

**LIES FROM RELIABLE SOURCES,
OR A RECURRING LOVE FOR 'POLITICAL' EXILE**

The three-volume 'Historical Encyclopedia of Siberia' (Novosibirsk, 2009), edited by the Siberian Branch of the RAS (Russian Academy of Sciences) Institute for History, surprised historians as its authors do not seem to consider *private press* as a historiographical source. The reference book contains data on official governorate gazettes and eparchial bulletins and only provides a few facts about the first private newspaper 'Amur'. That is, the encyclopedia, in fact, declares the primacy of official media.

The first scholars to disagree with that approach were researchers from Tomsk. In her work entitled '*The periodical press of the city of Tomsk (from the 19th to the beginning of the 20th centuries: formation and development)*'**, Natalia V. Zhilyakova tries 'to close this gap, to summarize the facts on Tomsk's periodical press prior to 1917, to reveal its key tendencies using the original texts of newspapers and magazines...****'.

Although the book covers a large span of time — the whole 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, as is indicated in the title, there were only three papers in the periodical repertoire of that time that could build up the image of the region: (i) '*Sibirskaya gazeta*' ('The Siberian News', 1881-1888), referred to in the Soviet times as 'an offspring of political exile'****; (ii) the 'reptilian'***** '*Sibirskii vestnik politiki, literaturny i obshchestvennoi zhizni*' ('The Siberian Bulletin of Politics, Literature, and Social Life', 1885-1905), 'blackhundredist'*****, inclined to political denunciation against its opponents'*****; (iii) '*Sibirskaya zhizn*' ('The Siberian Life') that grew out of '*Tomskii*

* 'Amur' (Rus. «Амур») was the first private newspaper in Irkutsk, Eastern Siberia, established in 1860. The last issue was published in 1862. (*Translator's note.*)

** Zhilyakova Natalia V. *Zhurnalistika goroda Tomska (19 — nachalo 20 veka: stanovleniye i razvitiye)* : The periodical press of the city of Tomsk (from the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century: formation and development) / N.V. Zhilyakova. Tomsk: Tomsk University Press, 2011. 446 p.

*** Ibidem, p. 8.

**** Shvetsov S.P. *Kul'turnoye znachenkiye politicheskoi ssylki v Zapadnoi Sibiri* : The cultural importance of the political exile in Western Siberia // *Katorga i ssylka* (Penal servitude and exile), 1928. Vol. 4. P. 91.

***** Turunov A. *Gazety* : Newspapers // *Sibirskaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya* (The Soviet Encyclopedia of Siberia). Vol. 1. Article 593.

***** The Black Hundreds (sometimes The Black Hundred), also known as the black-hundredists (Chornaya sotnya, chernosotentsy) was a nationalist movement in Russia in the early 20th century. (*Translator's note.*)

***** Nikolayev V.I. *Sibirskaya periodicheskaya pechat' i politicheskaya ssylka* : The Siberian periodical press and political exile // *Katorga i ssylka* (Penal servitude and exile), 1928. Vol. 4. P. 112.

spravochnyi listok ('The Tomsk Directory') (1894-1919), the paper where 'progressive tendencies' went hand in hand with 'double-dyed Blackhundredists from amongst high-ranking officials'^{*} and with the Archiereus Macarius II considered 'a pogrom-maker' by Soviet researchers. All these clichés and labels pinned on the newspapers and their leaders a decade after the October revolution were reflected in reference books of that time and served as markers, or ticks, for the Soviet censorship. It was not easy to conduct scientific research outside those ticks.

Those red ticks, or flags, although pretty faded by now, still seem to be influential, as they might have hindered Natalia Zhilyakova in breaking an old stereotype according to which one part of Tomsk periodicals was served by political convicts while another part was actually led by exiled criminals. This might make Zhilyakova's history of '*Sibirskaya gazeta*' mostly unpersuasive, though the author has been doing research into this periodical source since her first steps in science.

