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REFLECTIONS ON THE RUSSIAN FEBRUARY REVOLUTION OF 1917. SEVERAL HISTORICAL AND LEGAL REMARKS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF 2022-2023

REFLEKSJE O REWOLUCJI LUTOWEJ 1917 R. W ROSJI. KILKA UWAG HISTORYCZNO-PRAWNYCH Z PERSPEKTYWY LAT 2022-2023

Summary: This article is about the changes in the state system during the February Revolution of 1917 in Russia. Article contains an analysis of political system and political competitions at the beginning of the Russian Revolution od 1917. On the background this description the author of the article provides characteristic of constitutional changes of Russia during revolution. In this area the article contains characteristic the idea of The All Russian Constituent Assembly (Vse-rossiyskoye Uchreditelnoye sobraniye) and other reform proposals conducted by The Russian Provisional Government. The second problem discussed in the article concerns memory of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and political instrumentalization of them in contemporary Russia.

Keywords: The February Revolution of 1917, the Russian Revolution of 1917, Russia; revolution, historical memory

Streszczenie: Artykuł dotyczy procesu zmian ustroju państwowego Rosji podczas rewolucji lutowej 1917 roku. Zawiera on analizę systemu politycznego i rywalizacji politycznej na początku rewolucji rosyjskiej 1917 roku. Na tle tych zjawisk autor artykułu przedstawił charakterystykę przemian prawno-konstytucyjnych Rosji w czasie rewolucji. W tym zakresie artykuł zawiera charakterystykę idei Ogólnorosyjskiego Zgromadzenia Ustawodawczego (ros. Wsierosijskoje Uchreditelnoje sobranije) oraz innych propozycji reformatorskich, które w 1917 r. wypracował

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i próbował wdrażać Rząd Tymczasowy. Drugi problem poruszany w artykule dotyczy pamięci o rewolucji rosyjskiej z 1917 roku i jej politycznej instrumentalizacji we współczesnej Rosji.

Słowa kluczowe: rewolucja lutowa 1917 r., rewolucja rosyjska 1917 r., Rosja, rewolucja, pamięć historyczna

INTRODUCTION

The Russian aggression on Ukraine opened on 24 February 2022, once again raised numerous fundamental questions and thus, many discussions concerning the nature, sources, and identity of the Russia's state system. According to some of the Russian Kremlin-related experts and intellectuals, Vladimir Putin's decision led to unprecedented termination of Russia's relations with the West. Dmitri Trenin wrote about "abandonment of Peter the Great's legacy"¹ and Fyodor Lukyanov about a new cold war and "Russia Stronghold"². While Timiofej Bordaczov called the Russian invasion on Ukraine "the end of the process of determination of geopolitical borders in the Eastern Europe"³. These opinions and views provoke a thought that Russia again has set a course for a distinct systemic path, justifying its choice, among others, with alleged geographical, cultural, and ethnic differences which purportedly prevent from functioning under the Western European models. This narrative dominates public space in Russia in during through 2022. Therefore, we might expect, especially if Vladimir Putin remains in power or his system of power survive after his death, that remembrance about processes and events concerning reconstruction of the Russian system into a constitutional state of law and democracy, will be not only marginalised but also probably completely eliminated.

One of such periods is the February Revolution of 1917, namely the period from February to March 1917, when construction of a democratic and constitutional Russian state was attempted. Studies thereon are indispensable to know and understand not only systemic processes of democratization in Russia up to 1917, but also the essence of the collision of political democratic ideas with anti-western systemic concepts in the Russian reality. And this may provide priceless information and conclusions in the context of predicting Russia's future.

¹ Д. Тренин, *Кто мы, где мы, за что мы – и почему*, 11 апреля 2022, <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/comments/kto-my-gde-my-za-chto-my-i-pochemu/> [access: 14.04. 2022].

² Ф. Лукьянов, *Крепость на прочность*, 25.02.2022, <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/krepost-na-prochnost/>, [access: 14.04.2022].

³ Т. Бордачев, *Земельный вопрос. Почему контроль территории продолжает играть ключевую роль в международных отношениях*, <https://profile.ru/columnist/zemelnyj-vopros-1026503/> [access: 29.04. 2022].

