rehabilitating people in good health; (6) to become involved in activities designed to give people a better understanding of the value of good health and encourage them to adopt behaviors to help safeguard it; (7) to develop medical sciences and advanced medical technologies, in every way possible, including information technologies; (8) to meet the population's need for medications and other medical products; (9) to set up a system of sociomedical insurance; (10) to fix a price policy in the market for medical services; (11) to introduce professional liability insurance, and improve the social protection for health sector personnel; (12) to create a system of medical rehabilitation, and develop preventoriums and sanatoriums; (13) to extend the organizational and legal framework of public health institutions, and optimize the nomenclature of medical specialties.

On the whole, this document reads more like an ideological text, in the manner of numerous writings of the Soviet period, than a practical guide for action. It reflects the ideas and interests of the Ministry of Health's main leaders before its reorganization in 2004, with little danger of being proved wrong, it can be said that this document will go through major adjustments in the coming years.

It is not surprising that the transition period's blurred policy did not lead to any major success. Apart from a reduction in the number of abortions, declines in maternal and child mortality, and gaining control over a certain number of infectious diseases, such as diphtheria, whooping cough, hepatitis A, typhoid, brucellosis, rabies, or malaria, the population's health status has shown no positive change, nor any promising tendency. Incredible as this may sound, Russians have a lower life expectancy at birth at the start of the 21st century than they had 40 years ago.

It was easy to identify the key health challenges, and certain policies could have met these challenges. Looking first at the rapid worsening of various infectious diseases (tuberculosis, STDs, AIDS); for all these diseases, morbidity rates increased at an unprecedented rate in the last decade. Although the rising incidence has slowed down in the last two or three years, the future evolution of the situation remains uncertain and worrying. Second, exogenous mortality (accidents, accidental poisoning, homicides) shows no sign of letting up. On the contrary, it has begun to rise again, probably as a result of increasing alcohol consumption. Third, the risks of premature death, essentially through cardiovascular and chronic diseases, have grown substantially. In the current state of affairs, it is impossible to foresee how society and the State could curb a trend that started more than 40 years ago.

### III. MIGRATION POLICY

#### 1. Internal Migrations

During the Soviet period, the size and nature of internal migratory flows were essentially determined by two State-driven processes: forced industrialization, which accelerated the process of urbanization, and the development of peripheral regions, which triggered off massive flows toward the east and north of the country. The aim was to transform an agrarian country into an industrial power as quickly as possible by transferring resources, human and others, from the countryside to the cities, or toward regions to be developed. The immense population movements engendered by urbanization and regional development were completely consistent with the policy of the State. In so doing, however, the authorities rightly feared losing control over massive migrations that risked ruining the system, a danger they sought to avoid.

Deep regional inequalities in living conditions were present throughout the entire Soviet era. An immense urban-industrial periphery living in poverty existed alongside small enclaves where living standards were relatively high and artificially maintained (capital cities, several regional centers, or privileged industrial centers). Residents of the periphery were constantly on the lookout for the slightest opportunity to move toward more prosperous areas, thereby undermining the very idea of privileged enclaves. The authorities also feared too swift an exodus from the countryside, which played the role of an internal colony whose exploitation had for a long time made it possible for them to achieve their ambitious plans. In a word, massive migrations were necessary for development, but their strict control was just as necessary to anchor and maintain the totalitarian political regime then asserting itself. These contradictory aims spawned a hypocritical and paradoxical migratory policy. On the one hand, the State did its utmost to bolster the factors forcing people to leave the countryside and small towns, and to ensure an uninterrupted flow of demanding human resources toward industry and other urban sectors, the army, and remote regions. On the other hand, however, the State implemented a system of restrictions and barriers to ensure its total power over migration by submitting every individual move to bureaucratic controls.

The key instrument of this policy was the internal passport system. Making it possible to control all citizens' movements, this system had been widely used in Western Europe in the 19th century but had more or less disappeared everywhere by the beginning of the
20th century. It had been kept in place in Russia (at least for those who left their permanent place of residence), however, providing Lenin with the opportunity of declaring, in 1903:

Social-democrats demand complete freedom of movement and enterprise for the people. But what does “freedom of movement” mean? [...] It means that passports must also be eliminated in Russia (in other states, passports have long since disappeared) [...] that no policeman, no zemstvo civil servant will have the power to stop people from living and working wherever they see fit. [...] Isn’t this a case of feudal serfdom? Isn’t it insulting people? (Lenin, [1966]).

