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***Perestroika* and the Normalisation of Soviet-Chinese Relations as a Groundwork for the Modern-Day Chinese Immigration to Russia**

The earliest favourable conditions which conduced to the normalisation of relations between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (abbreviated to USSR) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) emerged in the first half of the 1980s. However, it was Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika that contributed to the breakthrough in terms of political and economic mutual relations. At that time a lot of agreements were reached, unaltered in force after 1991, as Russia gained the status of a successor of the USSR. The acceleration of the Soviet-Chinese political rapprochement initiated in 1985 conduced to closer economic cooperation and this, in turn, stimulated migration processes and helped regulate them legally. Some decisions made by the Soviet Union at that time, e.g. liberalisation of the border control regime or signing the agreement on the demarcation of the east PRC-USSR border, had a couple of implications which consequently affected, with varying intensity, Russian conceptualisation of Chinese immigration and all this triggered changes in the Russian migration policy. So far, a great many works of literature, especially Russian, have analysed the condition and potential consequences of immigration on the east border of the Soviet Union but there is a scarcity of papers examining the beginnings of immigration in-depth. Even if they may be found, they are usually only a part of robust works concentrated on a completely different subject matter. This article aims at investigating Soviet-Chinese relations at the time of perestroika and setting it within occurring then process of influx of the Chinese to the USSR. Undoubtedly, complicated normalisation of relations between Moscow and Beijing created conditions for restoring bilateral migration cooperation, shaping its initial form and direction. Its' continuation and intensive development, that was taking place

even during the period of several years' cooling of Russian-Chinese relations at the beginning of the 1990s, was sustained not so much by political or ideological considerations but by pragmatic reasons connected with the economic needs of neighbouring regions in the east Russia and north-east China.

Formulation of a new policy towards the People's Republic of China

Galenowicz J. considering Soviet-Chinese relations within the span of 50 years notices that “[we—Russia]... have never had any strategy regarding our foreign policy towards China. There was only our willingness to stay in good relations with this country. This was all we wanted.”¹

Although the claim of retaining good relations may raise some doubts as it seems to be grossly oversimplifying, the remark about the political strategy towards the PRC is confirmed by the activities of both the Soviet leaders and the Russian Federation's authorities.² Formulation of new relations with Beijing in Moscow in the 1980s was the implication of evolution in understanding China and changes ongoing there, on one hand, and personal replacements in Kremlin, on the other. Acceleration of this process at the time of perestroika may be perceived as the means used to achieve—like the whole new thinking in foreign policy of the USSR—above all, the main aim to radically reform internally the USSR. There is no rationale to claim that relations with the PRC were based on some kind of a distinct and transparent policy strategy towards this country, or generally towards the countries of East Asia.

At the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s Soviet experts' outlooks on Chinese ideology, politics and economy changed beyond recognition. Previously, there were manifold voices of criticism about Maoism expressed with unanimity that, when considered from the perspective of Marxism-Leninism, such an ideology is unacceptable. When Deng Xiaoping came to power, the so-called “official” panel of experts with Rakhmanin O. in the vanguard announced that, undoubtedly, new Chinese decision-makers continued Zedong's politics, so they refrained from the proper, Soviet way of development while trying out capitalist solutions and reaching agreements with the West. In their opinion, the ideological attitude of the new group

¹ Ю.М. Галенович, *50 лет с Китаем*, Moscow 2011, p. 325.

² See: Э. Качинс, *Россия и Китай: двойственный союз*, „Pro et Contra”, no. 6, 2007, pp. 61-71.

