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## Russian Villagers in Revolutionary Fire, 1902–1907: Generation’s Factor

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### Abstract

The paper studies the role of the “revolutionary turning point” generation in the Russian revolutionary movement of 1902–1907. The source base for the study includes documents from central and regional archives and periodicals. Representatives of this generation were peasant children, adolescents and young people. The participation of children and adolescents in agrarian protests was established on the basis of gubernatorial reports, police reports and court chronicles. Young peasants or people from the peasant environment, who often had the city life experience, actively participated in revolutionary propaganda and creation of revolutionary cells in the village. The authors explore the specifics of their social experience on the basis of archival materials, including memories and questionnaires, which allows to consider the historical context not only from the perspective of a chronicle, but also in the framework of historical memory of social experience.

The authors found that the participation of children in agrarian protests most often manifested themselves in passive forms of resistance and were spontaneous in nature. In turn, it was young people aged 16 to 24 years (the “revolutionary turning point” generation) who provided the most active assistance to the revolutionary cause. This was largely facilitated by the fact that rural youth, who managed to break away from the care of family and community, were more susceptible to the influence of left-wing radical ideas. Leaving for work in the cities and entering educational institutions, many people from peasant families easily fell under the influence of revolutionary ideas. The romanticization of the “heroic” image of a revolutionist, combined with youthful maximalism and a relatively low level of education, quickly turned young peasants into active participants of the revolutionary movement, in contrast to children and teenagers who rebelled mainly spontaneously, together with their community. At the same time, many of those who left for the cities subsequently worked secretly in rural revolutionary cells stimulating the spread of revolutionary influence in the village.

**Keywords:** “revolutionary turning point” generation, Russian village, revolution of 1905–1907, agrarian history, history of generations, generational factor, children, youth.

### 1. Introduction

The fate of the Russian peasantry during the years of the “revolutionary turning point”, during a period of radical changes in the way of village life, represents a truly pressing problem in Russian peasant studies. The purpose of the study is to identify the socio-demographic, socio-historical and socio-psychological characteristics of the participation of the “revolutionary turning point” generation in the revolutionary events of 1902–1907 in the Russian village, i.e. children, adolescents, peasant youth and young people from the peasant environment.

The socio-demographic approach to the study of the generational factor comes down to the analysis of the following aspects of the problem: gender, national, and educational. A socio-historical analysis of the problem allows us to identify the behavioral motives of representatives of the “revolutionary turning point”

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generation in agrarian turmoil and the Russian revolutionary movement in 1902–1907. The research focuses on the age of political initiation of representatives of the studied generation and the dynamics of the revolutionary participation. The use of the generational approach to the analysis of agrarian protests allows us to determine the role of rural children, adolescents and youth in the revolutionary events of the designated period.

## 2. Materials and methods

The source base for the study includes archival materials from the collections of the Russian State Historical Archive (Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation), the State Archive of the Russian Federation (Moscow, Russian Federation) and the State Archive of the Kursk Region (Kursk, Russian Federation). In order to study the socio-demographic characteristics of representatives of the studied generation, it was important to turn to the materials of the biographical directory of the Society of Political Prisoners and Exiled Settlers “Political Penal Servitude and Exile”, the data of which became the basis for creating a database table and conducting a prosopographic study of revolutionists of peasant origin.

In addition, the study involved materials from newspapers and journals “Russkie Vedomosti”, “Rech”, “Tambovsky Golos”, “Voronezhskoe Slovo”, “Kurskaya Zhizn”, “Katorga and Ssylka”.

The research methodology is dictated by the objectives and materials on which the comprehensive historical analysis is based.

The study of the generational factor in revolutionary processes and events in the Russian village of 1902–1907 required turning to the methodology of generational research. The focus of the research is on a specific socio-demographic group, i.e. the “revolutionary turning point” generation. The author of this concept, domestic researcher Yu. A. Levada, attributed to this generation those who were born “around the 90s of the 19th century” (Levada, 2006: 34). The generational approach to the study of the problem makes it possible to use the methods of social demography and historical anthropology, which expands the research field and creates the precondition for a new scientific result.

