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The Decision of the National Question in Soviet Russia in 1920-s in the Perception of Russian Emigration

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Article considers the attitude of Russian emigration to solving the national question in Soviet Russia. It examines the reaction of emigration on the creation of the USSR and the occurrence of the some territories in it.

This problem is decomposed into two components – the perception of the Soviet national policy in general and of the individual nations and territories. This work focuses on the first part of the problem.

The paper identifies differences in the views of the Russian Diaspora on the problem, the contradictions in its environment and their causes. Article reveals the views of representatives of emigration: politicians, lawyers, philosophers. The position of the Russian-language foreign press is also presented in this paper.

However, emigration is viewed not as a amount of individuals and organizations, but as special unique social environment, acting in certain conditions and according to definite laws of development. Therefore, even if there was some controversy on national policy among emigration, article identifies key moments of its apperception, analyzes their causes and origins.

This paper considers only the Russian emigration, and doesn't examine other's nation emigration from Russia. The reason for this is that, firstly, it is a big topic proposed a special study (in connection with a broad national composition of emigration), and secondly, the problems of individual nations were not included in this article, and national immigration has focused mainly on it.

The material presented in the paper, allow to draw conclusions about the impact of private and common causes on emigration's apperception of solving national question in the RSFSR and USSR. Private causes include personal and party motives, the general – the linking of the national situation in the RSFSR with the past (Imperial Russia and Russia of Provisional Government) and with the possible future (after the overthrow of Bolshevism).

Keywords: national question, Russian emigration, soviet history, 1920-s

Introduction

There are a lot of works Russian (Egorov, Nikitin, Vdovin) and foreign authors on soviet national policy published recently, as on general

problems of nation-building (Martin, La question des nationalités, Oushakine, A State of Nations, Werth, Williams), and in connection with the study of the history of individual nations and

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territories of the USSR (Eschapasse, Monicault). Some Articles on the national question published in the Journal of Siberian Federal University "(Danilova). This topic has become particularly relevant in the post-Soviet era, in the modern geopolitical environment. However, the specific of this article is that the object of her attention is not a national issue itself, but its perception by Russian emigration. Historiography of the this plot is minimal. The only comprehensive work on this theme is the study of Doronchenkov (Doronchenko).

In the early 1930-s Russian philosopher-emigrant G.P. Fedotov has written: «... In Russia national problem is expressed in tension between the Russian consciousness and nationalism of small nations» (Fedotov, 1932:95). This phrase describes not only the Soviet national policy and the attitude of emigration towards it, but also a national problem in Russia in general, for which she has always been one of the patients. Multinational state across the vast territory was forced to either listen to the demands of other nations and to implement them or resist them. As did the Russian state, maneuvering between these two methods to solve the national question. Each of them had their supporters and opponents, as they were at the ideas and talents border countries independence. Therefore, the reaction of emigration to address this issue is reflected not only its relationship to politics in it of the Soviet state, but also echoes of past debates. As researcher A.I. Doronchenkov specifies: «One of prominent features of Russian post-revolutionary emigration consisted that along with nostalgia for the abandoned homeland in its midst there was a process of rethinking its painful past, and with it ... the maintenances ... of the national question, which has become one of the "stumbling blocks" of White movement» (Doronchenkov, 2001:67). Numerous publications of 1920th abroad testify to a profound interest, both Russian, and

national emigration to this aspect of the Soviet policy (Ex.: Articles on national question, 1921; Miliukov, 1925; Markov, 1930; Boldyr'. 1930 etc.). The newspaper «Novoye Vremia» («New time») wrote that with the decision of an national question Bolsheviks «again hit the mark», while noting that it is even more important than the NEP (new economic policy)(Letter from Zinoviev to Kamenev, 1991:197).