Once in power the Bolsheviks eliminated the internal passport and, despite the fact that serious obstacles to the movement of citizens resurfaced in the years following the revolution, the general policy of abolishing “feudal serfdom” remained in force for some time. In 1922–1923, a whole series of legislative documents were adopted to abolish the system of internal passports and all institutions related to it, as well as all other constraints on the right of Russian Federation citizens to move or reside anywhere on the Russian territory, by demanding that they have a residence permit or other such document. Thus, The Small Soviet Encyclopedia could write that “Soviet law does not recognize the system of internal passports [which] had been an important tool of police intervention and fiscal policy in a so-called police State” (Encyclopedia, 1930).

Less than 10 years later, however, a new article in The Great Soviet Encyclopedia tells of the Bolshevik State’s sudden policy turnaround:

Passport system: rules of administrative registration, of control and regulations over population movement through the introduction of passports for the said population. The Soviet legislation [...] never concealed that its passport system was class-based, using it according to the conditions of class struggle and the aims of the working class’s dictatorship at different stages in the construction of socialism. (Encyclopedia, 1939)

These words referred to the new system of internal passports already established by a decree of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People’s Commissars on December 27, 1932. According to this decree, all people living in cities, industrial towns, sovkhozes, and new cities had to have an internal passport stamped by the authorities testifying to their place of domicile (the propiska). Ipsa facto, this inhibited the right to move since the choice of residence depended on the possibility of obtaining the propiska. Very quickly, in cities such as Moscow, Leningrad, the federal republic capitals, and other important cities, the propiska was restricted, and even citizens with a passport could obtain the propiska only with special authorization. As for the peasants—the majority of the country’s population—without passports, they were unable to move to the city and were effectively prevented from leaving their village or kolkhoz.

Admittedly, the State did not intend to ban all migrations by introducing such restrictions. On the contrary, its economic policy demanded a radical upheaval in the population’s geographical distribution and, as a consequence, vast migration. The aim was to define and control these flows from the center, regardless of its citizens’ individual aspirations. As Stalin declared in 1939, “at present it is only a matter of proposing to the kolkhozes to accept our request and allow at least one and a half million young members of kolkhozes to depart each year to satisfy industry’s increasing needs” (Stalin, 1952). Although rather hypocritical, Stalin’s formulation clearly reveals the cynical order thus created: the individual could only move if “he was allowed to leave” by being granted a passport authorizing him to go and live elsewhere. From this point on, migration flows were thus strictly regulated.

By the late 1930s, the already severe controls placed on population movement proved insufficient. As a result, in 1940, a new law added penal sanctions against any individual leaving his work or changing his place of work without authorization. Conversely, engineers, technicians and qualified workers who refused to accept a change of residence dictated by the State could be penalized. Although this law was at first followed to the letter, it was undoubtedly applied less rigidly over the years; nonetheless, the 1940 law was abrogated only in 1956.

These regulations aimed at controlling spontaneous migrations, or those considered as such, even though the desire to migrate often resulted from very pressing economic or political constraints. In counterpart, forced migration also existed, involving mass displacements and even repressive population transfers.

The Soviet regime frequently resorted to political repression to solve the most diverse problems, with economic issues first, or almost first, among them. As early as 1929, on the basis of a proposal put forth by a special commission of the Politburo, the Sovnarkom adopted a secret decree on “the use of prisoners’ labor,” which specified that people condemned to 3 years or more of “deprivation of freedom” by common law tribunals had to serve their sentence in labor camps by working for OGPU. And, to welcome those deprived of their freedom, the OGPU had in turn to enlarge or build new labor camps in remote areas “in order to colonize them and exploit their natural resources by using the labor of those deprived of freedom” (Materik, 2000, p. 64).
Very quickly, deprivation of freedom for criminal or political offences became an important instrument for the "colonization of outlying regions." These regions soon became the sites of a vast network of camps, colonies, and special settlements (spetsposelenie) where millions of people newly deprived of their freedom were sent: dekoulakised peasants, Gulag prisoners, ethnic deportees, and so on. In 1953, the total number of prisoners and specposeleny rose to 5.4 million people, while Siberia, the Far-East and Kazakhstan combined, where most of these prisoners were concentrated, barely numbered 30 million inhabitants in total.

Stalin’s death ended these massive deportations, but the system of migration regulation initiated under Stalin did not die with him.

