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THE YOUTH IN RUSSIAN MONOTOWN: CURRENT PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS (THE CASE OF VOLSK, SARATOV REGION)

The article deals with the problems of the modern Russian youth in monotowns - the settlements of a special type, characterized by a focus on large enterprises. The Case of Volsk in Saratov region shows the desire of young people to leave the monotown in search of better conditions for self-realization, and suggests the ways to prevent this outflow of young people in the future.

Keywords: monotown, investment, youth, the cement industry, demographics, employment, crime.

The monotowns' problems (or **monoprofile** settlements) in modern Russia worsened due to the global financial crisis of 2008–2009 and the subsequent post-crisis recession. It was found out that on the vast Russian territory there are many such settlements, and the situation in them can't be regulated by the municipal units' forces only, it requires intervention and support, especially financial, of the higher levels of administration, e.g. the federal government.

The historical fact that the state had a crucial role in the development of monotowns is commonly accepted. Many Russian monotowns were created in XVIII–XX centuries (single-industry towns with serf-workers in the Urals), and at that time their creation was justified economically and socially. In the pre-socialist epoch entrepreneurs actually carried out government orders to ensure the establishment and development of such settlement (present monotowns), among the founders of industrial enterprises were such merchants as G. Stroganov, N. Demidov, J. Korobkov, E. Tverdishev, E. Myasnikov, M. Pokchodyashin, it is no coincidence that currently the most monotowns (45 of 335) are in the Urals. [1] The establishment and the development of those monotowns performed a great number of important functions: they favoured the development of the remote areas, fixed the population on them, moved the economy closer to the resources, as a great number of settlements was established exactly as the resource, which favoured the development and increase in the resource base of the country.

In the Soviet times, the function of the monotowns' development passed to the state, which performed two roles at the same time – of a subject that defined the strategy and tactics of their functioning, and of a social agent, which was responsible for organizing the activity of the social institutions, the key factors, and of the population of the towns in general. There were a lot of people, mainly young people, who went to those remote regions (Siberia, the Far East, etc.) in 1970s to take part in the developing of new regions: build factories, housing, infrastructure, to work in municipal services.

The situation changed significantly due to the transition to the market economy. In 1990s, as a result of the spontaneous and largely politicized privatization,

business accrued the rights of ownership of the city-forming enterprises in monotowns, but at the same time it was not ready to take responsibility for the welfare of the people living there. Thus, a crisis situation was gradually forming, and it was not only of economic, but mostly social and humanitarian nature. Lately many experts have argued that the disastrous state of the people in these settlements is objective (monotowns produce products with a "negative" value), so, Russian monotowns, an anachronism, a relic of the planned economy, should be closed (keeping the enterprises!), and the population is to be massively relocated to other places of residence. The similar statement was made by the First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov at the meeting with the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in November 16, 2010: "In the near future we need to strive for the adoption of the comprehensive investment plans for all monotowns. For those monofoundations, where industry will not develop without business development, it will be necessary to make a decision about moving the people" [2].

Due to the current critical situation and according to the order of the President of the Russian Federation dated November 9, 2009 a list of 335 monoprofile communities, that require government support and investments in the municipal services and the city-forming enterprises, was urgently made up in 2009–2010 at the federal level. The total amount of government support of monotowns from the federal and regional budgets in 2010–2011 reached more than 22.7 billion rubles. [3]

It is accepted that nowadays one of the major problems of modern monotowns is the outflow of young people, and, in general, depressing situation with the youth. According to the commonly accepted ideas, young people are a particular social group, which is notable for age limits and their status in society. The youth is understood by some researchers as a set of young people, provided by the society with the opportunity of social formation for account of certain benefits, but limited in the opportunities to participate actively in certain areas of the social life. Age qualification, referring people to the youth, are various in different countries. As a rule, the lower age limit is 13–15, middle – 16–24, higher – 25–36 years old. Today, the youth of the Russian Federation comprises 39.6 million young people, i.e. 27% of the total population of the country. According to the strategy of the state youth policy of the Russian Federation, approved by the Government of the Russian Federation on December 18, 2006, N 1760-p, the citizens aged from 14 to 30 referred to the category of young people in Russia. However, recently in the majority of territorial subjects of the Russian Federation the age qualification tends to grow till 35 years old. [4]