In accordance with the definition of K. Mannheim, we consider a generation to be a socio-demographic group in which everyone is connected to each other by the fact that “they experience the impact of social and intellectual symptoms of the dynamic destabilization process” (Mannheim, 1998: 28). Thus, members of one generation are not only children, adolescents and rural youth, but also young people from the peasant environment who have retained ties with the village. It was the latter who played a key role in the development of a special style of the generation, which was formed on the basis of “new contacts” (in the terminology of K. Mannheim). The revolutionary idea and the leveling of secular and spiritual authorities were of decisive importance in the formation of the center of new worldview structures (Mannheim, 1998: 33) allowing the generation to reach the level of self-determination.

The methodological basis of the work was also the concept of the peasant revolution of 1902–1922 (Danilov, 1996; Shanin, 1997), which later received theoretical justification (Kondrashin, 2008).

## 3. Discussion

The importance of the communal structure in the social and cultural organization of the Russian village predetermined the degree of involvement of children and adolescents in various forms of the agrarian movement. The main organizational resource of agrarian protest is the community (Kondrashin, 2020: 199). There is a certain consensus among historians on this issue (Kabytov, Barinova, 2021: 237; Varfolomeev, Shumilova, 2022: 144).

The protest movement in 1905–1907 in the Russian village was widespread. Peasants actively participated in various forms of protest, including the destruction of landowners and private estates, the seizure of land and hayfields, and collective logging. According to V.V. Kondrashin, 20–30 % of the rural population of the Russian Empire participated in such activities (Kondrashin, 2020: 198).

A number of modern studies describe some socio-demographic aspects of the identified problem (Bezgin, Yakimov, 2022; Yakimov, 2021). The scientific result of these studies shows that “the apogee of the revolutionary protests among the youth occurred during the period of the first Russian revolution of 1905–1907” (Bezgin, Yakimov, 2022: 1243). V.B. Bezgin analyzed the impact of the protests of the first Russian revolution on the younger generation of the Russian village noting the particular activity of adolescents in the agricultural movement (Bezgin, 2023: 74). However, a number of aspects of the identified problem, which allows us to answer the question about the historical formation of generational style, have not yet been studied.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Children and adolescents

The content of historical sources dictates the following classification. Adolescents are a category of minors from 14 to 21 years old (legal age, time of conscription into the army). Children are a category of minors up to 14 years (the onset of adolescence and the beginning of full-time work on a peasant farm).

The participation of children and adolescents in pogroms of estates was due to the fact that, in accordance with community traditions, decisions on collective actions were made at gatherings. This presupposed the general participation of local villagers: “The alarm sounded on the church bell, a crowd

gathered, armed with stakes, moved towards the intended estate, followed by carts with women and adolescents, and all this moved with shouts, whoops and noise” (Perepelitsyn, Kudinova, 2013: 123).

The presence of children during pogroms was also recorded in the materials of investigative cases. In the Sevsky district of the Oryol province, on February 20, 1905, children took part in the grain theft (RGIA. F. 1405. Op. 108. D. 6811. L. 150b.). The police officer reported about the crowds of 10-year-old boys surrounding the agitators in the settlement of Borisovka, Grayvoronsky district, Kursk province (GAKO. F. 1. Op. 15. D. 14. L. 220b.). The participation of children in riots on the lands of the landowner Romanov near the village of Maryina, Golitsynvolost, Kozlovsky district, Tambov province, was reported by the local prosecutor (RGIA. F. 1405. Op. 108. D. 6977. L. 2).

