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THE MENTALITY OF THE RUSSIAN PEASANTRY IN THE XIX CENTURY

Ryabtsev, Alexey Vladimirovich¹

¹Candidate of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor, Vice-Rector for Educational Work and Youth Policy, State Humanitarian and Technological University, 22, Zelenaya Street, Orekhovo-Zuevo, Russia, E-mail: awr-oz@mail.ru

Abstract

The article deals with the historical and cultural mentality of the Russian peasantry in the XIX-th century. The study shows a class society, assuming a legal inequality of estates and, as a result, a different culture based on the experience of previous generations and focused on everyday needs and demands. The peasantry for many centuries was the most numerous estate, distinguished by fidelity to traditions. It was in the peasant environment that the true features of folk Russian culture appeared. This circumstance opens up prospects for a more detailed study of the past of the Russian people, which will make it possible to better understand both national traditions in general and the history of Russia itself in certain periods.

Keywords: peasant, land, state, tax, people, corvée.

I. INTRODUCTION

The mentality, or the psychology of the people, has been formed over the centuries and, being a conservative formation, is preserved and continues to exist in its main basic characteristics and manifestations within different social systems. Its roots go deep into history.

A special role in the formation of the mentality of the Russian people belongs to the peasantry, which for many centuries was the nation-forming social group of Russian society, according to K.S. Aksakov as his main "life force". According to K.S. Aksakov, Russia is a "peasant kingdom", therefore the strength of Russia is in the peasantry, in the Russian village. If the village becomes empty, Russia becomes poorer. The world of the Russian village is the environment in which the soul of the Russian nation was formed and "preserved" throughout the centuries-old history, the spiritual features of the Russian people were formed.

In modern conditions, when our country is at a crossroads, deciding on the path of further development, reliance on the productive experience accumulated by the Russian people in the past, its root values and moral principles are of particular relevance and importance.



II. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

Traditional comparative historical methods made it possible to draw analogies with the evolution of peasant mentality in the conditions of political development of Western countries and to identify the most important reasons for such a striking dissimilarity of these processes and their results, to conduct a comparative analysis and characterize the determinants of the nodal historical moments that determined the divergence in the evolution of Western and Russian mentalities.

With the help of a systematic approach, this phenomenon was isolated from the totality of political life as an independent subsystem with its own logic of development and specific causal relationships and channels of interaction with the environment. This made it possible to analyze the mentality of the peasantry and the political process in all their complexity and mutual influence.

Structural analysis made it possible to divide these concepts into multilevel components and consider the dynamics of their changes as interrelated, but rather autonomous objects of research. This approach allowed us to identify the permanent dominant mentality of the Russian peasantry, reflecting the continuity of some of its characteristic features.

The specific features of the mentality of the peasantry are associated with the material existence of this social stratum and, above all, with the nature of its production activity, with managing the land in close and direct contact with nature. But not economic activities in themselves or the surrounding nature, but the social structures and relations that grew on their basis determined the mentality of the peasantry. The community was the main social cell where the peasant's worldview, his ideas about the world around him - nature and society, about his destiny, proper and existing, social justice, was formed. The mentality of the peasantry is a communal mentality, formed within the framework of a closed local community, in a rural neighborhood organization. Of course, the macrosociety also influenced the mentality of the peasantry, but its significance in this regard is incomparable with the all-encompassing influence of the community. In the pre-industrial stages, it was the communal mentality of the peasantry that determined the mentality of the social whole.

The community acted as a social institution that regulated the inner life of the peasant community and its relations with the outside world, the custodian and translator of production and social experience, the entire value system of the peasantry. The main manifestations of the peasant's life activity were closed in the community, and his consciousness, naturally, could not be other than group, communal. The worldview of a peasant is the worldview of a member of a small community, whose whole life from birth to death passes within a closed world. This character of the peasant mentality is ultimately due to the nature of the peasant economy and all the essential aspects of peasant life, the contacts of peasant communities with macrosociety, their social status. The occupation of agriculture and animal husbandry, i.e., those areas that are directly tied to the natural basis and subject to the action of socio-natural laws, the family nature of peasant production, the inevitability of cooperation between individual families - this is the basis on which the peasant mentality was formed: the perception of the world, morality, aesthetics, social psychology, behavioral stereotypes. Specific forms of peasant mentality vary in time and space depending on the totality of historical and environmental conditions. However, in one form or another, the collectivist communal principle is present in all peasant communities. The most pronounced forms of communal consciousness among the peasantry fall on the stage of domination of the traditional agrarian economy. But the communal principle is retained for a long time in the peasant mentality even with the appearance of agrotechnical innovations with the beginning of the ascent of society to the industrial stage of development. While maintaining significant masses of the peasantry in the composition of the population, it affects the mentality of the entire society and its cultural and historical appearance.

