

DOI 10.23859/2587-8352-2017-1-4-1

UDC 94(47).083

Andrey Egorov

Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor
Cherepovets State University
Cherepovets, Russia
anegorov65@mail.ru



Public sentiments of the population in Vologda Governorate on the eve of the February Revolution

Abstract. The article is devoted to the analysis of public sentiments of the population in Vologda Governorate in the period since the beginning of World War I and until the February Revolution. Reports of gendarmes and police officials to their administration adequately reflect the state of affairs locally and serve as the main source of information. The article shows how the patriotic spirit in the first months of the war began to give way to psychological and physical fatigue due to the hardships of war and disruption of the routine way of economic life. The author notes that the anti-German and, to a lesser degree, the anti-Semitic views that appeared during the war could be dangerous signs of aggravation of the social tension. Rising prices and the ongoing shortage of food and essential goods, together with the inability of the central and the local authorities to solve this problem, pushed the population to self-assembly and struggle. Immediately prior to the February Revolution, many people felt that the Tsarist regime was the reason of all failures and misery. Anti-war statements became widely spread, the Tsar and the government often faced sharp criticism; there were cases of open non-fulfilment of orders issued by the authorities. All the materials in the article acknowledge the naturally-determined character of the February Revolution.

Keywords: World War I, public sentiments, Vologda Governorate, gendarmes, police, political parties, the February Revolution

Introduction

The February Revolution is one of those historical events that will cause discussions as long as historical studies exist. Most Russian and foreign historians see the February Revolution as a logical consequence of the fundamental contradictions in

Tsarist Russia¹. At the same time, in recent years, supporters of the conservative approach formulated by G.M. Katkov², also became influential. They believe that there were no objective reasons for overthrowing the monarchy, and that the Revolution took place because of a combination of several accidental causes due to temporary military difficulties and the destructive activity of masons, liberals and other opponents of the existing system. To understand the causes of the Revolution adequately, it is necessary to look at the public sentiments of the population in the Russian Empire during World War I. This is not a new topic; its various aspects have always attracted attention of both Russian and foreign historians³. In recent years, the following intrigues have been thoroughly studied: the image of the Russian imperial family in the people's consciousness, spy mania, sentiments in the army, attitudes to subjects of hostile nations, etc.⁴. International conferences and colloquiums devoted to World War I are regularly held, where the manifestation of public sentiments amongst the population of the Russian Empire is revealed⁵, followed by publication of the summary works⁶. The changing dynamics of the public sentiments in several regions of the country are studied as well⁷. However, in Vologda Governorate, such studies have not been undertaken yet, except for their several separate aspects⁸.

¹ Khasegava Ts. The February Revolution. *Critical Dictionary of the Russian Revolution*. St. Petersburg, 2014, p. 60.

² See: Katkov G.M. *The February Revolution*. Moscow, 1997.

³ See: Gatrell P. *Russia's First World War: A Social and Economic History*. Harlow, 2005; Gatrell P. *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I*. Bloomington, 2005; Gaudin C. *Ruling Peasants: Village and State in Late Imperial Russia*. DeKalb, 2007; Figes O. *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891–1924*. Leningrad, 1996; Haimson L. The problem of the social stability in urban Russia, 1905–1917. *Slavic review*, 1964, vol. 23, no. 4, pp. 619–642; 1965, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 1–22; Haimson L.H. 'The problem of political and social stability in urban Russia on the eve of war and revolution' Revisited. *Slavic review*, 2000, vol. 59, no. 4, pp. 848–875.

⁴ Kolonitskiy B.I. 'Tragic Erotic': *Images of the Imperial Family during World War I*. Moscow, 2010; Fuller U. *Internal Enemy: Spy Mania and the Decline of Imperial Russia*. Moscow, 2009; Astashov A.B. *Russian Front in 1914 – early 1917: War Experience and Modernity*. Moscow, 2014; Lor E. *Russian Nationalism and the Russian Empire: The Campaign against 'Enemy Nationals' during World War I*. Moscow, 2012.

⁵ See: *Russia and World War I: Proceedings of the International Colloquium*. St. Petersburg, 1999; *The Era of War and Revolution: 1914–1922*. St Petersburg, 2017; *Russia during World War I, 1914–1918*. Moscow, 2014; *Great War of Russia: Social Order, Public Communication and Violence at the Turn of the Tsarist and Soviet Eras*. Moscow, 2014; etc.

⁶ See: *Russia during World War I: Economic Situation, Social Processes, Political Crisis*. Moscow, 2014.

⁷ See: Balyberdin Yu.A. The rise of the protest moods of the people during World War I in the Vyatka-Kama region. *Bulletin of Vyatka State University*, 2011, no. 1, pp. 39–46; Belov S.B. *Patriotism in World War I (1914 – 1916). A view from Nizhniy*. Nizhniy Novgorod, 2008; Belova I.B. *World War I and the Russian Province. 1914 – February 1917*. Moscow, 2011; 21. Shashkov V.I. *The Political Climate among the Siberian Peasantry during World War I (July 1914 – February*

In the early 20th century, Vologda Governorate was an ordinary province with the mostly peasant population. On the territory of the region, there were no big cities, large factories or higher educational institutions. The revolution of 1905-07 grew out relatively quietly there. In terms of politics, this region was interesting only due to the amount of political exiles, which was the second largest in the Russian Empire after the East Siberian region (they called Vologda Governorate ‘pod Stolichnaya Siberia’, which is literally translated as ‘Siberia near the vicinity of the capital’). The well-preserved reports of gendarmes and police officers regarding the situation in the local areas, together with the materials in the local press, make it possible to understand the public sentiments of the population of Vologda Governorate on the eve of the February Revolution.