Children and adolescents also became participants in clashes between local peasants and the police, which ended in death (Voronezh Word. 1906. May 17. No. 115). The indictment of the Kursk District Court testifies to the participation of children in the pogrom of the landowner household: “the peasants, preceded by children, began to break the glass in the windows of manager Egorov’s apartment and throw his property into the yard” (Kurskaya Zhizn, 1906b). Of course, children and adolescents caused less damage during pogroms than adult peasants, but nevertheless their participation was significant: “Adults broke and threw away property, and women and children picked up everything they liked and took it home. In front of the crowd there were boys who broke windows with stones and helped drag property” (Varfolomeev, Shumilova 2022: 140). After a pogrom organized by adult peasants, adolescents and children could participate in the looting of property: “At first, the peasants beat and broke everything, and then, when most of the buildings in the estate caught fire, having been set on fire by adolescents and children who were in the crowd, they began to plunder household property, mainly, bread and alcohol. Three witnesses saw how Alexander Marochkin, 17 years old, carried a lit bunch of straw outside the carpenter’s workshop during the pogrom, how he then broke the windows in the manager’s house and shouted to the crowd: “Whoever has matches, take them!” (Russian Vedomosti, 1905a).

One of the motivations for the peasant protest was violence by government officials, including against children and adolescents.

The leaflet of the Borisoglebsk group of Social Democrats dated November 30, 1905 reported the following: “An officer of the 6th reserve cavalry regiment, Mr. Shcherbinin, who volunteered to pacify the peasants, was flogging them with a sense of pleasure and voluptuousness. Without any reason, solely out of pleasure, this scoundrel flogs men, flogs women and even children!” (Dubyshkin, 1930). Similar evidence came from other places: “They beat them with whips, whips with woven wire and lead tips, they mutilated them with rifle butts and shot them... They beat adults, they beat adolescents, women, and old people. They flogged them to the point of insensibility, many to death” (Zasodimsky, 1922).

On the estate of Knyaz Baryatinsky, Lgov district, Kursk province, on May 24, 1906, the Cossacks, having discovered four teenage shepherds in the landowner’s meadow, used whips as physical punishment. One of the adolescents managed to inform local adult peasants about this. As a result of the subsequent clash, one peasant was killed and one was seriously injured (Kurskaya Zhizn, 1906a).

Monstrous in their cruelty, reprisals against peasants, including adolescents and old people, could not but arouse hatred towards the authorities, especially in the minds of young people, adolescents and children. In the village of Chernavka, the Cossacks raped girls aged 13–15 years old (Veselovsky, 1907: 89). It can be assumed that flogging of fathers and brothers were a strong psychological trauma for the young residents of the village.

Often children and adolescents became random victims of punitive actions of the authorities (Tambovsky Golos, 1905; Tambovsky Golos, 1906). Alcohol consumption by adolescents could also be a factor in the protest movement. In November 1905, 13 state-owned shops were destroyed in the Novooskol district of the Kursk province. Hooligan acts associated with the looting of wine warehouses and government shops were common among village youth aged 14 to 25 years old, engaged in crafts or other trades (Evdokimova, 2019: 110).

At the same time, the authorities could mitigate the punishment for minor participants in agrarian protests and pogroms (Rech. 1906. February 24. No. 2; Russkie Vedomosti, 1905b; Pashkov, 2012: 140). According to the provisions of Article 269 of The Code of Punishments, deprivation of special rights and benefits was not applied for minor participants in rural pogroms, and punishment was replaced by prison correctional companies with imprisonment, and its term was reduced by at least half. In addition, judges believed that the participation of minors in illegal acts was the result of incitement, and therefore reduced the degree of their responsibility.

