



## Resettlement of foreigners to Russia in the 18th century and today

The German-born Czarina Catherine II, who came to power in July 1762, began her colonization policy of the Russian Empire with a decree to the Senate on October 14, 1762, in which she authorized the Senate, together with the College of Foreign Affairs, to admit all persons who wished to settle in Russia, hoping that in time this would increase the prosperity of the Empire. History is repeating itself today.

*Karl Eckstein*

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## Introduction

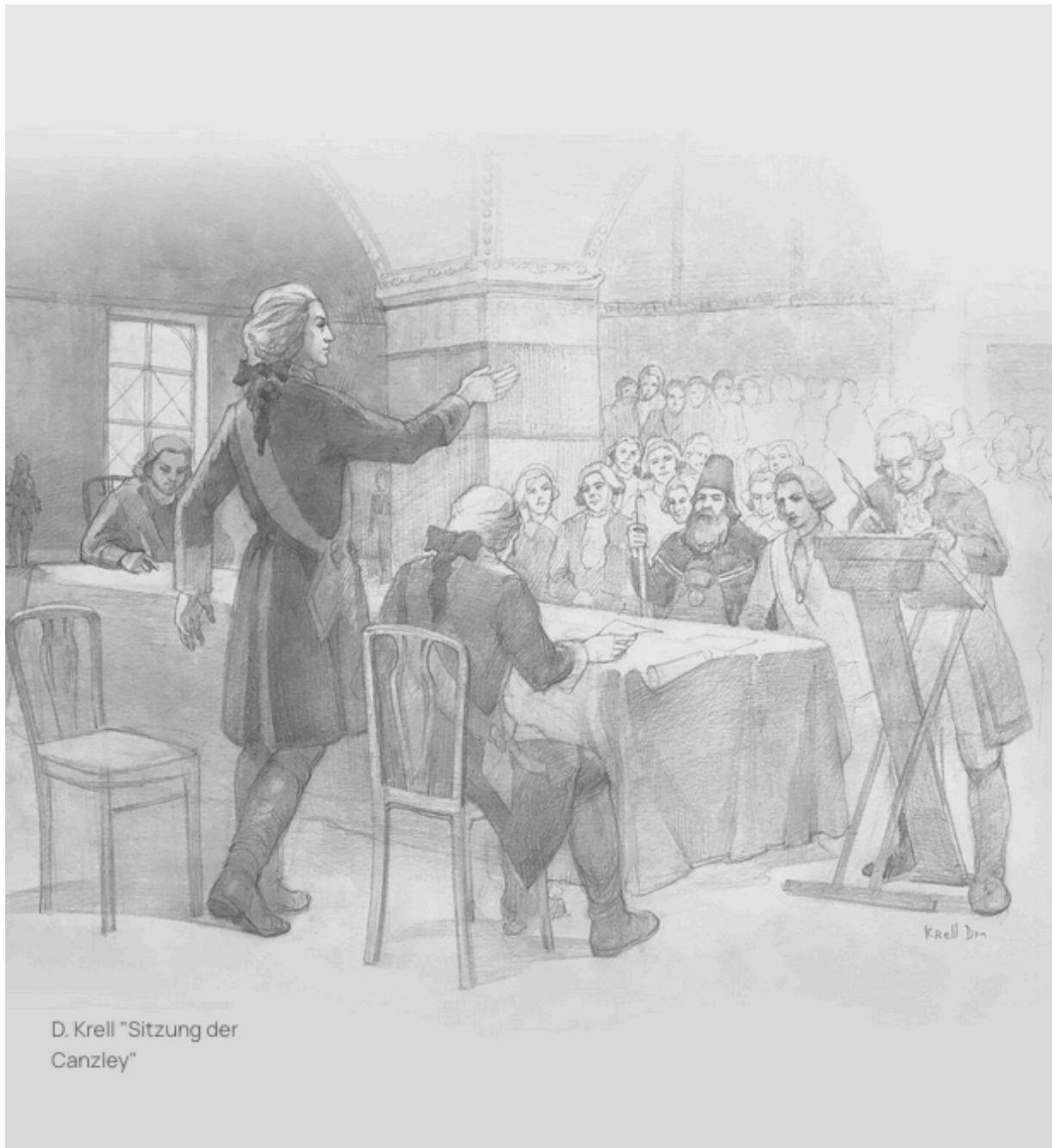
On December 4, 1762, she signed the **manifesto "On Permission for Foreigners to Settle in Russia and on the Free Return of Russian People who have gone Abroad to their Fatherland"** (the so-called 1st Invitation Manifesto).

