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SOVIET REPRESSIONS AS AN ETERNAL PAIN OF MODERN RUSSIAN SOCIETY

Abstract: The contributor of the article has studied the materials concerning political repressions in 1930-s. The text reveals the essence of persecution of people for political reasons as an instrument of the socialist state marking its totalitarian regime. Tens of millions of Soviet people suffered from political repressions launched by the dictatorship of the proletariat. The author concentrates on D.I. Pasechnik's case in his analysis. This investigator of the Military Prosecutor's Office of the Ural Military District was charged with espionage and treason by Soviet authorities. In modern Criminal Law a conviction on charges of betrayal of or spying against one's own country requires a confession by the accused in the open court, or a testimony from two witnesses. That was not the case in the totalitarian state. The fact that the study is being pursued on the recently declassified documents of the State Archive makes the investigation particularly interesting and topical.

Keywords: a socialist state, an anti-Soviet element, enemies of people, totalitarianism, repressions, espionage, treason, a case, People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, NKVD, a Prosecutor's Office, rehabilitation.

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СОВЕТСКИЕ РЕПРЕССИИ КАК НЕПРОХОДЯЩАЯ БОЛЬ СОВРЕМЕННОГО РОССИЙСКОГО ОБЩЕСТВА

Аннотация: Автор статьи изучил материалы о политических репрессиях 1930-х годов. В тексте раскрывается сущность преследования людей по политическим мотивам как инструмента социалистического государства, характеризующего его тоталитарный режим. Десятки миллионов советских людей пострадали от политических репрессий, инициируемых и осуществляемых диктатурой пролетариата. В своем анализе автор обращается к судебному делу Д.И. Пасечника. Это следствие Военной прокуратуры Уральского военного округа. Он был обвинен советскими властями в шпионаже и государственной измене. В современном уголовном праве осуждение по обвинению в предательстве или шпионаже против собственной страны требует признания обвиняемого в открытом судебном заседании или показаний двух свидетелей. Это было не в правилах тоталитарного государства.

Тот факт, что исследование проводится на недавно рассекреченных документах Государственного архива административных органов Свердловской области, делает исследование особенно интересным и актуальным.

Ключевые слова: социалистическое государство, антисоветский элемент, враги народа, тоталитаризм, репрессии, шпионаж, государственная измена, судебное дело, Народный комиссар внутренних дел, НКВД, прокуратура, реабилитация.

It is common knowledge that the political regime in the USSR of 1930s was totalitarian. Absolute and oppressive single-party government under Joseph Stalin did not sanction any individual freedom and sought to

subordinate all spheres of life of every single person or group of people to the authority of the state. The practice of coercion and repression was exploited all over Soviet Union territory, including the Ural region.

The mass-media of those days informed the intimidated population about the exposure of spies, saboteurs, and «enemies of the people» on the daily basis, thus increasing the sense of terror in the society and restraining any dissent. Many individuals and population groups were persecuted particularly for the purpose of subduing or obstructing their involvement in the political life of the society. Motivated to maximize his political power, J. Stalin practically enshrined mass repressions at the legislative level.

According to recently declassified documents, the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR signed the Operational Order № 00447 on 30 July, 1937. It bore the title «About repression of former kulaks, criminals, and other anti-Soviet elements» and empowered any local NKVD agents to dispense with anti-Soviet elements.

Describing this operation order, which got the epithet «notorious» that suits its inhuman nature, it should be noted the following. Firstly, the document outlined individuals and social groups subjected to «punitive measures». Secondly, the law prescribed types of punishment for political culprits. Thirdly, the order provided execution and arrest quotas for every region and autonomous republic. So, the operational order divided anti-Soviet elements into two groups: the most dangerous and other potentially hostile elements. Especially «treacherous» elements were subject to immediate arrest and subsequent execution after investigation by troikas (three people who issued sentences to people after simplified, speedy investigations and without a public and fair trial). The second category deserved arrest and imprisonment for 8-10 years.