Main body

The impact of World War I on the revolutionary crisis that broke out in Russia is so obvious that it would be useful to look at the reaction of the population in Vologda Governorate to the outbreak of the war. In fact, this reaction was no different from the one in the other regions of the country, where the profound patriotic spirit observed everywhere was reflected both in the press and in the reports of gendarmes and police officers. One non-commissioned officer of Vologda provincial gendarme department was sent to several subdivisions – volosts – in Vologda uyezd (administrative subdivision of the Russian Empire, a second-level of administrative division, close to a county – *translator’s note*) in November 1914 to check the ‘attitudes of the population’. He noted, “Despite difficult times and the financial hardships of the peasantry, the attitudes are patriotic and cannot be compared to those that existed in these volosts in 1905 and 1906⁹.” In a few reports, the police officers characterized the attitudes of the local population as ‘highly patriotic’. On 18 November 1914, the City Duma in Vologda considered the possibility of commemorating the names of citizens from Vologda Governorate who “had fallen for faith, the Tsar and the motherland”. The members of the City Duma – ‘glasnye’ (councilors) – decided to install several commemorative plaques with the names of the citizens from Vologda Governorate

1917). Author’s Abstract ... Doctoral Dissertation. Novosibirsk, 2001; Shilovskii M.V. *World War I of 1914 – 1918 and Siberia*. Novosibirsk, 2015; etc.

⁸ See: Golikova N.I. To the question about interaction of state institutions and public organizations during World War I (on materials of Vologda Governorate). *Historical Local Studies and Archives: Collection of Articles*. Vologda, 2003, vol. 9, pp. 133–140; Smirnov I.A. *Kirillov Uezd during the World War I*. Kirillov. Vologda, 2005, vol. 6, pp. 136–156; Troshina T.I. *The Great War and the Northern Region: North European Russia during World War I*. Arkhangel'sk, 2014; etc.

⁹ *State Archives of the Vologda Region (SAVR)*. Fond 108. Opis’ 1, D. 5745, Sheet 13, reverse side.

who died at the front, in all Vologda churches, and to arrange a special site for military graves on the territory of the Bogorodsky cemetery¹⁰.

Currently, researchers consider it artificial to make attempts to isolate the stages in the formation of protest moods. During the whole period of the wartime, there was manifestation of patriotism, as well as that of grumbling and discontent. Whilst we agree with this statement, we would nevertheless like to emphasize that certain dynamics of changes in the public attitudes can be seen in the reports of gendarmerie and police. Thus, in many documents in the autumn of 1915, such expressions as ‘patriotic attitude’ gave place to others, such as ‘the population made themselves easy towards the war’. The battle fatigue and the desire for a quick but victorious end of the war for Russia began to prevail. The police chief of Kadnikov Uyezd believed that, although the attitudes of peasants and workers towards the war over the past year “seemed to have not changed at all..., there is no turning to peace, but, apparently, the fast end of the war is desirable for all.”¹¹ Reports from Gryazovets assumed that the peasants referred to the war with ‘great attention’, were longing for peace, but only for the peace that would be accompanied by a complete defeat of the enemy¹². Since the spring of 1916, gendarmes had been noting that the peasants and workers were looking forward to making peace being impatient, however, with the honorable peace.

At the beginning of the war, the mobilization in Vologda Governorate, as well as throughout the whole country, was successful. As one of gendarmes’ reports states, “there was nothing politically reprehensible noticed at recruiting station No.3 among approximately 350 people summoned there. The sentiments of the people are patriotic, they join the service willingly; many of them volunteered”¹³. In 1915, the attitudes towards mobilization began to change. The gendarmes note, “Peasants and the rest of the population are conscious of the need for frequent military recruitments and lend themselves to this process, although they complain that we should also take police officers and guards to war”¹⁴. In 1916, the discontent with frequent military recruitments became obvious. After the horse mobilization, some of the peasants said, “It is still tolerable, however now people and horses are taken away, summer will come shortly, there would be no one to cultivate the land, and there would be nothing to help us to do so”¹⁵.

¹⁰ *State Archives of the Vologda Region (SAVR)*. Fond 108. Opis’ 1, D. 5745, Sheet 13, reverse side

¹¹ *SAVR*. Fond 108. Opis’ 1, D. 5864, Sheet 24.

¹² *Ibid.* Sheet 32.

¹³ *SAVR*. Fond 108. Opis’ 1, D. 5745, Sheet 26, reverse side.

¹⁴ *SAVR*. Fond 108. Opis’ 1, D. 5864, Sheet 7, 79.

¹⁵ *SAVR*. Fond 108. Opis’ 1, D. 5872, Sheet 79.

Since the spring of 1915, gendarmes had begun to note the anti-war attitudes. Thus, a peasant from one of the villages said, “the Germans are rich and they have a lot of gold, but our government does not have any money, the Germans have a lot of power, our troops can never defeat them, and it would be better for the Russian government to ask the Germans for peace in advance”. Another peasant “scolded the Emperor and said that the soldiers do not need to go to war”, yet another “condemned the instructions of the Emperor, and said that we should not fight”¹⁶. For every fact like that, gendarmes conducted an unofficial check, and, if there were any reasons, made an official inquiry. However, although the anti-war attitudes were not so widely spread in Vologda Governorate, since the beginning of 1916, there was an obvious increase in the number of such inquiries. Quite often, such demonstration of anti-war attitudes also meant negative statements about Nicholas II and the Empress, which had not been observed before. In January 1916, A. Abramovsky, a peasant, said, “it is not necessary to fight; there is no one to fight for and no one to protect; he allowed himself to offend the reigning Emperor of All Russia, calling him ‘Kol’ka’ to arouse disrespect and scolded him in the foul language”¹⁷. The anti-war sentiments have spread not only among the peasants. In October 1916, a servant of K. Popov “dared to say that soon soldiers would not go to war, and that they do not have to go”, and “that there will soon be pogroms, they will smash the authorities, whereas the servant expressed the desire to join these pogroms”¹⁸. In December 1916, K.I. Pilberg, a chemist in the local pharmacy, said, “Peasants are fools to give money to the government, buying war bonds”¹⁹.

We also have at our disposal the memoirs of D.M. Silinsky, a Vologda peasant, who as a young man in 1916–17 worked as a scribe in the volost government. Silinsky wrote these memoirs in 1965–66 for the local history museum, most likely, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution. They have certain clichés of the Soviet era but show peasants’ attitudes in considerable detail on the eve of the February Revolution. Per the memoirs of Silinsky, the open and blended discontent with the war had revealed itself more and more since 1916, especially among women. During the war, the wives of soldiers who were off to the front received benefits from the state for disabled members of the family. However, under the conditions of constantly rising prices, these benefits “completely lost their value”. There were frequent cases when “soldiers’ wives and old people who had lost their breadwinners came to a rural marshal with demands to take measures to return their husbands and sons from the front”. Moreover, crippled soldiers began to come to villages from the front, telling about the situation and moods in the hospitals and at the front

¹⁶ *SAVR*. Fond 108. Opis’ 1, D. 5872, Sheet 72, 79.

