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Sources on Social and Political Moods of Peasants of the Ishim District of the Ural Region in 1925?27: Materials of the District OGPU Department Reports

Abstract

The article uses previously unstudied reports of the Ishim district OGPU department to describe social and political attitudes of various groups of peasantry in the palmy days of the New Economic Policy (1925–27). The study is to consider the influence of social rural stratification on

peasants' mindsets and the relationship between the authorities and the peasantry; to assess the political resources of the Ishim peasantry through the lens of the OGPU reports; and to show the intransigence in social interests of the rural poor and the kulaks. The authors assess political moods of peasant population as a whole and those of particular social groups: poor, middle peasants, and kulaks. Political moods of the peasantry differentiated with respect to the following criteria: attitude to the Soviet government and various groups and strata, attitude to agricultural tax, attitude to religion, and church, and also according to the degree of political consciousness. On the basis of this analysis, we put forward an idea of multidirectional, heterogeneous participation of peasant population in the political life of the second half of the 1920s and of its significant social differentiation. In general, in the rural areas, the Soviet government was unequivocally supported by the poor, who were to some degree influenced by the kulaks. The middle peasants were characterized by their changing attitude; they symptomatically juxtaposed Soviet government and communists. The rich peasants took an extremely negative position to the Soviet government and tried to exert pressure on the local authorities (i.e. village soviets). However, discontent with the New Economic Policy encompassed all strata of the peasantry. Persistent confrontation between peasants fighting each other in the Ishim anti-communist peasant uprising of 1921 did not weaken for quite a long time. In conclusion, it is noted that protests, social deviations, and negative stance on the New Economic Policy gradually intensified in the political behavior of the Ishim district peasantry. The OGPU reports are a representative source that permits to reconstruct the social and political attitudes of the Ishim region peasantry.

Keywords

Archive, Ishim district, New Economic Policy (NEP), Russian peasantry, political moods, OGPU reports, poor, middle peasants, kulaks, communists, uprising.

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