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Soviet Modernity in the Eyes of Rural Population of the USSR in the Second Half of the 1940s – Early 1950s According to the Personal Provenance Sources

Abstract

The author analyzes the content of collective social ideas of peasantry against the background of the recently ended Great Patriotic War and transition to peaceful life. The restart of mobilization model of economy and realization of a series of administrative campaigns in the

USSR (fighting violations of the agricultural cooperative codex and labor absenteeism) mediated the emergence of new opportunities for social integration. The authorities virtually authorized the creation of official channels for citizens' appeals. These administrative campaigns to activate the socio-political interaction stimulated the process of verbalization of hopes and aspirations of the Soviet peasantry and objectively contributed to the emergence of modernization attitudes in the minds of rural population. In this regard, the complaints, sent by the rural population to the Council for Kolkhozes Affairs, and direct requests and decisions of general meetings of collective farmers, which followed the Decree of June 2, 1948, should be considered as a most important source for studying representations of the realities and prospects for the development of industrial civilization in the USSR, as seen by the rural population. Complaints about administrative arbitrariness and failures in social policy are private provenance sources. They present a wide range of assessments of the real state of the kolkhozes system and offer desirable, from their point of view, changes in peasants' social status and position. The article is to provide a source-based analysis of the Soviet modernity as a certain socio-cultural construct reflecting the system of social preferences and aspirations of the post-war Soviet society. The author comes to the conclusion that, despite the increased tax burden, disenfranchisement, and hunger strikes, the end of the war and transition to the peaceful life factored in the dissemination of ideas about modernity in the consciousness of the rural population. These were mostly imaginary cultural and ideological prospects for building a socialist future: introduction of guaranteed wages, realization of the right to rest, social security, and protection from administrative arbitrariness. The peasant vision of the Soviet industrialism included ideas about agricultural technology rationalization and dissemination of scientific knowledge; removal of discriminatory restrictions on the legal status of the rural population; growth of social security and material well-being of the collective farmers.

Keywords

Soviet modernity, complaints as a historical source, source analysis, collective farm peasantry of the USSR, social ideas.

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