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Social Image and Fate of Peasant Rebels of 1920–1921: Materials from the Fonds of the State Archive of the Tambov Region

Abstract

The forthcoming centenary of the beginning of the peasant revolt of 1920 – 1921 in the Tambov gubernia has caused an increased interest of scholars in studying the issues of the insurgent movement and its role in the Civil War. Portrayal of ordinary combatants and understanding social and demographic nature of the guerilla is of great significance. Having studied lists of bandits and members of their families in the fonds of the State Archive of the Tambov Region (GATO), the authors analyze social identity, property status, age and marital status of peasants in partisan groups. The names of the personnel show the actual combat loss of the insurgent

peasants; they allow to assess the activity of population in “rebellious” areas, the nature of counterinsurgency and punishment of the anti-government movement participants. It has been established that average age of the Tambov Rebellion participant was 26. The typical insurgent was a peasant, a local resident, year of birth about 1896, usually married with two or three children. The property status in such families was mostly below average. Most rebels were poor. The poor numbered from 66% to 93% in the lists. As a part of counterinsurgency operations, all “bandits’ property” or part of it was confiscated, heads of the family were shot, other family members of were declared hostages and taken in temporary custody to concentration camps. Those participants of the revolt who gave themselves up or were captured were brought to “revolutionary justice.” Depending on their involvement in armed struggle against the Soviet power, they were sentenced to 1–5 years of prison.

Keywords

Mass historical sources, peasant uprising, Tambov Rebellion of 1920–1921, lists of peasant rebels, social image, age, property status, marital status, repressions.

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