The discrimination imposed by the system of internal passports went on for a long time. It took more than 20 years before new passport regulations in the USSR were introduced by a USSR's Council of Ministers Decree on August 28, 1974; according to this new decree, passports had to be issued to all USSR citizens aged 16 years and over. For the first time, this decree created the same system for rural and urban dwellers. "The passport campaign began on the first of January 1976 and was completed on 31st December 1981. In 6 years, 50 million passports were delivered in rural localities." (Lioubarski Kronid, Régime de passeport et régime de propiska en Russie, http://www.hrights.ru/text/b2/Chapter5.htm).

The propiska lasted even longer, until the USSR collapsed, and has still not completely disappeared. In principle, any citizen holding a passport could move freely throughout the entire country; in reality, however, he could not settle in any place where the propiska was restricted as, without it, he had access to neither work nor housing. As the demand for labor was in general very high in these regions, the State’s need for labor in key economic sectors (industry, science, etc.) was in constant contradiction with a migration policy that paralyzed the labor market. In practice, the creation of non-viable artificial social statuses made it possible to bypass these contradictions. Thus appeared millions of limitchik—people whom businesses and state organizations were entitled to employ by issuing them with a temporary propiska for the duration of their contract of employment. This authorization to live in large cities was precarious and did not extend to other members of the family (even marriage to a limitchik did not entitle them to a provisional propiska).

Only on October 26, 1990, did the USSR’s Supreme Soviet Committee for Constitutional Supervision acknowledge that the propiska’s authorization proce-

dure in force for so many years “prevents citizens from enjoying their fundamental right to freedom of movement, work, and education”; legally, this paved the way for abolishing the propiska. Furthermore, on June 25, 1993, President Boris Yeltsin approved the law on “the right of citizens of the Russian Federation to freedom of movement and to the choice of their place of residence within the limits of the Russian Federation,” which should have put a term to the propiska. In reality, this did not happen. In many places, the attempt to eradicate the propiska’s authorization procedure met with resistance from local authorities, and it still survives today. Moreover, many bureaucrats at all levels still openly favor a return to the propiska.

Although prohibitive and repressive measures were the main tool of Soviet migration policy, this was seldom referred to. Instead, the focus was constantly placed on the incentives that had also always existed. A whole system of privileges had been created at the time the State needed to increase flows of migrants toward certain cities or regions. A most typical example is the priority accorded to regions of the extreme North, rich in natural resources but suffering from harsh climatic conditions. The list and particular status of these territories were defined in 1967 by a decree of the Soviet government. In 1990, the list was extended to 70% of Russia’s territory (11.9 million sq. km.), without any real reason according to some authors. Those volunteering to come and work in these regions enjoyed a higher salary, more days off, subsidies for temporary work stoppage, higher pensions, and so on. These measures met with relative success. The benefits attracted many people to the northern regions; in 20 years, from 1970 to 1989, the population in the far eastern regions increased noticeably, from 7.2% to 8.6% of Russia’s total population (12.6 million people). In subsequent years, these regions lost some of their economic attraction and their population size, in absolute terms and as the percentage of the country’s total population, has started decreasing.

Another type of incentive was used to encourage migrations toward developing regions. It consisted of combining economic interests with young people’s enthusiasm referred to as the “komsomol appeals.” In the decades following World War II and until the mid-1980s, it was common practice to call on volunteers to work on the large sites of natural resource development, construction of railways, power stations, and so on. In this way was ensured, for instance, a flow of young people to Kazakhstan in the 1950s, to exploit virgin lands or build the Baikal-Amour railroad during the 1970s.
During World War II, people and industries were evacuated from the occupied territories, which played a considerable role in increasing the population and developing the economy of the Asian part of Russia.

The population census of 1989 makes it possible to assess the results of internal migration during the post-war period and, as a consequence, the effect of Soviet migration policy.

According to the first Soviet census of 1926, 82% of the population within the borders of the USSR as well as those of Russia were rural (Goskomstat, 1988, p. 8). At the end of the 1920s, right from the start of forced industrialization, a rural exodus took place on an unprecedented scale. Between the 1926 and 1939 censuses, the urban population of the USSR (within the pre-1939 frontiers) increased by 30 million people (from 26.3 to 56.1 million) and its share of the total population rose from 18 to 33% (Goskomstat, 1988). Over the next 50 years, the USSR’s total population (within its new borders) increased by 94.5 million, but, during the same period, the urban population grew by 127.5 million whereas the rural population fell by 33 million despite its fertility being higher than that of the urban population. Between 1950 and 1990, the USSR’s urban population increased, on average, by around 30 million people every 10 years (Goskomstat, 1997, p. 7).