¹⁷ *SAVR*. Fond 108. Opis’ 1, D. 6002, Sheet 62.

¹⁸ *SAVR*. Fond 108. Opis’ 1, D. 5990, Sheet 187.

¹⁹ *SAVR*. Fond 108. Opis’ 1, D. 5983, Sheet 138.

not in a “newspaper style”, as Silinsky recalled, “And soldiers’ wives were no longer afraid to speak openly that peasants did not need this war”. The anti-war talks spread around at village meetings and in conversations of peasants with each other. These talks “have already brought a lot of trouble to a police sergeant, who reported about the attitudes of peasants to the bailiff in Tarnoga every week. However, it was no longer possible to hush such conversations among the peasants”²⁰.

The gendarmerie documents show the ambiguity of attitudes in the various groups of population towards the war. Thus, in October 1915, an assistant to head of Vologda provincial gendarme department reported that part of the peasant population had jobs in the cities. There, “due to shortage of workers, peasants can assign wages at their will, and employers only agree to them; and because of these circumstances, many peasants made money savings... they, therefore, are aware that the reason for improvement in their welfare is the war, for the duration of which they do not grumble”. Other peasants understand that “the enemy is strong, and the war cannot end soon; although there were certain individuals who expressed their views against the war; peasants did not agree with them, and these individuals were brought to attention of the local authorities”²¹.

In October 1915, summing up the information from all the counties, the head of Vologda provincial gendarme department reported to the Police Department, “The attitudes of peasants and workers are now calm and mostly patriotic; the population has a strong desire to bring the war to the final victory over the enemy”. He noted, “Therefore, despite the enormous hardships associated with mobilization, the population adequately tolerates the frequent military recruitments, understanding their necessity, and only the recruitment of soldiers 2nd rank (‘ratniks’) was a little distressing”²². Per his observations, the anti-war proclamations of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party and the agitation of political convicts among the workers of Vologda railway shops were not very successful.

Since December 1914, the documents of gendarmes and police officers also note cases of evading military service. By 1916, they became so widespread that began to influence the public sentiments. In October 1916, an assistant to head of Vologda provincial gendarme department wrote about the ‘strong displeasure’ of the population towards people “evading recruitment, both through self-mutilation and mainly by applying for positions exempt from forced military recruitment, in various ways; and there were usually reports from the population about such people”²³.

²⁰ Silinsky D.M. *Through the Fog of Time. Memories of Distant Youth. At the Savior Churchyard. The History of the Northern Village*. Vologda, 2002, pp. 85–86.

²¹ SAVR. Fond 108. Opis’ 1, D. 5864, Sheet 6.

²² Ibid. Sheet 16.

²³ Ibid. Sheet 268.

In August 2014, Nicholas II ordered to stop selling vodka for the whole duration of the war. As researchers note, and as evidenced by the materials of Vologda Governorate, the overwhelming majority of Russians²⁴ supported the Prohibition at the beginning. One of gendarmes' reports say, "Since the cessation of the wine trade, all sorts of crimes have significantly decreased, and this, apparently, quite satisfies the whole population"²⁵. However, over time, the Prohibition began to bring some negative effects, the main of which was the widespread distribution of brewing and moonshining, being noted by the police since November 1914. Subsequently, it led to other consequences dangerous for the authorities. The documents of 1916 repeatedly noted the cases of peasants' dissatisfaction with the appearance of drunken representatives of the authorities; and it was not because they drank too much but rather because "they drink when we cannot".

One of the characteristics of the wartime was the growth of anti-German and, to a lesser extent, anti-Austrian attitudes that appeared mostly in the sentiments towards prisoners of war and persons of German nationality. At the beginning of the war, the attitude towards them was not yet hostile. Thus, in November 1914, a non-commissioned officer of Vologda provincial gendarme department reported that the residents of Ustysysol uyezd "do not oppress and do not make acquaintance" with prisoners of war (22 persons) located there²⁶. However, due to escalation in military activities, the anti-German attitudes also intensified. The main reason of these anti-German attitudes was the idea of German, and in general foreign economic dominance, foreign sabotage within the country, the government propaganda that formed the image of the enemy among the people and the stories about inhuman methods of warfare applied by the Germans in the news that had been coming from the front starting since the autumn of 1914. In the autumn of 1915, a district police officer in Solvychegodk uyezd wrote that the attitudes towards the Germans were hostile and "the hostility towards them was also growing", since "there are almost no such persons who did not have their relatives mobilized, and this bitterness aggravates upon arrival of wounded soldiers to the villages, especially those with wounds from shell bullets"²⁷.

An assistant to head of Vologda provincial gendarme department reported on hostile attitudes of the population towards persons of German origin who were in the civil service and those holding prominent posts²⁸. They blamed them for all the fail-

²⁴ Arthur M.K. Prohibition during World War I: causes, concept and consequences of the introduction of Prohibition in 1914–1917. *Russia and the First World War*. St Petersburg, 1999, p. 154.

²⁵ SAVR. Fond 108. Opis' 1, D. 5745, Sheet 25.

²⁶ SAVR. Fond 108. Opis' 1, D. 5745, Sheet 25.

²⁷ SAVR. Fond 108. Opis' 1, D. 5864, Sheet 22.

²⁸ Ibid. Sheet 6, reverse side.

ures at the front. Before the war, German citizens run several commercial and industrial enterprises in Vologda Governorate (such as the brewery in Veliky Ustyug, etc.). Since the beginning of the war, the owners of these establishments had begun to accept the Russian citizenship discreetly. The residents of Vologda were strongly against it and suggested confiscating these enterprises in favour of the treasury²⁹. The requirements to dismiss persons with German nationality from their posts became a widespread phenomenon, as well as spreading rumours about them being potentially spies.