SAVING THE REMEMBRANCE ON FEBRUARY 1917

Here, it is worth mentioning that the discussion and postulates about the remembrance on the significance of the February Revolution of 1917 as a fundamental event from the point of view of modernization and democratization of Russia, has had a long history. On the ninth anniversary of the February Revolution of 1917, Paul N. Miliukov wrote that one of the reasons of its defeat was a conflict among the political groups and societies which at the turn of February and March 1917 took over the power⁴. The conflict arose around the fact that one group wanted to strengthen a revolutionary authority, namely the Provisional Government, and thus wished to “keep the [revolutionary -Author] movement in specific statehood tracks”⁵. Therefore, the aim was to firstly perform political and constitutional democratization reforms and then, to carry out specific economic reforms and changes, with the use of such institutions as e.g., the ownership law. On the other hand, the second group claimed that natural revolutionary processes should not have been held since it meant infringement of the highest rights of people⁶. Thus, they strived to speed up and deepen the changes of socialistic nature without waiting for completion of legal and constitutional reforms. The Russian historian and politician was thinking about a conflict which in the conditions of 1917 February Revolution had arisen between liberals and moderate socialists and led to strengthening of the third power, namely Bolsheviks.

On the other hand, seizure of power by the last ones with V. Lenin as a leader, resulted in a civil war, during which Anti-Bolsheviks started to be called as a part of propaganda “contra-revolutionists” who wanted to return the order from the times before overthrowing of the Romanovs. Although, a decisive majority of the Whites were in favour of the basic ideas of changes announced by the Provisional Government when it was formed. Such picture of Anti-Bolsheviks, created by the Bolsheviks, presumably was still alive after the war, which, according to P.N. Miliukov, was earned by some emigrants who gave reasons to call them a reaction force striving for restoration of monarchy which had existed before February 1917. On the other hand, the emigrants started to perceive the Bolshevik ruling, and soviet system of Russia as a consequence of not only the October upheaval but also the February Revolution of 1917. In this last case, it meant that the events related to the February

⁴ *Десятилетие февральской революции*, “Последние новости: Ежедн. газ.”, 13 марта 1926, no. 1816, с. 1.

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ Ibidem. „Февральская революция, которая именно и была попыткой создать это среднее — создать демократическую государственность, как-то была забыта за ужасами большевистского режима и за ужасами гражданской войны. Точнее говоря, на нее без разбора валили ответственность и за то, и за другое.” (“The February Revolution, which was precisely an attempt to create this middle ground – to create a democratic state, was somehow forgotten behind the horrors of the Bolshevik regime and the horrors of the civil war. More precisely, she was indiscriminately blamed for both”).

Revolution of 1917 were seen as the reason for modernization failure. In such a way, P.N. Miliukov quite skilfully described a general perception of the 1917 February Revolution which had one distinctive feature, namely, remembrance about the phenomena, reasons, nature, and course of the Great February faded with time.

This fading of remembrance on the February Revolution and a high degree of politicisation of narrative about it, caused that its grounds and initial consent and enthusiasm of liberal, liberal, and conservative, and socialistic opposition elites, which unexpectedly from the point of view of 1917, enthusiastically accepted overthrowing of the Romanovs, were forgotten. Recognising this event as crowning of a long-lasting fight for democratization of Russia. However, failure of these plans, caused that the collapse of 1917 February Revolution has been used as an element of political narrative about the fact that democratization and reception of the western system in Russia always leads to chaos. In a political and systemic sense, experiences of February 1917 have become a tool in the hands of advocates of functioning of non-democratic ruling in Russia.

Therefore, the article by P.N. Miliukov from 1926 may be treated as an explicit attempt to separate the events and remembrance about the revolution of 1917 from their political instrumentalization performed by Anti-Bolsheviks, inter alia, the Whites (monarchists, liberals, conservatives), socialists and Bolsheviks. But the speech of the ex-minister of foreign affairs of the Provisional Government constituted an element of narrative as a part of the so-called new tactics which P.N. Miliukov set as a main trend in his activity and politics since 1920⁷. It consisted in recognition that main socio-economic transformations which resulted from the February Revolution and the so-called October upheaval, could not have been turned back. Since they were a consequence of natural striving of Russian peasants and workers and were a crowning of long democratization processes in Russia. Thus, fighting against the Bolsheviks must be founded on recognition of some conditions in the Soviet Russia and favouring of such evolution of the people in Russia that they will take up arms against the communistic regime and perform democratization. In this option, recourse to foreign intervention was not considered. However, setting aside the political sense of the so-called Miliukov's tactics, we should remember about the efforts of the cadets' leader to investigate the significance and sense of the 1917 February Revolution, since in the systemic sense, the essence and meaning of 1917 revolution boiled down to the final transformation of the tsarist autocracy into the Western European model of a constitutional state.