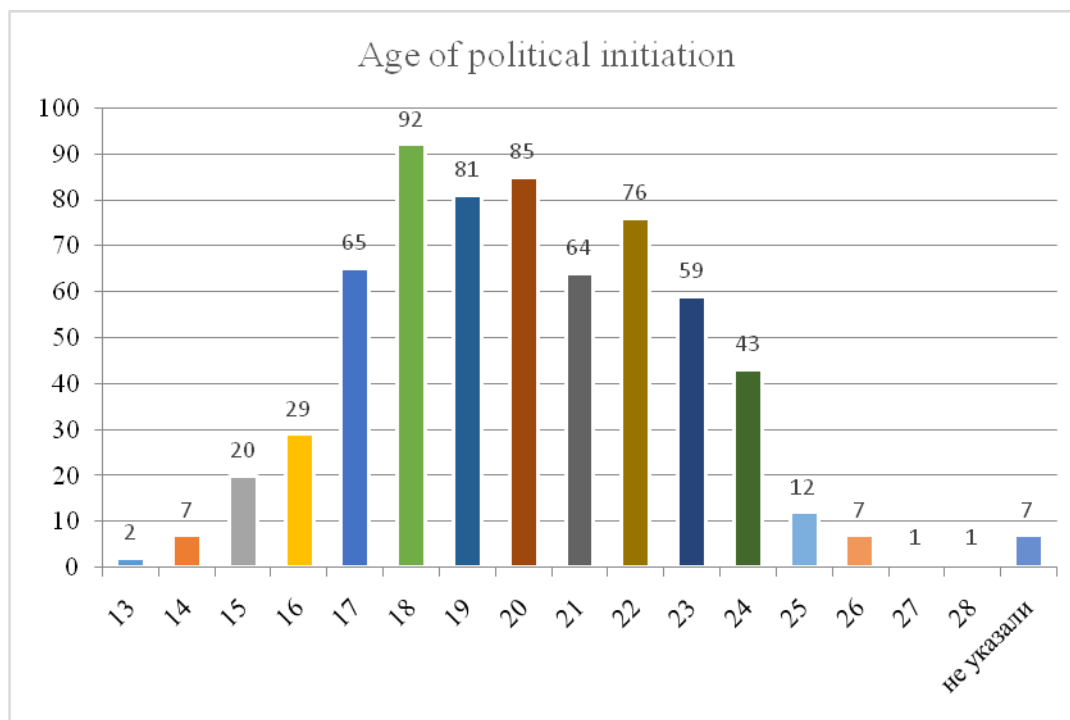
#### 4.2. Youth

The study of the role of youth in the Russian revolutionary movement of the early 20th century was carried out on the basis of a socio-demographic study of the biographical characteristics of the “revolutionary turning point” generation, as well as a socio-historical analysis of the radicalization factors of sentiments among people from peasant families. In 1934, the Society of Political Prisoners and Exiled Settlers numbered 2,980 members, while the number of those who were born between 1881 and 1896 and came from a peasant family was 651 people (21.8 %) (Politicheskaya katorga, 1934: 15-833). It is important to note that when creating the database table, we took into account the class origin of political prisoners, while their

revolutionary path might not always be connected with the village. At the same time, one cannot fail to take into account the significant influence of the habitus of patriarchal rural society on the formation of the socio-demographic portrait of a rural radical.

In the cohort under consideration, there is a noticeable predominance of men – 622 people (90.5 %), which is mainly due to the traditional idea of the place and role of Russian women in rural society at the beginning of the 20th century. Obviously, the socialization of girls proceeded differently. The main social role for which the girl was prepared in the family essentially from birth was the role of mother. While the education of girls at universities and gymnasiums seemed not only unnecessary, but also a harmful and unsafe activity.

Let us turn to the consideration of the national composition of the form in question. The results of the quantitative analysis showed the expected predominance of the most numerous ethnic groups living on the territory of the Russian Empire. The absolute majority among them were Russians (52.9 %). The share of Ukrainians was also very significant – 102 people (15.6 %). Moreover, in the sample under consideration there were only 24 Belarusians (3.2 %). The stratum of revolutionary-minded Latvians turned out to significantly exceed the share in the empire – 89 people (13.6 %). Such a significant part of Latvians among the revolutionary-minded part of the Russian peasantry can be probably explained by the Russification policy of the imperial government. Similar reasons for the radicalization of sentiments were characteristic of people from Georgian (5.3 %) and Polish (3.9 %) peasant families. It is noteworthy that the share of Jewish revolutionists in the sample under consideration was only 1.2 %, while in the overall composition of the Society of Political Prisoners they made up about a fifth (Yakimov, 2021: 170). However, this is not surprising, given that the vast majority of Jews lived in cities in the Pale of Settlement and, with rare exceptions, did not engage in agricultural work. Other national groups included: Armenians, Bulgarians, Lithuanians, Maris, Moldavians, Ossetians, Uzbeks, Chuvashs, and Estonians.