ruling in Beijing not only obstructed closer relations with the USSR but it also posed a serious threat to socialism, endangering the whole USSR in this way. On the other hand, the group of non-conformists represented by e.g. Bovin A. and Arbatov G., reckoned that in the PRC all the anti-Soviet Zedong's policies were abandoned. They also emphasised the potential benefits of improving relations with Beijing, particularly the possibility of drawing upon Chinese experience in terms of executing economic reforms in the USSR.³ Although the official group representatives' outlooks had a significant impact on the Soviet east policy in the first half of the 1980s, it was exactly at the same time that some indications of willingness to suppress the conflict appeared on both sides. In 1982 a new direction of foreign policy was officially approved and this created favourable conditions for the normalisation of relations with the USSR.⁴ Simultaneously, Brezhnev L.—firstly, on the 26th Congress of the CPSU and then during his speeches in Tashkent and Baku in 1982 publically declared his readiness to improve relations with China.⁵ These circumstances provided grounds for signing some significant agreements on economy, among which the agreement on the restoration of economic cooperation between the USSR and the PRC may be mentioned (signed in 1982, came into force in May 1983). Further rapprochement took place on December 28th, 1984 when three agreements on mutual cooperation in the field of economy, science and technology were reached. More decisive steps into the direction of mutual relations normalisation were not taken until perestroika time. Earlier, Moscow failed to take any efforts to eradicate main sources of problems in mutual relations indicated by China, which were disposal of the Soviet army in Afghanistan, deployment of armed forces contingents along the border with the PRC and in the People's Republic of Mongolia and, finally, USSR involvement in Vietnamese-Chinese conflict siding with Hanoi.⁶ In Kremlin people who had a rather sceptical attitude towards the radical redefinition of previous establishments concerning the policy towards China were still influential.

When Gorbachev M. took office of the first Secretary of CK in CPSU, he preferred presence of the followers of his programme concentrated on radical economic and political reforms, so he gradually ousted conservative

³ А.В. Лукин, *Медведь наблюдает за Драконом. Образ Китая в России в XVII–XX веках*, Moscow 2006, pp. 253-263.

⁴ See: В.Л. Ларин, *В тени проснувшегося Дракона. Российско-китайские отношения на рубеже XX–XXI веков*, Vladivostok 2006, pp. 11-12.

⁵ In practice, it was admission that the PRC is a socialist country and, due to that fact, there is no ideological obstacles to normalization of bilateral relations. А.В. Лукин, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

⁶ О.Б. Рахманин, *К истории отношений России-СССР с Китаем в XX веке. Обзор и анализ основных событий*, Moscow 2000, pp. 37-38; Ю.М. Галенович, *op. cit.*, pp. 301-302.

people from high positions in the country. As a consequence, the policy of Kremlin towards the PRC started to change radically and dynamically and much more attention was paid to the aspect of bilateral relations normalisation. This was the key issue of new thinking in the USSR foreign politics, pretty well expressed in perestroika as the activity aiming at shaping mutual relations with neighbouring countries in a way that contributes to effective and efficient internal restructuring. Furthermore, Gorbachev's and his surrounding environment's views, which were in conformity with those of the above-mentioned Soviet panel of experts called non-conformists by Lukin, made it easier to eradicate conflicts and accelerate development of cooperation between Moscow and Beijing.

First of all, new authorities in Kremlin did not see any ideological obstacles to come closer to the PRC. It was reasonably assumed that Deng Xiaoping was not interested in preserving the anti-Soviet rhetoric in foreign affairs cherished by Mao Zedong. Referring to the idea verbalised earlier by Brezhnev, the PRC was perceived to be a socialist country that chose a way of economic development different from the Soviet Union. Tightening of cooperation, particularly economic, with the country of such a political regime did not require any substantial ideological compromises, it came naturally and was much easier to be conducted than any other form of cooperation with West countries; notwithstanding the fact that Gorbachev dedicated a lot of attention to improve relations with the West. In 1989, the year of the fall of the Berlin Wall in the area of Soviet influences, economic cooperation with socialist China was flourishing as for six years there had already been cross-border trade exchange which was restored formally in the treaty of 1982. Perestroika opponents expressed much more controversy regarding aspirations to normalise relations with the West countries than changes in the policy towards the PRC. Party activists of conservative political views as early as in 1987 came officially against westernisation of Soviet Russia and in 1990 they set up a fraction called Alliance which dismissed Gorbachev's foreign policy as utopian and naive, leading to American dictate in global affairs and inspired by the international imperialistic alliance.⁷

Secondly, at the time of perestroika various environments favouring initiated in the USSR transformations more and more often referred to taking place then modernisation in China, pointing out the possibility of drawing upon East neighbour's experience in terms of conducting economic reforms. Such political views enjoyed particular popularity from 1985 to 1989, paradoxically at the exactly the same time when some first serious

⁷ В. Согрин, *Политическая история современной России 1985–1994*, Moscow 1994, pp. 42, 75-76.

