
***M. V. Taskaev socio-political processes
in the european north-east of Russia (1901 — the 1st half of 1930).
Ekaterinburg: ural academy of sciences, 2011. 610 P.***

During the pre-war period (1901 — the 1st half of 1930), socio-political processes in the European North-East of Russia developed according to a situational script which was connected with the socio-economic environment of the region and events in the heart of the country. The same factors defined the nature and gradation of development of the regional socio-political processes. In the early 20th century in the European North-East there were created, for the first time in history, partisan groups, cells of pan-Russian parties, trade unions and other social organizations. These phenomena in the region gained significant number of records and had a multi-faceted character in the revolutionary period. They evolved and basically survived in spite of cruel opposition from irreconcilable political forces during the Civil War.

Unlike in the center of the country, the north experienced a similar situation even after the Civil War and at the initial stage of rebuilding of the Russian nation. In the European North-East, the Stalinist leadership model of the socio-political processes finally won only in the second half of the 1920s-1930s.

M.V. Taskayev's monograph is devoted to the analysis of the identified problems. For the first time in national historiography the complex historical development of the European North-East of Russia in the first decades of the 20th century is fully traced. This is a very large area of the region formed by two modern subjects of the Russian Federation — the Republic of Komi and Nenets Autonomous District. The monograph is an original and interesting study which allows a new perspective on the processes stated in the title to clarify and, in some cases, refute the propositions and conclusions established in the traditional historical science. The relevance of M.V. Taskaev's research on the scrutiny by the public of issues of changing the model of state governance and social order is evident. The monograph examines party construction, the Revolution and the Civil War, the destruction of the old state machinery and the creation of a new Soviet model of government for Soviet social and political life in the 1920s-30s.

These issues had already attracted attention of historians, but the closed nature of most regional archival material, "rigidly-defined ideological frameworks" do not allow to trace objectively the socio-political history of the European North-East of Russia in the period. It may be no accident that the author of the proposed periodization of the Russian historiography of the problem practically leaves out the 1930s-50s, when the "descriptive and factual period" had come to a logical conclusion and the analytical period, for obvious reasons, could not yet start (p.10-170). A characteristic feature of the book under review is its regional aspect, with the issues of socio-political processes in the country documented with a specific regional archive material, the vast majority of which is introduced here into scientific circulation. M.V. Taskaev's

research is free from ideological one-sidedness, which was (in my opinion) too often manifested in his works in the 1990s — early 2000s.

With all of the author's critical view, concerning political practices of the Bolsheviks, Marxist-Leninist ideology and the Soviet historical school, developed on the basis of it, today he does not reject their originally perceived awareness of historical correctness.

The author argues the necessity to combine research of in many ways opposite processes of pre-revolutionary and Soviet periods, the impact on the socio-political processes in the Soviet period of those phenomena and events, which arose in the pre-Soviet time, in one monograph.

The monograph substantiates new, original provisions, which began to take shape in earlier works of the author. They receive here their final character and formulations. Let us pay attention to the most interesting and valuable propositions and conclusions, in our opinion, which are reflected in the work. M.V. Taskaev reveals that, in contrast to the center, where until 1917 inter-party disagreements came to the fore, groups of political exiles in the region were characterized by inter-party composition dominated by relations of cooperation between the representatives of different parties, joint actions etc. On the whole, in the European north-east of the country before the revolution, the establishment of political associations was of different origin. Here, ideological differences were more "blurred" than in the center, which allows uniting very diverse political forces in a single whole, and political actors lose enough to "flow" from one association to another (p. 130, 152–153).

In the reasonable opinion of the author, the assertion of Soviet power in the region happened almost without the participation of the Bolsheviks (p. 196, 249-250). He has shown that often the county rural administration was renamed, but did not transform, in fact, into the Soviets (p. 211-212). In confirmation of this thought we can quote what I.V. Stalin told them a little later. In 1923 in his concluding speech at the 12th Congress of the RCP(b), I.V. Stalin pronounced a symptomatic phrase: "If we are established in the regions, then surely we will conquer everything". In other words, even in 1923, 5 years after coming to power, the party still virtually did "not hold" regions, and the task to get a "foothold in regions" was only a problem for the future. In the monograph is argued the exclusive role of the interventionists in unleashing civil war in the European North. The author is convinced that without the intervention of foreign powers in the regional political processes, large-scale military actions would never have begun (p. 569).

M.V. Taskaev clarifies the date of creation of many political groups in the European North-East of Russia, and the formation of councils at various levels in the field. It is interesting to note, by the way, some of the sources' uncertainty in terms of dating events, a problem always negotiated in good faith by the author. For example, with respect to the initial date of SR organizations in the region, he conducted some specific research (p. 172-173). The description of M.V. Taskaev's struggle for power in the region between the bureaucracy and the leaders of the democratic movement in 1917,

suggestive of the events of 1991-93, will present a definite interest not only for professional historians, but also for a wider readership (c. 190-196).

Other sections of the book are devoted to territorial reorganization of the region and, in particular, zoning of the Pechora district of the Arkhangelsk province (Section 2, Chapter 4, p. 504-520). According to the description of these processes it is noticeable that in the European North-East there was less activity and initiative among the population, compared to central Russia. On the other hand, the region showed the vast role of the so-called administrative resource in solving problems of subordinating certain townships and counties.

In the monograph the contradictory processes of regionalization are studied and in particular the opposition of Arkhangelsk and Ust-Sysolsk and, in regions — of Ust Tsilma and Izhmy on the issue of the administrative territorial classification of the lower Pechora River, with problems of economic gravity and ethnic self-determination. With all the advantages in the reviewed work, there are some points of contention and small annoying inaccuracies that actually are, no wonder, connected with the huge amount of archival material considered by the author. In my opinion unnecessary is paragraph 2 of Chapter 1 (pp. 26-36). It indicates, that the party structure in this region is not like in the whole of Russia; this has already been covered by researchers. The author translates the name of the newspaper of Nenets Autonomous Okrug “Nyaryana Vynder” into the Komi language, at the time, when it would be more correct to translate to the original language, i.e. the Nenets language (p. 586). For the classical scientific monograph, to which no doubt the book of M.V. Taskaev refers, it is compulsory to have a name index. However, it is unfortunately not available. Perhaps for the reader can also wish for a geographical index and a list of illustrations and maps. All of these minor errors generally do not reduce the high creative level of the monograph.

Fundamental propositions and conclusions proposed by M.V. Taskaev are quite reasonable, reliable and show scientific novelty. The monograph is written in a good scientific language, it offers a huge amount of archival documents and literature. It certainly is a major contribution to the national historiography.

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