At the end of the 1980s, the urban population represented two-thirds of the USSR’s total population and close to three-quarters of Russia’s population. Of the 29.8 million-strong increase in the urban population of the USSR between 1926 and 1939, 18.7 million, or 63%, were migrants from rural areas. Between 1939 and 1969, within the USSR’s post-1939 borders, the urban population rose by 75.6 million people, 61 million of whom were migrants (Urmanis, Borisov, 1984, p. 414).

The migrations taking place during the Soviet period also modified the regional distribution of Russia’s population. These changes, however, were less important than those brought about by urbanization. The USSR had inherited from the Russian empire an immense territory far from uniformly populated and developed. During several decades after the end of the 1920s, occurred a substantial shift of population eastwards, as a result of migrations from the European to the Asian parts of Russia. The total population east of the Ural increased from 13 to 22 million people between 1926 and 1939 and reached 32.1 million in 1989 (thus multiplied by a factor of 2.5, whereas Russia’s total population increased only 1.7 times). However, population movements toward the East hardly changed the overall picture (Figure 118–5). As in the past, Siberia and the Far East have remained very sparsely populated and the concentration of population in the Central region that includes Moscow, has only slightly decreased (Figure 118–6).

During the period following the USSR’s collapse, former restrictions on freedom of movement were either abolished or considerably weakened, and the State’s once active policy in the realm of internal migrations disappeared. Migrations then took place against a backdrop of depopulation, economic crisis, and political conflicts (especially in the Caucasus), and have often flowed in directions contrary to those imposed for decades by previous policies. Noticeable since the late 1980s, this migratory ebb has gathered momentum, mostly from the eastern and northern regions that the State once sought to populate.

This is not really because the State, with its more liberal political regime, no longer allows itself to resort to methods used during the Soviet regime. More fundamentally, this occurs because the potential of internal migration became severely limited by the level of urbanization already reached and by the trend toward depopulation. In Russia, internal migration can no longer play the role it enjoyed from 1930 to 1980. Today, the migration issues are related much more to external migration, and more precisely to immigration, which completely alters the objectives that policies may be aiming at.

2. External Migration

a. Emigration

The Russian empire contributed much less than other European countries to the trans-Atlantic migrations of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This can be explained by Siberia’s vast and vacant lands, and by the enormous potential for internal agrarian colonization, encouraged by the government. Nevertheless, the country produced emigration flows, mostly consisting of non-Russians. Estimates put the number of people who emigrated from Russia in the period 1861–1915 at 4.3 million, of whom 2.6 million left during the first fifteen years of the 20th century. Two-thirds went to the United States (close to 80% during this period) (Obolensky-Ossinsky, 1928). Among those who left, predominated the Jews (approximately 2 million between 1881 and 1914), and other non-Russians. From 1860 until the beginning of World War I, the majority of migrants to North and South America were non-Russians: Jews (44%), Poles (25%), Lithuanians (8%), Finns (7%), and Germans (6%) (Obolenski, 1928, p. 24).

Although World War I abruptly halted these emigration flows, the Revolution and the civil war generated new, and very different, streams. In fact, these political upheavals incited a massive and definitive emigration. Although estimates vary greatly from one author to the next, it is now estimated that the USSR,
FIGURE 118-5  Maps showing the evolution of the Russian population's geographical distribution during the 20th century.
within its 1922 borders, established at the time of its foundation, lost then approximately 2 million inhabitants (Jiromskaia, 2000, p. 134-139; Adamets, 2003, p. 284-285).

When the civil war ended and the Soviet regime imposed its power over the entire country free emigration outside the USSR stopped. It became exceptionally rare for individuals to receive authorization to leave the country (an exit visa), except for official duties abroad. A few waves of uncontrolled emigration took place nonetheless. In 1931-1933, according to some estimates, some 200,000 Kazakhs definitely left for China, Mongolia, Afghanistan, Iran, or Turkey, to escape from a raging famine (Kozybaev et al., 1991, p. 226).

World War II spurred new, and very substantial, waves of emigration, some more or less uncontrolled and others, on the contrary, forced and severely controlled by the authorities. On the one hand, a vast number of refugees and displaced persons refused to
return to the USSR, despite the fact that the Soviet authorities did their utmost to get them back. Various estimates have been made of their numbers. According to official sources, on January 1, 1951, 452,000 Soviet citizens remained abroad (Polian, 2002, p. 573). However, some of those who refused repatriation after 1945 had died by 1951, so that the total number of permanent departures was greater. Other estimates provide much higher figures: 1.2 to 1.5 millions, or even 2 million (Heitman, 1987, p. 10), a figure considered exaggerated, however (Polian, 2002, p. 576).

