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District newspapers as a chronicler of the Arkhangelsk North history*

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Abstract. The article discusses the creation and operation of district periodicals in the Arkhangelsk Oblast. The author analyzed their role in solving problems in different periods and evaluated the place of the “district” in the relations of the state and local authorities. Based on a study of modern local periodicals, the author concluded that the press, freed from the CPSU dictates, became dependent on new power and was forced to cover mainly its activities and achievements. The way out of this situation is the creation of municipal newspapers.

Keywords: *periodicals, district newspaper, reform, municipal formation, state and municipal authorities.*

Administrative and territorial reform related to the creation in 1929 on the basis of the Arkhangelsk, North Dvina, Vologda provinces and the Komi area of the Northern Territory¹, affected the lower level. Instead of counties, their disaggregation, districts were created everywhere, which led to the appearance of a periodical press.

It is from this time that the regional newspaper, which has survived to this day, originates. However, in a number of areas it appeared much earlier. Noting the round date - the ninetieth anniversary of the creation of the majority of “districts”, it should be noted that in a number of territories covering the then existing counties, their own newspapers appeared much earlier - back in 1917-1920².

It was facilitated by the situation that developed on the territory of the former Russian Empire after the events of 1917. Freedom of speech and thought, the assembly then became part of life, which allowed Izvestia newspapers, established by the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, to appear in the country and then in the provinces and soldiers' deputies, their executive committees. This example was also followed by the subordinate Soviets - county, publishing their print media. Many of them borrowed the same names, e.g., “News of the Council of peasant deputies of the Arkhangelsk district”, “News of the Council of peasant deputies of the Yarensky district”. They came out most often for free, they were kept at the expense of advertising revenues and scanty amounts allocated from local budgets. Without an apparent periodicity, the local press, nevertheless, played a significant role in disseminating information among the population in the initial pe-

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¹ See: Sm.: Administrativno-territorial'noe delenie Arkhangel'skoy gubernii i oblasti v XVIII–XX vv. Spravochnik [Administrative and territorial division of the Arkhangelsk province and the region in the 18th – 20th centuries]. Arkhangelsk, 1997. (In Russ.)

² Russkie gazety perioda 1917–1922 godov v fondakh Gosudarstvennoy biblioteki SSSR imeni V.I. Lenina [Russian newspapers of 1917-1922 in the collections of the V.I. Lenin State Library]. Moscow, 1982. (In Russ.)

riod of the formation of Soviet power. This made it possible, among other things, to provide conditions for the expression of opinions by various strata of society.

With the help of the local press, it became possible to unite people both on a professional basis and on interests. It most often bore the democratic imprint of the time, despite the ever-growing power of the Bolsheviks, but was still weak to withstand it. Therefore, in the output of some of the current "districts," e.g., Onega, Kargopol, Shenkur, and Velsky districts, you can see the year of publication associated with the beginning of their first release in the very difficult period when the civil war broke out and foreign military intervention continued.

Analyzing the provincial periodicals of the pre-revolutionary period, it should be noted that county newspapers had every reason to appear, even as official ones, back in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The fact is that decisions made then by local authorities, which affected the interests of residents, could come into force after their publication in the periodical press. And since there wasn't one at the county level, they had to print them in the provincial newspaper *Vedomosti*, overloading it with officialdom, which forced the editorial office to often increase the volume and release applications.

The tsarist government did not want to make concessions to allow the creation of a local press, to prevent free-thinking on the part of the population. As a result, in none of the districts of the Arkhangelsk province until 1917 not a single one of its periodicals was published. This can also be explained by the fact that "the local authorities still did not want to get their own newspapers. She didn't show any initiative, and public organizations were not ready for this: they didn't want to disperse their forces, and at the same time, they were under pressure from the power structures" [1, Butorin M., p. 83].

However, the first county newspapers, appearing in the early years of Soviet power, did not last long. One of the reasons that served as their closure was financial - the transition to a new economic policy required the introduction of self-financing, and the editorial offices themselves did not have enough money to issue, as well as paid newspapers. It was good, but not the main reason. After the end of the civil war and foreign military intervention in the North, county newspapers gradually turned into joint bodies of the executive committees of the Soviets and the committees of the RCP (b). According to A.N. Zashikhin, "in practice, this meant subordinating the Soviet press to the party structure" [2, p. 12]. The fact is that the Bolshevik party, having monopolized power in the country, saw in the press one of the most important mobilizing means for solving the problems facing the country. It was decided to create a new press - the party-Soviet press (it got that name) with the organization of the release of central newspapers and magazines. Therefore, not only local but also many regional publications of various orientations, which did not even set political goals, were closed - only the official press remained, the organs of which were the party committees. In our Arkhangelsk province, these included the *Volna* newspaper with the supplements *Severnaya Derevnnya*, *Komsomolets*, the party magazine *Bolshevik Thought*, the economic journal *Severnoye Khozyaystvo*, the journal *Northern Co-Operator* [3, Butorin M., p. 16].

And this was no exception. A similar printing system has developed in the neighboring provinces of Arkhangelsk - in the Vologda and Severodvinsk.

The creation of the current “districts” was postponed until the administrative-territorial reform, which provided for the formation of districts instead of counties. The trial was the creation of newspapers at the district level, which are an intermediate link between the region and the districts but have not justified themselves and were soon liquidated. And then, in 1930–1932, newspapers were created everywhere in the districts.