**Fig. 1.** Age of political initiation

The analysis of the starting age of revolutionary activity is of no less scientific interest. The study showed that the majority of peasants of the generation under consideration joined one or another revolutionary organization at the age of 16 to 24 years (92.2 %). Such a young age of the start of revolutionary activity is mainly explained by the lack of family ties and corresponding obligations, as well as isolation from the care of older relatives. In addition, it was during these years that they studied in gymnasiums and universities, where the majority of young people fell under the influence of revolutionary agitation. No less important was the tendency of the younger generation to romanticize the “exploits” of revolutionists. Among the representatives of the generation under consideration were those who joined the revolutionary movement at the age of 13 to 15 years (4.6 %). At such a young age, their revolutionary activity was usually limited to the distribution and storage of illegal literature. The proportion of those who joined a revolutionary organization after 25 years of age was very small (3.2 %).

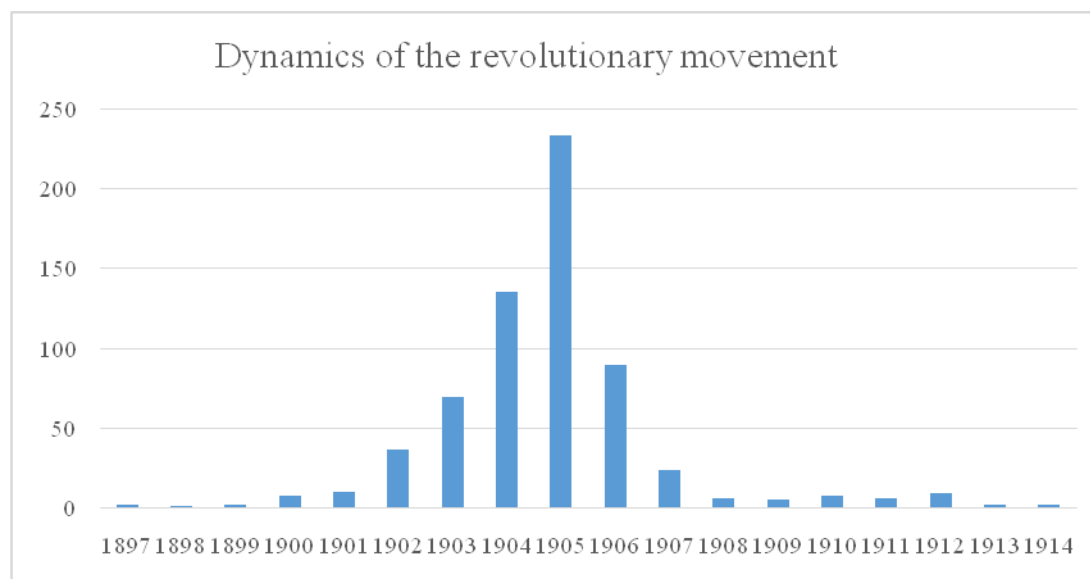


The level of education among people from peasant families was relatively low, which was mainly due to the fact that most of them simply could not afford to study at gymnasiums and universities. Difficulties in obtaining the desired level of education contributed to the radicalization of rural youth, making them more susceptible to the content of revolutionary agitation. However, only 8 people (1.2 %) described themselves as illiterate. The vast majority indicated that they had a lower education (51.6 %), which meant attending primary school. There were also those who indicated “home” in the education column (17.1 %), the relative prevalence of which was caused by the increase of the number of zemstvo home schools towards the end of the 20th century, which made it possible to combine schooling with agricultural work. About a quarter of the revolutionists (23.5 %) had a secondary education, which in most cases involved studying at a gymnasium or seminary.

