

Chekist, Railroad Man, Architect Petr Petrovich Zutis

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Abstract

The article studies the biography of a famous Soviet era figure, Petr Petrovich Zutis (1897–1977). He lived an interesting, eventful life: he was an active participant in the First World War and in the Russian Revolution, served in the security organs of the Soviet state, worked on the railway, and later became a successful engineer and architect. The article assesses the role of the individual (Zutis) in the events of modern history of Russia. It draws on previously unpublished sources from the fonds of the Historical Archive of the Omsk Region (IAOO) to reconstruct the fate of Zutis. The analysis of documents allows to pose and to answer the question of conditions for successful social adaptation of a person to Russian political cataclysms of the first half of the 20th century. The authors conclude that the fate of Zutis is an example of how in conditions of wars and social cataclysms a person could “make himself” by climbing up the social ladder. His life was long, colorful, and successful. An untroublesome person, he did not join informal groups, promptly left the KGB service, and eluded political repression that many of its employees suffered. The article supports the idea of paramount importance of personality traits in the human destiny. The authors conclude that in the highly controversial and dangerous conditions of the Stalin’s era, Zutis’s social success was determined by his personal qualities: industriousness, perseverance, energy, ability to see which way the wind was blowing and to make good decisions. Throughout his life, Zutis was constantly engaged in self-education and acquired many professions. He was not afraid to switch career and chose professional areas that were important for the state, thus becoming a sought-after specialist. Thanks to his military and KGB experience, he was a good judge of character, formed good teams of professionals, and managed them skillfully.



Keywords

Sources, latvians, Civil War, Soviet authority, Omsk, security services, railway transport, construction.

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