

The Municipal Reform in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century: The Prussian Election System and its Russian Version

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Abstract: The main postulates of the three-category election system were implemented as they were adopted by the municipal reform of 1870. The law basis of revealed and main stages of its implementation is manifested. The comparative analysis reveals the ratio between the election group and the number of urban population, the electorate activity of voters is demonstrated. The Prussian tree-category system is shown and its adaptation to the Russian reality. The linguistic and cultural features are considered and the foundation of application of the terminology apparatus is treated.

Key words: Municipal mayor • Municipal дума • Town councilors • Prussian election system

INTRODUCTION

During last decade the subject of municipal self-governance is becoming more and more discussed in the historical science. A number of reasons explain it. First, the soviet historic science represents the subject of self governance by the commons as the most active political phenomenon. The exceptions are the works of V.A. Nardova who was the first to endeavor the system analysis of the processes underlying the reform of municipal self-governance in the second half of the nineteenth century [1]. Second, the course of reform in the recent years in this sphere dictates the need to apply the historic experience of self-governance bodies as the form of interaction between the center and the countryside. Administrative and public representation structures.

The municipal self-governance of Vyatka is the object of study; the voters meeting, дума, administration. The object comprises the structure, formation of municipal self-governance bodies during action of the Municipal regulations of 1870. The purpose is to study the implementation of three category electorate system.

The Municipal regulations of 1870 were an important landmark in the history of self-governance. Its progressive significance was which eliminated the class principle in the formation of public representation, introduction of the principle of power separation into the

executive and administrative branches. In addition, the city acquired the financial independence as the right of collecting rated duties from estate property to be enjoyed by public governance. This provision contained the article of 32 paragraphs under the title “Municipal voters meeting” which specified the complete election system. According to the law, the municipal public administration comprised the voters meeting, the municipal дума, the administrative body and the municipal administration (the executive body). The chairman is the city master; the voters meeting was due to be convened once in four years to elect the municipal дума members (the councilors) [2]. It is noteworthy that during the reform, special terminology was used from the common truly Russian lexicology. For instance, as new classless municipal administration and its master, well-known publicly words were used. Masters were since ancient time in Russia, the persons chairing some community, representation administrative territorial or military unit; since the mid nineteenth century thus noun was frequently used. V.Dal explanatory dictionary explains that the noun implied the “cause leader, manager, horse driver. In ancient time there were leaders of riflemen, supplies, customs, writers, salt and others. Now the leader is senior local manager, of voters, among merchant or citizens and taxable classes. They were the shop leader, the shop chief administrator, the volost leader, the volost manager” [3].

The noun 'duma', while retaining link to the derivative verb, implied both the process of thinking and the entity of people getting together to think over some matters, in other words,

It is the 'meeting officials for some business' [3]. This word has centuries long history of use as the titles of power bodies in the prerevolutionary Russia. For instance, the tsar дума functioned in different years representing boyars, okolnichies, Boyars' Council solicitors chaired by the tsar; the boyar дума chaired by a boyar, the representative дума of boyars and councilors to discuss the estate affairs.

A direct link between the noun and the word 'voice' or the voiced phrase in the Russian speakers' mind determined its use to name the дума member or the magistrate who had the right of voice. It is believed that the terminology in broad public use is due too the power wish to help understand the essence of proposed reform and make it publicly popular.

A different explanation is possible. A. Haugen, a famous American linguist, notes that use of abbreviations can be due to the individual wish to adapt to the native language and culture [4]. The culture here implies a system of views, behavior models, moral values inherent to the public

Absence of borrowings in the vernacular and nomenclature of changes introduced by the reform can be estimated of the fact that the municipal reform of 1870 did not result from any outside influence, but it was influenced by Russia's external neighbors of contradictions maturing in the Russian society.

The municipal regulations of 1870 entrusted the right of vote irrespective of the position, to those who were Russian subjects and belonged to the following payers of municipal duties: owners of estate property, possessors of retail certificates or salesclerks of the first category and the tickets of managers of industrial enterprises "[1].

Only men were entitled to participate in voting after they reached the age of 25. The women and men of the required position could participate in the voting after the age of 25 through their authorized representatives.

The right of vote can be provided to juridical entities under the same conditions: various office, institutions, partnerships, companies, monasteries and nunneries, churches. The employed workers mostly within any estate property, the educated population portion, brain workers, such as engineers, medical doctors, educators, bureaucrats, as a rule not house owners living in rented flats, were derived of the right to vote".

The statistical data about new electorate system implementation in Russian urban communities are presented by V.A. Nardova. The average specific share of voters was 5% of the total urban population. These data in the city of Vyatka stayed under 3.6%. A similar urban pattern was observed throughout the Municipal regulations of 1870 remained valid. On the average in the city of Vyatka the share of urban dwellers deprived of voting was 96%. Thus, the bourgeois property qualifications deprived most of the urban population of the right to vote. Meanwhile, the property qualifications gave the right to vote to petit property owners. It the

This duality was explained by the absolute power police guarding nature of the government course: the qualitative reformation of all public life spheres should proceed so that it reinforces the state power. During the reform of municipal self-governance, it envisaged provision of the philistine (in other words, apolitical) in its nature public representation contingent.

A typical phenomenon of election of municipal self-governance bodies under the law of 1870 was the absenteeism of main proportion of voters. The voters participating in election in Russian cities stayed below 12.8%. The lowest activity of voters was observed in Nikolayev (3.8%), the highest in Odessa (30%).

