

Reflections on the revolution in the jubilee year

Natalia Zausaeva^{1,*}

¹Altai State University, 656049, 61a Lenina ave., Barnaul, Russia.

Abstract. Revolutions at all times attracted the attention of various social groups, because their consequences always in one way or another influenced the status and prospects of these groups. It is natural that the jubilees of revolutionary events stimulate interest in these events not only among professional researchers of the revolution, but also among all those who are somehow connected with power structures: represent, support, or criticize them. The article analyzes the opinions of various social actors on the revolutionary perspective in Russian society, its connection with the revolutionary tradition, the foundations of which were laid in 1917, the year of the two Russian revolutions. Particular attention is paid to the reasons that stimulate thinking about this fateful topic. Intellectuals are considered as the main and most important subject of reflection on the revolutionary perspective of society.

1 Introduction

The jubilee year of the two revolutions is over. Probably, someone would like, that it would devoted to revolution in Russia, and not ecology. And someone would prefer that the theme of the revolution does not sound at all this year, but the reality turned out to be, as always, richer and gave rise to a whole range perspectives to the revolution. In this situation, it is important to understand the reasons for this diversity, as well as the specifics and nature of the attitude to the revolution of various social actors. Whatever the official attitude to this historical event, nevertheless, it caused a flurry of diverse publications from monographs to individual articles and public appearances. Numerous conferences and discussions on the topic of the 1917 Revolutions on TV channels, in radio programs, on Internet sites, in museum exhibitions are the very important evidences not only of the importance of the events happened a hundred years ago, but also of their significance for the contemporary Russian society. This array of diverse opinions needs to be analyzed and systematized to elucidate the specifics and conditionality of the attitude to the revolution of individual social subjects, which is the goal of this article.

2 An array of viewpoints on the revolutions of 1917

The power structures dislike the revolutionary themes from the post-Soviet times, when the attitude towards the previous history changed almost by the opposite. Yes, and in Soviet

* Corresponding author: nataza@mail.ru

times, one could hardly speak only of a positive attitude toward the revolution. In the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, the revolution occupied a key place; therefore, through the system of education, revolutionary qualities and a positive attitude toward revolution in general were to be formed in people's minds. This was actively promoted by the veneration of the Revolution Day as a state holiday and the ritual of the November demonstrations. At the same time, the Soviet system was positioned as a perfect one, not requiring revolutionary changes. As a revolutionary, a person could manifest him/herself in the transformation of nature, as well as in the reorganization of other societies that have not yet risen on the right track of the movement towards communism. In the post-Soviet period, for power structures, the revolution was often identified with chaos, disintegration, and violence. By the way, the flow of emigrant literature and the active penetration of liberal and conservative ideas from the West, in which the revolution was evaluated critically and was rejected as a method of transformation, contributed to the creation of such an image. In recent years, despite the drift towards the ideals of the Soviet period with the aim of finding values, especially to its symbolism, nevertheless, there was no revolution in this fascinating world of the past. The reason for the negative attitude of power structures towards the revolutionary processes is the rejection and criticism of the recent revolutions, often called "colored" revolutions. This is especially true of the Ukrainian revolution, which is referred to as a coup in the official rhetoric. A revolution, like a coup, never brings something good for the acting power. Moreover, these are the phenomena that the authorities fear at all times. Weak authoritarian regimes, known from history, die from revolutions, and strong authoritarianism, under certain circumstances, can experience the so-called "palace coups". Therefore, if we clarify the nature of the relationship of power structures to the anniversary of the two revolutions, then it can be called "unmarked". The modern researcher, professor of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations Valery Solovei writes, "The Russian official discourse persistently and consistently avoids the word "revolution", and the color revolutions are denied the right to be considered as revolutions" [8, p. 39-40].

However, despite this attitude towards the 1917 Revolutions from the official side, interest in them in the jubilee year undoubtedly increased. "Do the revolution deserve such honor?", we ask the question formulated by the well-known French political thinker R. Aron. And we take the answer from him, "People who think about this are not the people who make them" [2, p. 58].

If the authorities outwardly identify themselves with the revolution and with the public opinion that is formed by them, this does not mean that the actors that form it do not reflect on the revolution secretly or explicitly. For such reflection, there are serious reasons for the existence of specific problems. In particular, there are a number of problems: a protracted economic crisis, a hidden increase in taxes, a decrease in the standard of living of the population, an increase in the number of poor, and the growth of local protests with the trend of merging into more extensive ones. To them can be added a decrease in the quality of management and the resulting feeling of uncontrollability of these processes.

An important symptom of the emerging problem can be considered as the tendencies of politicization of the youth discovered by sociologists in the autumn of last year and, for the first time, the predominance among the respondents of the people oriented toward change, rather than stability, as it was all the last decades after the collapse of the USSR. Immediately, these data became the basis for comparing the current situation with the times of Perestroika, when the tendency to change was first discovered and subsequently led to the events of 1991, sometimes also being called the revolution.

If you wish, the list of problems can be continued, but those already listed recall memories of the Leninist objective prerequisites of the revolution: "The upper strata cannot rule in the old way, and the lower classes do not want to live the old way." The feeling of alarm in the power structures is reinforced by the ever-repeated phrase: "Revolutions

cannot be predicted, they start unexpectedly and spontaneously.” In particular, V. Solovei points out that “... no revolution has ever been predicted anywhere ... The paradox of revolutions is that they never happen when they are expected and called, but always do when no one expects them” [8, 43-44].

