo dvizheniia za vremia s 1896 po 1909 gg. (vkliuchitel’no)* (St. Petersburg: Pereselencheskoe upravlenie, 1910), 45.

<sup>49</sup> *Kolonizatsiia Sibiri*, 170, 355.

<sup>50</sup> A. A. Kaufman, “Pereselencheskaia statistika,” in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’ Granat*, 31:7. Kaufman, whose expertise on resettlement made him the obvious choice to write this entry on the subject for the Granat encyclopedia, also contributed a longer entry on “Resettlement and the Resettlement Question in Russia” (508–48) in the same volume (see n. 6). Earlier (in

the failure of most scouts to secure land as a “preventative check” to the excessive growth of settlement.<sup>51</sup> Others were less sanguine. One critic of the Resettlement Administration’s policies noted the “tragedy” of scouts absenting themselves from their own families during a time of year when they otherwise would have been hard at work in the field, in the process collectively draining millions of rubles from their household budgets—and for naught.<sup>52</sup>

Why, though, did so many scouts fail to find land to their satisfaction? The shortage of available parcels is part of the explanation, but there is no a priori reason to assume that everyone who obtained permission to travel to Siberia, and still less irregulars traveling without permission, actively sought to migrate. The availability of reduced fares—the incentive the state offered so that peasants would designate someone as a scout and obtain travel authorization—also facilitated labor migration, as the state itself acknowledged.<sup>53</sup> Finally, if the Resettlement Administration hoped scouts would rescue it from the inherent disorderliness of the resettlement/colonization process, the scouts and the peasants they served could be excused for their disappointment in the administration’s own lack of order. The archives contain numerous petitions from scouts seeking to register their families and other clients on particular parcels where relatives or *zemliaki* had settled earlier rather than where resettlement officials enrolled them.<sup>54</sup>

The nominal relationship between the Resettlement Administration and scouts nonetheless grew closer with the adoption of the Temporary Rules of 4 June 1904. According to this law, peasants seeking the state’s assistance in resettling had to choose a scout “to select and register for them an appropriate number of parcels of land on the basis of one scout from each family or from several families within a commune, as confirmed in the latter case by the land captain or other person with equivalent responsibilities.”<sup>55</sup> Delayed

1898), he had provided an entry on “Resettlement” for the Brockhaus and Efron encyclopedia. See *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’* (St. Petersburg: F. A. Brokgauz and Efron, 1890–1907), 23:265–81. Another source cites an average of 70.9% of scouts making the return journey from Siberia between 1896 and 1911. See Chernigovskaia gubernskaia zemskaia uprava, *Pereselenie iz Chernigovskoi gubernii v 1909–1911 g.g. po materialam Cheliabinskogo i Syzranskogo pereselencheskikh punktov* (Chernigov: Zemskaia uprava Chernigovskoi gubernii, 1913), 49.

<sup>51</sup> A. A. Kaufman, *Sibirskoe pereselenie na iskhode XIX veka, istoriko-statisticheskii ocherk*, 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg: Kirshbaum, 1901), 85.

<sup>52</sup> S. F., “K khronike pereselencheskogo dvizheniia,” 136.

<sup>53</sup> *Sbornik uzakoneni i rasporiashenii o pereselenii*, 16 (circulars of Ministry of the Interior, no. 34, 1894, and no. 1, 1897).

<sup>54</sup> Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (RGIA) f. 391, op. 1, d. 492, ll. 3–93; d. 579, ll. 85, 133, 170, 212, 234, 244.

<sup>55</sup> *Sbornik zakonov i rasporiashenii po pereselencheskomu delu i po pozemel’nomu ustroistvu v guberniakh i oblastiakh Aziatskoi Rossii (po 1 Avgusta 1909 g.)* (St. Petersburg: Pereselencheskoe upravlenie, 1909), 8.



by the war against Japan, the “compulsory scouting” law went into effect in stages according to the administration’s determination of provinces in greatest need of out-migration.<sup>56</sup> In the meantime, the Resettlement Administration announced in a circular of 2 September 1906 that it would be distributing to scouts precise information about the location and quantity of available shares of land once they reached Cheliabinsk, thereby obviating the need for their “fruitless wandering” and contributing to the elimination of the “well-known disorder of the resettlement movement.” It was a small step from there to amending the rules in August 1907, according to which land for settlement in Siberia would be matched with settlers from each province of European Russia.<sup>57</sup>

