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Political Activities of N. P. Okulov, Deputy of the 2nd State Duma of the Russian Empire

Abstract

Deputy Nikolai Pavlovich Okulov is little-known to historical science. And yet his career was a good example of the opportunities that political system of the Russian Empire gave its ordinary citizens. While a student in Kazan, he, a member of a peasant family, entered an illegal circle for studying revolutionary literature. Graduating from the Kazan teacher's institute, he got a job in the Tsaritsyn town college, but got engaged in propaganda of radical ideas among the poorest town folk. Police discovered the plans of the revolutionary-in-making, and he was arrested and sentenced to prison. After his liberation, the former teacher had to make a living by giving private lessons, writing articles for newspapers, and keeping records and accounts.

Having become known to the domestic intelligence, he did not become a professional revolutionary. Having got a family and a job, he had to be guarded in his opinions and cautious in his actions. Nikolai Okulov succeeded in union activities and legal participation in national political life. Despite his misguided revolutionary youth and difficult financial situation, N.P. Okulov's energy and talent won elections to the State Duma of the 2nd convocation. Among the conditions of his electoral success, the author has been able to identify these main factors — impeccable business reputation, support of the local intelligentsia and business circles, membership in the Labour Popular Socialist Party. The party program intended to replace monarchy by republic, socialize production, and construct socialism on the basis of obshchina. The article portrays N.P. Okulov as a journalist, trade union head, and politician. He was a politician of a new mould, who framed socially significant program and sought public support. The author reveals his participation in the work of the State Duma: in the commission for implementation of state revenues and expenses inventory and in the temporary commission for introduction of regulated time off for employees of trades and crafts. Parliamentary activities gave him an opportunity to accumulate political experience and build up his career in the public government. And yet a complex of reasons prevented the first Tsaritsyn deputy from realizing his political potential. Previously unknown letters of N.P. Okulov reflect his fatigue and frustration resulting from the dissolution of the Duma. However, he remained useful in Tsaritsyn until 1917.

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Keywords

Russian Empire, State Duma, revolutionary propaganda, elections, popular socialists, Tsaritsyn.

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