modernisation problems appeared in the PRC. Analysis of the course of transformation in China and the USSR made with hindsight leads to the conclusion that these countries carried out interior reforms in different ways and with different results. This, however, does not change the fact that in the second half of the 1980s Gorbachev himself identified his own objectives as similar or even concurrent with Den Xiaoping's ideas about strengthening of the country's economic potential while preserving the political order that had been there so far—that means establishing the socialist market economy. The Soviet leader based his conception of restructuring on the comeback to Leninism, so he frequently cited Lenin in his official speeches in order to explain the need and direction of reforms carried out at that time.⁸ With regard to this, the New Economic Policy (NEP) from the 1920s was quickly recognised to be the prototype of perestroika.⁹ The Soviet observers of Chinese modernisation initiated in 1978 had all the grounds to assume that Deng, like later Gorbachev, decided to pursue and expand Lenin's economic experiment. The policy of making market open to foreign investments, gradual rebuilding of the private sector and reformation of the state-owned companies aimed at increasing manufacturing efficiency and profitability, which was equivalent to the general establishments of NEP and Deng himself claimed in 1979 that "Lenin encouraged to talk more about economy and less about politics. In my opinion, his words are still important with reference to the shares of efforts which should be devoted to theoretical work in these two areas."¹⁰

The above-mentioned factors formed the ground for Soviet activities of crucial importance for Moscow-Beijing relations. In 1986 Rusakov K., the leader of CK department for cooperation with Socialist countries, was made to retire and his office was taken by the follower of normalisation of relations with the PRC, Medvedev W. The new leader was supported by two deputy leaders, the already-mentioned Rakhmanin O. and recently designated to this office Shakhnazarov G. who was engaged in the reformist movement. A year later Rakhmanin retired, which significantly reduced influences of opponents of cooperation with the PRC in Kremlin.¹¹ Gorbachev set about to

⁸ A. Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World. Perestroika in Perspective*, New York 2007, pp. 284-294.

⁹ В. Согрин, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

¹⁰ Quoted by: C. Tisdell, *Economic Reform and Openness in China: China's Development Policies in the Last 30 Years*, "Economic Analysis & Policy", no. 2, 2009, p. 277.

¹¹ More about personal changes in this Department of the Central Committee during the perestroika: A. Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-90; А.В. Лукин, *op. cit.*, pp. 270-272.

remove three problems indicated by Beijing which were obstacles on the way to mutual relations normalisation.

During his speech in Vladivostok in July 1986, Gorbachev stressed the possibility of reducing the number of the armed forces deployed near the Soviet-Chinese border, gradual withdrawal of the USSR from Afghanistan and taking some effort to normalise Vietnamese-Chinese relations. In 1987 the five-year plan of withdrawing Soviet army from the area of the People's Republic of Mongolia was announced and, by virtue of this, the number of army ground forces garrisoned there was reduced by 75%. A year later there was another decision to diminish the manpower of the Soviet army by 500 000 soldiers, among these there were 200 000 soldiers to be withdrawn from the Asian part of the country.¹² Besides, in 1988 some decisive steps were taken with regard to Vietnam—the Soviet Russia came out with the proposition to pull back its fleet from Cam Ranh Bay on the condition that the USA gives the green light to elimination of bases in Philippines.¹³ A couple of months later, the USSR army withdrew from Afghanistan and Deng Xiaoping was favourably disposed to the possibility of a top-level meeting, which was held in May 1989 when Gorbachev came with an official visit to Beijing, which symbolically crowned the long-term process of normalising Soviet-Chinese relations.

The last years of existence of the USSR were also the time when economic cooperation between these two countries intensified. As it has already been mentioned, the first achievements in this field took place at the beginning of the 1980s. Further acceleration of the political rapprochement between Moscow and Beijing created good conditions for intensified efforts on both sides to set up some specific bilateral agreements on economy. In July 1985 two agreements between the government of the USSR and the government of the PRC were signed. These agreements regulated trade and trade settlements between 1986 and 1990 and set some guidelines for cooperation concerning building and rebuilding of 24 industrial sites in the PRC. Three years later, another agreement was made on direct inter-regional relations in trade and economy between local Chinese and Soviet authorities and economic subjects. The rules of setting up and running joint ventures were also drawn. The authorities devoted considerable attention to economic matters during the official visit of Gorbachev in Beijing and in April 1990 when the Chinese prime minister came to Moscow six agreements of great importance were