⁷ С.М. Смагина, *Российские политические партии в эмиграции: блоки и идеологии (20-е годы XX века)*, Ростов н/Д 2007, с. 11-54; И.П. Нильсен, П.Н. Миллюков и И.В. Сталин: о политической эволюции П.Н. Миллюкова в эмиграции, 1918-1943, Oslo 1983, с. 10-13; С.А. Александров, *Лидер российских кадетов П.Н. Миллюков в эмиграции*, Москва 1996, с. 22-45; Г.И. Чернявский, Л.Л. Дубова, Миллюков, Москва 2015, с. 391-402; B.I. Elkin, *Paul Milyukov (1859-1943)*, "The Slavonic and East European Review" 1945, Vol. 23, No. 62, pp. 140-141; A. Goldenweiser, *Paul Miliukov - Historian and Statesman*, "The Russian Review" (Apr., 1957), Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 3-14.

REVOLUTION OR UPHEAVAL?

One of the first and main problems of the February Revolution of 1917, which affected its development was that abdication of Tsar Nikolas II and his brother Michael Alexandrovich followed the military and social uprising in Petrograd. P.N. Miliukov wrote that some oppositionist members of the State Duma were prepared to act in case of a palace coup and only in such a way to take up power. Most probably it would have meant introduction of constitutional monarchy in Russia. However, the problem was that the coup took place from below, not from the top⁸. Thus, only mass rebellion of people, paralysis of state institutions and a fear of anarchy under the war conditions caused that liberal and liberal and conservative opposition forced out Tsar's abdication and using the institution of the State Duma appointed a Provisional Committee which begun to take over the state power⁹. At the same time, in the building of the State Duma, a socialistic system of workers' and soldiers' delegates councils started to shape as a consequence of the social and military revolt, which gave rise to the so-called dual power and first conflicts, too.

THE IDEA OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Competition and discrepancies between the liberals, liberal conservatists and moderate socialists caused that the decision on the final determination of the systemic form of the Russian state and main social and economic reforms was postponed not earlier than to the moment of convention of the Constituent Assembly. Such an Assembly should have been convened based on the democratic rules of elections which would have settled whether Russia would be a monarchy or a republic. As a part of such Assembly, the people in Russia were to decide about the shape of the constitution, ownership reconstruction in relation to the agrarian reform and introduce changes in the workers' matter. Therefore, convocation of the Assembly was the main task of the Provisional Government formed at the turn of February and March 1917 and became a leading idea of the revolutionary political life in Russia. This phenomenon is exemplified by the words of the state law pro-

⁸ П.Н. Милуков, *Россия на переломе: Большевистский период русской революции*. Т. 1: *Происхождение и укрепление большевистской диктатуры*, Париж 1927, с. 28.

⁹ W.G. Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution: the Constitutional Democratic Party, 1917-1921*, Princeton 1974, p. 49-59; M. Kirschke Stockdale, *Paul Miliukov and the Quest for a Liberal Russia, 1880-1918*, Ithaca and London 1996, p. 238-249; R. Pipes, *Rewolucja rosyjska*, trans. T. Szafar, Warszawa 2012, p. 294-306; T. Hasegawa, *The February Revolution: Petrograd, 1917*, Seattle – London 1981, p. 313-317; O. Figes, *Tragedia narodu. Rewolucja rosyjska 1891-1924*, trans. B. Hrycak, Wrocław 2009, p. 246-370; L. Engelstein, *Russia in Flames: War, Revolution, Civil War, 1914-1921*, Oxford 2017, p. 105-120; M. Sadłowski, *Między Mikołajem II a Leninem. Państwowość rosyjska i jej koncepcje w czasie rewolucji lutowej 1917 roku*, Kraków 2021, p. 35-49; W. Bruce Lincoln, *Passage Through Armageddon: The Russians in War and Revolution, 1914-1918*, New York 1994.

fessor Alexiej Adriej Rozhdestvensky¹⁰ who wrote in a booklet from 1917 about the Constituent Assembly which was going to be convened:

In it we place our hope, the whole future of free and renewed Russia. If the Constituent Assembly will convene and properly solve the issues presented before it, then it will determine for a long time a peaceful progress of the Russian state life; it will lead us to a wide and known path of law from this state of lawlessness and half-anarchy in which we are now¹¹.