The key role in this process would be played by land organization commissions (*zemleustroitel'nye komissii*) consisting of *zemstvo* personnel as well as the Resettlement Administration’s own considerable staff of agronomists, surveyors, hydrologists, and other technical personnel. The commissions would assign scouts to specific parcels identified as appropriate for their inspection and registration. Scouts in other words no longer scouted; they inspected land that experts had pre-selected for their inspection. A 1909 Resettlement Administration publication directed at scouts and settlers described how the system worked: “Directing groups of scouts to resettlement parcels, the Resettlement Administration takes into account soil, climate, and other conditions.... Steppe dwellers are sent to the steppe, and inhabitants of forested provinces to [Siberian] forest locations.... Care is taken so that people are settled in the same place from one and the same province, district, and even village.”<sup>58</sup> Care was taken presumably because, left to their own devices, peasants could not be expected to settle where other peasants from the same province and “even village” settled. As one liberal supporter of the measures put it, “Who knows the psychology of peasant settlers knows that their thirst for new land drives them to take risks, to go anywhere, because they have a childish naïveté that help will arrive from the state.”<sup>59</sup>

Help occasionally did arrive. In August 1906, for example, Grigorii Viacheslavovich Glinka, the director of the Resettlement Administration’s parent organization, offered assisted passage and a housing loan of up to 165 rubles to a peasant who had requested state assistance in resettling to Akmolinsk

<sup>56</sup> Treadgold, *Great Siberian Migration*, 129.

<sup>57</sup> See the circular from the Main Administration of Agriculture and Land Management (GUZZ) to governors dated 4 August 1907 in *Sbornik zakonov i raspriazhenii*, 246–48.

<sup>58</sup> *Spravochnaia knizhka dlia khodokov i pereselentsev na 1909 god*, 23.

<sup>59</sup> K. Kurteev, “Poslednie mery dlia uporiadochenii pereselencheskogo dvizheniia,” *Sibirskie voprosy*, no. 23–24 (1908): 9.

in return for the peasant's "willing[ness] to be sent next spring ... as a scout, to inspect registered land."<sup>60</sup> Otherwise, the Resettlement Administration limited itself to providing medical and food services, handbooks and maps, and a lot of advice. Scouts should assemble and travel in large groups, it recommended, because "group scouting is more economical. The larger the scouting party, the less expense each has to bear." Each family intending to resettle should designate one of its members to serve as a scout; if this is beyond the means of a single family, then a scout could represent several, but not more than five. Scouts should not pay anyone to arrange to inspect or register the best parcels because "any such promise to do something for money, to demand payment, is deceitful." They should bring between 50 and 100 rubles (depending on the distance they traveled and the region of Siberia they intended to inspect) to cover expenses; and they should bring warm clothing, because "beyond the Urals the nights even in summer can be very cold." But "first and foremost, do not decide anything in Siberia without the advice of an official—either a resettlement administrator or a peasant captain—who knows the laws."<sup>61</sup>

This "organized group" approach to scouting thus increased the dependence of scouts on the expertise and services—statistical, medical, technological, financial, and meteorological—of the Resettlement Administration. One journalist described it as "interference by a tutelary bureaucracy penetrating deeply into popular life."<sup>62</sup> But lest scouts feel overly constrained by such assistance, they were assured that the "entire success of settlement depends on scouts," that the "obligations that a scout takes on himself are very difficult and very serious," and that the "better and more honestly he fulfills them, the easier and sooner he and his family will be established in their new location."<sup>63</sup> Condescending as such assurances may have been, they were not necessarily disingenuous. Had the system worked according to plan, the state might have outfitted scouts in uniforms.

<sup>60</sup> RGIA f. 391, op. 3, d. 214, ll. 3, 6. The offer was conveyed to the governor of Kiev province, who had forwarded the request.

<sup>61</sup> *Spravochnaia knizhka dlia khodokov i pereselentsev na 1909 god*, 23; *Spravochnaia knizhka dlia khodokov i pereselentsev (pereselenie za Ural v 1914 godu)* (Petrograd: Pereselencheskoe upravlenie, 1914), 10–12. There is considerable continuity in the advice offered to scouts over the years. See, e.g., *Sibirskoe pereselenie v 1902 godu (Chto nuzhno znat' kazhdomu khodoku)* (St. Petersburg: Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del, 1902), 35.

<sup>62</sup> Kurteev, "Poslednye mery," 9.

<sup>63</sup> *Spravochnaia knizhka dlia khodokov i pereselentsev na 1909 god*, 26. Scouting could serve other purposes as well. For details of a demonstration tour by scouts to farmsteads (*khutory*) in the Zhitomir district of Volhynia province organized by a land commission official in Grodno, see *Izvestiia zemskogo otдела*, no. 1 (1908): 76–78. Scouts were selected by volost' elders and paid 35.30 rubles each.