The anti-German attitudes related to the patriotic spirit and resulted from it. In the autumn of 1915, a leaflet was posted up in Vologda, “When will Vologda get rid of the German Fuchs (vice-governor. – *A.E.*)? Are the scandal and warnings in the theatre not enough for him when people shouted “down with Fuchs, down with the Germans”? Such a pity they let him get away alive; it is high time to strangle this German spy because we cannot entrust the government with this... Moreover, we have another German, the gendarme Miller, and everyone knows about this scoundrel, everyone knows he is a spy but everyone is afraid of him. Down with the German Fuchs! Down with the gendarme Miller! It’s time for us to start cleaning our Mother Russia!”³⁰ The gendarmes did not find the authors of this leaflet, but judging by the style of the text, those were the people close to the Union of the Russian people, who showed certain activity during the war³¹. In 1906–07, almost with the same expressions they demanded to clean ‘Mother Russia’ from revolutionaries, liberals and the Jews. However, one should not think that the anti-German attitudes came only from the right-wing circles; they were spread in most segments of the population. The local district police officer from Kadnikov wrote, “I often heard peasants’ arguments that if not for the dry law, they would have treated the Germans in such a way that only very few of them would be left in Russia”³².

The incident in Totma in January 1915 proves how easily the anti-German attitudes turned into interethnic conflicts. Per the report of a non-commissioned officer of Vologda provincial gendarme department, several mobilized warriors – the ‘ratniks’ – smashed a few captured Germans and Austrians, explaining this by saying that “the Germans were under poor supervision and had greater freedom”³³. Together with other prisoners, they also assaulted a supervised mountaineer, whom they mistakenly took for one of the Germans. The next day, the supervised mountaineers

²⁹ SAVR. Fond 108. Opis’ 1, D. 5864, Sheet 42.

³⁰ SAVR. Fond 108, Opis’ 1, D. 5864, Sheet 18.

³¹ For further information please refer to: Egorov A.N. The organization of right-wing parties in the cities of North European Russia in the early 20th century. *Bulletin of Cherepovets State University*, 2013, no. 1 (46), vol. 2, pp. 29–32.

³² SAVR. Fond 108, Opis’ 1, D. 5864, Sheet 24, reverse side.

³³ SAVR. Fond 108, Opis’ 1, D. 5872, Sheet 7.

made a ‘deal’ with the mobilized in response to beating their compatriot. Thus, there started a big fight, during which one mountaineer was killed, and two died later in the hospital. The police that came to rescue decided not to deal with the mobilized and simply arrested all the mountaineers without any special investigation.

In 1915, the retreat of the Russian army caused evacuation of a significant number of Jews from the governorates, from the boundary of a settled area to various regions of the country, which led to increase in anti-Semitism activity. Prior to the war, there were almost no anti-Semitic attitudes in Vologda Governorate, since there were very few Jews there, and in some areas (‘*uyezdy*’ – pl. *translator’s note*), there were none of them at all. Therefore, per various police reports, the public attitude towards Jews could be mostly described as ‘indifferent’. In 1915, Jewish refugees appeared in Vologda Governorate; in most cases, the population reacted to this fact with no prejudice. The head of Vologda provincial gendarme department reported to the Police Department that the Jewish refugees were treated in the same way as the Christians³⁴. At the same time, in the cities that were located down the railway, such as Vologda or Gryazovets, the number of Jews increased noticeably, which led to spreading the anti-Semitic attitudes. The local police chief of Gryazovets reported, “The general attitude of the population towards the Jews is not very favourable, and whilst collecting information on location of refugees in the uyezd, we had to listen to such requests as “just do not send the Jews to us”³⁵. Gendarmes saw the causes of such anti-Semitic attitudes in mass evasion of the Jews from the military service, unfair prices for essential products set by Jewish traders and strengthening of Jewish influence in the provincial cities. As an example, per gendarmes’ reports, the residents of Vologda complained of “Jewish dominance in general, and in particular, recent frequent purchases of houses by the Jews”³⁶. The point was about the policy of settling all accessible areas by the Jews pursued by the Petrograd Jewish Assistance Committee, the deputies of which repeatedly visited Vologda.

One of the main questions is how great the influence of political parties was on maturing the revolutionary crisis during the war. There is no point explaining that the activities of all political parties in pre-revolutionary Russia, especially the left-wing parties, were under constant control of gendarmes. During the wartime, this control only intensified. Per the report of head of Vologda provincial gendarme department to the Police Department, “all persons under suspicion are registered, and both external and internal surveillance is done”³⁷. There were no organized branches of revolutionary parties in Vologda Governorate, but there were some representatives of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) and the Socialist Revolutionary

³⁴ *SAVR*. Fond 108, Opis’ 1, D. 5864, Sheet 17.

³⁵ *SAVR*. Fond 108, Opis’ 1, D. 5864, Sheet 32, reverse side.

³⁶ *SAVR*. Fond 108, Opis’ 5, D. 130, Sheet 28.

³⁷ *SAVR*. Fond 108, Opis’ 1, D. 5864, Sheet 17.

Party (the SRs), as well as people who sympathized them. The Social Democrats in Vologda rested upon the society called ‘Prosveshcheniye’ – a cultural and educational organization that brought together more than 200 people, mostly workers of various industries and professions. The society arranged lectures, literary readings, concerts and excursions for the workers. Per the invitations of its management, many scientists and cultural figures from the capital visited Vologda and delivered lectures. Supporters of the Socialists-Revolutionaries were also orientated at the Vologda Agricultural Society, which played a huge role in the development of the cooperative movement in Vologda Governorate. Per gendarmes’ reports, “agitators used legal meetings of these societies to put forward their beliefs; proclamations accidentally received from Petrograd were also delivered there”³⁸. At the same time, in 1915, the local gendarmes did not see any great danger in the activities of the revolutionary parties and their representatives yet. They believed that workers “are not inclined to believe the agitation appeals, with few exceptions, saying that now was not the time to be engaged in politics; the disturbances amongst them occur only due to rising prices for food and insufficient remuneration of their work, in their opinion”³⁹.