On the other hand, the State decided to expel nearly 900,000 Germans (approximately 400,000 in accordance with the 1939 Soviet-German Pact, and 500,000 after Russia annexed Eastern Prussia) from the USSR territory within the borders established after the war. In addition, close to 1.5 million Poles from Western Ukraine, Western Bielorrussia, Lithuania, and other regions of the USSR were moved to Poland, and nearly 400,000 Finns were moved from Karelia to Finland, and so on (Heitman, 1987; Piesowicz, 1988).

Once the waves of migration prompted by World War II were over, the iron curtain fell again, putting a sudden end to all emigration from the USSR.

During the 1960s, departures out of the USSR were minimal, and were more than counterbalanced by arrivals, themselves very few (Armenians returning to their historical homeland, refugees from China or students from Asian or African countries); as a result, before 1970, net migration was slightly positive.

In the two following decades, the number of entries fell and, despite the rarity of departures, net migration was negative. In the 1970s, net emigration fluctuated between 10,000 and 15,000 people, only exceptionally reaching 30,000 to 40,000. During the 1980s, emigration had slowed even further.

A major change took place in 1988, as Jews, Germans and Greeks were allowed to emigrate with relative ease, and trips abroad on personal invitation were authorized. The reaction to this breath of freedom was immediate. Departures from the USSR almost trebled from 1987 to 1988 (108,000, as opposed to 39,000), and doubled again in 1989 (235,000), and once again in 1990 (452,000). As immigration remained a rare event, net emigration skyrocketed.

In May 1991, the USSR adopted a new law on the entry and exit modalities, guaranteeing that international law in matters of freedom of movement would be respected; this law was supposed to be implemented throughout the whole USSR territory from January 1st, 1993. The USSR ceased to exist at the end of 1991, but the law was nonetheless implemented in the Russian Federation and remained in force until a federal law was adopted, on August 15, 1996, on the modalities of entry to and exit from the Federation of Russia.” This law stated: “Every citizen of the Russian Federation can freely circulate outside the borders of the Russian Federation and freely return to the Russian Federation.” Thus the final restrictions on leaving the country, in place for decades, disappeared; as a result, emigration increased substantially.

According to published government statistics, Russia’s net emigration from the ex-USSR’s borders rose to 1,071,000 people during the years 1990-2000 (Goskomstat, 1997, 2001).

b. Immigration

Whether taking its present frontiers, those of the Russian empire or those of the USSR, Russia never experienced large-scale immigration waves in the past, despite the fact that the government occasionally accepted relatively numerous groups of migrants belonging to specific categories. Thus, for instance, German settlers were made welcome in the 18th century, and Armenians in the 19th and 20th centuries. On the whole, however, within its present borders, Russia has been a sending rather than a receiving country. This is even more the case in the European part of Russia, which for a long time was an important source of migration toward the Asian part of Russia as such or toward other republics of the USSR which became independent states after the USSR’s collapse.

In the days of the Empire and under the Soviet regime, these migrations were always considered internal and, fitting neatly in its strategy to develop peripheral regions, were encouraged by the central government. However, for demographic or sociopolitical reasons, migration gradually lost its role and Russia became host country to in-migrants as early as the second half of the 1970s (Figure 118-7). In addition, the USSR and RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic) leaders became aware of the need to open their doors to immigrants. Experts and policymakers hotly debated the question of how to supplement a scanty demographic tank of Russia with the help of migration from regions with excess manpower, such as the central Asian republics; their attempt at measures of this nature met with no great success.

As the USSR was dismantled and the Russian Federation became an independent state, the migration context and interpretations have radically changed. On the one hand migrations between republics, hitherto considered internal, became international migrations overnight. On the other hand, the population’s natural increase became negative since 1992 and immigration suddenly became an important counterbalanc-
In the early 1990s, Russia, which, at its level, had no experience managing migration flows, created institutions and legislation essential for this management. In 1992 the Federal Migration Service was established as an independent federal agency that subsequently was reshuffled many times. In 2002, this service lost its independence and its functions were passed on to the Ministry for Matters of the Federation, Nationalities and Migration Policy. This Ministry was in turn dismantled and migrations became the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior where, the Federal Migration Service was reconstituted in 2002 as a ministerial department.