An extensive article on this subject was also written in 1917 by Bogdan A. Kistiakovski who said in the introduction:

The power of the Provisional Government has only a temporary meaning: it was given for a short period. The main task of the Provisional Government is convocation of the Constituent Assembly. It is a demand which unifies all layers of the Russian folk without any initial agreement or contract¹².

Also, foreign experts of the state such as Isaac Don Levine who published his work on the Russian revolution as early as in summer 1917 in the United States, expressed their hope that convocation of the Constituent Assembly would have stabilised the situation in Russia¹³. He stated that:

„The new Russia has before it a period of trial and constant peril, the months that will be required to elect the Constituent Assembly. When that body meets, free Russia will have started on the safe road of progress and civilization”¹⁴.

Such a system, however, caused that the Provisional Government and main political forces became hostages of the idea of the Constituent Assembly. Since, the government could not have made any systemic reforms and thus solve specific problems, limiting itself only to current managing functions. The law for introduction of thorough changes in the Russians' lives was going to be instituted by the Constituent Assembly. Thus, on one hand, one should agree with a view that such a concept unified numerous parties in the initial revolutionary phase, groups, and social organi-

¹⁰ Aleksiej Andrejewicz Roždjestwienkij (1869- 1923?) – Russian lawyer, specialist in the state law theory and law philosopher. Related to the Department of Law of the Moscow University since 1897.

¹¹ А.А. Рождественский, Опыт теории учредительного собрания: (В связи с вопросом об учредительном собрании в России), Москва 1917, с. 5.

¹² Б.А. Кистяковский, *Учредительное Собрание*, [in:] Свободный государственный строй, Москва 1917, с. 13.

¹³ I.D. Levine, *The Russian Revolution*, New York 1917, s. 269-280. I.S. Levine estimated that the united socialist forces would have gained majority in the Constituent Assembly.

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 280.

zations¹⁵, being a significant binder of this political diversity. What is more, it can be said that the heart of the Russian democracy in 1917 was a compromise which, as a value, constitutes one of the conditions of a stable functioning of a democratic model. Therefore, Olga P. Popova wrote that the Constituent Assembly was a democratic perspective of the Russian development being an alternative for the Bolshevik rule or civil war¹⁶. On the other hand, this compromise in practice led to the paralysis of the Russian government activity. Focusing their forces on preparation and convention of the Constituent Assembly, both liberal and socialist politicians and experts of the Provisional Government who mainly had an opposition experience, became only passive observers of the deteriorating situation in the state and radicalization of the revolution process. Vladimir P. Buldakov concluded in this context that “stubborn doctrinarism” of liberals expressed only by focusing on the perfection of the election act for Constituent Assembly and theoretical and absolute following of western systemic forms caused that they failed to notice other mechanisms that could have led to democratization of Russia and maintenance of power¹⁷. Therefore, he criticised also moderate socialists who recognised the system of councils as a provisional systemic tool which was supposed to be removed as soon as reforms of liberals were introduced¹⁸.

On the other hand, deepening of the process of revolution and permanent fighting between the parties as a part of the dual power system¹⁹, inhibited the works on convocation of the Constituent Assembly that was indispensable for the development of Russian statehood. The preparation of convention of this body also implied initiation of elections and political campaigns which consisted in competition. As a result, a vicious circle was triggered and paralysis of decisive measures that were supposed to strengthen the authority. This paralysis of the system in Russia was used by the Bolsheviks who mercilessly overthrew the system which was shaped at the turn of February and March 1917 and the Constituent Assembly. Nevertheless, the efforts related to its convention were accompanied by a quite extensive social debate which was a valuable novum of the Russian political reality. The idea of the Constituent Assembly was honest dream and great intention for which Russian liberals and socialist fought even before revolution of 1917. This supreme organ of state power should makes fundamental changes and

¹⁵ И.С. Искевич, *Модель демократического государства в законодательстве и конституционных проектах Временного правительства*, [in:] *Памятники права Временного правительства*. Т. 21, Под общ. ред. А.А. Демичева, Р.Л. Хачатурова, Москва 2016, с. 9.