¹² О.Б. Рахманин, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38, 40; В.Л. Ларин, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹³ *Soviets Offer to Give Up Vietnam Base: Gorbachev's Proposal Includes Navy's Exit From the Philippines*, "Los Angeles Times", September 16, 1988, http://articles.latimes.com/1988-09-16/news/mn-2454_1_u-s-military-bases [accessed on: 12.11.2011].

signed, out of which half referred to bilateral economic cooperation (agreed then on taking bilateral loans: the Soviet Union was granted a fixed amount of consumer durables and the PRC got finances to build a nuclear power station.¹⁴ As of 1988 when the first bilateral agreement at the local level was reached, authorities of particular regions' of Soviet Zabaykal and the Far East worked together with the representatives of the north-east provinces of the PRC on laying general and specific rules of bilateral economic cooperation.¹⁵ As Larin W. notices, these papers

... to a large extent ... reflected good intentions rather than real possibilities of both sides'. Nevertheless, they gave grounds for future relations, which in the next decade were instantiated as interregional agreements on cooperation, cordial relations and close contacts in the economic and humanitarian areas.¹⁶

Repercussions of the events in Tiananmen Square

Following the events in Tiananmen Square, which coincided with the visit of the Soviet leader in Beijing, relations between the USSR and the PRC underwent further transformations. Although since May 1989 bilateral relations have been considered normalised, the last months of existence of the USSR showed a rather growing distance between the authorities of both countries. The prevailing conviction was that, although Deng's China outstripped the USSR in their radicalism with reference to economic reforms, this was the Soviet Federation that gained supremacy in terms of the pace of political reforms and relative freedom of speech. Chinese scientific environments expressed their hopes that democratisation initiated during perestroika time in the USSR will stimulate analogical transformations in the PRC.¹⁷ The authorities in Beijing rejected such a solution. In order to hamper rampant fondness for the Soviet way of political transformation, parts of information coming from the USSR were censored and what was announced were only these pieces of information which did not run counter to the official position of the Communist Party of China. Authorities in Beijing were afraid of propagating political transformation set in motion in the USSR and they were right in their presupposition that Gorbachev

¹⁴ О.Б. Рахманин, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37, 39, 42, 45.

¹⁵ В.Л. Ларин, *Российско-китайские отношения в региональных измерениях*, Moscow 2005, pp. 150-152.

¹⁶ В.Л. Ларин, *В тени проснувшегося Дракона...*, p. 33.

¹⁷ А. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

will let political reforms develop and he will finally lose control of their results. Additionally, the conception of new thinking in USSR foreign policy, previously accepted without any reservations, in 1989 raised some objections among Chinese party activists.¹⁸ In the meantime, as of the end of 1988 stronger and stronger position of the radical fraction of the CPSU (isolated from the reformist surrounding of Gorbachev) chaired by Yeltsin B. could be noticed. This group criticised reforms in the USSR as sluggish and hardly effective, particularly when considering broadly-taken democratisation of all aspects of the country—in their economic, social and political dimensions. In 1990, in connection with progressive disintegration of the Soviet block countries and more and more apparent de-centralizing forces in the USSR itself, this fraction transformed from radically-reformist into anti-Soviet.¹⁹ Accumulated within the presented events' framework ideological discrepancy of views between Beijing and Moscow did not lead to open military actions but due to more and more powerful position of Yeltsin whose attitude was pro-East (at least till the half of the 1990s), the matter of bilateral relations with the Soviet China was sent to the background.

Factors determining the influx of Chinese people to the USSR at the time of *perestroika*

In the second half of the 1980s Chinese immigration to the USSR was organised in two ways; on the one hand it was regulated by the official international and interregional agreements and contracts and, on the other, it was done by the activity of immigrants themselves who crossed the border either legally or not. The former form included cooperation between universities in the field of students' exchanges, delegation of scientists, and employing temporarily a fixed number of Chinese people in Soviet working places.²⁰ Taking into consideration political and historical context, it seems understandable that officially regulated people transfer preceded migration from bottom-up. In some respects it paved the way for subsequent transcontinental contacts initiated by individuals, which flourished a little bit later and in most cases such migrations did not conform to formal, regulated

¹⁸ E. Bazhanov, *Soviet Policy Toward Asia-Pacific Region: The 1980s*, [in:] G. Rozman, K. Togo, J.P. Ferguson (eds.), *Russian Strategic Thought toward Asia*, New York, 2006, pp. 44- 45.