The point of view

It is possible to allocate interest of emigration to two groups of problems thereupon: first, the decision of the national question in the scale of state, secondly, the international relations of some nations and the problems of some areas. Therefore, on the one hand, comparing its solution with the previous period, she saw in the Soviet land consolidation the tradition of former power and the borders restoration of the Russian empire. Such unifying tendencies caused even sympathy for the Bolshevism in certain emigrants political circles (Quite personally... 2002:281-282). However, emigration was trying to play on national feelings and ambitions of non-Russian peoples, in order to set them against Bolshevism. I.e. it was the patriotism coterminous with anti-sovietism. In this context, the approach to the specific national issues in the USSR was twofold.

Russian abroad unanimously marked dynamism of the Soviet national policy. Opinions of emigrants dispersed in estimations of its concrete maintenance and character. For some, the paramount importance was in preservation of country's unity, its great-power status, others more interested in the solution of the situation with non-Russian peoples, that's why for them a principle of self-determination and its realisation, federalism problem was put forward.

B.A. Bahmetev considered that in fact the Soviet collection of land is exclusively due to the

past, is the phenomenon useless and ineffectual, it does not solve questions, but only postpones it. So with the fall of Bolshevism he predicted the collapse of the Mirage (that happened a few decades later). In view of the foregoing, He called for «a merciless struggle to chauvinism, which could be carried away by the specter of great power (“velikoderzavie”)), which must be stripped of Bolshevism opportunities to achieve success in this field that could be done, in his opinion, only by revision the base of European and Asian systems created by past international conferences.

Answering him, V.A. Maklakov noted that the current national program of Russian foreign policy is carried out by the Bolsheviks: they “protested against the retention of Bessarabia by Romania and threatened Romania war, they will declare war to Poland, obviously, on the basis of the Riga’s agreement. They have now grasped already in the hands Azerbaijan and Armenia, tomorrow will grasp also Georgia,.. rapprochement with Lithuania, and possibly with other Baltic states, is on the order». Thus, he concludes – «The Bolsheviks now carry the unity of Russia, that’s the fact which all is evident» (Quite personally... 2002:299). He called two reasons two reasons of such Bolshevik’s policy: 1) they are forced to reckon with the patriotic elements in the Red Army; 2) this consolidation gives more chances to extend communism. Probably, Maklakov wrote, Bolsheviks did not become nationalists but «they unite suburbs which have separated... and infect the minds in Russia by a healthy idea of nationalism and patriotism; both results are so useful, that is quite difficult to find out the ideological basis on which we can not deny their international policy» (Quite personally... 2002:300). In this sense, referring to the foreign policy of the Bolsheviks, Maklakov emphasized their patriotism, believed that they alone preserve some semblance of the state in

Russia, defending its national interests, and even return the well-known international prestige (Quite personally... 2002:302).

This belief was also one of the reasons of «acceptance» of the October Revolution by Smena-Vekhites. As N.V. Ustrialov considered only it is capable to restore the Russian great power (‘velikoderzavnost’) and international prestige of Russia (Cit. on: Kvakina, 1991:79). And one of authors of «Change of marks» («Smena vekh») urged to support the slogan:« Let in power internationalists, but they obviously create national business!» (Smena Vekh, 1921, № 2:118). Newspaper «Russia» («Rus’») considered that Bolsheviks in the in contact with foreign countries only «array themselves in the national colors» (Rus’. 1924).In light of the problems of collecting Russian lands, emigration singled out the creation of the USSR, she have started to talk about its preparation since the end of 1922 (For ex: Latest news, 1922)

It is interesting to note that emigration in joining outlying areas by Soviets did not see much economic and geopolitical purposes, but agitation and propaganda, communism distribution in breadth, in these republics and abroad.

The principle of nation’s self-determination also has been connected with a problem of «velikoderzavnost’». Economists A.P. Markov and S.N. Prokopovich were against the thesis «own state to each nation», and V.D.Stankevich (former national socialist) offered for each people which have voluntary logged in Russia store full independence not only in domestic but in foreign economic affairs. He believed that the internal independence of peoples in the united state should extend not only to legislative activity, but also on the armed forces (Nikitin, 1996:8).

