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The Upper Class of Regional Scale: Sources on Emergence of Status Structures in Soviet Russia in the Mid-1920s

Abstract

The article considers an important stage in formation of the upper class in Russia, associated with the beginning of the right of use regulation. According to the authors, this class was a product of uncompleted bourgeoisie formation in the Soviet society — hence the term proto-bourgeoisie. The historiography associates 1917-1920s with an emergence of nomenclature system: system of certain privileges for the upper class. The authors have studied the questionnaires of the Arkhangelsk gubernia executives of the 1920s (party leaders of the gubernia and town level, heads of Executive committees of the Soviets, etc.). These were

deposited in the fonds of the State Archive of the Arkhangelsk Region; the collection numbers 130 pages of printed questionnaire cards with handwritten answers. The questionnaires are divided into three groups: on distribution of work time in at primary place of employment, on material conditions of life, on state of health of senior and middle officials of the Arkhangelsk gubernia. The analysis of questionnaires indicates a formation of certain status features of the regional upper class. It was characterized by high intensity of work, performance of public duties (work in the commissions, etc.), party activity, and obligatory self-education (reading newspapers, books, writing articles and reports). Material goods and living conditions included high wages and improved housing (separate apartments); and yet the senior officials' welfare does not strike as extraordinary compared to the living standard of the rest of the gubernia population. Health overview shows a number of diseases associated with fatigue and bad living conditions in the pre-revolutionary period and during the Civil War. In general, one-time survey of the executives of the Northern periphery conducted in the mid-1920s provides valuable insights into the process of the upper class emergence in the Soviet society.

### Keywords

Mass historical sources, survey materials, nomenclature system of 1917–1920s, privileges of upper class in the Soviet society, proto-bourgeoisie.

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