In 1916, the situation began to change. The secret agent named ‘Kamenny’, who was apparently a worker recruited for the service, regularly reported to Vologda provincial gendarme department on the Social Democrats spreading among the workers. In January 1916, the workers of Vologda railway shops and city printing house established a social-democratic group that maintained contact with the Social Democratic fraction of the State Duma and the working group of the Central War Industry Committee⁴⁰. On 1 May 1916, the members of the group planned a mass meeting outside the city followed by a meeting of workers sympathizing with the ideas of the Social Democrats, however they did not dare to do so due to fear of arrests. The general public sentiments among the workers can be seen from the gendarmes’ reports, “The workers do not trust the central government and representatives of administrative authorities unconditionally, they are opposed to merchants for their looting and blame the government for the opposition against them, and in general, for the high cost of appropriate measures”⁴¹.

Various public organizations in Vologda Governorate (such as credit partnerships, consumer and cooperative unions, cultural, educational and agricultural societies) were the reason of serious anxiety on part of the authorities. Per head of Vologda provincial gendarme department, “These unions attract attention of the population not only as breeding ground for culture and material well-being, but also as insti-

³⁸ *SAVR*. Fond 108, Opis’ 1, D. 5864, Sheet 17.

³⁹ *Ibid*. Sheet 17, reverse side.

⁴⁰ *SAVR*. Fond 108, Opis’ 5, D. 131, Sheet 105.

⁴¹ *SAVR*. Fond 108, Opis’ 5, D. 130, Sheet 79, reverse side.

tutions that unite disparate forces”⁴². The historians have repeatedly emphasised the importance of legal organizations, including cooperatives, for the socialist parties in pre-revolutionary Russia⁴³. A. Dickens believes that legitimate organizations created new political culture, “which shaped the organized socialism”⁴⁴.

This statement is fully confirmed by the materials of Vologda Governorate. Thus, the Regional Cooperative Congress of eight northern provinces (‘guberniyas’) arranged by the Vologda Agricultural Society late in August 1915 became a highlight of the social life. The organizational bureau of the congress headed by the famous Socialist-Revolutionary S.S. Maslov, included people close to revolutionary parties, and most deputies, per gendarmes’ observations, referred to the left wing. A prominent liberal, member of the Central Committee of the Cadet Party, Prince D.I. Shakhovskoy became chairman of the Congress. During the war, he played a huge role in the development of the cooperative movement and strengthening its role in the socio-political life of the country⁴⁵. During the work of the Congress, the vice-governor repeatedly interrupted the speeches of the left-wing deputies and cautioned them for their attempts to raise political questions. At the end of the Congress, Prince Shakhovskoy read out the general political resolution that expressed the demands and wishes of the Congress. The text of this resolution is not preserved in the archive, but we know its content according to one of the members of the Central Committee of the Cadet Party, A.S. Izgoyev, who states that the cooperative congress demanded “freedom of alliances, universal suffrage, responsibility of the ministry, etc.”⁴⁶ For a legal congress, this was too much, and when Shakhovskoy put the resolution to the vote, the vice-governor declared the Congress closed.

The local press noted that at the Congress many peasants saw and understood for the first time the importance of various organizations, “They realized, because they had to realize, that it is possible to fight for better future only being organized”. One newspaper quoted the words of one of peasants’ deputies, “Everything that I saw and heard at the Congress affected me so much that I feel terribly excited... Here I realized that we, small people, being united and organized, represent the force for which there is nothing impossible. This consciousness brought me into cheerfulness and forces me to strain my efforts in my work for the good of the Motherland and the

⁴² SAVR. Fond 108, Opis’ 1, D. 5864, Sheet 16, reverse side.

⁴³ See: Swain G. *Russian Social Democracy and the Legal Labour Movement, 1906–1914*. London, 1983.

⁴⁴ Dickens A. A legal path to revolution: Consumer cooperation and the overthrow of Tsarism (the case of Krasnoyarsk). *The Age of Wars and Revolutions: 1914–1922*. St Petersburg, 2017, p. 64.

⁴⁵ Kuz'mina I.V., Lubkov A.V. *Prince Shakhovskoy: The Path of a Russian Liberal*. Moscow, 2008, pp. 238–239.

⁴⁶ *Protocols of the Central Committee and foreign groups of the Constitutional Democratic Party: in 6 volumes*. Moscow, 1998, vol. 3, p. 168.

bright future, in which I believe now”⁴⁷. Per gendarme’s report on A. Nikitin, a peasant, the idea of such co-operative congresses was beginning to become popular in the villages. At the meeting of the consumer society, A. Nikitin made a speech “on the benefits of cooperative societies, saying that currently, with the level of destruction of the state, this it is not possible to achieve any profit, because workers in our country have been in chains for more than one century and even though liberation from serfdom has taken place, people are still in slavery”⁴⁸.

On 30 August 1915, the Vologda City Duma organised a banquet with 500 guests for members of the cooperative congress. Opposition speeches were made over a cup of tea, and at the end, a telegram was received from Moscow in support of the Moscow City Duma demanding “the need to regain the authority by means of engaging people who are trusted in the country and bear the responsibility for such power”⁴⁹. At the meeting of the Central Committee of the Cadet Party on 5 September 1915, D.I. Shakhovskoy talked about the public sentiments in Vologda Governorate. He noted, “The absence of any manifestations of public life does not mean any powerlessness of the country, but simply the impossibility or inability to bring its negative attitude towards the reactionary course and arrange any legitimate forms of struggle”. Recalling his trip to Vologda, he mentioned “tremendous growth of everyone’s responsibility for the national affairs and understanding the need to invest in these affairs, but at the same time, extreme caution should be exercised in trying to get involved into any open struggle”. Therefore, local “serious riots and unrest” cannot be expected”⁵⁰.

The military upheavals led to the much expected activities of the working class. In Vologda, workers of railway shops differed in their greater cohesion and organization. They came forward in May 1915, appealing to the City Duma with a demand to include their representatives in the city food commission. The workers wrote, “For many months, prices have been rising... our City Duma, one can say, did nothing... It satisfies traders’ interests rather than consumers’ needs... Earnings remain at the same level, when life got more expensive and the prices continue to rise. It is impossible to survive for the working population. Drastic measures should be taken immediately, straight away”⁵¹. 683 workers signed the petition. Both members of the City Duma and the authorities saw not only the economic requirements in this letter, however the political context as well. At the meeting of the City Duma on 2 June 1915, an intensive discussion arose, as some of the City Duma members feared possibly greater in-

⁴⁷ *Vologodskiy listok (Vologda leaflet)*, 1915, September 1.