Smena-Vekhites viewed self-determination as a tactical maneuver of the Soviet government, calculated on a quick world revolution, in what they were partly right. They did not believe in the

“proletarian internationalism” and perceived the desire for unity only as a return to the restoration of great power (velikoderzavnost’), i.e. as the researcher Kvakin remained – they were in the positions of Russia’s nationalism (Kvakin, 1991:79). Opinions of Smena-Vekhites confirm this (Smena Vekh, 1921, № 4:6).

At the meeting of the members of the Constituent Assembly (1921) disintegration of Russia was due to the reluctance of the border regions identified with Bolshevism. Its resolution «On the national» documented recognition the right of national minorities to “national autonomy”¹ (Vdovin et al., 1998:41-42). However, it is necessary to notice that in it in very florid form pointed out that in general Assembly does not approve the desire of the border states to complete separation and rupture of relations with Russia nevertheless, justifies its by Bolshevik’s leadership and hopes that, after elimination Soviet regime, once again reveal their commonality with Russia (Meeting of Constituent Assembly, 1921; Miliukov, 1927:234-235).

It is clear that at such approach creation of RSFSR and the USSR was perceived by emigrants with caution. They did not hurry with the assessment although many of them said that the rights of the peoples, the principle of federalism, it is only a declaration of the Soviet government. However eventually, Russian abroad has been compelled to reckon with the changes which have occurred after October Revolution. So, the Russian Foreign Congress which has gathered in 1926 has accepted the reference in which promised the recognition of sovereignty of border countries in case of changing state system in Russia.

P.N. Miliukov, analyzing a polity of the RSFSR, came to the conclusion that in reality federation in Russia did not exist. Local authorities executed the decrees of the central institutions (Miliukov, 1925:186). Other

emigrants agreed with mismatch of the letter of the law to practice considering the autonomy of the republics, only a sham. They marked: «On the one hand, the Bolsheviks proclaimed the principle of unconditional self-determination for all nationalities including the right to secession from Russia, but on the other hand – the prosecution of the national movements never had reached such forms» (Articles on national question, 1921:9-10). Socialist Revolutionaries declared that the Bolsheviks had stolen their idea of federalism, bringing it to an absurdity, having strangled national aspirations of the peoples (Kozliakov, 1992:141-142).

P.N. Miliukov compared the attitude of the two party congresses towards the national question. At the Tenth Congress of communist party (March, 1921) under the influence of the Civil war and military communism, “flexible federalism” satisfies both: the nation and party. So Congress declared a national issue resolved. At the Twelfth Congress (April 1923), traces of the old optimism, according to Miliukov, were gone. He ascertained that not only that questions were not resolved in the RSFSR, but its became more complicative because of the centralization, enslavement of power by the Party and total ignoring of the results reached earlier by national movements (Miliukov, 1925:186).

The national Union of Protection of the Native land and Freedom also agreed that there is increased centralism of the policy of Council of People’s Commissars (Sovnarkom) on nationalities and believed that «soon from the federation, even in its form in which it existed until now – there will be no trace»².

Emigration did not consider the establishment of USSR the exit from the situation – Soviet Union has preserved the old centralized and formally promised the independence of the national states. So if the Miliukov called RSFSR «strange» federation, than USSR he called «even

more strange union of countries» (Miliukov, 1925:189-190). G.P. Fedotov considered that this is due to the fact that there is a contradiction between a national emigration is not considered the establishment of Soviet exit from the situation – he has kept the old centralized and formally promised the independence of national states. policies and an international essence of revolution.

