

Scientific article

УДК 930.2+930.253+930.255+930.23+395.3+364.075.2+352/354-1+352.93

doi 10.28995/2073-0101-2023-1-100-116

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On Oddity of the Left Socialist Revolutionaries Uprising in the Zhizdra Uezd of the Kaluga Gubernia, July 7–14, 1918: A Source Studies Aspect

Abstract

The revolt of the Left SRs (Socialist-Revolutionaries) in Moscow in July 1918 was used by the Left SR organization of the Zhizdra uezd of the Kaluga gubernia, which was supportive of the program of its Central Committee, as a pretext to remove the communists from power. The SRs

counted on the fact that they held all the decision-making positions in the uezd military commissariat and were in charge of weapons. Moreover, some of the local peasants, who were the main producers of marketable bread, saw in food dictatorship and in Poor Peasants Committees a direct threat to their economic activities. They viewed the SRs as their mouthpiece and defenders of their interests and therefore supported them in their political struggle against the Bolsheviks. Having learned about the events in Moscow by early morning of July 8, 1918, the Left SRs of Zhizdra gathered several hundred peasants in the town and handed them weapons. Until July 10, the armed peasants received allowance in the uezd military commissariat. The communists of Zhizdra, having established the approximate number of armed peasants by covert observation, fled the town and left their posts. We still do not know what happened next in Zhizdra on July 8-10. On the night of July 11, an armed detachment from Kaluga arrived to help the communists of Zhizdra, but found no one, neither armed peasants, nor their leaders. This suggests that the fugitives knew the date and time of the detachment arrival in advance. Almost immediately upon his arrival, detachment commander Saltykov issued an order, announcing the establishment of martial law in the town and uezd, starting July 11. The population was ordered to hand over their weapons by 4 p.m. the following day. The uezd military commissar Trunov, who had fled, was outlawed "for counter-revolutionary actions" and was to be seized. It is worth mentioning that all this happened on the eve of the Uezd Congress of Soviets, which was to be held on July 12. The Left SRs planned to conduct and head the congress; by July 11, 25 delegates had arrived. On that day, the Zhizdra communists, no longer threatened, held a meeting and decided to thwart the congress and offered the executive committee to hold in its stead a meeting in order to inform about political events in Moscow and their local repercussions. On the same day, members of the communist faction overtook all key positions in the Uezd Executive Committee previously held by the Left SRs. As the Zikeevo volost refused to hand over weapons in peasants' possession, Saltykov received an additional deterrent artillery gun and a group of Latvian riflemen. Having intimidated the population, the detachment entered the village of Zikeevo on July 13. There the chairman of the volost council handed over to Saltykov only 24 rifles, but promised to collect the remaining weapons and transport them to Zhizdra on the following day, July 14. Whether Saltykov received the weapons is unknown. Searches in Zhizdra on July 14 had no result. The reports of Saltykov and Evstafiev shed no light on Bolsheviks collecting weapons previously distributed by the Left SRs. Therefore, the author has good reasons to believe that not all weapons distributed to peasants by the Left SRs were collected.

Keywords

Kaluga gubernia, Zhizdra, July 1918, Left SRs, Bolsheviks, confrontation, I. V. Evstafiev, M. I.

Saltykov.

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Submitted 28.08.2022, published (for citation):

BELOVA, I. B. O strannostyakh levoehserovskogo myatezha v Zhizdrinskom uezde Kaluzhskoi gubernii 7–14 iyulya 1918 g.: istochnikovedcheskii aspekt [On Oddity of the Left Socialist Revolutionaries Uprising in the Zhizdra Uezd of the Kaluga Gubernia, July 7–14, 1918: A Source Studies Aspect. In Russ.]. IN: Vestnik arhivista / Herald of an Archivist, 2023, no. 1, pp. 100-116. doi 10.28995/2073-0101-2023-1-100-116

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Полностью материал публикуется в российском историко-архивоведческом журнале ВЕСТНИК АРХИВИСТА. Ознакомьтесь с условиями подписки [здесь](#) .