## Disappointing Scouts/Scouts Disappointed

But the system did not work according to plan. In 1907, the nearly 150,000 scouts and 420,000 settlers who crossed into Siberia at Cheliabinsk overwhelmed the railroad and strained the Resettlement Administration's resources. Of the 80,000 scouts who returned that year, a few more than 21,000 (27 percent) registered shares on sites made available to them by the land commissions or paid admission fees to join old settler communities. Sixty-five thousand scouts remained in Siberia to try their luck the following year. This "rate of productivity" was down from 29 percent in 1906 but higher than 1908, when it dipped further to 26 percent.<sup>64</sup> After what must have been a Herculean effort to provide scouts with scouting certificates in 1907, their distribution became a haphazard affair. The percentage of scouts known to have traveled without them rose sharply (from slightly under 4 percent in 1907) to 61 percent in 1908 and 67 percent in 1909.<sup>65</sup>

These aggregated figures do little to convey the actual experiences of real people working through (or around) a maze of procedures and color-coded forms (*yellow* for scouting certificates; *pink* for travel authorization documents; *green* for assisted passage).<sup>66</sup> Both state and zemstvo sources cited instances of scouts' abuse of the new rules of settlement for their own gain. One such report, by the zemstvo agent Kosmenko, concerned a group of scouts he accompanied overland to the Maritime oblast of the Russian Far East. Kosmenko noted that at each station along the railroad between Omsk and Irkutsk "several scouts would depart, saying that not far away people from their family or village had settled and that they had bought a ticket to the Amur or Maritime oblast because that was the only way, or that they had been given erroneous information by the land organization commissions about the cost of the journey and had run out of funds." Among those who made it to Blagoveshchensk in Amur oblast, as many as 30 left for home after only two days at the resettlement point and without having seen any land, despite having received 3–5 rubles from each family to select parcels and register them.<sup>67</sup> A circular sent by Glinka to governors in 1908 noted that after registering shares made available for their inspection, scouts returned home, but instead of bringing their families back, they "often" sold the rights to the

<sup>64</sup> *Sibirskie voprosy*, no. 23–24 (1908): 11; Kaufman, "Pereselencheskaia statistika," 7. For use of "productivity" in reference to scouts' expeditions, see N. Turchaninov, "Pereselencheskoe dvizhenie v 1909 godu," *Voprosy kolonizatsii*, no. 6 (1910): 23.

<sup>65</sup> Turchaninov, *Itogi pereselencheskogo dvizheniia*, 45.

<sup>66</sup> *Spravochnaia knizhka dlia khodokov i pereselentsev (pereselenie za Ural v 1913 godu)* (St. Petersburg: Pereselencheskoe upravlenie, 1913), 12.

<sup>67</sup> V. Khizhniakov, "Iz pereselencheskikh skitanii," *Vestnik Evropy*, no. 1 (1910): 86; no. 2 (1910): 105–7.

land. Others, according to an investigation by the zemstvo organization in the black-soil province of Chernigov, returned with their families but, instead of settling down, began to look in earnest for land elsewhere. If successful, they would sell the right to their plot to another family, who could be traveling under the same pretext.<sup>68</sup>

If scouts sometimes disappointed their patrons in the Resettlement Administration, they could be disappointed, too. In October 1907, three scouts sent a petition to Her Highness Maria Fedorovna requesting permission to move to another parcel in Tomsk province because the one to which they were assigned proved "not beneficial and even unsuitable." It got no farther than the director of resettlement in Tomsk raion, who rejected it on the grounds that "moving from one section to another is in general undesirable especially in view of the presence in the district of a large number of sections that are difficult to work but that promise settlers sufficiency given ... the expenditure of significant amounts of labor." Other petitioners cited lack of water, swampy conditions, the inappropriateness of the land for grain cultivation, and its just not being to their liking in their equally unsuccessful requests for assistance to move.<sup>69</sup>

We have an unusually graphic description of the trials and tribulations of 625 who set out in September 1909 to claim land in the Kirghiz steppe, thanks to the Chernigov zemstvo agent Doroshenko who accompanied them. "The train crawled like a tortoise," Doroshenko wrote. Fearful that those ahead of them had already seized the best parcels, the scouts cursed the conductors and stationmasters who—perhaps fearing incendiary results, or maybe just out of spite—refused their request for candles, which meant traveling in the dark. At Syzran, Doroshenko received a telegram from the resettlement agent in Ural'sk that no shares of land were available in his district and that the party of scouts should proceed farther east to the Kustanai and Temir districts of Turgai oblast. Most of the scouts nevertheless stopped at Ural'sk, where "with great difficulty" they registered shares for 565 people. The remaining 107 scouts traveled on to Kustanai as instructed, but on arriving were informed by the local agent that their shares awaited them not in that district but 600 versts (circa 400 miles) to the northeast. "Several" made the journey on foot but, in view of the complete lack of rivers or forests, refused to register any parcels.<sup>70</sup>

