

Review

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A Publication on the Role of Youth in Public Administration at the Turn of the 1930s

Abstract

This publication reviews a collective monograph on participation of the Soviet youth in the implementation of measures of control aimed at combating red tape and bribery and

overcoming negative trends in the work of state and professional institutions. “Light Cavalry” is considered a successful, if flawed, project for preparing young people for management via communist education system. The focus is on detailed analysis of the tasks assigned to the youth organization and on the researchers’ conclusion about the impact of expanding cavalry assignments on the content and feasibility of the “Light Cavalry” plans. The results of the study are most valuable on the issue of perception of the “Light Cavalry” by the population. The authors demonstrate an abundance of myths and conflicting assessments of the organization’s activities in the mind of significant part of society. The reviewer underscores the value of the assessment of youth participation in mass political purges. The authors of the monograph conclude that unreasoning adherence to the pursued policy and unscrupulousness of the youth not only blighted and undermined the work of public and state structures, but also resulted in social tension. Quite logical, according to the reviewer, is the conclusion on ambiguous attitude of party and Komsomol functionaries towards the “Light Cavalry” activists, pulled apart by two opposing trends to independence and initiative and to compliance to the party and Komsomol control; the solution to this dilemma was not found in the 1920s. Unsurprisingly, as reviewer believes, the “Light Cavalry” did not find its place in the complex system of socio-political institutions. The failures gave rise to disappointment and disbelief, producing unfavorable effect on its composition. The situation only slightly improved in the 1930s, when the initiative of the young people was restricted, and their activities acquired greater control and planning. The reviewer concludes that the monograph is undoubtedly relevant, as it focuses not only on the problems of the youth movement of the 1920s–30s, but also on unconditional success of the “Light Cavalry” in developing the creative potential of the Russian youth; it manifested in identifying internal reserves of the industries, in increasing the efficiency of enterprises and organizations, all of which is in demand today.

Keywords

Soviet youth, Komsomol, All-Union Leninist Young Communist League, “Light Cavalry,” Soviet everyday life, social control.

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