⁴⁸ *SAVR*. Fond 108, Opis’ 1, D. 5988, Sheet 10.

⁴⁹ *Vologodskiy listok (Vologda leaflet)*, 1915, September 1.

⁵⁰ *Protocols of the Central Committee and foreign groups of the Constitutional Democratic Party: in 6 volumes*. Moscow, 1998, vol. 3, p. 165.

⁵¹ *Vologodskiy listok (Vologda leaflet)*, 1915, May 31.

fluence of the workers and, consequently, less influence of the ‘eligible to vote’ population. Thus, the City Duma agreed to include representatives of workers into the city food commission⁵².

In March 1916, the workers of Vologda railway shops elected a commission of seven persons to draft a petition and submit it to the Social-Democratic fraction of the State Duma referring to the failure of the city government and the administration of Vologda Governorate, in their opinion, to take appropriate measures to curtail the rising prices. At the same time, the workers from Vologda selected a delegation of five persons to the governor to deliver a statement “on the removal of Volkov, the mayor of Vologda, and inspection to be conducted by police officers, in presence of workers’ representatives, in the warehouses of local merchants and traders holding back the flour in their stores for the sake of their own profit”⁵³. Thus, the first signs of self-organization could be seen among the workers, which in 1917 led to the creation of a system of workers’ councils, or soviets.

The military upheavals caused quite natural expectations for changes amongst the population, after the said war was over. According to the observations of Velsky uyezd police chief, in the autumn of 1915, peasants believed that they would “timely increase the size of their allotments per person to correspond to the standard in place, and that this would happen by the supreme order after the war’s end”⁵⁴. In October 1916, an assistant to head of Vologda provincial gendarme department wrote, “in all social groups, there is a belief that since the war has become the people’s war, as soon as it ends, people will have the right to demand from the government the fulfilment of their desires”⁵⁵. Were these the attitudes that led to euphoria from the fall of the monarchy that overtook Russia after the February Revolution?

The rising prices for all products and essential commodities had a huge influence on public attitudes on the eve of the February Revolution. The public discontent with the soaring prices was the key issue in all the reports of gendarmes and police officers to their leadership; the inability of the authorities to control the rising prices caused the naturally expected anti-government attitudes. In December 1915, an assistant to head of Vologda provincial gendarme department reported, “Due to the high cost of living in terms of necessities, the population began to distrust any measures of the government aimed at high prices, whereas the merchants raising the prices for these products were met with bitterness”⁵⁶. In October 1916, the same assistant reported, “The high cost of living makes no sense, sometimes it is caused by nothing more than greed of the traders, and the prices for some products are higher than those in the

⁵² *Vologodskiy listok (Vologda leaflet)*, 1915, June 4.

⁵³ *SAVR*. Fond 108, Opis’ 5, D. 130, Sheet 12.

⁵⁴ *SAVR*. Fond 108, Opis’ 5, D. 5864, Sheet 35.

⁵⁵ *SAVR*. Fond 108, Opis’ 5, D. 5864, Sheet 17, reverse side.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Sheet 53.

capital. Among the poor, even the bureaucrats, and especially those who work at the post office and telegraph offices, you can hear the opinion that it is better to commit a crime than to see a starving family”⁵⁷. The head of Vologda provincial gendarme department reported to the Police Department about the widespread “grumbling and discontent of the population with the government that does not take any measures against the high prices”⁵⁸.

The public attitudes were reflected in sad couplets (‘chastushki’),
“There’s no tea and sugar,
No more beer left in store.
This is when I start to know,
We’re with Germany at war”⁵⁹.

The discontent with the rising prices provoked hatred towards merchants and entrepreneurs. According to the words of a local police officer, peasants blamed for this dearness the “local merchants, who take advantage of the opportunity to raise prices for all goods”⁶⁰. Summarizing the data on the governorate, the administrators of gendarmerie noted, “Among peasants, there are rumours that when the war ends, they will fight against the merchants, because they consider them one of the reasons for the high cost of living”⁶¹. There is probably no point in explaining how the Bolshevik propaganda used these attitudes in 1917, accusing the bourgeoisie, merchants and landlords of all the country’s troubles.

On the eve of the February Revolution, the problem of food provision became the major issue in Vologda Governorate. The members of the City Duma members reflected upon its importance in the report on the food provision issue dated 19 January 1917, “The situation gets worse every day and in the nearest future, as soon as the previous supplies are exhausted, it threatens us with famine and its terrible consequences. If not Vologda, then other less lucky areas already came close to this difficult situation”. The members of the City Duma no longer believed in the government’s ability to cope with this situation. They believed that “it was impossible to prevent an impending disaster in presence of the governmental regulation of the food matter, that was currently in effect”, and therefore “the local public institutions... must immediately raise their voice and point to the central authorities how threatening the situation with food currently is”⁶².

However, the local authorities could guess where the situation was leading to. It was already possible to spot some alarming issues in October 1916. In the review on

⁵⁷ SAVR. Fond 108, Opis’ 5, D. 5864, Sheet 17, reverse side.

⁵⁸ Ibid. Sheet 7.

⁵⁹ *Vologda in the last Millennium: Essays on the history of the city*. Vologda, 2006, p. 135.

⁶⁰ SAVR. Fond 108, Opis’ 5, D. 5864, Sheet 35, reverse side.

⁶¹ Ibid. Sheet 139.

⁶² SAVR. Fond 108, Opis’ 5, D. 594, Sheet 20.

the political situation in Vologda Governorate in the autumn of 1916, the head of Vologda provincial gendarme department noted that amongst the population “one can note a certain degree of fatigue, expressed grumbling and discontent of certain individuals regarding recruitment of the elderly workers, and regarding the cost of living, rising everyday”. Per this report, this discontent “transformed into hatred towards the merchants who shamelessly plundered their buyers”. A city inhabitant “gives up in despair for now, however their patience has limits”. Peasants thought that requisitioning of grain products was “uneven and did not correspond to one’s well-being, and due to shortage of bread in the harvest this year, it causes concern with regards to successful seeding of fields next spring”. Thus, “the failure to address the food issue, the injustice in food supply that is obvious to a common man and favouring merchants and landowners cannot strengthen the authorities’ credibility that became obvious at the beginning of the war; therefore, due to shameless criticism of newspapers and frequent changes of key figures in power, the population feels pessimistic towards the government, almost hostile towards those bearing German surnames, and indifferent towards the local executors of supreme orders, in view of their impotence”. The head of Vologda provincial gendarme department saw the main danger in destabilizing the situation in Vologda Governorate when military officials and individuals coming from the front spread rumours that the troops were unhappy with the government, and that after the war and defeating the enemy they would start a war ‘on the home front’. “The questions regarding land and food”, he concluded, “were so close to ordinary citizens that all the gossip about them were spread instantly, and the idea of a revolution was discussed as something inevitable unless emergency measures were to be taken to improve the food crisis”⁶³.