Another, even more elaborate story of disappointment was told by M. Sumkin, a peasant from Kaluga province who, "on the clear spring day

<sup>68</sup> *Sbornik zakonov i rasporyazhenii po pereselencheskomu delu*, 370–72; *Pereselenie iz Chernigovskoi gubernii*, 19.

<sup>69</sup> RGIA f. 391, op. 3, d. 417, ll. 3–6, 12, 58–59, 78.

<sup>70</sup> Khizhniakov, "Iz pereselencheskikh skitanii," 82–84.

of 8 May 1907,” set out to scout “open land” (*vol’naia zemlia*) in far-off Semipalatinsk oblast. Sumkin’s account provides fascinating details about the journey that took him and other scouts aboard a “resettlement train” through the provinces of Tula, Riazan’, Tambov, Penza, Saratov, and Simbirsk across the Volga near Samara into Ufa and on across the Urals into Siberia. “All the scouts were glad to see that it was possible to live well in Siberia,” he remarks, but all the way to Omsk and beyond there were no parcels available near the railroad. Indeed, at Cheliabinsk the scouts had been advised to proceed to Ussuri krai and Amur oblast—which many did, he reports, only to return home with unkind words about the land captains who had recommended they resettle. Sumkin himself boarded a steamer at Omsk, crowded with 300 other scouts and settlers bound for Semipalatinsk. The trip, covering a distance of 727 versts (482 miles), took six days.<sup>71</sup>

Discovering that the predominantly dry and salty land supported only a few “incomplete” settlements, he traveled another 600 versts to Zaisansk district, bordering on China and inhabited primarily by “Kirghiz.”<sup>72</sup> In early June—a month after his journey had begun—Sumkin arrived at the Ardyn parcel, founded by Vasilii Mikhailovich Abramkin, a 40-year-old scout who had spent three years wandering in Siberia before selecting this site. Thanks to Abramkin, who belongs among those most beneficent scouts cited above, settlers received as a loan 165 rubles per household. But owing to ferocious winds that knocked down houses and caused the shoots to wither, followed by the onset of mosquito season, many recently arrived settlers left “without a ‘goodbye’ to their relatives who had urged them to come.” Further misadventures eventually persuaded Sumkin to leave for home, convinced that the time had passed when one could find land capable of sustaining new settlements.<sup>73</sup>

Sumkin’s account is about as close as we can get to scouts relating in their own words what they did and why they did it. But even this source is disappointingly elusive. Sumkin writes at the end of his memoir that he decided to travel to Semipalatinsk oblast “because I had read in a resettlement booklet [*pereselencheskaia knizhka*] of the city’s abundant grain trade,” which led him to assume that the sparsely populated region could support not only his village but all of Kaluga’s peasants. Only on arriving, he claims, did he discover that the grain sold in Semipalatinsk had originated in the

<sup>71</sup> M. Sumkin, *V Sibir’ za zemleiu (iz Kaluzhskoi gubernii v Semipalatinskuiu oblast’): Zapiski khodoka* (Moscow: Zemliak, 1908), 3, 8–9, 11–19.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 21–23. Sumkin notes that the parcels for settlement had been removed from use by the Kirghiz nomads on the basis of the Resettlement Administration’s determination that the land was in “excess” of what the Kirghiz needed, and that bloody confrontations had occurred between Kirghiz and settlers.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 29–38, 46–58.

neighboring province of Tomsk. "It seems that something was left out of the resettlement book," he adds caustically. Yet, earlier, he had indicated that he "was keen to see how" his zemliaki, who had departed for the Ardyn parcel from Zhizdrinsk district the previous autumn, were faring.<sup>74</sup> So in what capacity was Sumkin traveling?

