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Vladimir K. Nevlev, Vladislav V. Nevlev, Belgorod University of Cooperation, economy and law, Belgorod, Russian Federation

Historical and Legal Situation at the Lena Goldfields in 1912

Abstract

The article provides a new interpretation of the causes of the Lena Execution in 1912 in the light of personal memoirs of P.N. Demin, an eye-witness of those far-off events. Memoirs have been recorded and annotated by the authors. The article investigates causes and circumstances of the Lena tragedy. Personal memoirs of an events participant are of a great historical and legal value for Russian science, along with official chronicles of different periods. About 50 years ago one of the authors met P.N. Demin, who had miraculously survived the Lena Massacre. He told how he happened to come to the Lena goldfields. Harsh Siberian nature, backbreaking work, ill-treatment of workers, wretched food and living conditions drove miners beyond endurance. The strike was brought on by sales of uneatable meat. Elected representatives of the mines formulated their demands to the "Lenzoloto" administration for improvement of working and living conditions. When the workers' were demands refused and the elected arrested, a peaceful demonstration of over 3000 came to the Nadezhda mine, where the company office was situated. They were met by soldiers who opened fire on unarmed crowd on the command of the rittmeister of the gendarmerie. About 300 people were killed and as many injured. The news of the Lena tragedy roused revolutionary sentiments in the Russian society, which

resulted in further unrest. Official rendering of the Lena Execution causes is fleshed out by valuable intelligence from P.N. Demin's memoirs. The article is accompanied by rare photographs of the Lena events participants.

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Keywords

Personal provenance source, Lena goldfields, backbreaking work, growth of self-consciousness, revolutionary mood, political rallies, shooting of a demonstration, P.N. Demin.

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About autor

Nevlev Vladimir Kuzmich, PhD in Pedagogy, professor, corresponding member of the International Academy of Pedagogical Education, professor of the Social Work and Psychology Department of the Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economy and Law, Russian Federation, Belgorod, +7-910-228-58-59, kaf-srp@bukep.ru

Nevlev Vladislav Vladimirovich, PhD in Law, associate professor, professor of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, associate professor of the Theory and History of State and Law Department of the Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economy and Law, Russian Federation, Belgorod, +7-910-741-85-78, kaf-srp@bukep.ru

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