This document explained the basic principles of the new Russian leadership's policy: maternal concern for peace in the country and population growth. At the same time, Catherine II did not count on an immediate influx of colonists to Russia. The state structure for the reception of foreigners had not yet been established, and the places for their settlement had not yet been legally defined. Without this, there was no point in beginning a large-scale recruitment of foreigners.

## Why mostly Germans moved to Russia

The mass resettlement of foreigners to Russia began after Catherine II issued the **manifesto "On Permission for All Foreigners Coming to Russia to Settle in the Governorates Where It Pleases Them, and on the Rights Granted to Them"** (the so-called 2nd Invitation Manifesto) on July 22, 1763.

This manifesto, which was published in Russian, German, Latin, French, English, Dutch, Polish, Czech, Turkish and Arabic, was not a completely new document. It was an organic continuation of the manifesto of December 4, 1762. The manifesto could be divided into two parts: The first part (paragraphs 1-5) explained the mechanism of resettlement to Russia, and the second part (paragraphs 6-10) described the benefits and privileges granted by the Empress to the resettlers who would *take the oath of allegiance*.



Consultancy on settling in Germany – a contemporary portrayal

These were unprecedented:

free receipt of free fertile land in specially designated areas,

tax exemption for 30 years (in the case of settlement in cities - for 5 years),

interest-free loans for 10 years to build a house, to purchase food until the first harvest, livestock, agricultural implements and tools for craftsmen (after this period, the loan was to be repaid in equal installments over three years),

reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses,

payment of resettlement costs by the Russian state, and the provision of travel money by the Russian Embassy abroad in the event of insufficient funds for the move,

free transportation to the place of settlement after arrival in Russia,

duty-free transportation of personal property,

exemption from military and civilian service (except for agricultural service),

an increase in salary when entering military service at the request of the settler,

in the case of the establishment of factories and plants with previously unknown production in Russia – exemption from inland, port and border customs duties for 10 years when selling the goods produced there to foreign countries,

the right to found colonies and settlements,

the preservation of their way of life,

freedom of religion and the right to build their own churches in the colonies with the necessary number of priests and other church employees,

full self-government in the colonies, without interference from government officials in the organization of the internal life of the colonies,

permission to organize trade and fairs in the colonies without levying taxes on sales to the treasury,

the right to leave Russia at any time, on condition that half of the property acquired in Russia be surrendered to the treasury if one had lived in Russia for one to five years. Those who had lived here for more than five years had to surrender one-tenth.

The above-mentioned benefits and privileges were granted not only to the incoming colonists, but also to their descendants born in Russia. After the end of the favorable years, foreigners who settled in Russia had to pay taxes like other subjects.

From 1763 to 1766, more than 30 thousand people moved to Russia.



## Resettlements from Germany to Russia

At the end of the 18th century, according to the revised census of 1796, the number of Germans was 237,000 (0.3% of the total population of the Russian Empire). According to the first general census in 1897, in which religion and language were recorded, but not nationality, the more or less accurate number of people in the Russian Empire who spoke German and considered German to be their mother tongue was 1,790,000.

At the end of the 19th century, there were more than 2000 German settlements in Russia, and the number of Germans was around 2 million. The Germans were the eighth largest ethnic group in the country and made up 1.4% of the empire's population.