*Khodok* emerges as a discursive category that resettlement authorities employed in their attempt to gain control over resettlement and make it work in the interests of colonization.<sup>75</sup> They worked hard over several decades to make legible and otherwise control the behavior of peasants seeking new homes beyond the Urals on behalf of their families and other clients. Peasants seeking a better life in Siberia could ill afford to ignore the Resettlement Administration. But the administration overreached itself in seeking to bind peasants to particular sites and transport them by prearranged convoys. All too many peasants inhabiting the category of scout deviated from its prescribed norms and resorted to heterodox practices that the authorities were powerless to eliminate. Even before Prime Minister Petr Arkad'evich Stolypin and Director of Agricultural Management Aleksandr Vasil'evich Krivoshein journeyed to Siberia in the summer of 1910 to inspect how resettlement was proceeding, the linchpin of that policy—organized group scouting—was in trouble. Upon their return, they, among other things, abandoned the policy.<sup>76</sup> But this is not nearly the end of the story.

## Scouts Survive

When I began researching scouts in earnest, I assumed that their dependence on the Resettlement Administration—for authorization, information, and material assistance—made their survival much beyond the October Revolution unlikely. I was wrong. My error is symptomatic, I believe, of how little attention scholars have paid to voluntary long-distance migration in the Soviet era.<sup>77</sup> It is as if the Gulag, the special settlements, and the deportations

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 61, 19.

<sup>75</sup> On the noncoincidence of these two terms, see Sunderland, "'Imperiia bez imperializma?'" 459–72; and Willard Sunderland, "The Ministry of Asiatic Russia: The Colonial Office That Never Was but Might Have Been," *Slavic Review* 69, 1 (2010): 136–50.

<sup>76</sup> On the Stolypin–Krivoshein mission, see Treadgold, *The Great Migration*, 159–82; and Charles Steinwedel, "Resettling People, Unsettling the Empire: Migration and the Challenge of Governance, 1861–1917," in *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, ed. Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby Schrader, and Willard Sunderland (London: Routledge, 2007), 134–41.

<sup>77</sup> For partial exceptions, see N. I. Platunov, *Pereselencheskaia politika Sovetskogo gosudarstva i ee osushchestvlenie v SSSR (1917–iiun' 1941 gg.)* (Tomsk: Izdatel'stvo Tomskogo universiteta, 1976), 35–130; Iu. V. Pikalov, *Pereselencheskaia politika i izmenenie sotsial'no-klassovogo sostava naseleniia dal'nego vostoka RSFSR (noiabr' 1922–iiun' 1941 g.)* (Khabarovsk: Chastnaia

of nationalities precluded this possibility. Nonetheless, substantial numbers of peasants from European Russia remained interested in resettling in Siberia and elsewhere after the Bolsheviks came to power, just as their neighbors and relatives had been doing before the revolution.<sup>78</sup> Even in the midst of collectivization—and largely, one suspects, because of the deterioration in their material conditions that vast upheaval caused—peasants made themselves available for recruitment to settle far-flung parts of the country. And they continued to rely on scouting to inform themselves about and otherwise facilitate their move to new lands, despite the Stalin regime's morbid fear of losing "total control over the distribution and composition of populations," that Nick Baron has identified as one of its key objectives.<sup>79</sup>

Resettling land-hungry peasants from the central Russian provinces quickly took second place to absorbing prisoners of war and refugees after the outbreak of World War I. Cutbacks in staff within and a shift in priorities by the Main Administration (from 1915 the Ministry) of Agriculture from resettlement/colonization to food supply led to a significant decline in the preparation and availability of land for settlement.<sup>80</sup> The number of settlers recorded by the Resettlement Administration correspondingly shrank from about 336,000 in 1914 to only 28,000 in 1915 and less than 6,000 during 1917. How much of this decline reflected a diminution in the administration's statistical apparatus is not known. Nor can it be determined to what extent advance parties of scouts continued to inspect land and if so, whether they assumed broader tasks in light of the reduction of services provided by the administration.

The new Soviet government did what it could to discourage peasants from resettling east of the Urals, much of which was not under Soviet power. Asserting that "without personal inspection by a scout from one or several families, it is not possible to go to Siberia," it urged peasants to settle on the

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kolleksiia, 2003); and Eugene M. Kulischer, *Europe on the Move: War and Population Changes, 1917–47* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 30–120.

<sup>78</sup> As Holquist notes, the Soviet government revived the Resettlement Administration with many of the same personnel who had served in similar capacities under the tsar and the Provisional Government ("In Accord with State Interests," 174–75).

<sup>79</sup> Nick Baron, *Soviet Karelia: Politics, Planning, and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1920–1939* (London: Routledge, 2007), 237.

<sup>80</sup> Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomiki (RGAE) f. 478, op. 6, d. 1332, ll. 12–18. This is a communication from the "Commissariat [sic] of Agriculture, Resettlement Administration," dated 29 March 1917 to local officials lamenting the "significant supply of settlers' plots not being put under settlement [*zaselenie*] owing to a lack of surveying, road building, well drilling, and other measures."