It should be noted that there is no federal youth law at present (there is only a project), but there are legislative acts that are directly related to the young people, for example, the Russian Federation Laws "Education Law", "Higher and Post-graduate Professional Education Law", "State support of the youth and children's public associations Law", "Employment in the Russian Federation Law", etc. There is a great number of regional legislative acts, such as the Law of Moscow city № 39 dated September 30, 2009 «Youth Law", the Law of the Republic of Tatarstan dated June 22, 2009 № 20-LRT "Young people and state youth policy in the Republic of Tatarstan Law", the Law of the Saratov region dated October 9, 2006 N 94-LSR "Youth Policy in the Saratov Region Law". Moreover, due to the increasing facts of extremism and nationalism, the Chechen Republic Ministry of

the national policy got worried about the development of the Conduct Code of Caucasian young people, the subordinate act regulating the conduct of the people from the Caucasus on admission and living in the Russian cities [5].

"The fact is that the young people in monotowns are vulnerable and angry now", said Elena Omelchenko, Doctor of Sociology, Director of the Youth Research Centre NRI "Higher school of economics" Russia's leading specialist in the sociology of youth. According to her, "a further social stratification will lead to nowhere. Somebody can afford to pay for higher education, while others don't have money even on good nutrition; somebody travels abroad, while others can't afford to get out of their village to the district center. Young people, living in poor towns, are ready to organize riots". "The way out is not visible; there is only anguish and desolation! There are great problems with jobs, the earnings are low. Some who could escape from here, did it", said the representative of the youth of monotown Kopeysk, Chelyabinsk region (there is a coal industry in this town). According to the human rights activist, professor of the Ural State Pedagogical University, Lyudmila Lukashva "young people become embittered in monotowns. Every city was created on the basis of some plant in the Urals. The plant closed – people grew poor. Officials invest money in the revival of monotowns, but what comes out of it? They declared progress and innovations while people were made redundant and left helpless, and all remained the same. It is clear how the younger generation reached the critical point". [6] As a result, there is an increase in teenage and youth crime in monotowns, while the age-crime is on the decline. Such phenomena occur, for example, in monotown Tutaev, Yaroslavl region, where the engineering sector dominates, the Tutaevsky motor plant is the main city-forming enterprise [7].

At present, the federal government is trying not to weaken the control of the situation in monotowns. The incumbent Russian President Vladimir Putin held a meeting on the solutions to the social problems of monotowns on 23, October 2012 in Novo-Ogaryovo, at which, particularly, said: "We need to continue to keep it under control all the time. And, whenever somebody criticizes us for the manual mode, it's the case that we need to work individually with each town, we must seek solutions to the problems and do not forget that the fate of the people, the state of the Russian families, the situation of children, people's well-being depend on every case of dismissal". [8]

This article is written on the materials of the researches of the interregional network project "Russian monotowns: Constructing socio-economic perspectives", which was carried out in 2010–2011 by the order of the Ural inter-regional institute of Social Sciences of the Ural State University (Yekaterinburg). In the course of research, the main indicators of social and economic development of Volsky and Balakovo in Saratov region were analyzed (Balakovo has some signs of a monotown), there were conducted interviews with 24 experts among the urban residents, young people and older generation, also with the experts, presenting big business and authorities (elite) [9].

Volsk is the only town in Saratov region, included in the federal list of monotowns. Here is the largest cement plant in the European part of Russia, which enters the holding company «Holcim Group» (the Holcim headquarters is in Switzerland). There is another plant here, a smaller one – CJSC "Volgacement", which

also has a great influence on the situation in the town, and also a small plant of lime production (currently, the production is only being launched there) – LLC "Volgaizvest" (both companies belong to the owner from Saratov) [10]. The town of Volsk has been the administrative center of Volsk municipal district in Saratov region since 1780. The town is located on the right bank of the Volga River, 147 km northeast off Saratov, far from the main traffic artery, railway station Volga Railroad Volsk-1 is the only terminal.

The population and employment data presented in Table 1. [11]

Table 1

Population and labor in the Volsk metropolitan region and in Volsk town.