¹⁹ В. Согрин, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-69.

²⁰ Import of labor from the PRC has started in 1986. В. Ларин, *Посланцы Поднебесной на Дальнем Востоке—легальные и нелегальные*, „Демоскоп Weekly”, no. 69-70, 2002, <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2002/069/analit04.php> [accessed on: 19.11.2011].

by bilateral agreements interregional cooperation. Predominantly, they boiled down to the distribution of economical Chinese goods and services in the USSR that was taking place during short visits, officially registered as done with tourist intentions. These types of swinging migrations were significantly popular after the collapse of the USSR²¹ and they are still pivotal in economic cooperation between Russian and Chinese borderline regions.

One of the implications of radical economic reforms in China was the rapid growth of unemployment. Irrespective of the fact that between 1978 and 1993 development of the private sector was taking place parallel to the unchanged number of government-operated factories, the percentage of employment in the latter decreased from 75% to almost 60% in the urbanised areas and from 60% to 30% in the rural areas.²² The north-east provinces of the PRC neighbouring Russia were at that time (and still remain) the relatively poorly urbanised areas, and because of that they suffered from the consequences of reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping. Migration, thus, more and more often offered a possibility to receive a regular income. There was an intensified mobility among countrymen who usually had poor qualifications and were willing to accept almost all jobs, heedless of difficult working conditions. The system of household registration required by law in China (*hinoku*) categorised individuals as coming from rural or urban areas. As these categorisations were rather permanent, border crossing frequently caused fewer difficulties than migration from the land to the city, or even to better-industrialised regions. It was also significant that geographical proximity of north-east China with regard to the Asian regions of the USSR made these countries report demand for working force and economical consumer goods. The development of private sector, strictly connected with carried in the Middle State economic reforms, entailed the growth of the number of people potentially interested in individual manufacturing and distribution of these goods.²³

The impact of the above-mentioned factors on the intensification of migration processes was additionally strengthened by Beijing's decisions on expanding the policy of becoming open to the outer world and decentralisation in the sphere of external trade contacts. All this, in practice, meant increasing independence as far as formulation and execution of foreign cooperation are

²¹ Г. Витковская, Ж. Зайончковская, *Новая столичныйская политика на Дальнем Востоке России: надежды и реали*, [in:] Г. Витковская, Д. Тренин (eds.), *Перспективы Дальневосточного региона: межстрановые взаимодействия*, Moscow 1999, p. 96.

²² Y. Cao, Y. Qian, B.R. Weingast, *From Federalism, Chinese Style, To Privatization, Chinese Style*, "Economics of Transition", no. 1, 1999, p. 103.

²³ D. Liao, P. Sohmen, *The Development of Modern Entrepreneurship in China*, "Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs", no. 1, 2001, pp. 27-33.

concerned. Forming new space for cross-border cooperation in the regions of north-east China constituted a part of Chinese macroeconomic strategy and was directed at improving economic conditions of these areas. Involvement in cooperation with abroad was perceived to be a great opportunity to bridge the gap between the industrially strong east coast and the central region of the PRC, which covers, among others areas, north borderlines.²⁴

The process of local authorities' autonomy increase in China that began at the end of 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s led to a peculiar diversification of economic strategies in these provinces. Due to the fact that, following 1988, individual regions became independent in their economic cooperation with foreign partners, there was not any universal or coherent mode of bilateral cooperation applied to borderline areas, both Soviet and Chinese. What cannot be denied, some common purposes of this cooperation are clearly visible for all engaged in it Chinese provinces – export of workforce, filling the demand gaps on Soviet local markets and import of natural resources. This general direction of development of contacts with the foreign partner implied intensification of Chinese migration to the Asian part of the USSR and became established in the 1990s.