(confiscated) property of local landlords.<sup>81</sup> But already in April 1918 one resettlement official was sounding the alarm that “the resettler flow . . . , if not already greater than that of 1907–9, soon will be so.”<sup>82</sup> In this connection, a regional resettlement commissar in Krasnoiarsk issued temporary instructions to calculate the number of shares of land in Eniseisk province to be presented for inspection by scouts. Like their tsarist predecessors, Soviet authorities tried to discriminate in favor of settlers who registered land or received invitations from old settlers—that is, on the basis of scouts’ prior excursions. Aaron Retish, citing documents from Viatka province, notes that 9 percent of “potential pioneers” consisted of people who “already had been in Siberia” and “now led new pioneers back.”<sup>83</sup> Even Lenin got into the act, instructing the Siberian Revolutionary Committee (*Sibrevkom*) in June 1920 to take charge of the settlement of migrants by, among other things, facilitating trips by scouts.<sup>84</sup>

Scouts continued to crop up in the official record, especially after 1922 when the People’s Commissariat of Agriculture (Narkomzem) started receiving reports that peasants, impatient with the slowness of land surveying and distribution, were dispatching them to seek free land.<sup>85</sup> They appear again in a resolution of the Third Congress of Soviets of the USSR (May 1925) as entitled to reduced fares on the state’s railroad system, and in a Narkomzem directive assigning them responsibility for choosing allotments of land for “not less than 5 and not more than 10 peasant households.” The procedures for registering land and other details concerning scouts’ functions as well as the grudging accommodation of irregular scouts and settlers basically repeat the tsarist legislation of 1896 and 1904.<sup>86</sup> This was true not only for Siberia but also for other areas of the country, such as the Far North, for which Soviet authorities had great plans for development.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>81</sup> RGAE f. 478, op. 6, d. 1332, l. 157, Narkomzem circular to all Soviets of Peasants, Workers, and Soldiers Deputies, 6 March 1918.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., l. 174. The official was from the Petrograd Oblast Colonization Bureau. He urged that settlers be directed to the Orsk–Atbasar–Akmolinsk–Pavlodar–Semipalatinsk region, although it was precisely these areas (the “steppe oblasts”) where, according to the circular cited in the previous note, opposition to settlers by the local *inorodtsy* was at its fiercest.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., l. 178. The instructions are dated 15 April 1918; Retish, *Russia’s Peasants*, 249.

<sup>84</sup> Platunov, *Pereselencheskaia politika*, 43. Sibrevkom was to report to the Commissariat of Agriculture by 10 July on the amount of land available for settlement, its location, the number of settlers to be accommodated in each uezd and volost, and the corresponding point of disembarkation.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 64, citing RGAE f. 2077, op. 8, d. 65, l. 2, and op. 7, d. 55, l. 1.

<sup>86</sup> Platunov, *Pereselencheskaia politika*, 74–75; Pikalov, *Pereselencheskaia politika*, 95.

<sup>87</sup> See, e.g., points 12–15 of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee decree of 6 September 1926 “On Resettlement in the Autonomous Karelian SSR” at [www.knukim-edu](http://www.knukim-edu).



On the ground things looked much the same as well. The archives contain numerous requests from individual “citizens” or representatives of entire villages to migrate from this or that European Russian province to Semipalatinsk oblast, the Altai, or Tomsk province, the standard reply to which was “no permission is given for settlement except for those registering land in Siberia via scouting certificates.”<sup>88</sup> One also encounters announcements by provincial agricultural authorities of land available for inspection by scouts, as well as requests for scouting certificates, the possession of which entitled their bearers to “privileged” passage by rail.<sup>89</sup> So, as in the past, scouts were privileged. About the only difference was that the area in which they operated had expanded to include such Middle Volga provinces as Samara and the Far North (Karelian-Murmansk krai). Otherwise, as Retish argues, “peasants and the Soviet state returned to a managed migration pattern very much like that of the Stolypin era.”<sup>90</sup>

Change was in the offing toward the end of the 1920s. In a brochure issued by Narkomzem’s Department of Settlement in 1929, peasants intending to resettle were urged to “send working detachments [*rabochie družiny*] instead of scouts.” The difference seemed to be that working detachments would not only choose and reserve land but also start cultivating it.<sup>91</sup> But, as if to concede that peasants were unlikely to abandon a familiar and trusted institution quite so easily, the brochure indicated that “scouts and members of detachments, traveling through Cheliabinsk, must visit the information bureau ... to receive detailed instructions about parcels open for settlement throughout Siberia.”<sup>92</sup> Boris Mazurin—one of two scouts from the Tolstoi-inspired Life and Labor commune that relocated from Teplyi Stan to Siberia in 1930 under Soviet government pressure—does not include Cheliabinsk

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kiev.ua/download/ZakonySSSR/.../tex16744.htm (accessed 13 July 2011); Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 78–83.

