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The Revolution of 1905–07 in the Tambov Gubernia Peasants' Memoirs

Abstract

The paper examines the memoirs of participants in the revolution of 1905–07 stored in the State Archive of the Socio-Political History of the Tambov Region (GASPITO). Fond 382 “Department

of the Gubernia Committee of the RCP (B) for Studying the History of the October Revolution and the Party” has been analyzed. Due to scarcity of personal provenance documents created by peasants, analysis of the memoirs written in the Soviet era is of great importance. Most national and foreign scientists who studied similar topics mainly used the reports of the police department and other official documents. Peasant memoirs were rarely considered. The memoirs compiled in 1925 contain various data on the revolutionary movement in the Russian village in the early 20th century. The authors provided information on their origin, occupation, political beliefs, etc. Peasant uprisings, their orientation, and punitive actions of the government were described in sufficient detail. The relevance of the study is determined by the importance of comprehensive analysis of the Russian peasantry. When examining the memoirs, the author has used historical-comparative and retrospective methods. The key scientific principle is historicism. The article underscores special role of the “revolutionary turning point” generation representatives in the events of the first third of the 20th century. The majority of peasants who wrote memoirs was born at the turn of the 20th century and took an active part in the revolution of 1905–07. Generational history provides a deeper understanding of the motivation of the young people who became organizers of the agrarian riots. The article focuses on the impact of the revolutionary events on the behavioral practices of rural society. It cites instances of revolutionary agitation of peasants by seasonal workers. Relations between peasants and landlords are analyzed. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of peasant uprisings. The research showcases great generational gap in the village. The youth, by virtue of its inherent psychosocial qualities, was the most important catalyst for the revolution. There was characteristic influence of marginal elements on the peasant community. The study shows that memoirs created in the Soviet period were characterized by politicization and ideological predestination. However, these shortcomings do not reduce their importance for understanding the peasant worldview. The memoirs of direct participants point to continuity of the events of 1905 and 1917.

Keywords

Historical sources, personal provenance sources, peasantry, Tambov gubernia, revolution, generations, memoirs, revolt, landowners.

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