Yet, for instance, the evidence of V. Krutovsky strongly suggests that 'at first there were almost no political exiles among people working for *Sibirskaya gazeta*'. Even the newspaper's reporters were mostly from the local intelligentsia'^{**}. If we study the corpus of censorial documents, we'll find out that A.V. Adrianov, one of the fathers of '*Sibirskaya gazeta*', was clear from any suspicion on the part of the gendarmerie. In 1880, when the printing office of the Irkutsk newspaper '*Sibir*' was burnt down and its publisher A.P. Nesterov arrested, the Third Section of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancery reported to the General Directorate for Press that it saw no obstacles to 'the appointment of Adrianov to the position of editor-in-chief' of the above-mentioned Irkutsk newspaper. Three years later, when the question arose as to whether he could be appointed to the same position at '*Sibirskaya gazeta*', the Police Department reported: "In consequence of his friendly relations and joint residence with a person brought to interrogation as suspected of a state crime, Adrianov also aroused suspicion of political unreliability which, however, did not prove true.'^{***}

'*Sibirskaya gazeta*' employed various types of exiles. For instance, F.V. Volkhovskiy and S.L. Chudnovskiy served their sentence as a result of preventive measures against revolutionary propaganda. But the majority of the exiles involved in the work of the newspaper were administrative exiles, i.e. individuals accused of political unreliability at the discretion of local authorities. Adrianov's case, documented by the Police Department, is quite rare and thus significant, as he was considered politically unreliable by the authorities of the province, but at the same time the ruling of the latter was not shared by the gendarmery. More often in such cases, both sides would share one viewpoint.

^{*} Shvetsov S.P. *Kul'turnoye znachenkiye politicheskoi ssylki v Zapadnoi Sibiri* : The cultural importance of the political exile in Western Siberia // *Katorga i ssylka* (Penal servitude and exile), 1928. Vol. 4. P. 95.

^{**} Krutovsky V. *Periodicheskaya pechat' v Tomske* : The periodical press of Tomsk // *Gorod Tomsk* : The city of Tomsk, 1912. P. 289.

^{***} Russian State Historical Archives (RGIA). Inventory 12: 1883. File 100. Page 7-8.

One of the reporters of *'Sibirskii vestnik politiki, literatury i obshchestvennoi zhizni'*, Viktor Kostyurin, was a convict in the so called 'Trial of the 193'. In his letters, he declared himself a political exile. Yet, he was convicted of the attempted murder of Goryunovich, a 'betrayed'. So was he a political offender or a criminal? This appears an uneasy question, as far as we consider the Trial of the 193 in general. Less than one third of the 770 people named in this case and brought to interrogation were tried. Out of this number, 80 people were justified by the Court and sentenced to administrative exile, as it was sanctioned by Alexander II. None of the convicts, however, ever filed a request for mercy.

The idea of conducting a more detailed study of the Trial of the 193 might seem unethical as it may compromise the honour and dignity of people long dead. Nonetheless, the importance of political exiles for the local Siberian press, increasingly stressed by Zhilyakova at each page of her work, is overestimated, as we can judge by Adrianov's recently published letters to G.N. Potanin. Thus, in a letter dated June 20th 1882, he complains that 'there is no publisher, the editor has gone and a new one has not been appointed yet... All this affects the newspaper, as you see, and now I am almost alone in charge of it. All menial jobs, money and subscription matters, intercourse with co-workers and most of the editor's work are in my hands... There's no other way out but to coax Makushin into being an editor. He did not seem to yield before, but this time, perhaps, he will, seeing how critical the circumstances are. Otherwise, we are to put up the shutters.'

Towards the end of 1886, the absence of staff correspondents and the lack of material supplies made Adrianov hold a meeting with the co-workers and friends of the newspapers. The matter of concern was whether *'Sibirskaya gazeta'* should continue to be published or should be closed. Early in 1887 the decision was made: 'We are pretty well penniless; the paper is flagging and won't last more than a year.' The same had happened earlier to *'Kamsko-Volzhskaya gazeta'*, edited in Kazan during the years 1872-1874. When the newspaper's reporter, the famous lawyer Konstantin V. Lavrsky, was exiled to Vologda by decision of the Governor, the editor-in-chief N. Agafonov wrote: 'There is no reason to close the paper ourselves. Let the honor of doing this belong to the same government that put Lavrsky out of the way. Then we'd say that we yielded to physical force.'

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* The Trial of the 193 was a series of criminal trials held in Russia in 1877-1878 under the rule of Tsar Alexander II. The trial consisted of 193 students and other "revolutionaries" charged with populist "unrest" and propaganda against the Russian Empire. (*Translator's Note.*)