<sup>88</sup> RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 700, ll. 5, 15, 90, 96.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., d. 2958, ll. 21, 57; d. 2949, l. 11.

<sup>90</sup> Aaron B. Retish, “Eastward Ho! Peasant Migratory Networks of Viatka Province during Peace and Revolution, 1850–1921,” in *The Making of Russian History: Society, Culture, and the Politics of Modern Russia*, ed. John W. Steinberg and Rex A. Wade (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2009), 108.

<sup>91</sup> “Seemed to be” because it is possible that, as with the simultaneous campaign to replace artels with brigades, the difference was often nominal. See Kuromiya, “Workers’ Artels,” 78–82.

<sup>92</sup> D. G. Barov, G. A. Liaskovskii, and V. A. Rubinskii, eds., *Pereselenie v Sibirskii krai v 1929 godu* (Moscow: Novaia derevnia, 1929), back cover. See also I. Vorob’ev, ed., *Pereselenie na Dal’nii Vostok: Statisticheskii obzor dvizheniia pereselentsev i khodokov na Dal’nii Vostok i obratno v 1926/27 i 1927/28 gg.* (Khabarovsk: Raionnoe pereselencheskoe upravlenie, 1928). Pikalov, *Pereselencheskaia politika*, 102–3, describes the working detachments as a “popular initiative” of peasant assemblies and claims they were “more effective” than scouting, which had become an “outmoded method of resettlement.”

among the places they visited, but he does mention receiving maps, addresses of available plots, and “land-scouting tickets” from the People’s Commissariat of Agriculture in Moscow.<sup>93</sup>

Collectivization and the attendant expulsion of kulaks to special settlements caused other key peasant-based social institutions—communes, village assemblies, *artels*—to disappear or go underground. But households survived, and in the course of the 1930s some of them resettled.<sup>94</sup> The chief method of resettlement—organized recruitment (*verbovka*) to repopulate rural areas especially affected by deportation, famine, or flight—did not require scouting. As with the deportation of kulaks and enemy nations, the authorities planned every aspect of the resettlement process from propagandizing and signing up households to their “delivery” to embarkation points along with their livestock and baggage, scheduling and provisioning of convoys, reception at disembarkation, housing construction, furnishing of dwellings, and integration of households into their new host collective or state farms.<sup>95</sup> But although officials tended to regard scouts as at best superfluous and at worst as crypto-kulaks, some peasants managed to travel independently to areas designated for resettlement to inform their communities about the conditions that awaited them.

In the autumn of 1933, under the auspices of the All-Union Resettlement Committee and with the assistance of the Red Army, 44 trains carried some 17,925 people as well as several thousand horses, cattle, and household effects from Ivanovo Industrial province to Donetsk oblast. According to the report of the committee’s plenipotentiary in Ivanovo, they did *not* include 12 households from Kovrov district that had been signed up but opted out after two scouts returned with information about the poor rate of labor-day payments.<sup>96</sup> Elsewhere, scouts complicated fulfillment of the recruitment plan by signing up with collective farms (in Dnepropetrovsk oblast) independent of the recruitment effort, and traveling to one settlement district only to discover that the households they represented had been assigned to another district. Nevertheless, they continued to hit the road, arriving “every day in

<sup>93</sup> Boris Mazurin, “The Life and Labor Commune: A History and Some Reflections,” in *Memoirs of Peasant Tolstoyans in Soviet Russia*, ed. and trans. William Edgerton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 46–47.

<sup>94</sup> Compare Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the History of Interwar Russia* (New York: New Press, 1994), 87: “The commune vanished during the collectivization drive, although its traces would linger on to await discovery by attentive research. The other traditional rural institution, the household, did survive almost intact.”