¹⁶ О.Г. Попова, *Борьба демократических сил на Урале за предотвращение Гражданской войны*, [in:] *Гражданская война как феномен мировой истории: материалы научной конференции*, Екатеринбург 2008, с. 60.

¹⁷ В.П. Булдаков, *Красная смута. Природа и последствия революционного насилия*, Москва 1997, с. 176-177. The Russian historian indicates that fast convention of the fifth State Duma after overthrowing of the Romanovs would cause less damage than long legislative work of the Russian liberals in 2017.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 175.

¹⁹ M.P. Sadłowski, *Populizm w procesie rewolucji 1917 r. w Rosji. Perspektywa prawno-ustrojowa*, [in:] *Prawo w epoce populizmu*, ed. P. Grzebyk, Warszawa 2023, p. 51-66.

democratize Russia. Expression of this was very liberal Electoral Law to The All Russian Constituent Assembly²⁰. On the other hand, the idea of the Constituent Assembly became one of the main systemic concepts of the Whites during the civil war which meant that they set aside the basic reforms and changes in the country to the moment of winning over the Bolsheviks and convocation of the Constituent Assembly. In this context, it should be noted about the great discussion about the future constitution of the Russian state and its political system that began during the February Revolution of 1917²¹. This discussion is an important part of Russia's constitutional heritage²².

TOWARDS THE SELF-GOVERNING RUSSIA

The period when the Provisional Government was functioning initiated the stage of formation of the local self-government in Russia under new, democratic rules, which was going to be one of the foundations of the state system²³. It was related to beliefs of Russian liberals according to whom the self-government had a key role in perceiving a public sphere, and in their concept its development constituted an indispensable part of the reforms to decentralize the process of ruling the state and ensuring the rule of law²⁴. One of the main cadet politicians A.A. Kizewetter in his monography on the local self-government in Russia published in 1910 indicated that its development is a natural consequence of the general development of Russia²⁵. Strengthening of self-governments was also a compensation for long-standing discrimination by the last two tzars²⁶. Moreover, construction of extensive home

²⁰ И.С. Искевич, *Модель демократического государства в законодательстве и конституционных проектах Временного правительства...*, с. 12; В.М. Гессен, *Русское учредительное собрание и выборы в него*, Петроград 1917, с. 7-20.

²¹ I.D. Thatcher, *The Russian Revolutionary Constitution and Pamphlet Literature in the 1917 Russian Revolution*, "Europe-Asia Studies" 2016, Volume 68, Issue 10. The electronic version of the article: https://www.academia.edu/26729643/The_Russian_Revolutionary_Constitution_and_Pamphlet_Literature_in_the_1917_Russian_Revolution [access: 14.01.2023].

²² In this contest, it is worth reading the following books about constitutional law published in revolutionary Russia of 1917: К.Н. Соколов, *Учредительное собрание*, Одесса 1917; Ф.Ф. Кокошкин, *Республика. О государственном строе в России*, Петроград 1917; Ф.Ф. Кокошкин, *Учредительное собрание: [доклад, прочитанный 7 съезду партии Народной свободы 25 марта 1917 г.]*, Петроград 1917; М.В. Вишняк, *Закон о выборах в Учредительное собрание*, Петроград 1917; Б.Э. Нольде, *Учредительное собрание и его задачи: [речь в собрании граждан города Ранненбурга, Вязанской губернии 14 августа 1917 года]*, Петроград 1917.

²³ Л.А. Жукова, *Проблемы взаимодействия властных структур и земского самоуправления в пореформенной России (1864-1918)*, Москва 1995, с. 29.

²⁴ А.Л. Стародубова, *Юридическое совещание 1917 г.: основные направления деятельности: автореферат диссертации на соискание кандидата исторических наук*, Москва 2000, с. 75.

²⁵ А.А. Кизеветтер, *Местное самоуправление в России. IX-XIX ст.*, Москва 1910, с. 163-165.