This was a new type of press, its purpose was primarily associated with the solution of important tasks of socialist construction, strengthening ties with the masses. By directive documents it was clearly defined that “each district can have one newspaper, its organ is without fail the district committee of the CPSU (b), the district Council of Deputies” [3, Butorin M., p. 19]. But in the presence of two seemingly equal bodies, an important place in the leadership of the newly appeared press was already assigned to the party committees: they selected and approved the editors, considered the work plans of their printed publication, and gave directives on various issues. The Soviets, which were the same equal bodies of the press, were given a secondary role: they were called upon to ensure, mainly, the material and technical and financial activities of the editorial board.

Despite its size (originally appeared on two pages), the “district” tried to cover a wide range of issues of the socio-economic life of the territory in which it spread. True, the theme changed depending on time: at different periods of the newspaper’s existence, time dictated. Open the newspapers of the thirties - on their pages are questions of collectivization and industrialization, the Stakhanov movement, socialist competition, and then the struggle against the enemies of the people. With the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, the theme changes, but the newspaper, despite the difficulties with paper, continues to come out - its main leitmotif is: “Everything for the front, everything for the victory!”. The districts in the sixties and eighties became saturated in content. Interest in them increased, the circulation of many of them exceeded ten thousand copies. Per inhabitant, it was the press most demanded by the reader, which covered local life in all its diversity. Newspapers write about socialist competition, the development of the economy, the social sphere, and people, but the main place on its pages is given to readers’ letters.

The printed editions of the districts have repeatedly changed the volume and frequency of publication. For a long time - many residents of the districts remember this - they went out strictly according to the established schedule: three times a week in four lanes.

The turning point in the life of the “districts” was the beginning of the nineties of the past century. It was facilitated by the emergence of a legal basis for their activities, in particular, the adoption of the Law of the Russian Federation “On Mass Media”, which determined that “the search, receipt, production, and distribution of mass media, the establishment of mass media, the

possession, use and disposal of them, not subject to restrictions, except as provided for by the legislation of the Russian Federation on the media”³.

Most of the local publications change their names, for example, the Shenkur newspaper “Leninets” - to “Vazhsky Krai”, the Kargopol newspaper “Communist” - to “Kargopolye”, the Kholmogory newspaper “For Communism” - to “Kholmogorskaya Zhizn”, Konosha newspaper “Zvonok” - to “Konosha kourier”. The founders of newspapers are state authorities. The periodicity of the release is also changing: now the editorial staff sets it on the basis of its own capabilities. The first in the region weekly newspaper in 1994 was transferred to the seaside newspaper “By the White Sea”, which caused an mixed reaction from colleagues. Today, including taking into account the delivery conditions, the vast majority of “districts” in the region come out in this format, which allows them, using modern computer technologies and programs, to make the newspaper more diverse in its design and layout.

However, with the advent of the legal framework and the development of democracy, the district newspaper did not receive full independence. Its founders are the administration of the governor and the government of the region, which dictates its conditions when covering the life of the region, giving preference to showing the activities of the regional authorities, as well as the local administration. Thus, having freed themselves from the dictatorship of the CPSU, the editorial offices turned out to be dependent on the modern government, which provides them with scant financial assistance, depending on the publication of materials provided by the authorities.

An analysis of the local press shows that newspapers published in cities and regions of the region are issued by publishing houses, which are autonomous state institutions. However, they have their distribution in the territories of municipal entities whose bodies, following Article 12 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, are not included in the system of public authorities⁴.

It turns out that municipalities have the right to create their mass media. It is enshrined not only in the Law of the Russian Federation “On Mass Media”, but also in the federal law “On General Principles of Organization of Local Self-Government in the Russian Federation”. However, this right in the Arkhangelsk Oblast could be used only in Arkhangelsk and Koryazhma. In other municipalities, there is no such money to support their media.

The transfer of “districts” to the influence of local authorities also has many so-called pitfalls, which calls into question the independence of the local press. In our opinion, the first step

³ Zakon RF «O sredstvakh massovoy informatsii» ot 27.12.1991 g. № 2124-1 (s izm. na 01.05.2019 g.) [The Law of the Russian Federation “On Mass Media” dated December 27, 1991 No. 2124-1 (as amended on May 1, 2019)]. Vedomosti S"ezda narodnykh deputatov RF i Verkhovnogo Soveta RF [Vedomosti of the Congress of People's Deputies of the Russian Federation and the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation]. February 13, 1992, no. 7. Art. 300.

⁴ Konstitutsiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii. Prinyata vsenarodnym golosovaniem 12 dekabrya 1993 g. (s uchetom popravok, vnesennykh zakonami Rossiyskoy Federatsii o popravkakh k Konstitutsii Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 30.12.2008 № 6-FKZ, ot 30.12.2008 № 7-FKZ, ot 05.02.2014 №2-FKZ, ot 21.07.2014 № 11-FKZ) [Constitution of the Russian Federation. Adopted by popular vote on December 12, 1993 (subject to amendments introduced by the laws of the Russian Federation on amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation dated December 30, 2008 No. 6-FKZ, dated December 30, 2008 No. 7-FKZ, dated February 5, 2014 No. 2- FKZ, dated July 21, 2014 No. 11-FKZ)]. Sbornik zakonodatel'stva RF [Collection of the legislation of the Russian Federation], 2014, no. 31. Art.4398.

towards this could be the transfer of “districts” under the auspices of representative bodies of local self-government.

To a certain extent, this would provide them with independence and independence, would allow more comprehensive coverage of local life, touching upon existing problems, suggesting ways to solve them, which is lacking in the current local periodicals. Indeed, the periodical press itself is not only a source of information - a newspaper line creates the history of the region, and all together - the Arkhangelsk Oblast as one of the areas of the Russian Federation. And one can see this, turning over the pages of newspapers that have already turned yellow from time to time. Before our eyes stand the life of many generations of people who lived and worked in different periods of the formation and development of the northern region.

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