<sup>95</sup> The recruitment of peasant households, primarily from the central and western provinces of the RSFSR to resettle in eastern Ukraine, the Kuban, and eastern Siberia, can be tracked in RGAE f. 5675, op. 1, d. 33, d. 48, d. 48a, d. 79, d. 90, d. 164.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, d. 48, ll. 4–11. For a similar instance involving 25 (of a total of 133 recruited) families from the Iukhnov raion of the Western oblast, see *ibid.*, l. 54.

large numbers” at the oblast offices of the Resettlement Committee with requests for information and permission to settle along with their families. In its plan for 1936, the Resettlement Committee made provisions for them—5 scouts for each district in Cheliabinsk and Omsk oblasts, wherever kolkhozes were accepting settlers.<sup>97</sup>

As before, peasants did not only rely on scouts. Nor did they wait to be recruited by state authorities. Now, they pestered the people’s commissar of agriculture, the All-Union Resettlement Committee, far-off land departments, the editor of *Krest’ianskaia gazeta*, and anyone else they could think of with requests for information about resettling in Saratov krai, Azov–Black Sea krai, western Siberia, eastern Siberia, Far Eastern krai, the Jewish Autonomous Oblast, “or,” as one particularly desperate letter writer put it, “to anywhere else without bad conditions because on our kolkhoz we have little land and very few labor days and an inadequate supply of bread.”<sup>98</sup> If they had maintained contact with people from their village or district who had resettled, they used the knowledge gained thereby. On 14 October 1935, 17 members of the First of May Swine Kolkhoz wrote to the All-Union Resettlement Committee’s man in Voronezh oblast that they had given up hoping for improved living conditions and “passionately want to move to eastern Siberia, Oloviansk raion, Kashkai village soviet,” because “that is where our zemliaki live, from whom we have heard about life there.”<sup>99</sup>

Correspondence with fellow countrymen remained part of the repertoire for peasants contemplating long-distance resettlement. But so too did scouts. As both gatherers and conveyers of information, scouts continued to occupy a position of influence in peasant communities. Even more than in the case of zemliaki, though, scouts tended to have ephemeral, partial, or even hidden identities. In communicating with Soviet authorities in the 1930s, peasants refrained from identifying themselves as scouts, preferring the more generic “authorized person” (*upolnomochennyi*). But there was no mistaking the functions attributed to or claimed by such people. “After receiving permission to resettle,” wrote one such *upolnomochennyi* in the name of 25 households from a collective farm in Gor’kii krai, “we will inspect the area and, finding a place we like, will inform the krai agricultural office, the district agricultural office, or you directly of its location.” It is not clear whether the letter writer was employing the first person plural because

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., ll. 52, 56; V. P. Danilov, R. Manning, and L. Viola, eds., *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni: Kollektivizatsiia i raskulachivanie. Dokumenty i materialy v 5 tomakh, 1927–1939* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2002), 4:606–7.

<sup>98</sup> RGAE f. 5675, op. 1, d. 106, ll. 1, 3, 8, 33, 59.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., l. 134.

he expected to do the inspecting with others. Nor did any of the three peasants from Voronezh oblast who wrote to both *Krest'ianskaia gazeta* and the People's Commissariat of Agriculture in June 1935 on behalf of their families indicate that they personally intended to perform the functions of scouts. But after asking whether it was possible to move (*vyselit'sia*) voluntarily to a particular location in Priamur krai, they wondered whether "our authorized representative whom we will choose" could receive reduced fare or free passage to inspect the given location, and if so, whether such privileges would be extended to members of their families.<sup>100</sup>

Except for the few who made themselves available for hire, once having performed the function, a scout resumed earlier activities associated with his role as farmer and head of a household. We would like to know more about who these people were and whether their stints as scouts changed them at all, but we cannot. What we do know is that the institution survived. Writing in December 1953 about why only 5,165 of a planned 10,000 families had been resettled from the Belorussian SSR to other parts of the country, V. Shkliarik, an official in the Ministry of Agriculture, let slip that local authorities had "neglected to use such an important and proven method as sending scouts and heads of families to places of settlement." Only 17 scouts, he reported, had been dispatched.<sup>101</sup> A year earlier, regional offices of resettlement and organized labor recruitment began issuing brochures advertising the advantages of resettling in their particular part of the country. The brochures, which continued to be published throughout the 1950s, employed the common trope of "[Fill in the blank] has everything. But laboring hands are insufficient." Many contained letters extolling the new life, ostensibly written by settlers to their relatives and friends back home. Some were even accompanied by photographs.<sup>102</sup> What the brochures did not include were explicit references to scouts. But ever since the 19th century, scouts had been elusive, and we should not exclude the possibility that readers sent someone ahead to check out whether the brochures were telling the truth.

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., ll. 34, 1–3. The standard response of the All-Union Resettlement Committee to such queries was that it only engaged in "planned resettlement."

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., d. 633, ll. 79–98.

<sup>102</sup> All titles begin with *Pereseliates' v ...* or *Pereseliates' k nam v ...*. I have identified over 20 such brochures in the Russian National Library and the Russian State Library.