It is not surprising that educational organizations themselves became places where people from peasant families became acquainted with revolutionary ideas. In particular, a native of the village Koporye, St. Petersburg province, F.S. Petrov joined the revolutionary organization through the mediation of Kronstadt gymnasium students (Katorga and Ssylka, 1934: 130). A significant part of peasants found themselves left out of the educational organization (6.7 %), and often the reason for their exclusion was promoting the revolutionary movement. For example, I.M. Kukhalishvili was expelled from the theological seminary after participating in the October events of 1905, and the reason for the exclusion from the school of E.Kh. Rumba was the dissemination of revolutionary literature (Politicheskaya Katorga, 1934: 341, 553).

At the same time, the analysis of autobiographies of political prisoners of peasant origin indicates an increased desire of rural youth for education. However, most of them could not afford to study in higher and secondary educational institutions. In this regard, the memoirs of the peasant M.G. Vanidze are noteworthy: “My parents, poor peasants, only allowed me to graduate from a two-year primary school, after which, having no funds, they could not give me the opportunity to continue my education” (GARF. F. 533 Op. 2. D. 300. L. 3). Being the youngest child in a large peasant family, N.S. Ershov noted that “he studied for a short time on copper pennies bargained for by his mother at the market” (GARF. F. 533. Op. 2.D. 661a. L. 4).

The lack of education among some peasants was also associated with their difficult financial situation. In particular, the peasant I.P. Timoshenkopo wrote that he could not continue his studies at the gymnasium, because his family did not have enough funds to continue his studies (GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 2011. L. 3). Peasant P.V. Strafun was forced to stop his education at the age of 12, because his father needed additional hands on the farm (GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 1943. L. 3). No less illustrative are the memoirs of T.S. Vishnevsky, a political prisoner from the peasantry: “I did not graduate from parochial school, because the need that reigned in my father’s family forced the latter to tear me away from my studies and make me an assistant to ease our financial situation” (GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 363. L. 5). Thus, the increased desire of rural youth for education was restrained by the low level of material wealth in the majority of village families.



**Fig. 2.** Dynamics of the revolutionary movement

The analysis of the dynamics of the revolutionary movement among peasants of the generation under consideration at the beginning of the 20th century is also of particular interest. The overwhelming majority of political prisoners indicated in their biographical data the year of the beginning of revolutionary activity, which served as the initial data for analyzing the dynamics of revolutionary activity. As the results of the quantitative analysis showed, the majority of people from peasant families joined the revolutionary movement during the years of the first Russian revolution – 345 people (53.6 %), while the majority of them joined it in 1905 – 233 people (36.2 %). A significant proportion of peasants – 240 people (37.3 %) came

under the influence of revolutionary organizations in 1902–1904. We believe that the key reason for the spread of revolutionary sentiments among peasants was the problem of land scarcity on most peasant farms that had worsened by the beginning of the 20th century.

In the overwhelming majority of cases, the period of continuous assistance to the revolutionary cause among people from peasant families was from 1 to 3 years (66.7 %). At the same time, some peasants were arrested several months after the start of revolutionary activity (14.6 %). However, the proportion of those who managed to avoid arrest for more than 3 years was insignificant (18.7 %). As data from the autobiographies of political prisoners show, the reason for their arrest could be possession of weapons, participation in revolutionary agitation, as well as the distribution of illegal literature. However, there were also those who showed their dissatisfaction with the existing order in more radical forms. For example, K.S. Semerin committed the murder of an official of special assignments, N.E. Elkin was arrested for an armed attack on the quartermaster's sergeant major, I.M. Panferov participated in the preparation of the assassination attempt on the commander of the Kazan district troops Sadnetsky (*Politicheskaya Katorga*, 1934: 576–577, 210, 475).

It is also important to note that many of peasant political prisoners of the “revolutionary turning point” generation were arrested two or more times (32.7 %), and therefore, it is not surprising that they subsequently ended up in penal servitude or exile. In this regard, individual human destinies are noteworthy. For example, the peasant K.A. Kiselev was arrested four times in the period from 1905 to 1916, and the Ukrainian I.T. Krivoruchenkov was arrested 6 times in the period from 1905 to 1911 (*Politicheskaya Katorga*, 1934: 281, 324). The prevalence of repeated arrests is largely due to the fact that many political prisoners fled from places of serving their sentences. In total, the study identified 86 escaped political prisoners, which is 13.2 % of the total number of peasant political prisoners of the generation under consideration. Among them were those who, hiding from political persecution, went abroad.