Rather detailed analysis of the national-state structure of the USSR (based on the constitution of 1924) was given by lawyer-emigrant N.N. Alekseev. In his view, each element of the Soviet state has the right to self-determination, self-government and autonomy in theory, but in practice, the decentralization of power purely administrative. Although he noted the presence of self-government, however, he saw all it falsehood (Alekseev, 1998:334,335). Among the features of nation-building, Alekseev singled adaptation to the situation where the occurrence of a federation (voluntary or occupation) was accompanied by acceptance of the Bolshevik program and a new political system. As well as Fedotov, he pointed out the contradiction between internationalism and the right of nations to self-determination (Alekseev, 1998:336-337). He agreed with the Soviet politicians concerning elasticity of federalism, and considered that with decentralization it is the best form of government, but doubted that the Soviet federalism is federalism (Alekseev, w.d.:240), though marked in it presence of qualities not found in the western federations, in particular, force of an attraction and influence which promote occurrence other nations in the USSR (Alekseev, 1998:317). In general, he flatterly responded about structure of the Soviet state, singled out certain dignity. Many emigrants who focused exclusively on the shortcomings of Soviet policy did not agree with him.

In 1926 journal «Sovremennye Zapiski» («Contemporary Notes») published a big article of lawyer N.S. Timashev devoted exclusively to national law in Soviet Russia (Timashev, 1926). He considered that, despite the Soviet legislation giving the right to self-determination and recognizes the sovereignty of the Union republics, the autonomy of some areas, in reality the law does not act, one reason for this is the dominant soviet centralization. He noted the following features of Soviet law: 1) it is not the same for different nationalities (4 categories of nationality); 2) it is closely intertwined in their implementation with the beginning of federalism, thus generating certain paradoxes of discrepancy (the pairing in terms of equality, for example, the RSFSR and Turkmenistan (in the USSR) or RSFSR «the basic kernel» and the Karelian Republic (in the RSFSR)); 3) it is mostly declarative. Thus, the author sums up, «the impression produced by a wide volume of the Soviet national law, is false» (Timashev, 1926:390-392). Timashev linked features of the national policy of the USSR, with its systems. In particular, he attributed it by a type of states «with a forked power, with power which is breaking up to two systems, from which one holds all the honors and the other has all the real things, which is give the power» – «formally so called “Soviets” rule, i.e. power theoretically based on the representation of “workers”, but practically is in complete subjection to the kind of social organization called the Communist Party». He considered that this fact has paramount importance for «the right of nationalities» because «to federalism which represents itself one of the major constructive principles of the Soviet system, in communist party the strict centralism corresponds»(Timashev, 1926:394). Therefore he noticed that the federalism, even just declared, is a temporary measure, and it will be soon replaced by centralism. He explained the reasons of this compelled national policy by three things: 1) the

need for the development of national communist cells; 2) the fear of the national movement; 3) the aspiration to raise the state appeal abroad (Timashev, 1926:397).

By this and other articles «Socialisticheski vestnik» («Socialist bulletin») opened in 1926 in its pages a discussion on the national question, which has been picked up by right social revolutionaries in «Sovremennye Zapiski» («Contemporary Notes»). So M. Verner noticed change of the national program of the beginning 1920 in comparison with the first years of the Soviet power towards liberalization and reduce of national tensions that, in his opinion, helped preserve the unity of the country. M. Vishnyak, by contrast, argued that the cultural and limited domestic autonomy given to peoples by Soviets only in that degree that «they come into conflict with the intentions of the ruling elite of the Communist Party». D.I. Chizhevsky felt it necessary to approach the right of republics to independence differentiated (for example, for Ukraine, he thought it inappropriate to use this right) (Doronchenkov, 2001:76; Russian national policy, 1997:308; Egorov, 1998:147 Nikitin, 1996:9-12). Depending on the overall approach to national problems, expatriates have expressed different attitudes to issues of some territories and peoples, and it should be noted, unequal interest in the various regions and peoples. Discussions in emigration were caused by Finland, Poland and Bessarabia territories The emigration of non-Russian nationalities troubled fate of their peoples, who discussed Russian abroad, to a lesser degree. It was discussed both an independence of border countries and occurrence of some territories in the URSS³.