The last ten years of the USSR existence brought the growth of population in the far-east region higher than in the remaining parts of RSFSR (the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic) all together. Due to the migration policy executed in law at that time which provided for financial support for people settling in Siberia and the Far-East regardless of their reasons (be it an individual decision or being delegated to work), this traditional direction of internal migrations prevailed despite of unfavourable life conditions in the regions that adopted immigrants.²⁵ As early as then, growing workforce deficit became apparent, which after the collapse of the USSR gained the rank of one of the most serious restrains hampering regional development. In the 1980s this problem stemmed mainly from the employment structure of each sector of Soviet economy. At the beginning of the decade, notwithstanding the fact that population growth reported in the Far East was higher than in the whole RSFSR, demand for workplaces in this sector remained unsatisfied.²⁶ This situation was additionally aggravated by the fact that internal migration in most cases was only temporary—between 1986 and 1990 only one person out of 18 people who had migrated decided

²⁴ С.А. Иванов, *Формирование приграничного с Россией пояса открытости КНР*, “Ойкумена”, no. 3, 2009, p. 53.

²⁵ Л.А. Крушанова, *Миграционная политика советского государства на Дальнем Востоке (1980-е гг.)*, “Россия и АТР”, no. 3, 2009, p. 127.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 128.

to settle there²⁷. In such a set of circumstances, there was an increasing need to obtain indispensable human workforce by means of imports from abroad and the PRC had already been perceived as a competitive provider of workforce in the whole region of north-east Asia.

There were other factors brought into prominence and additionally reinforced by restructuring instigated by Gorbachev that increased the attractiveness of cross-border cooperation and they were strictly connected with this influx of the Chinese to the USSR. Alongside with the crisis growing in the whole country, the far-east regions of the USSR experienced the phenomenon called *catastroika* (amalgamation of the words *catastrophe* and *perestroika*), which manifested itself in the collapse of regional markets.²⁸ Yet, immigrants from the USSR offered goods of good quality which were then in short supply in the USST, they did not reject barter deals and they were interested in buying products of even relatively poor quality.²⁹

First decisive steps in order to formally organise migration processes between the PRC and the USSR were taken in 1986, when, as regulated by the arrangements of the bilateral agreement (in the form of notes exchange) two consular offices were opened—Chinese in Leningrad and Soviet in Shanghai, and a couple of months later (September 10th, 1986) the consular agreement was signed. At the moment of the collapse of the USSR, there were four such institutions – since September 1990 two more in Khabarovsk and Shenyang. It is worth pointing out that, in the long run, their locations as well as a small quantity could cause substantial inconveniences for migrants. Cross-border flow of people was, however, taken out of consulates' control in 1988 as a result of the arrangement on abandoning visa requirements for Chinese people coming to the USSR.³⁰ Not only did this decision, in void till the end of 1993, activate individual (non-contractual) immigration of Chinese people but it also contributed to the establishment of a peculiar, half-legal mode of interregional cooperation, whereby even though the border crossing was officially recognised and considered legitimate, activity of immigrants in the USSR was illegal to varying degrees.

As it has been mentioned previously, in the USSR—like in China—at the end of the 1980s the autonomy of regional and local authorities increased as

²⁷ В. Портяков, *Миграционная ситуация на Дальнем Востоке России*, [in:] *Миграционная ситуация на Дальнем Востоке и политика России*, Московский Центр Карнеги, Moscow 1996, p. 38.

²⁸ S. Davis, *The Russian Far East: The last frontier?*, London—New York 2003, p. 22.

²⁹ А.В. Лукин, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

³⁰ Г.Б. Дудченко, *Миграция на Дальнем Востоке России в конце XX в.*, “Россия и АТР,” no. 3, 2004, pp. 85-86.

far as the management of cooperation with the foreign partner is considered. For the USSR formal grounds for this decentralisation were laid in the already-mentioned agreement on the establishment of direct, interregional contacts between respective administrative units of both countries signed in June 1988. Some districts and Asian countries of the Soviet part of the USSR gained widely-understood freedom to regulate economic cooperation, which also entailed freedom of regulating migration cooperation (e.g. companies had the right to set their own directives for the amount of immigrants that could be employed). In stark contrast to the reforms taking place in the PRC, the freedom of economic cooperation at the end of the 1980s in the USSR started to transform into autonomy, that concerned the area of formulating regional migration policies among others. Such a course of events enhanced acquisition of a local identity constructed as a countermeasure of the imperial identity and by the chaos that competition between Gorbachev and Yeltsin caused.³¹ This autonomy was additionally strengthened after 1991 and remained a characteristic element of Soviet-Chinese relations for at least a decade starting from the date of the collapse of the USSR. What it implied was, among others, increasing impact of regions on the centre in terms of setting and modifying some establishments of the mainstream migration policy regulated at the local level. In some cases (e.g. in the Seaside Country) reaction of local elites to the problem of the growing number of Chinese immigrants triggered Moscow's decisions regarding border control regime.