²⁶ Here, diaries of a conservative liberal M. Rodzianko where he described how a landed self-government was deprived of veterinary services and supply of grains for the benefits of governmental administration on site. See. М.В. Родзянко, *Государственная Дума и февральская 1917 года революция*, [in:] Архив русской революции издаваемый Г. В. Гессеном. Т. 6, Берлин 1922, с. 8-9.

rules, according to cadets, was to compensate the absence of federalization based on the national principle²⁷. Moreover, the composition of the new government, including its head, J.G. Lvov proved that the issue of a self-government will be treated as a priority. A legal and political prove for the above was incorporated in clause six of the Declaration of the Provisional Government of 3 March 1917 on elections to the local self-government under democratic principles²⁸.

And what is absolutely crucial, the reformed bodies of the local self-government next to a new administrative judicature, were to constitute the main structure based on which elections to the Constituent Assembly were to be carried out. Thereby, the Provisional Government rejected all concepts which assumed elections to the Constituent Assembly with the use of workers' and soldiers' delegate councils. It wanted thus to eliminate possible various abuses and manipulations during elections and ensure the highest democratic and law-abiding standards in the election procedure.

CONCLUSION

The above considerations prove that in the systemic sense, the Provisional Government, formed at the turn of February and March 1917, consequently aimed at reconstruction of Russia into a democratic and constitutional state based on the local government where an individual would have enjoyed extensive rights²⁹. Whereas any changes in the socio-economic system would have been made by a parliament with respect for principles of the ownership law. Putting aside political, social, and economic preconditions in which the Provisional Government took over the power in Russia and a political and ideological conflict which as a consequence paved the way to power for Bolsheviks, it should be concluded that between February and October 1917, modernization of Russia towards a western state system had a quite advanced character. And this is omitted by all kinds of critics of the democratic system in Russia. Although the Provisional Government:

- 1) announced the basic laws and civil liberties and started formation of the system of its protection;
- 2) created organizational frameworks and an apparatus of the Ministry of Councils;
- 3) took up a decision on the direction of reforms in judiciary and local government;
- 4) carried out a reform of the local government (territorial self-government)³⁰;
- 5) introduced administrative judiciary³¹;

²⁷ А.Л. Стародубова, *Юридическое совещание 1917 г....*, с. 97.

²⁸ Сборник указов и постановлений Временного правительства, Петербург 1917, Вып. 1, с. 7-8.

²⁹ М. Sadłowski, *Między Mikołajem II a Leninem...*, p. 474.

³⁰ Н.Д. Судавцов, *Разработка Временным правительством правовых основ местного самоуправления России*, [in:] Памятники права Временного правительства. Т. 21, Под общ. ред. А.А. Демичева, Р.Л. Хачатурова, Москва 2016, p. 172-174.

³¹ М.Р. Sadłowski, *Koncepcje postępowania sądowoadministracyjnego w okresie funkcjonowania Rządu*

- 6) prepared election rules for the Constituent Assembly;
- 7) started thorough works to reshape the relation of the state – Russian Orthodox Church³².

All these measures were accompanied by strong axiological foundations and, as Andriej N. Mieduszevskij noted, ideals of February such as state of law, civil society, constitutional guarantees of human rights and possibilities of their protection or market economy “maintain unshakable historical meaning”³³. Thus, the researcher concluded that the February Revolution of 1917 was a boundary in the process of transformation of the state society into the civic society³⁴. This evaluation corresponds to the thought of the famous Russian philosopher Nikolai A. Berdyaev who claimed that Russia had been a feudal state in many issues up to the revolution in 1917³⁵.

On the other hand, some of the mentioned actions, reforms, and the general process of the systemic transformation, particularly the preparation of the election rules for the Constituent Assembly and selected agrarian and workers’ reforms, were very slow. When analysing the measures taken up by the Provisional Government in the second facet, it should be said that it acted “as a mediator between various social groups”³⁶, remaining neutral, which did not help to solve even more violent social conflicts. Certainly, it became one of the reasons for its collapse. However, we cannot forget about active measures and extensive analytical, statistical, conceptual, and legislative works undertaken by the Provisional Government in difficult conditions of 1917, which were to serve for realization of its evolutionary vision of changes in workers’ relations. Fundamental reforms were planned to be prepared thoroughly and in such a way that they would have corresponded to the basic requirements of a democratic legal state and modernization of Russian society. We also saw an attempt to implement these plans and concepts during the civil war in Russia. Especially in the white Crimea in 1920, during the rule of General Piotr Wrangel, when the agricultural reform and the reform of local administration began, based on the land and municipal government³⁷. And the first results of these reforms in Crimea gave hope for their comprehensive implementation³⁸. Without the experience of the February Revolution of 1917, it would be difficult to start these reforms.