This extremely generous invitation to foreigners to resettle in Russia should be viewed against the following background:

The Seven Years' War, in which Russia and Prussia were among the enemies, had just ended. The peace treaty between Prussia and Russia was signed in St. Petersburg on May 5, 1762. Two months later, on July 9, 1762, Catherine II, who was of German origin, was crowned Empress of Russia.

The situation in Germany in the 18th century was anything but rosy. The many



fragmented small domains were mostly ruled by noble dynasties, which allowed themselves an extravagant royal household, which was financed by the resident farmers being burdened with taxes. Mass poverty, permanent wars and internal unrest in a revolutionary mood prevailed. The incentives for emigration were great.

In Russia, however, huge territories were barely cultivated. For the most part, the land east of the Urals was only used by nomads passing through. The huge raw material reserves such as iron, coal, copper, gold and silver remained unused in the ground.

In addition, new territories were added in the steppes of Central Asia, where the nomadic tribes sought Russia as a protective power against the aggressive and cruel Mongolian hordes of Genghis Khan's successors.

In short, there was a demand in Russia for hardworking and willing immigrants, which was a good reason for many people in Germany to emigrate.

## **The current Russian government is taking on bonds in its own history**

A wag is someone who thinks that the situation today is comparable!

But since the Russians are obviously such wags, it is not surprising that there are efforts in the government and parliament to make offers to skilled workers willing to leave the country, especially from Western European countries, in the spirit of Empress Catherine II.

Thus, on August 19, 2024, President Putin issued Decree No. 702, according to which foreigners can enter Russia more easily.

Initially, people from countries whose politics contradict Russian spiritual values will be granted residence permits without the usual criteria, such as proof of Russian language skills, knowledge of Russian history and the basics of Russian law. The usual annual quota restrictions will also not be applied.

Initially, visas for three months are to be issued to such persons in order to examine the circumstances in more detail during this period and to make decisions for the future.

On September 17, 2024, the Russian government issued Decree No. 2560-r, which lists the 47 countries from which resettlement to Russia can be carried out under a simplified procedure. This is the list of countries that have behaved "unfriendly"

towards Russia, in particular, have imposed sanctions. This list is published in Russian on the [Internet](#) at . It includes Switzerland, Austria, Germany and Liechtenstein.



## ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВО РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ

### РАСПОРЯЖЕНИЕ

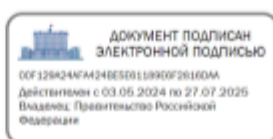
от 17 сентября 2024 г. № 2560-р

МОСКВА

1. В соответствии с пунктом 2 Указа Президента Российской Федерации от 19 августа 2024 г. № 702 "Об оказании гуманитарной поддержки лицам, разделяющим традиционные российские духовно-нравственные ценности" утвердить прилагаемый перечень иностранных государств и территорий, реализующих политику, навязывающую деструктивные неолиберальные идеологические установки, противоречащие традиционным российским духовно-нравственным ценностям.

2. Настоящее распоряжение вступает в силу со дня его официального опубликования.

Председатель Правительства  
Российской Федерации



М.Мишустин

Decree 2560 of the Russian government

The exact details of the procedure for obtaining visas and further procedures within Russia have not yet been published to my knowledge. However, a conciliatory practice will develop in this regard with immediate effect, which will probably only be reflected in detailed regulations after a period of experience.

Those interested in leaving the country are advised to contact the Russian consulate in their country.

In addition, the conditions for former emigrants from Russia to return to their original homeland are also the focus of this new migration policy.

The conditions for settlement after the three-month residence permit has expired will be particularly favorable for people who have specialist knowledge that is in demand in Russia.

ARTICLE TAGS:

Analysis Cathrine the Great Germany Russia Putin, Vladimir Russian consulate  
Russian embassy