Final remarks

The evolution of Soviet-Chinese relations presented above entailed fundamental consequences for Chinese migration to the present-day east Russian areas, its social and political reception, later management of its course and implications for the host country. The decision to demilitarise east borderline of the USSR resulted in the improvement of political relations with Beijing but it also brought some important social and economic outcomes in the region, stimulating the increase in demand for foreign workforce and imported goods, of which China was the most competitive provider. The renewal and later intensification of Soviet-Chinese economic cooperation contributed to the formation of official and legitimate grounds and strong economic incentives (which are discussed below) for the flow of people between these two countries. Furthermore, the ideological rapprochement of Moscow and Beijing, observed from 1985 to 1989, enabled not only

³¹S. Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.

to normalise bilateral relations but it also facilitated the social process of coming to terms with ongoing changes, which meant intensified³² presence of Chinese immigrants in the far east and east Siberian areas of the USSR. In the 1980s, the reaction of the Soviet society to border opening and all the implications it brought was not negative. In the borderline areas the problem of cooperation with China, among others in the field of migration, received much public interest because of the well-understood social and political rationales so the new situation was accepted with enthusiasm by both local elites and public opinion.³³ It may seem surprising, especially when considering the influence of Soviet propaganda from the 1960s and 1970s, which identified the PRC as a staunch opponent of socialism. As a matter of fact, however, impact of this factor on perceiving the Chinese immigrants was insignificant at the beginning. The Soviet society paid some attention to the tense relations between Moscow and Beijing only because they were afraid of a possible military conflict. The attitude of the Soviet Union towards the east neighbour was shaped in opposition to the PRC and the CPC, not inhabitants themselves, so the renewal of social relations was not burdened with geo-strategic or ideological aspects accentuated by the Soviet propaganda in the previous decades.³⁴ It was also significant that the suspension of the cross-border movement lasted a bit longer than two decades, so the generation of people living and working in the east borderline areas had still in mind close, or even friendly, Soviet-Chinese relations from the 1950s. Other implications were brought by the instigated in 1988 diversification of bilateral economic relations, which consisted in spreading cooperation at the international level to different forms of interregional cooperation. After 1989, irrespective of the growing ideological and political distance between Moscow and Beijing, Soviet-Chinese local initiatives were sustained and developed, which undoubtedly intensified the cross-border mobility of people coming from the north-east China.

Unquestionably, the last years of existence of the USSR were the time of the most intensified influx of the Chinese to the Asian part of the country. Works of literature on this subject claim unanimously that the peak of this phenomenon occurred in the first half of the 1990s. The enormous impact of this period on matters connected with the perception and management of Chinese immigration, thus, was not propelled by its intensity (relatively

³² Chinese migration to the eastern Russian territories has a long history. See: А.Г. Ларин, *Китайские мигранты в России. История и современность*, Moscow 2009, pp. 19-142.

³³ А.В. Лукин, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-292.

³⁴ The conclusion made on the basis of conversations with prof. V. Dyatlov from the Irkutsk State University, November 4–5, 2011.

low at that time) but rather by the economical and political considerations in the second half of the 1980s, most of which became established after the collapse of the USSR and set general directions of migration processes in the next few decades.

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Abstract

Complicated normalisation of relations between Moscow and Beijing in the second half of the 1980s, created political and legal conditions for restoring bilateral migration cooperation. Its' continuation and intensive development, that was taking place even during the period of several years' cooling of Russian-Chinese relations at the beginning of the 1990s, was sustained mainly by pragmatic reasons connected with the economic needs of neighbouring regions in the east Russia and north-east China. The enormous impact of the *perestroika* period on matters connected with the perception and management of Chinese immigration, was not propelled by its intensity (relatively low at that time) but rather by the economical and political considerations in the second half of the 1980s, most of which became established after the collapse of the USSR and set general directions of migration processes in the next few decades.

Keywords: Perestroika, Soviet-Chinese Relations, migration.