To understand the fate of Russia in the past and present, the study of the manifestations of the communal principle in the mentality of the people - and in this case we can talk not only about the peasantry, but also about the whole people - is a task of paramount importance. In the recent posts, by historical standards, Russia was a peasant country.



In the mentality of the Russian peasantry, in the presence of common features with the peasantry of other countries and regions, there was a specificity due to the peculiarities of historical development, starting from the early Middle Ages and ending with the disappearance of the class of small landowners leading a parcel family economy.

The existence of the peasantry in Russia (including the stage of its formation and depeasantization) dates back at least a thousand years. By the beginning of the XX-th century, when the industrial system already dominated the economically developed centers, Russia was a country where the peasantry constituted the undividedly dominant mass of the population, and small-peasant production was the most massive economic structure. The reasons for the existence in Russia on such a huge scale of the small-peasant way of life and the preservation of traditional traits by it lie in the relatively late (compared to other regions of Europe) agricultural development of the East European Plain, in the geopolitical situation of the existence of the Russian state, as well as in the peculiarities of environmental conditions, which to a large extent influenced on the nature and pace of development of peasant production (and, consequently, the economy of the country as a whole), in the specifics of the social system in Russia. The overwhelming majority of the Russian peasantry was organized into communities, the viability and strength of which were clearly revealed by the failure of the Stolypin reform and the revival after the revolution of 1917 of communal organizations, their appearance where they had disappeared or had not existed at all before (as, for example, in newly developed areas). Under such conditions, the communal principle in the mentality of the peasantry and the whole society was extremely strong.



"Haymaking" Nikolay Pimonenko

The industrialization and modernization of the country, carried out at an accelerated pace in an incredibly short time frame, took place in the conditions of the persistence of huge layers of pre-capitalist relations in the social system, from the economy to the spiritual sphere. Naturally, the spirit of communality was the aura in which the mentality of the whole society was formed. Its bearer was not only the entire rural population, but also the working class of post-reform Russia, which had just (for the most part, its first or second generation) broken away from the peasantry, and the intelligentsia, in the person of its advanced representatives, keenly felt and experienced people's troubles, and even part of the bourgeoisie (especially those who came out of the Old Believer environment).



Group communal consciousness (to a large extent it was mythological) permeated all spheres of the life of the peasant community. It was the consciousness of a collective of people, connected with each other not only by business relations, but also emotionally, a consciousness oriented towards traditions and ideals going from time immemorial.

For a peasant, his community is the whole world. No wonder the Russian peasants called the community the world or society. The communal peasant divided people into “us” and “them”. Moreover, the category of “strangers” included not only townspeople, feudal lords, and representatives of other classes in general, but members of other rural communities. (Unification with them occurred only during mass peasant movements). “We” and “they” - such a vision of the world around us was a product of communal localism and isolation;

The rural community was the institution where the socialization of its members was carried out. The peasant opposed the outside world, was included in an integral social organism (macro-society) not as a separate individual, but through a communal organization. From an early age, he perceived the orders, customs and traditions of his community as immutable laws of nature.

The dominance of communal consciousness is directly revealed in land relations - this most important sphere of peasant life. The traditional peasant is emotionally connected to the land. He and the earth are one. Work on the land was for the peasant the main content of his life. The weak dismemberment of the social and natural principles at the stage of domination of the agrarian economy suggested the sacralization of the land. The right of every member of the rural community to work on the land is sacred. It is essentially a right to life.

