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Documents on Revolutionary Events of 1917 in the State Archive of the Contemporary History of the Smolensk Region

Abstract

The article analyses documents from the State Archive of the Contemporary History of the Smolensk Region concerning revolutionary events in Smolensk in 1917, particularly memoirs of the participants written in 1927 and 1957. Memoirs' assessment of some facts is ideologically tinged, they tend to exaggerate the role of the Bolshevik party. There are a few memoirs about the February revolution in State Archive of the Contemporary History of the Smolensk Region, among them memoirs of N.G. Burkin, a participant of the events, who in 1920s was secretary of the department for studying history of the communist party. The October revolution of 1917 is described in numerous memoirs. Many were collected in 1927, when the 10th anniversary of the Revolution was celebrated. Soviet historians mostly studied and published Bolsheviks' memoirs, while memoirs of other parties' members remained unnoticed. One of these is

memoirs of S.E. Galperin, leader of the Smolensk Mensheviks and head of the town Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' deputies. He took an active part in the revolutionary events; his memoirs note confusion of the Smolensk Bolsheviks when they first learned of the October take-over. It is difficult to study history drawing on memoirs alone, as every participant and eye-witness has their own agenda. But memoirs are also quite absorbing, as they convey emotions and moods of the citizens, participants and happenstance witnesses of the events. The article also studies transition of power from the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks to the Bolsheviks drawing on partially preserved issues of the local newspaper "Smolenskii vestnik."

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Keywords

Revolution of 1917, Smolensk, archival documents, participants' memoirs, political conflict.

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