



2024 · No. 1 (33)

The Theme of the Issue:

**SOVIET ELECTORAL SYSTEM:
INSTITUTIONS, MECHANISMS, ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR
OF THE POPULATION (1917–1991)**

FROM THE EDITOR

The topic of this issue is devoted to a very difficult subject area in Russian historical science, related to the sphere of relationship between the institutions of power and society in the Soviet era. Despite the apparent obviousness of the role and significance of electivity as an institution that continuously ensured and confirmed the legitimation of the Soviet state and its unshakable mass support by the population of the country, difficulties, conflicts and contradictions nevertheless arose within the electoral process itself, which occasionally took crisis forms and were preventively “extinguished” actions of party and government bodies. They manifested themselves quite clearly in the first early Soviet period, until the end of the 1920s, but then the electoral space turned out to be extremely cleared under the cover of the “inviolability of the bloc of communists and non-party members,” turning into a ritual action on the part of both the election organizers and the electorate itself. This ritualism operated uninterruptedly until the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in 1989, which for the first time since the 1917 elections to the Constituent Assembly were, albeit inconsistent, but alternative and competitive in nature.

The Soviet electoral system, which actually started working procedurally in the 1920s. after the end of the Civil War, it certainly underwent a number of transformations, remaining unchanged in its main goal - the retention by the party state of commanding heights in management and control over the population of the country. At the same time in the 1920s. until the mid-1930s. The electoral system for elections to the Soviets retained a bizarre combination of features of disproportionate representation from various electoral groups of the adult population with the rather archaic principle of direct and open voting during election meetings. Subsequently, after the new Constitution adopted in 1936, the introduction of ballots for direct and secret voting for elections to Councils of various levels was not accompanied by their alternativeness (the phenomenon of preliminary approval of candidates, i.e. “elections before elections”). In addition, after 1936, instead of depriving people of voting rights, procedures for denying those convicted by courts their voting rights were maintained. The contingents located in special settlements were not deprived of voting rights and participated in the electoral processes, but in reality this did not have an impact on their repressive status. In the post-Stalin period, the routinization of electoral actions found its refraction in the usual behavioral mode of action as the norm of conformist coexistence of society with the institutions of power.

The publications in this issue are divided into three thematic sections. The first and kind of key section, “Elections to Councils and Electoral Procedures,” consisted of articles and documentary publications that analyzed electoral goals, mechanisms and resources for achieving them, as well as the results of elections to Councils at various levels. Priority here is given to the election campaigns of the early Soviet era, when the authorities, through trial and error, determined ways to solve the main task - to identify a reliable electorate and separate it from “alien”, “former” and other contingents dangerous from the point of view of the authorities; organize the sustainability and mass participation of workers in the electoral processes; ensure the passage of the necessary candidates to deputies; increase the proportion of communists, Komsomol members and women in the deputy corps by reducing the proportion of non-party deputies, etc. However, as the authors of the articles show, in the 1920s, party-state organizers of campaigns



actually faced a problem when the expansion of the electoral corps entailed unforeseen consequences at the grassroots level (numerous failures of lists of government candidates, protest voting against nomenklatura workers, etc.). The turning point in the electoral behavior of the bulk of voters came after 1936, when the party state solved the problems of mass participation and loyal behavior of the electorate, which was reflected in articles about pre- and post-war elections to Soviet bodies.

The second thematic section “Electorate and non-electorate” is devoted to historical research as the behavior of the so-called. legal population, and those layers of post-revolutionary society that were stigmatized by constitutional provisions, deprived of voting rights (various categories of “disenfranchised”), as well as those specific Soviet electoral groups that had the regime status of special settlers, but had nominal electoral opportunities (participate in voting procedures), which, however, did not fundamentally change their repressed position and inability to leave the commandant’s office. A group of publications devoted to various aspects of the life of “disenfranchised” in early Soviet society is aimed at analyzing their behavioral trajectories - from individual petitions to the authorities in an effort to change their discriminatory status to a legal one to active public protests of those exiled to Siberia in the late 1920s. supporters of Trotsky. In relation to the characteristics of the electoral behavior of special settlers of the post-war period, the publications clearly and conclusively established the presence of a certain balance of interests of both sides - the protective and the captive - in agreeing on the rules of regime behavior, which was basically based on a protective platform of conformity on the part of the ethnic groups of the special contingent. Although the above did not exclude some non-mass manifestations of protest behavior in this environment.

The third thematic section “Departmental Elections” included a group of publications that analyzed election procedures in certain corporate environments (scientific and educational groups), as well as elections in public organizations (Komsomol). Each of the analyzed groups, regardless of its departmental affiliation, found itself included in one or another nomenclature category, passing through the procedures of nomination and election, that is, inclusion in it. Since the election took place in the context of a certain, albeit inconsistent democratization of social and political life during the “thaw” period, this also affected the electoral procedures to some extent. In particular, this affected the corporate scientific and teaching environment, where the vertically established hierarchical relationships, although they were reproduced with sufficient stability, new channels and opportunities for professional career growth appeared (elections based on quotas for the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences) and competitive selection for new vacancies. The sprouts of grassroots democratization as opposed to nomenklatura technologies are shown in cases of protest against the principle of appointment in the Komsomol environment of the Novosibirsk academic town during its formation.

The publications in the issue contain new and important empirical material and its understanding in the field of electoral processes of the Soviet era.

Executive editor:
Doctor of Historical Sciences
Natalia Nikolaevna Ablazhey

Executive editor

Executive secretary

Corrector

Layout designer

Web designer

Doctor of Historical Sciences N.N. Ablazhey

Candidate of Historical Sciences N.A. Potapova

T.V. Soboleva

V.V. Vvedenskiy

K.A. Vasil'ev