It should be noted that many future political prisoners became acquainted with revolutionary ideas in the villages. We agree with M. Steinberg's point of view that in the historical conditions of the “revolutionary turning point” even elementary education “stimulated new thoughts about the possible and the impossible” (*Steinberg*, 2018: 277). For example, the peasant F.M. Bezugly came under revolutionary influence thanks to his older brother, who kept the works of Lavrov, Kropotkin and other populists in the barn (*GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 140. L. 3*). A native of the Kiev province A.M. Gopkalo recalled that the source of his revolutionary sentiments was illegal literature, which he obtained in rural areas through Narodnaya Volya teachers (*GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 482. L. 3*). The prevalence of illegal revolutionary literature among rural youth in the town of Kolyshki, Vitebsk province, was recalled by the peasant Z.P. Filippovsky (*GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 2109. L. 3*). Peasant V.A. Shein became interested in socialist ideas in the village through the mediation of his peasant relatives (*GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 2286. L. 7*). Although based on the above examples, it is impossible to establish the exact quantitative coverage of rural youth with revolutionary ideas, it can be argued that the popularity of left-wing radical propaganda in the Russian village was increasing.

At the same time, the majority of peasants, due to their illiteracy, did not fully understand the differences between the content of the propaganda of various socialist organizations. For example, political prisoner A.N. Prasolov recalled that most of peasants in his village had very vague ideas about socialism (*Prasolov*, 1928: 44). To a much greater extent, the feeling of belonging to the revolutionary struggle, which expressed their protest and sometimes anti-government sentiment, was important for rural youth. For clarity, here is an excerpt from the autobiography of the peasant G.M. Strygin: “At the extras that representatives of different parties organized for us, speakers touched revolutionary topics, but personally I did not particularly understand the parties' programs. We liked the mere fact that they were talking about our interests, about our needs” (*GARF. F. 533. Op. 1. D. 173. L. 48*). According to the testimony of political prisoner A. Cherkunov, among the rural youth of the Kherson province, the desire to understand the essence of revolutionary propaganda was so significant that many of them literally crammed Bolshevik slogans, not understanding the meaning of many of the words used (*Katorga and Ssylka*, 1925: 38).

Intensification of agrarian turmoil at the beginning of the 20th century also contributed to the radicalization of rural youth. An excerpt from the autobiography of a peasant from the Saratov province I.Ya. Korotkov is noteworthy: “The peasant performances only warmed us up, and I myself had even more energy” (*GARF. F. 533. Op. 1. D. 204. L. 2*). The memoirs of political prisoner A.N. Prasolov also prove that in the Voronezh province among young peasants such words as “revolutionary” and “striker” were pronounced with particular pride (*Prasolov*, 1928: 35).

The analysis of the surviving autobiographies of political prisoners indicates that many people from peasant families joined the revolutionary movement while studying in educational organizations. In particular, peasant N.S. Ershov noted that, under the influence of illegal literature, in his last year of study at the Kungur School he became a revolutionist (*GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 661 a. L. 4*). Peasant A.I. Trenin indicated in his autobiography that his acquaintance with some seminarians became a determining factor in the formation of socialist views (*GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 2021. L. 4*). Coming from a peasant family, Ya.P. Naumenko noted that it was the students who introduced him to revolutionary literature and brought him to the meeting of revolutionists for the first time (*GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 1363. L. 3*).

