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Vyatka Revolutionaries in the “Government Facility”: 1905—1913

Abstract

The article analyses various aspects of the life in prison of political prisoners of the Vyatka gubernia. Unpublished documents from the archives of Kirov and Moscow, on which this study is based, designate the subject of the study; that is, they allow to establish forms of resistance of political prisoners to prison regime, to identify patterns of their escapes, to trace dynamics in occupancy of political prisons in the Vyatka gubernia, to establish instances of interaction between representatives of different left parties while in penal institutions. The timeframe of the study is the period of the first Russian revolution of 1905-1908, when prisons ceased to be the tenement of few and far between ardent revolutionaries from the privileged strata of society, and

swarmed with much less versed ideologically masses of the discontented. Thus, in view of a participant of the revolutionary events of 1905-1908, Socialists-Revolutionary Maximalist G. A. Nestroev, the ideological grounding of the political prisoners deteriorated significantly. The author, however, believes that this ‘diversity’ of prisoners allows to conduct a more thorough analysis of their public activity in prison and to better link the activities of prisoners with the people on whose behalf the revolutionary forces acted. The author focuses on the Socialists-Revolutionaries, as their percentage among prisoners was much higher than that of the Socialists-Democrats. Known for several high-profile assassinations, the former were considered more dangerous state criminals than the Socialists-Democrat ‘propagandists,’ and thus were subject to more severe punishments. After the October revolution 1917, the Bolsheviks created an extensive mythologized literature on fellow party members who served time in tsarist prisons but mentioned only several Socialists-Revolutionaries, and these were politically harmless, or deceased (like E. S. Sazonov), or attached to the Bolshevik party (like V. N. Rukhlyadev). Findings and conclusions of the article can be used in research of the later periods in the history of Russia and the Soviet Union, particularly, for comparison of the prisoners’ struggle with the prison administration and of the forms of assistance to prisoners from the outside in tsarist Russia and later.

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Keywords

First Russian revolution, Vyatka, political prisoners, prison, Socialists-Revolutionaries.

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