An incident in Nikolsky uyezd demonstrates how close the ‘idea of revolution’ was to the population. On 21 December 1916, head of a volost in Utmanovo called a meeting to distribute the oats among the peasants, which was also necessary for the army. However, the peasants at the meeting said that “they had no oats and did not wish to give any verdict on this”. On 24 December, the meeting was held again, this time with the local authorities being present, among which were rural chief of police, the district agrotechnician and others. The representatives of authorities tried to elaborate on the decision of the minister for agriculture to pay the ‘grain duty’, explaining it to the peasants, however failed to do so. The speech of the rural chief of police was interrupted by the local peasant A.S. Okulovsky, “We do not have any oats, so if you wish, you can take the seeds; however in this case give us the money for the seeds”. The rural chief of police replied to this, “And you, the red man, shut up”, In response, Okulovsky, as stated in gendarme’s report, “shouted at the chief of police, “maybe you will order me to get out?”, to which the chief replied, “probably,

⁶³ *SAVR*. Fond 108, Opis’ 5, D. 5864, Sheet 272, reverse side.

yes, get out”. Then Okulovsky shouted again, “If you want us to get out, then we will get out. Guys, let’s go”, and then he turned around and went out, and the whole gathering followed him”⁶⁴. Then the chief called the uyezd captain, however his intervention did not save the situation – the meeting was disrupted, and the peasants did not provide any oats.

A similar incident took place on 4 December 1916 in one of the villages of Yarensky Uyezd. The local authorities gathered the peasants in the building of a parish school for a meeting devoted to the military loan. The priest Popov urged the peasants to donate money for the needs of the army and said that whoever was against the loan was considered ‘a traitor’ and ‘unworthy to be called a son of their motherland’. The local scribe F.P. Chukichev replied, “I am a local peasant and I will not allow such rude treatment of the peasants”. The chairperson of the meeting, whilst referring to Chukichev, noted, “This is neither the place nor the time for making such remarks”. However, the troublemaker “continued to shout that he always had such a right”. Thus, the peasants began to leave the meeting – the subscription for the military loan was disrupted⁶⁵. The investigation showed that in 1916, peasants often gathered in the volost government, read newspapers, discussed the situation at the front and in the country, and Chukichev played a significant role in this. He repeatedly expressed his support for the Labour Group, the Trudoviks, tried to refer the conversation to the political topics during private conversations, criticized the activities of the government, “pointed to deprivation of the peasants”, sympathized with the democratic government and was interested in newspapers of the left wing. Most of all, the authorities were alarmed by Chukichev’s great influence on the peasants⁶⁶. The gendarmes did not have time to complete the inquiry as the revolution broke out. Such cases, although not numerous, testified to the increase in protest moods among the peasants.

Conclusion

Thus, the public sentiments in Vologda Governorate during World War I underwent significant changes. The patriotic spirit of the first months of the war, already since the end of 1915 began to give way to psychological and physical fatigue due to hardships of the war and disruption in the normal routine of economic life. Significant anti-German and, to a lesser degree, anti-Semitic views became dangerous signs of aggravation in the social tension. Rising prices and food shortages, as well as high prices for essential goods, together with the inability of the central and local authorities to solve this problem, pushed the population to self-organization and struggle. In

⁶⁴ *SAVR*. Fond 108, Opis’ 5, D. 6040, Sheet 29, reverse side.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* Sheet 13.

⁶⁶ *SAVR*. Fond 108, Opis’ 5, D. 6040, Sheet 14a, reverse side.

peasants' Vologda Governorate, this was particularly noticeable at the example of the cooperative movement, which became basis of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. On the threshold of the February Revolution, the masses at large felt that the Tsarist regime was to blame for all the failures and misery. The anti-war statements became widely spread, and the Tsar and the government often faced sharp criticism; there were cases of contempt and non-performance of orders issued by the authorities. Contrary to the claims of conservative historiography, the liberals, masons and German agents had nothing to do with that process. All the material provided in the article confirms the naturally expected character of the February Revolution, caused by the inability of the authorities to solve the most important problems in the country's life. One would find difficulty to quarrel with the statement of the head of Vologda provincial gendarme department, who wrote in October 1916, "The idea of revolution is being discussed as something inevitable".

References

1. Astashov A.B. *Russkiy front v 1914 – nachale 1917 goda: voennyi opyt i sovremennost'* [Russian Front in 1914 – early 1917: War Experience and Modernity]. Moscow: Novyy khronograf, 2014. 740 p. (In Russian)
2. Balyberdin Yu.A. Narastanie protestnykh nastroyeni naroda v gody Pervoy Mirovoy Voyny v Vyatsko-Kamskom regione [The rise of protest attitudes among the population during World War I in the Vyatka-Kama region]. *Vestnik Vyatskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* [Bulletin of Vyatka State University], 2011, no. 1, pp. 39–46. (In Russian)
3. Belov S.B. *Patriotizm v gody Pervoy Mirovoy Voyny (1914 – 1916 gg.). Vzglyad iz Nizhnego* [Patriotism in World War I (1914 – 1916). A View from Nizhniy]. Nizhniy Novgorod, 2008. 180 p. (In Russian)
4. Belova I.B. *Pervaya Mirovaya Voyna i Rossiyskaya provintsiya. 1914 – fevral' 1917 g.* [The First World War and the Russian Province. 1914 – February 1917]. Moscow: AIRO-KhKhI, 2011. 288 p. (In Russian)
5. *Bol'shaya voyna Rossii: Sotsial'nyi poryadok, publichnaya kommunikatsiya i nasilie na ru-bezhe Tsarskoy i Sovetskoy epokh* [Great War of Russia: Social Order, Public Communication and Violence at the Turn of the Tsarist and Soviet Eras]. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2014. 208 p. (In Russian)
6. Egorov A.N. Organizatsii pravyykh partiy v gorodakh Evropeyskogo Severa Rossii v nachale XX veka [Organization of right-wing parties in the cities in the North European Russia in the early 20th century]. *Vestnik Cherepovetskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* [Bulletin of Cherepovets state University], 2013, no. 1 (46), vol. 2, pp. 29–32. (In Russian)
7. *Epokha voyn i revolyutsiy: 1914–1922: Materialy mezhdunarodnogo kollokviuma* [The Era of Wars and Revolutions: 1914–1922: Proceedings of the International Colloquium]. St Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriya, 2017. 496 p. (In Russian)
8. Figes O. *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891–1924*. Leningrad, 1996. 923 p.
9. Fuller U. *Vnutrenniy vrag: Shpionomaniya i zakat Imperatorskoy Rossii* [Internal Enemy: Spy Mania and Decline of Imperial Russia]. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2009. 376 p. (In Russian)