Another important factor in the radicalization of sentiments among people from peasant families was the urban environment, since many of them joined the revolutionary movement through acquaintance with the labor movement. Thus, peasant I.I. Borisov, who left to work in the city, met the revolutionist G. Zinoviev at a factory, through whom he later joined the Socialist Revolutionists (GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 223. L. 3). Another native of a peasant family, N.E. Elkin, heard about the fight against the “exploiters” from a conversation among workers, which prompted him to study illegal literature (GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 650. L. 4ob.). Many young peasant workers were dissatisfied with the working conditions, which also affected the nature of their mood. Peasant S.I. Semenov, who moved from the village to the city, subsequently recalled that it was the difficult working conditions that became decisive in his intention to become a revolutionist (GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 1811. L. 3). Leaving his native village, the young peasant, who had experienced many material difficulties of village life, found himself in the urban environment, being emotionally prepared to perceive left-wing radical propaganda. In particular, peasant Z.P. Filippovsky argued that urban propagandists did not take much time to convince him, since being a poor peasant he himself felt all the hardships and deprivations of rural life (GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 2109 L. 3).

It should be noted that many peasants who went to the city to earn money continued to maintain contact with the village, as a result of which they became conductors of revolutionary ideas among rural residents. For example, peasant A.M. Tipunkov, after joining the socialist revolutionists, returned to his native village and began to engage in revolutionary agitation among the villagers (Kan, 2004: 198). Similar revolutionary paths can be found in other surviving autobiographies of political prisoners of peasant origin (GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 1070. L. 5, GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 140. L. 3, GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 2109. L. 3). At the same time, some young revolutionaries returned to the village also because it was very unsafe to assist the revolutionary cause in the city. In this regard, the memoirs of peasant N.A. Manyukov are noteworthy, where he noted that his revolutionary cell managed to acquire a manual printing press for the production of illegal leaflets, which was placed in the village of Kazinka. However, almost immediately after it was transported to the city, searches and arrests were carried out (GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 2224. L. 3-4).

Thus, the accelerated modernization of all aspects of social life, inherent in the late 19th – early 20th centuries, pushed peasant youth into the cities, however, subsequently a significant part of them returned to the village to work as organizers of revolutionary cells. For example, peasant V.A. Shein received illegal literature from Samara through railway drivers, after which he distributed it among the villagers (GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 2286. L. 7). G.V. Shcherbakov recalled that “in 1904, a fairly strong connection was established with the city, which was already quite carefully giving out its illegal literature” (GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 2349. L. 3ob.). Peasant I.I. Chelyshev, who joined the revolutionary movement, recalled that he established “a strong connection with the people as a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party <...> I expanded my influence on peasants through oral and printed propaganda” (GARF. F. 533. Op. 2 D. 2213. L. 4).

The social atmosphere of the revolutionary days itself played an important role in the process of forming left-radical sentiments among people from peasant families. In particular, the starting point of revolutionary sentiments of peasant F.M. Bezugloy, according to his personal testimony, was his impressions of the events of 1905 in Krasnodar, where his father worked at that time (GARF. F. 533. Op. 2. D. 140. L. 3). An excerpt from the autobiography of a political prisoner of peasant origin V. S. Ternavtsev is even more illustrative: “The All-Russian strike greeted me as a boy who was very interested in everything that was happening. At the age of 16, I had to take part in an armed uprising with a pike in my hands, which I made myself” (GARF. F. 533. Op. 2.D. 1998. L. 5).

## 5. Conclusion

If young children were observers of the events taking place, then rural youths, along with adult peasants, played an active role in them, and sometimes acted as instigators of turmoil. The analysis of the sources showed that the participation of children and adolescents in the agrarian movement is due to the nature of the collective actions in the community and the traditional attitude of peasants towards “other people’s” property.

In turn, the socio-demographic analysis showed that among villagers there were young people aged 16 to 24 years who were most susceptible to the influence of revolutionary propaganda. Leaving the familiar peasant world, rural youth, who had experienced a lot of material difficulties of village life, became especially susceptible to left-wing radical ideas, which many of them became acquainted with in the process of receiving education or communicating with populist teachers and urban workers. Moreover, unlike peasant children who participated in agrarian turmoil mainly spontaneously, young people not only joined revolutionary cells, but also actively contributed to their work, including in rural areas. In most cases, in villages, young radicals were engaged in the distribution of illegal literature, storage of weapons, and revolutionary agitation.

It was the “revolutionary turning point” generation that was the subject of radical social transformations in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century, which, on the one hand, determined a special generational style, and, on the other hand, constituted its logic of development.

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