A vivid testimony to the unexpected nature of revolutions, even for those who strived for it, is the often quoted statement of V. I. Lenin’s report on the revolution in Russia in 1905 pronounced by him in January 1917 in Switzerland a few weeks before the fall of the tsarist regime and a few months before the October Revolution. In particular, Lenin said, “We, the old people, maybe we will not live to see the decisive battles of this coming revolution” [6, p. 328]. It is noteworthy that he criticized the leader of the Russian liberals, P. B. Struve, in the same speech for his short-sightedness. Struve wrote two days before the “Bloody Sunday” that Russia still does not have a revolutionary people [6, p. 310]. Perhaps the last evidence of the unpredictability of revolutionary events was the April mass protests in Armenia in 2017, on the eve of which hardly anyone could conclude that there was a revolutionary people there.

In the pro-power thought, already on the eve of the jubilee year, one can find reflections on revolutions and coups, as already noted by V. Solovyov, referring all of them to the “color” revolutions. In his book “Soft Power, Color Revolutions, and Technology of Changing Political Regimes at the Beginning of the 21st Century”, A. O. Naumov treats colored revolutions as coups initiated from abroad [7]. D. Zykin wrote the work “Turns and Revolutions: Why Criminals Overthrow the Government”, from the title of which follows that revolutions are the work of criminals. In his annotation to the book, he notes that his piece of work “is intended for a wide range of readers, including President Vladimir Putin, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, Head of the Federal Security Service Alexander Bortnikov, and their colleagues in the highest echelons of power” [4, p. 2]. Such a designation of work once again emphasizes its protective nature for the authorities. The popular TV person V. Solovyov also wrote on the topic of revolutions in the “The Conservative Revolution: War of the Worlds” [9]. True, the book is about the world’s tendencies of a conservative nature, revealed to him, which have been developed in a number of Western countries.

Criticizing the authorities do not stay away from such an important historical event. The well-known journalist Mikhail Zygar published his next bestseller “The Empire Must Die”, devoted to the analysis of the pre-revolutionary era and numerous parallels with today’s day [5]. To comprehend the revolution in a new vein, V. D. Solovey attempts in his work “Revolution! Fundamentals of Revolutionary Struggle in the Modern Era”, which promises to be another smart bestseller, like his previous work. The author, not limited to the analysis of the conditions preceding the revolutions, draws attention to the subjective component of this process and analyzes it in modern revolutions. Debunking the widespread myths about the causes of revolutions, the author makes original conclusions about the revolutionary perspective in Russia [8].

Certainly, the jubilee year turned out to be fruitful for the historical community. Theoretical comprehension of the revolution on the basis of the study of more than a hundred revolutions can be found in the work of the historian E. Schulz “Theory of Revolution: Revolutions and Modern Civilizations” [11]. Yu. V. Aksyutin and N. E. Gerdt devoted their publication to the ever-urgent problem of the connection between the revolution and the intelligentsia in Russia, “The Russian Intelligentsia and the 1917 Revolution: In the Chaos of Events and Turmoil” [1]. It is almost impossible to list all the new editions of historians dedicated to the centennial anniversary of Russian revolutions. For example, the famous historian A. Zubov devoted a lot of publications and speeches in the past year to understanding the revolutions of 1917 and their consequences. Only in Germany there were nine books of major historians published on the anniversary events.

It is important to note that the revolutionary theme was and remains the focus of primarily intellectuals. So, in the twentieth century, the revolutions was analyzed by H. Arendt, R. Aron, I. Wallerstein, A. Pyatigorsky, D. Goldstone, and many other thinkers. It seems that one of the explanations for this interest in the revolution can be found in R. Aron's work "Opium of Intellectuals", in which he writes, "The accomplished reform is changing something. It seems that the revolution can change everything, although it is not known what it will change. For an intellectual looking for entertainment in politics, a subject of faith or a topic for reflection, reform is boring, and the revolution is exciting. One is prosaic, the other is poetic. One occurs as the creation of functionaries, and the other is the creation of a people rebelling against the exploiters. The revolution interrupts the usual order and makes us think that at last everything is possible" [2, p.68-69].

Another explanation is given by the well-known contemporary intellectual J. Habermas in his speech on the occasion of the awarding of the Bruno Kreisky Prize in 2006. He notes with regret that the development of mass media has allowed to fulfill the role of intellectuals to others. However, the intellectual still has "the only quality that even today could distinguish an intellectual: the ability to first sense something important. He/she must be able to begin to worry about certain critical tendencies already at a time when the others are still engaged in their usual affairs as if nothing had happened" [10, p.10].

Critical tendencies in modern society are often associated with the danger of its revolutionary reorganization, so it is not surprising that the great minds of the twentieth century dedicated significant articles and voluminous monographs to the analysis of revolutions. In this regard, we cannot fail to note the work of the modern researcher Jack Goldstone, "Revolutions: A Very Brief Introduction", which is considered by the many today as a classic work on revolution [3]. It was written in the 90s of the last century and was published in Russia twice already, in 2013 and 2015. In this work, the author gives a definition of the revolution, describes its structure, causes, results, and paradoxes. The popularity of this work in the jubilee year is expressed in numerous references to it by various Russian researchers focusing on revolutions.

3 Conclusion

And lastly, unfortunately or fortunately, the people do not express their thoughts on the revolution in bestsellers, but they can be testified by the results of the study of public opinion and the trend of political practice, which intellectuals sometimes speculate about with excitement. Thus, such different opinions about the revolution existing in society reflect not only the evaluation of historical events, but also the attitude to the possibility of a revolutionary perspective in the country.

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