Indicators	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2011 in % % to 2007
The constant population size, thousand people,	97,7	97,1	94,6	93,7	92,7	95,0
including:						
– urban population	79,0	78,6	76,9	76,2	75,5	95,6
– rural population	18,7	18,5	17,7	17,5	17,2	91,2
The annual average number of employees in Volsk, thousand people,	23,0	20,0	27,0	27,1	23,2	100,8
The average monthly wage, rub	6713	9658	11010	12148	13249	Б 1,97 p
The increase (decrease) per 1000 people of population	-7,8	-7,0	-6,0	-7,1	-5,5	+ 2,3
– nativepeople						
– migratory, people	1,9	-0.1	1,6	-2,2	-5,3	- 7,2

The data in Table 1 show that the number of resident population in the town and in the municipal units has been steadily declining, and even migration flow cannot make up it. (Make a reservation that All-Russian Census gave another figure of population-66 520 people, in our opinion, this figure is closer to reality). [12] The decrease in the population of the town is slower than in the country, but this trend is all-regional, and possibly All-Russian, due to the deterioration of social conditions and health services in rural areas, and also the lack of job. In addition to the reduction of population, the quality of work force resources becomes worse, as young people leave the town, and as a rule, don't come back. The cement plants of the town, despite the relatively high salaries for the town of Volsk, have difficulties with the staff, as young specialists go reluctantly to the industrial enterprises. Here is the answer of Kupriyanov N.A., a personnel service chief of JSC "Volgatsement" to the question about the lack of young workers: "Such situation can turn out. Just recently, one pensioner was retired and a young girl came, though she knew this production, and she had already worked there, she was ready to go to this place, and suddenly she refused, the salary is small, there is very difficult to her. Young people want a big salary, and want to sit in the warmth".

The data, which characterize the development of the social sphere of the municipal units and Volsk, are presented in Table 2. During the analyzed period in the municipal unit, the number of pensioners that is connected with the general demographic tendency was reduced by 1%. The figure of the recession of young people is very considerable in the town, by 2794 people or by 11.9%, because young people are leaving, and the town is gradually becoming extinct. A remarkable fact is

that the number of pensioners in Volsk exceeds the number of working people, 25 thousand and 23 thousand people, respectively.

Table 2

Indicators of the development of the social sphere in the Volsk metropolitan region						
Indicators	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2011 in % to 2007
The number of pensioners, people	25265	25074	25075	25152	25044	99,1
The number of the youth (16–29 year old), people	23655	23571	23329	21507	20861	88,1
The number of students of secondary professional educational institution, people	2981	2874	3576	3360	3156	105,9
The number of doctors, people	307	296	290	291	356	115,9
The number of registered crimes, per 10000 persons of population	264,2	206,1	181,3	159,4	144,1	54,5

In this district the main social indicators gradually worsen: the number of medical institutions was reduced by one third (in 2005 there were 14 municipal hospitals, nowadays – 9), by 16% – the area of housing is per each inhabitant (in 2005 the indicator made 28.7 sq.m, nowadays – 24,0 sq.m *per person*). Despite the growth of the number of doctors in municipal health care, there are problems with doctors and the medium medical personnel and with young specialists in the medical institutions. Here is the opinion of the director of the public institution "Center of employment of the population" of Volsk (nowadays – the minister of employment, job and migration of Saratov region) Sokolova about it: "We have a great shortage of highly skilled doctors in different areas, also it is our pain. We have many social, health-improving institutions with a large number of skilled medical staff, but the problem of doctors exists, and it doesn't disappear anywhere. As well as in all country, we have a misbalance between supply and demand for working vacancies. The employer demands highly qualified specialists, and we haven't enough such in the Job Center. Or low-paid workplaces are offered. Our medical school works well, and practically none of its graduates *is* registered in the job center among the unemployed. They find a job successfully, independently, and, considering that the main contingent of the medical school is girls, they get married to the IV year and leave the town. Speaking about a medical staff problem, I mean doctors, graduates of Higher Education Institutions for whom special conditions, a high salary are necessary. And the main problem in the town for doctors is the social sphere, cultural rest, providing with kindergartens and housing".

There happened a positive, on the whole, increase in the number of students of specialized secondary educational institutions from 2981 people to 3156 people, or by 5.9% during the analyzed period. It says that there is a potential change for the employers representing the city industry, and it is just necessary to create simply

the conditions under which the young specialists will be willing to work on cement production.

Moreover, a decrease (by 45.5%) in the registered crimes is observed, though a number of the registered crimes, according to the official statistics, decreased, the criminogenic situation in the town of Volsk leaves much to be desired. Kukartsev R. D., the senior manager of the commercial service CJSC “Volgacement” stated about it:

“– In the evening to leave house is unsafe. Crimes are committed, generally by young people. This is picking of purses and cell phones. To go for a walk in the evening with a girl till midnight or to meet a dawn is very unsafe. And murders are more often on the household ground, not because of business, not contract killing.”