Present laws concerning the treatment of refugees and displaced persons were adopted in 1993, together with a presidential decree aiming to introduce migration controls. However, more general federal laws on Russian Federation citizenship and on the status of foreigners, replacing regulations dating back to the Soviet regime, were only passed in 2002. Without going into detail on the content of these documents, it is nonetheless worth noting that they aroused strong criticisms within society. Recognizing its weaknesses, even the President of the Russian Federation criticized the law on citizenship and, in 2003, some amendments were made.

The unfairly restrictive nature of these two laws does indeed open them up to criticism. They create too rigid a boundary between Russian Federation citizens and those of former constituent republics of the USSR who shared, until recently, the same citizenship as the inhabitants of Russia. By putting the inhabitants of Ukraine, Armenia, or Kazakhstan on the same legal footing as those from China, Vietnam, or an African country, they groundlessly sever kinship ties, prevent the return to Russia of persons of Russian culture, who either have Russian as their mother tongue or are fluent in Russian, and thereby deprives Russia of an extremely valuable source of immigrants.

Despite these unfair restrictions, it is not true that Russian migration laws completely close the door to immigrants. They acknowledge that foreigners can legitimately remain on Russian soil provided they have a residence permit, temporary residence permit, visa, or any other type of document accepted by federal law or international agreements confirming the right of foreign citizens to stay or reside on Russian Federation territory.

A 5-year residence permit can be issued to any foreigner residing in Russia and in possession of a temporary visa; it can also be extended many times. Anyone holding such a residence permit is considered a permanent resident of Russia, whereas all other legal immigrants are defined as temporary residents (the temporary residence permit is issued either according to quotas defined yearly by the government of the Russian Federation or, in certain legally defined cases, outside quota), or as persons staying temporarily in the Federation of Russia (with visa, or without visa when they come from countries for which the visa is not required). Every foreigner who has resided in Russia for more than 5 years can apply for Russian citizenship.
Therefore, the current legislation provides a legal framework that is relatively favorable for immigration and for gradual integration of immigrants into Russian society. Nonetheless, the presence of a large number of illegal immigrants, often mentioned by the authorities and the media, shows that the system provided by this legislation functions poorly, that it was created without taking into consideration actual operative policies, and that it fails to regulate spontaneous, weakly controlled migration flows about which no reliable information exists.

The official statistics only provide data on registered migrants. According to these statistics, the exchange of migrants between the ex-republics of USSR changed radically with the Union’s collapse. Entries into Russia suddenly outnumbered departures, resulting in an abrupt increase in Russia’s net migration. This increase was short-lived and by the end of the 1990s, net migration had greatly diminished. However, it is quite possible that the real evolution of immigration flows was different, as a result of increasing illegal immigration.

This may to some extent stem from a change in the nature of migration movements. In the early years following the USSR’s demise, repatriated Russians, returning to live permanently in Russia, made up the bulk of immigrants; with time, however, immigration has increasingly included migrants in search of temporary work. Mounting difficulties in obtaining permits for work, residence, or temporary stay, were soon felt.

After the 2002 population census, Russia’s Goskomstat (which became the Federal Service of State Statistics in 2004) adjusted the data provided by current migration registration after 1995, raising immigration estimates (Figure 118–8). This correction is supposed to include illegal immigration as well, but this is questionable because census data on illegal immigrants are probably incomplete.

In the absence of reliable information, public opinion tends to overestimate the number of illegal immigrants, and increasingly resents it, which explains the government’s ambivalent attitude and migration policy. On the one hand, the authorities are starting to appreciate immigration’s new role as the main means to counterbalance natural depopulation and shortage of manpower. On the other hand, central authorities are more preoccupied by public opinion than by the active development of migration policy. They prefer to leave the responsibility of organizing and implementing this policy to the lower (departmental) echelons and regional authorities; the latter, however, tend to manage migratory processes according to their own interests, which are sometimes at odds with those of the country as a whole.

As a result, the President of the Russian Federation declares, “What we need […] are not prohibitions and obstacles, but an efficient migration policy that can benefit the country while being acceptable to people” (message from Russia’s President to the Federal Assembly, dated May 16, 2003). At the same time, the President acknowledges that “we […] have not yet succeeded in developing a civilized mechanism to recruit manpower from other countries” (comment made by Russia’s President on the radio, on December 18, 2003). A migration policy tailored to Russia’s present needs remains to be invented.
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