If emigrants politicians paid attention to questions of a real policy, the Russian philosophers staying abroad brought up the questions seeming at first sight theoretical, but on the other hand, as it was found out subsequently, reflecting an essence

occurring in the USSR within the next decades. So, the idea that the Russian internationalism led to the abandonment of Russian in favor of international and non-indigenous put forward (Karsavin, 1992:153; Berdiaev, 1990:349,366-367; Shoul'gin, 1929:231,232). This point of view was voiced also at Russian Foreign Congress (1926). The right wing noticed that Bolsheviks, having lost national feeling, acted towards Russia as hostile force. The manifestation of this hostility they saw even in fact that the name «Russia» has been removed from the name of the state, not to mention the destruction of traditional structures, of national and cultural traditions, their replacement by Soviet analogues (Nikitin, 1996:4). It was noted that if other nations in USSR are worried about their own national question, then for Russian, this question does not arise at all, it was overshadowed by other social and economic problems (Fedotov, 1991:174), and later, the national content of Russian democratic movement was divested by Soviet democracy at all. I.e. by the end of 1920-th emigrants marked the erosion of Russian national component and its replacement by the Soviet.

Conclusion

The researcher A.I. Doronchenkov believes that characterizing the reaction of Russia's emigration on the internal national processes, it should be borne in mind that Russian scientists and politicians, who were abroad, could not rise above the class-political antipathies, to avoid the politicization of evaluations of events occurring in the USSR change. They were hard to get away from subjectivity and political bias, and not well developed scientific tools complicate an objective analysis of the prospects for Russia, although it has not stopped scientific thought (Doronchenkov, 2001:11-112). It's not quite true. From our point of view, the émigré contradictions assessment of Soviet policy in general, manifests itself in the

assessment of national problems. On the one hand, there is a positive estimation of great-power aspirations for unity, it flattered the national vanity Russian Abroad. On the other hand, soviet nationalities policy was rejected by emigrants, as conducted by the Bolshevik government. For emigrants the national question was associated not only with the present (with Soviet Russia), but also with the possible future, in which inevitably would have to reckon with this policy.

¹ SARF (State Archive of Russian Federation), f. (fond) 7035 o. (opis') 1. d. (delo) 6.

² SARF (State Archive of Russian Federation), f. 6055 o. 1. d. 26, l. (list) 191

³ This is a big topic that requires serious coverage, so in this article, it will not be examined.

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Решение национального вопроса в Советской России в 1920-е гг. в восприятии русской эмиграции

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Статья рассматривает отношение русской эмиграции к решению национального вопроса в Советской России. Рассматривается реакция эмиграции на создание СССР и вхождение в него отдельных территорий.

Эта проблема распадается на две составляющие – восприятие советской национальной политики в целом и в отношении отдельных народов и территорий. В данной работе основное внимание уделено первой части данной проблемы.

В статье выявляются различия во взглядах русского зарубежья по этой проблеме, противоречия в ее среде и их причины. Статья раскрывает взгляды представителей эмиграции: политиков, юристов, философов. Позиции русскоязычной зарубежной прессы также представлены в данной работе.

При этом, однако, эмиграция представлена не как совокупность людей и организаций, а как особый уникальный социум, действующий в определенных условиях и по определенным законам развития. Поэтому даже при наличии противоречий по конкретным вопросам, связанным с национальной политикой, выявляются ключевые моменты ее апперцепции русской эмиграцией, анализируются их причины и истоки.

В работе рассматривается именно русская эмиграция, национальная эмиграция не затрагивается. Причиной этого является то, что, во-первых, это отдельная большая тема исследования (в связи с широким национальным составом эмиграции), во-вторых, проблемы отдельных народов не вошли в данную статью, а именно им национальная эмиграция уделяла основное внимание.

Материалы, приведенные в работе, позволяют сделать выводы о влиянии на апперцепцию эмиграции частных и общих причин решения национального вопроса в РСФСР и СССР. Среди частных можно назвать личные, партийные мотивы, среди общих – увязывание национальной ситуации в РСФСР с прошлым (императорской Россией и Россией периода Временного правительства) и с возможным будущим (после свержения большевизма).

Ключевые слова: национальный вопрос, русская эмиграция, советская история, 1920-е гг.