– What types of crimes, according to your opinion, are found mostly?

– picking, robbery and hooliganism.

– What is observed, for some time past, the rise in the total of crimes? Whether the crisis phenomena and increase in crime are connected?

– Yes, it is observed. Though the head of the Department of Internal Affairs says all the time that the criminal curve is reduced, but, in fact, it is not so.

– Whether are there a lot of criminals who *are* the representative of the older generation?

– No, generally, they are young people.

– Whether the criminal situation is connected with crisis phenomenon in economics? Is there connection?

– Yes, there is. There is a number of high-profile cases. It is connected with picking in cement sector and with robbers who concerned with it.

The factors of the social environment, reflecting the tendency of the development of the situation of young people in the town of Volsk, influencing young generation indirectly, are displayed in Table 3. The indicators, presented in the table, make it possible to reveal some disproportions, which influence the state of the youth environment of Volsk town. If suppose that basically young people get married, the number of marriages in the Volsk town increased by 9%, also the number of born people increased by 4.5% and the birth rate for 1000 people increased by 15.5%. In spite of positive dynamics, at the same time, the actual indicators are low, for example the indicators of 1990 formed 1256 born people and 12.4 born people per 1000 person of population. The number of divorces also increased; during the crisis of 2009 the growth indicator by 16% is remarkable in comparison with the previous year.

Thanks to the federal and regional policy the number of preschool educational institutions and the number of children were increased, but we are worried about the reduction of the number of educational institution and the number of children who study there. For example, in 1990 in Volsk there were 56 educational institutes (now 37 institutions), where studied more than 14 000 schoolchildren (now 8000 schoolchildren), so, 20 years ago the actual indicators was twice as large, accordingly, the number of young people at the age of 13–17, attending high school, used to be more considerable in the town.

Table 3

Factors influenced on young people's state in the Volsk town						
Indicators	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2011 in terms of % to 2007
The number of marriages	687	761	782	769	749	109,0
The number of born people born per 1000 person of population	927	991	1080	1026	969	104,5
The number of born people per 1000 person of population	9,5	10,2	11,1	10,9	10,4	115,5
The number of divorces	453	429	500	452	471	103,9
The number of preschool educational institutions	36	41	41	42	41	113,8
The number of children in preschool educational institutions	3359	3592	3529	3694	3668	109,2
The number of educational institutions	46	45	42	38	37	80,4
The number of children in educational institutions	8674	8236	8063	7927	7859	90,6

The great problem, exerting great influence on the situation in Volsk town, is the outflow of young people to study and further staying for the job. The situation, when young men and girls do not return to a native town and get a job in a regional center or move to other cities, is not rare: Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Voronezh, Volgograd, Sochi etc. Sapozhnikova Tatyana Aleksandrovna (born 1989, a native of Vols), is a student of the Volga Region Institute of Management named after P.A.Stolypin became a representative of young people at the meeting with the Russian president. She expressed her opinion regarding this situation: "Tell us about the state of young people in the town, are there any problems, progress in solving these problems? How has the situation changed in comparison with the pre-crisis period, what is the situation right now?"

– I would like to determine the situation with young people as inadequate, because even more problems have appeared. For example, job shortage is the main problem for young people. If there is a job – a remuneration of labour is low. I suppose that education is subpar; there is practically no higher education. If there is some education, it is a distant one in the branches of the institutes. To my mind, it is of low-quality, if compare with other towns. There is one more grave problem – alcoholism in the town, because young people do not know what to do and they spend time laying out money on alcohol. Not the least of the problems is the problem with accommodation for young families. There is practically no building in the town. If there is some building it goes too low rate, that's why young people have nowhere to live. After the crisis, as I think, the situation worsened even more.

– Well, thank you. Talking about Volsk town, on the whole, according to your opinion what's the major problem of the town? Why these problems came into being, can you describe the causes? What are you proud of?

– The first and the main problem is the personnel haemorrhage. It occurs due to the lack of workplaces for young people. The young personnel that have been potentially qualified, flow away, there are people elderly or under-elderly age. It

seems to me the basic problem. Why it arises, I think that inefficient youth policy is being conducted, new workplaces aren't formed, and production doesn't attract...

– Tell what you think, whether there are the prospects in Volsk town, if yes, what are they? Whether you plan to leave the town or you plan to remain, what prevents you from leaving or remaining in the town? Would you like your family, children to remain to live in Volsk town?