One of the victims of mass political repression in the thirties was a citizen of Ekaterinburg, an investigator of the Military Prosecutor's Office of the Ural Military District. A military jurist of 2nd rank Dmitriy Ilyich Pasechnik was a native of the town of Gorodenka in Poland and of a Ukrainian national identity. The formal allegation against Pasechnik contained the indictment on treason and espionage charges. Allegedly, D.I. Pasechnik was an emissary of Polish Joint Staff posted to Sverdlovsk as an area of his operation with covert identities in 1928. Also, according to the prosecution materials, he was a member of the so called «Polish military organization» with a branch based in our city. One more infraction ascribed to the arrested «spy» was his links with Botner, another Polish agent, and then with the leader of the «Polish military organization» –

Vovrovsky. The case materials read that the personage was engaged in their assignments. So, the criminal case against D.I. Pasechnik exhibited a classic example of whimsical combinations of both fact and fiction fabricated for the sake of his arrest and torture. As a result, troika deemed the main character of our article subject to «punitive measures» due to his counterrevolutionary activities and spying in favor of Poland.

During the investigation, none of the witnesses mentioned in the materials of the case was questioned; and no details or evidence was provided, either. That was the NKVD's method to coin confirmation of irrefutable guilt and to turn it into the basis for indicting and arresting people. So, Vavrovsky, Begansky, and Falevich were apprehended by the Commissariat for Internal Affairs. Tried on their own cases, they testified, that every piece of information about Pasechnik was only hearsay. Although Begansky once admitted that, on the errand of Vavrovsky, he was in communication with Pasechnik. However, he did not characterize the specifics of their ties.

During a brief investigation and at summary trial Dmitry Il'ich Pasechnik did not admit his guilt. He denied every criminal episode of the indictment against him. The character of the article insisted that he had never committed the crime of betraying the Soviet Union or of giving «aid and comfort» to enemies either on native or foreign soil. Dmitry Il'ich did not plead guilty to the accusations of being an accessory of a Polish espionage network, either. Needless to say, the court was unwilling to accept the truth and sentenced the accused to capital punishment. D.I. Pasechnik was executed by firing squad on 4 January, 1937, 2 months and a half after the arrest.

After the death of I.V. Stalin, the mass repressions in the country decreased and finally ceased. By the request of N.S. Khrushchev in February 1954 the report about the number of repressed people was prepared by R. Rudenko, the Prosecutor General, S. Kruglov, the Interior Minister of the USSR, and K. Gorshenin, the Justice Minister. The account listed the total number of people prosecuted for counter-revolutionary crimes during the period from 1921 to February 1, 1954. During that crucial phase 3,777,380 individuals were indicted, including 642,980 who received the death penalty, 2,369,220 were sentenced to up to 25 years, and 765,180 were exiled or deported. The report «On the Cult of Personality and its Consequences» brought about by Khrushchev became a turning point for the people of our country. So, Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin and began the de-Stalinization of Soviet society through the

Khrushchev Thaw. The mass rehabilitation of illegally repressed Soviet citizens started and has continued so far.

Concerning the case of D.I. Pasechnik, we can report the following. In 1957, the Martial Tribunal of Belorussian Military Okrug reversed the determination of NKVD Commission and Prosecutor of the USSR dated the 26th December, 1937 on Dmitry Il'ich Pasechnik. The case against the repressed personality was closed in the absence of crime composition. The details of protest of Chief Military Prosecutor of the USSR A.G. Gorny in regard to Pasechnik's case testify that the defendant did not admit or acknowledge all facts necessary for conviction of alleged crimes of treason and espionage during preliminary investigation. The former officer of Ural People Commissariat of Internal Affairs N.G. Elkin, who carried out the inquiry of the case, contradicted to the existence or activity of anti-Soviet Polish military organization infiltrated into the forces of Ural Military Okrug. But arrests targeted not only individual persons, but also the whole ethnic, social groups of population. D.I. Pasechnik turned to be of Polish ethnicity and belonged to the legal profession. These were two groups of the Soviet population with most victims.

Hereby, on the example of an illegally repressed investigator of the Military Prosecutor's Office of the Ural Military District, the military jurist of 2nd rank – Dmitry Pasechnik, we can make a conclusion that the main reason for criminal responsibility in the thirties in the USSR was not the guilt of a person, but their social danger. In its turn, the key criteria for identifying personal hostility appeared to be social and ethnic origin.

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