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There Is Such a Party: Vyatka Revolutionary Communists in 1918–1920

Abstract

In this case-study of the Vyatka province the author aims to review the history of a party which may be called a counterpart to the ruling Bolsheviks: party of the Revolutionary Communists, a populist organization of Narodinks which was operating for two years (autumn 1918 to August 1920). The article looks into generic characteristics of the party that dovetail those of the prior Neonarodnik organizations, studies the activities of the uezd associations and their relations with the core party, gives consideration to the leaders' personalities. The most important feature of the Vyatka Revolutionary Communists party cells was their vitality throughout constant persecution by ruling the Bolsheviks-Leninists. The persecution tended to weaken somewhat in the intense moments of the Civil War in Russia only to strengthen with the Reds' victories. Viability of the Revolutionary Communists stemmed from their close ties with local peasantry. The article addresses the underhanded techniques used by Bolsheviks to drive Revolutionary Communists out of political arena. The author argues the inevitability of the collapse of the Revolutionary Communists organizations, caused by not just by Bolsheviks persecution, but also by faint-heartedness of the party leadership, by local activists' ill-founded hopes of Bolsheviks "seeing reason", as well as by growing political apathy of peasants, hard struck by chaos and famine. It is the first time in the Vyatka-Kirov regional studies that the issue of post-October continuation of populist organizations has been raised. The scholarly results of the province case-study may yet draft a monograph on the history of the Revolutionary Communists party, as findings have only been published in some articles. The article draws on materials from Kirov and Moscow archives and libraries. The article has an appendix listing terms and abbreviations used in newspapers and official documents of the time and cited in the article.

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Keywords

Revolutionary Communists, Vyatka, Narodniks, Socialist Revolutionaries, Bolsheviks.

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