– As a student, I don't feel responsibility for fate of the town yet, but I don't exclude such opportunity. On the other hand, while in my plans to leave Volsk because today the situation in the town doesn't suit me, I don't see possibility of professional development, also such a place, where I could settle to work, I don't see, either. I am not sure about my children that they will live in Volsk, I wouldn't like my children to live here. Concerning a criminal situation, the town is rather quiet, but more global cities are necessary for successful development”.

– Varenova Anastasia Nikolaevna, born in 1989, lives in the town of Volsk of Saratov region, a student of the V year Volga region Institute of Management named after P.A.Stolypin, repeats to respondent T. A. Sapozhnikova: “Concerning young people after Higher Educational Institution, it is rare when young people graduate from Higher Educational Institution and come back to Volsk, they remain where graduated from Higher Educational Institution... Concerning involvement of young specialists on the enterprises of the town – it was, but about 20–25 years ago. There were directions, my elder sister studied in the direction from the cement plant, when she had arrived they got an apartment as young specialists. There was, as the saying goes, an incentive to return to the town and to work in the industry”.

– Are apartments given to young specialists? Did you hear about it?

– No, aren't given.

– Do you connect in the future yourself with the town? With a development of the town, you will arrive there, you will work, raise the enterprises, to work in administration or you will open your own business?

– If it is, but not at once after the Higher Educational Institution graduation I plan not to come back to the town. To work in the city, to open business, experience is necessary to me. Having got experience, maybe, it will turn out to go abroad, or to *another* city of Russia”.

To support of the words of the representative of the young people of Volsk we will give one more extract from the interview of Zinova Galina Petrovna, the First deputy head of municipality of Volsk : “Guys who have finished educational institutions, we have four educational institutions, cannot find a job. Without having received qualification in youth, after receiving a profession, without having fixed it, then it is more difficult to them to find themselves. The stream of our young people goes to big cities, to Moscow. On odd numbers we have the train Balakovo – Moscow that goes from us, which passes through Volsk, my daughter studies in Moscow and when I see off her, I see that all the platform is filled with young people from Volsk”. Yet, there is another experience. For example, the deputy head of municipality of Volsk Kharin I. A., on economic and consumer market problems, returned to the hometown after studying and several years of successful career in Moscow, however, it isn't possible to speak about the mass character of such cases, and it is more likely an exception, than a rule. Thus, today Volsk turns into the town of elderly people, inhabitants of pre-retirement age and pensioners,

peculiar "the survival territory", therefore it is impossible to speak about any strategic plans and problems of the region, of the town and the area, they simply can't be realized now.

According to the conducted research, the main problems of the town of Volsk are (in decreasing order of importance):

- 1) ecological situation,
- 2) aging of the population and young people outflow (Volsk town turns into "the survival territory"),
- 3) lack of the creative class, the going-down educational and cultural potential,
- 4) reproductive resource base (in the future the town can develop, first of all, on the basis of raw sources for production of cement), so the second in importance is a problem of condition and health of young people in the monotown [9].

There are conditions for the operation of natural complex and tourism but these spheres need investment and development. Among the important points of possible modernization of the economy of this monotown are the state order on cement (which is absent today), creating a cluster of small enterprises producing construction materials, revival of the system of technical schools and technical training colleges in the town for preparation of young specialists of medium level, use of innovations, the operation of a resource component. All these actions can lead to stable functioning of the town of Volsk, its harmonious development within the next years.

Summing up, it would be desirable to note one important circumstance. The research in Saratov region was conducted during the rule of Governor P. L. Ipatov, the person whose activity caused more than once complaints of the federal authorities. A new governor V.V. Radayev was appointed in April, 2012 to the region, the former chairman of the regional Duma and the former head of Khvalynsk region (next to Volsk). He set the object at once – to remove oppositions and intensity in society, to direct activity of all interested, healthy forces to overcoming of the economic and social dislocation which has remained from the former power. Therefore, on the territory of monotowns and all region as a whole, the appointed management should behave in a new way, to overcome the general mood of various social groups, such as, being abandoned by the authorities, social apathy, gradual deterioration of the social and economic situation. Hence the major problem has its source, it is important to awaken social activity of the population, people's abilities for self-organization and formation (with the help of the graduates of higher educational institutes) or attract "the creative class" (at the expense of migratory streams), young, active and purposeful managers and specialists devoted to their "little homeland", ready to make real efforts to revive it. Whether it will take the right direction, we will see in the future.

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