The peasant's right, consecrated by tradition, to work on the land and the fruits of his labor, vividly reflected in medieval sources, will pass through the centuries.

Moreover, when, at the end of the Middle Ages and in modern times, due to demographic growth and the appearance of the first signs of land oppression in the center of Russia, with the growth of large-scale feudal landownership, the restructuring of management in estates and estates, and an increase in private property rent, land redistributions spread, this is a communal legal consciousness strengthen noticeably. Under the conditions of land scarcity and the burden of taxes, the equalizing redistribution meant the real realization of the right of every peasant family to work and, consequently, to a physical existence.

III. CONCLUSION

Due to the direct attachment of the traditional agrarian economy to the natural basis, its immersion in nature, powerful layers of primary (pre-class, pre-state sociality: the principles of collectivism, democracy, social justice) remained in the peasant community. But the hierarchy and authoritarianism of the community also ascend to the stage of primary sociality, which stemmed from the subordination of man to natural forces, represented in the form of gods and demons, the omnipotent spirits of primitive religions.

It goes without saying that the confrontation between localism and statehood, pre-state and state consciousness was not unambiguous in the course of the historical process. In the mentality of the peasant worlds, as they were drawn into a broad social connection (with the city, the church, large land ownership, etc.), the importance of the state principle increased. Nevertheless, it was precisely in the sphere of state-institutional ideas that the peasant mentality underwent the most radical changes at the beginning of the 20th century. Already during the first Russian revolution, the peasantry rose to the level of political demands (the presence in the Duma of factions representing the interests of the peasants, direct speeches in the Duma by the peasants themselves, peasant orders, etc.) and the creation of their own political organization - the Union of the working peasantry, potentially capable of outgrowing to a political party. The crackdown on the people's revolution and the Stolypin agrarian reform dealt the first blows to the naive monarchism among the peasantry. It was finally eradicated by the horrors of the First World War, the mediocrity and selfishness of the ruling classes.



The communal heritage in the peasant mentality of modern Russia is not limited to the usual value of direct self - government of the village, it consists primarily in the absolute priority of labor use of land - equality of rights to the land of all who work it with their labor, because work on the land is the basis of human life. In this regard, it should be emphasized that forcing economic and political reforms without taking into account the mentality of society that came from the historical past can have disastrous consequences. And this mentality has largely inherited the features of the peasant communal mentality with its principles of direct democracy, social justice, collectivity.

The communal principle in the mentality of peasants is not, of course, a specifically Russian phenomenon. This is a generic sign of the peasant mentality and in one way or another it is characteristic of the peasantry in general. However, in Russia it has acquired a particularly stable and pronounced character. Due to the largely unfavorable geopolitical, social, and environmental conditions of Russia, the task of survival for the peasants remained the main one even in the XX century.

The traditional communal mentality belongs to the passed stages of social development. Now its historical limitations are obvious. But it is no less obvious that it contains enduring values that characterize the essential nature of sociality: collectivism, democracy, mutual assistance, social justice, equality. These high moral principles, developed by communal microcosms, should be transferred to macro society and humanity as a whole and preserved by modern civilization.

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МЕНТАЛЬНОСТЬ РУССКОГО КРЕСТЬЯНСТВА В XIX ВЕКЕ

Рябцев Алексей Владимирович¹

¹Кандидат исторических наук, доцент, проректор по воспитательной работе и молодёжной политике, Государственный гуманитарно-технологический университет, ул. Зелёная 22, Орехово-Зуево, Россия, E-mail: awr-oz@mail.ru

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается историко-культурная ментальность крестьянства России в XIX веке. В исследовании показано классовое общество, предполагающее юридическое неравенство сословий и, как следствие, иную культуру, основанную на опыте предшествующих поколений и ориентированную на повседневные нужды и запросы. Крестьянство на протяжении многих веков было самым многочисленным сословием, отличавшимся верностью традициям. Именно в крестьянской среде проявились подлинные черты народной русской культуры. Это обстоятельство открывает перспективы для более детального изучения прошлого русского народа, что позволит лучше понять как национальные традиции в целом, так и историю самой России в определенные периоды.

Ключевые слова: крестьянин, земля, государство, налог, народ, барщина.

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