10. Gatrell P. *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I*. Bloomington, 2005. 318 p.
11. Gatrell P. *Russia's First World War: A Social and Economic History*. Harlow, 2005. 318 p.
12. Gaudin C. *Ruling Peasants: Village and State in Late Imperial Russia*. DeKalb, 2007. 278 p.
13. Golikova N.I. K voprosu o vzaimodeistvii Gosudarstvennykh uchrezhdeniy i Obshchestvennykh organizatsiy v gody Pervoy Mirovoy Voyny (po materialam Vologodskoy gubernii) [To the question about interaction of state institutions and public organizations during World War I (on materials of Vologda Governorate)]. *Istoricheskoe kraevedenie i arkhivy: sb. statey* [Historical Local Studies and Archives: Collection of Articles]. Vologda, 2003, vol. 9, pp. 133–140. (In Russian)
14. Haimson L.H. 'The problem of political and social stability in urban Russia on the eve of war and revolution' Revisited. *Slavic Review*, 2000, vol. 59, no. 4, pp. 848–875.
15. Haimson L. The problem of the social stability in urban Russia, 1905–1917. *Slavic review*. 1964, vol. 23, no. 4, pp. 619–642; 1965, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 1–22.
16. Katkov G.M. *Fevral'skaya revolyutsiya* [The February Revolution]. Moscow: Russkiy put', 1997. 432 p. (In Russian)
17. Kolonitskii B.I. 'Tragicheskaya erotika': *Obrazy Imperatorskoy sem'i v gody Pervoy Mirovoy Voyny* ['Tragic erotica': Images of the Imperial Family during World War I]. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2010. 664 p. (In Russian)
18. *Kriticheskii slovar' Russkoy revolyutsii* [A Critical Dictionary of the Russian Revolution]. St. Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriya, 2014. 768 p. (In Russian)
19. Kuz'mina I.V., Lubkov A.V. *Knyaz' Shakhovskoy: Put' russkogo liberala* [Prince Shakhovskoy: The Path of a Russian Liberal]. Moscow: Molodaya gvardiya, 2008. 362 p. (In Russian)
20. Lor E. *Russkiy natsionalizm i Rossiyskaya Imperiya: Kampaniya protiv 'vrazheskikh poddannykh' v gody Pervoi Mirovoi Voyny* [Russian Nationalism and the Russian Empire: The Campaign against 'enemy nationals' during World War I]. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2012. 304 p. (In Russian)
21. *Rossiya v gody Pervoi Mirovoi Voyny, 1914–1918: materialy Mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii* [Russia During World War I, 1914–1918: Proceedings of the International Conference]. Moscow: Institut rossiyskoy istorii RAN, 2014. 712 p. (In Russian)
22. *Rossiya v gody Pervoi Mirovoi Voyny: ekonomicheskoe polozhenie, sotsial'nye protsessy, politicheskii krizis* [Russia during World War I: Economic Situation, Social Processes, Political Crisis]. Moscow: Politicheskaya entsiklopediya, 2014. 982 p. (In Russian)
23. *Rossiya i Pervaya Mirovaya Voyna: ekonomicheskie problemy, obshchestvennye nastroyeniya, mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya: sb. statei* [Russia and World War I: Economic problems, Public Sentiments, International Relations: Collection of Articles]. Moscow: Institut rossiyskoy istorii RAN, 2014. 416 p. (In Russian)
24. *Rossiya i Pervaya Mirovaya Voyna: materialy mezhdunarodnogo nauchnogo kollokviuma* [Russia and World War I: Materials of the International Scientific Colloquium]. St Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1999. 560 p. (In Russian)
25. Shashkov V.I. *Politicheskie nastroyeniya sibirskogo krest'yanstva v gody Pervoy Mirovoy Voyny (iyul' 1914 – fevral' 1917 gg.)* [Political Climate among Siberian Peasantry during World War I (July 1914 – February 1917)]. Author's Abstract... [Doctoral Dissertation]. Novosibirsk, 2001. 39 p. (In Russian)
26. Shilovskii M.V. *Pervaya Mirovaya Voyna 1914–1918 godov i Sibir'* [World War I of 1914 – 1918 and Siberia]. Novosibirsk: Avtograf, 2015. 330 p. (In Russian)



27. Smirnov I.A. Kirillovskii uyezd v gody Pervoi Mirovoi Voyny [Kirillov Uyezd during World War I]. *Kirillov* [Kirillov]. Vologda: Legiya, 2005, vol. 6, pp. 136–156. (In Russian)
28. Swain G. *Russian Social Democracy and the Legal Labour Movement, 1906–1914*. London, 1983. 239 p.
29. Troshina T.I. *Velikaya voyna i Severnyy kray: Evropeiskiy Sever Rossii v gody Pervoy Mirovoy Voyny* [The Great War and the Northern region: European North of Russia during World War I]. Arkhangel'sk: ID SAFU [Publishing house of Northern (Arctic) Federal University], 2014. 344 p. (In Russian)
30. *Vologda v minuvshem tysyacheletii: Ocherki istorii goroda* [Vologda in the Last Millennium: Essays on the History of the City]. Vologda: Drevnosti Severa, 2006. 240 p. (In Russian)