Vyatka could be referred to the most active group of cities with the average participation of 15.1%. D. Brower, American researcher, notices that the poor electorate activity was due to the rural population influx [5]. J. Hosking, a British researcher, shares this view, which attributed the poor electorate activity to the weak urban institutions in the Russian empire [6]. G. Bradley uses the example of Moscow to demonstrate direct relation between urban population influx and the urban self-governance functioning [7].

Let us analyze the social дума composition. V.A. Nardova quotes the social composition of думы in 1880 in 36 Russian cities. According to these data, the percent proportion of social in the дума was the following: the maximum share belonged to merchants 54.6%; one third belonged to nobles and commons. Petty bourgeoisie and peasants were the least 12.4% [1, page 36]. The social composition of the Vyatka municipal дума differed somewhat from general Russian indicators. Nobles were represented poorly because of the regional specifics with virtual absence of noble land owners. Two groups were leading in the social дума composition on the second half of the nineteenth century: they were merchants (62.8%)

and petit bourgeoisie (23.6%). Bureaucrats were represented insignificantly, 6.9% on the average. This pattern persisted with slight variations throughout the Municipal regulations of 1870.

The three category system is worthwhile to analyze. This electorate system was called the Prussian because it had existed in Prussia since the beginning of the nineteenth century (the reform of Stein) until just the revolution (cancelled in January 1919) [8].

This system was applied in the municipal self-governance in Austria, Saxony, Westphalia, Rhine provinces, in Poland.

Under the Municipal regulations of 1870, the voters were divided into three categories:

The first categories were large payers, the second were moderate and the third were petit payers in order that sum paid by voters of each tire amounts to one third of all municipal duties. Each tire

Composed its particular voters meeting electing one third of the total number of town councilors.

Let us consider the essence of three-category electorate system and return to the data quoted by V.A. Nardova.

According to these data, the number of town councilors elected under the first category exceeded insignificantly the number of voters in this category. Meanwhile, the number of voters in the third category exceeded the number of town councilors tens of times. For instance, in Petrozavodsk the number of town councilors exceeds the number of voters only by two persons. In archangel the councilors numbered one per one, or the voters voted for themselves. Vyatka can be referred to the voters of the first category exceeding the number of town councilors 1.7-2 times. This situation persisted in Vyatka in future too. On the average, under the Municipal regulations of 1870, the number of voters per town councilor in the first category was

1.75, 3.79 in the second, 44.41 in the third. The councilors of the first category had priority and numbered 2.17 as opposed to the third 25.38. Thus, the essence of the three-category system was to assure the leading position to large tax payers in the urban life matters. Let us consider the implementation of the three category system based on the voting activity. The most active was the first category 55.3% on the average; followed by the second category 36.9%. The least active was the third category 11.02%. But the least voting activity of the third category should be treated as the indicator of utmost

indifference of this category of voters. This situation would make the absolute number in the third category outweighing the remaining two categories. In their turn, the few numbering first voters meeting implied their high indicator of voting activity. In fact, it was exactly the first category which disrupted the elections: during six four-year period the 50% meetings were disrupted (1874, 1878 and 1886). In general, three category systems assured the priority of large tax payers. Notwithstanding the weak election activity of the first two categories, they retained their strong position in the voters meeting.

Let us check how the categories were represented in the дума. Article 36 of the Municipal regulations of 1870 envisaged the right to elect town councilors from the nominees from any category. This articles in the Municipal regulations resulted that the councilors from different categories would be represented in the дума unequally. Russian governorship cities had the situation to 62.5% when town councilors numbered under one third of the total number. The represented cities owned to 42.5% more than one third of the councilors of the third category. Over one third of the дума composition was made up by the cities to 32.5%.

The phenomenon in Vyatka discloses the following pattern. In general, the town councilors of all categories were represented in the дума equally. It should be noted that the councilors of the first category were least represented: during four of six four-year periods they held in the дума under one third of seats. Therefore, the property category in the

Electorate system base is not decisive in reality when it concerns the election of town councilors. Hence it is justified to question this principle of general representation of all categories of the Municipal regulations of 1870. B.N. Mironov treats the transformation of municipal self-governance by all categories [9]. Nevertheless, the inapplicability of the three category system to Russian urban communities remarked in the prerevolutionary history. Modern researcher L.F. Pisarkova confirmed this thesis with the example of Moscow municipal дума [10]. Let us consider this problem using local material. Let us trace the class composition of voters meetings and the class of the councilors. According to the presented data, merchants were leading in voters meeting by first two categories. The same groups of merchants represent in the дума. The commons and peasants in the third voters meeting ensured their representation in the дума based on the

third category. Thus, the curial system formed the municipal self-governance bodies based on classes rather than property. The matter of representation of classes closely relates to the following problem. V.A. Nardova in her research considers two first categories opposed to the third one. Local materials confirm that this approach is quite grounded. The leading positions of merchants in first two categories would definitely make them dominating in the дума composition throughout the period of Municipal regulations of 1870. In practice, the three category system resulted in formation of two class groups with a significant priority of the two first categories over the third one. The analysis of the three categories in the electorate system permits to draw the following conclusions. The electorate system based on the bourgeois property obligation was unable to implement one of the main attributes of the reform: it's the principle of involving all classes. The backbone of formation of municipal self-governance was the class appurtenance not the property position. In general, during the Municipal Regulations of

1870 stayed in effect, the following features were typical:

- formation of class groups in the self-governance bodies;
- high percent of дума composition renewal;
- indifference of voters.

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