Тумчасового Росји, „Studia z Dziejów Państwa i Prawa Polskiego” 2017, t. XX, s. 205-216.

³² M. Sadłowski, *Міędzy Миколајем II а Leninет...*, p. 332-340; А.А. Сафоноф, *Вероисповедное законодательство Временного правительства*, [w:] Памятники права Временного правительства. Т. 21, Под общ. ред. А.А. Демичева, Р.Л. Хачатурова, Москва 2016, с. 151-152.

³³ А.Н. Медушевский, *Причины крушения демократической республики в России 1917 г.*, „Отечественная история” 2007, № 6, с. 3.

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ Н.А. Бердяев, *Русская идея. Истоки и смысл русского коммунизма*, Москва 2020, с. 359.

³⁶ И.В. Евдошенко, *Временное правительство и реформы трудовых отношений в России (февраль-октябрь 1917 г.)*, „Вестник Южно-Уральского государственного университета. Серия: Право” 2006, no. 13 (68), с. 72.

³⁷ В. Цветков, *Последняя битва Белого Юга. 1920 г.*, Москва 2022, с. 420-434.

³⁸ Ibidem.

In this sense ideals of Russian February Revolution of 1917 have today importance. These events destroy the narrative that in recent history Russia has not had any democratization experience, and attempts to westernize Russia ended only unfavorably for it. Importantly, contemporary Russian historiography shows examples of research on the Russian revolution of 1917 and on the Russian Civil War of 1917-1922 as opportunities for social and political dialogue and build a state different from Bolshevik's type of state³⁹. On the other hand, recently several books about the fight against the democratization processes in Russia until 1917 also had been published in Russia⁴⁰.

Therefore, it may be said that along with the Bolshevik upheaval and collapse of the Provisional Government not only young Russian democracy failed, that is a state that was functioning for only a few months, but also the Russian state that continued previous systemic reforms of Russia. Since the Bolsheviks indicated formal and legal termination of relations with the overthrown system, the Russian state in the period of the February Revolution was grounded on the principle of continuation of the legal and political system e.g., in the judiciary sphere and local self-government, attempting to adjust it to new democratic conditions. Within this scope, the Bolsheviks overturned a long history and continuation of the Russian statehood, destroyed the efforts of a part of the Russian elite which wanted to establish a Western European model of a system in Russia. They also committed themselves to destroy a capitalistic path of the Russia's development, which Marian Zdziechowski fairly described as an unreal objective of the Russian Revolution⁴¹. Whereas, building the state on totalitarian foundations, the Bolsheviks returned and used some of tsar systemic experience, namely a system of the state dominance over an individual and repressions.

³⁹ М.Е. Разиньков, О. М. Морозова, *Социально-политический диалог в России (1917 - 1918 гг.) Тенденции, механизм, региональные особенности*, Москва 2021, с. 87-102; К.Н. Морозов, *Борис Савинков. Опыт научной биографии*, Москва – Санкт Петербург 2022, с. 481; В.М. Рынков, *Социальная политика антибольшевистских правительств на востоке России: Идеология, законодательство, практика (июнь 1918 – октябрь 1922)*, Москва 2022; А.С. Пученков, *Первый год Добровольческой армии. От возникновения „Алексеевской организации” до образования Вооруженных Сил на Юге России (ноябрь 1917-декабрь 1918 года)*, Санкт Петербург 2021.

⁴⁰ М. Давыдов, *Цена утопии. История российской модернизации*, Москва 2022; В. Аксенов, *Слухи, образы, эмоции. Массовые настроения россиян в годы войны и революции (1914-1918)*, Москва 2020, 2022; В. Аксенов, *Война патриотизмов. Пропаганда и массовые настроения в России периода крушения империи*, Москва 2023.

⁴¹ М. Zdziechowski, *Dwie rewolucje*, [in:] *Od Petersburga do Leningrada*, Kraków 2009, p. 106.

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