

## VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY EXPERIENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN RUSSIA DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR (1914-1916)

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Abstract: The paper is based on the materials of the Central State Archive of Moscow and is devoted to the characteristics of funds and documents containing information about the work of voluntary labour associations of students during the First World War. The introduction of new documentary sources stored in archival institutions into scientific circulation fills the gaps in revealing the history of the formation of the volunteer movement of young people in 1914-1916 on the territory of various guberniyas (governorate) of the Russian Empire. They are a valuable source which allows determining the key principles of the organization and formation of voluntary student squads and identify the specifics and timing of the types of the field work performed.

Keywords: archival documents, volunteering, historical sources, voluntary student labour squads, agricultural work, educational institutions, the First World War, the Russian Empire.

### 1 Introduction

To date, the study of the historical experience of volunteering activity among young people during the First World War is quite important for the all-Russian and regional history. The expansion of the research space and rethinking of various aspects of the historical past have greatly enriched the views of domestic researchers on many events of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the role and place that were given to voluntary labour associations of students in the social movement during the First World War. The appeal to a comprehensive study of the territorial aspect of voluntary activity of young people in 1914-1916 is one of the promising scientific directions in the history of domestic voluntary practices of young people in difficult time in the life of the country. This direction allows to recreate a complete picture of the voluntary movement that unfolded throughout the Russian Empire. Voluntary work of students in difficult time in the life of the country was considered, on the one hand, as a form of mobilization of the necessary labour resources under wartime conditions, on the other hand, as a manifestation of the state youth policy. Voluntary activities under wartime conditions were considered as the highest manifestation of civic duty and were aimed at the socialization of the younger generation in the war period, the formation of patriotic consciousness of young people. For the country, the volunteer movement has become one of the ways to obtain additional human and financial resources.

### 2 Literature Review

Over the past decade, the number of publications dealing with various regional aspects of the problem has increased significantly, which contributed to the formation of a holistic picture of the development of voluntary labour associations of students in the most difficult conditions of wartime on the territory of the Russian Empire (Merkulov, 2014; Strakhov, 2014; Shamakhov, 1966). The issues of formation of student labour squads are studied in detail in the works of S. V. Bukalova (2015). The author carried out a comprehensive

analysis of the socio-economic and political processes which took place in the country during the war and which primarily determined the content and specific forms of expression of voluntary work of young students. The monograph of E. N. Polischuk "Russian Youth Movement in the Pre-revolutionary Period" (2011) is one of the studies on the problem, in which a significant place is given to the analysis of the activities of voluntary associations of students in wartime. The daily life of the participants of the student labour squads is touched upon in the works of V. V. Karpova (2015, 2016).

Regional researchers pay special attention to the problems of organizing student labour squads to help soldiers' families in the field. The most complete coverage was given to the issues related to the history and activities of voluntary student associations in Minsk (Samovich, 2015), Kursk (Tarasova, 2012), Tomsk guberniyas (Gordienko, 2008), Western Siberia (Dolidovich, 2016; Sulimov, 2011), etc. Some of the presented regional works differ in the nature of historical references; contain only a small amount of actual local history material relating to the history of youth labour associations. Thus, in the First World War the topic of student labour squads is represented in the regional historiography by few works.

### 3 Research Methodological Framework

The authors identified the main objective of this study as a comprehensive and in-depth study of the development of student voluntary movement in the conditions of the First World War, the definition of priority forms and directions of activities of volunteers in the archival materials.

The objectives of the research are related to the study of the educational process, the structure and numerical composition of student labour squads during 1914-1916 on the territory of the Russian Empire.

The historical method allows to explore the reality through the study of its history, when the essence of the phenomenon is revealed through the analysis of its state. In addition to this method, specific problem methods were used: idiographic, historical-genetic, historical-comparative and historical-typological methods, as well as content analysis and illustrative methods.

The source base of the study was made up of archival materials contained in the fund of the Committee of Her Imperial Majesty Grand Duchess Elizaveta Fedorovna on providing charitable assistance to the families of people called up for war, the Moscow Committee on Providing Charitable Assistance to the Families of People Called to War (fund 113, 246 cases during 1914-1918) of the State Budgetary Institution of Moscow "Central State Archive of Moscow" (SBI "CSA of Moscow"). In the archives, a wide array of documentary materials on the establishment and activities of voluntary student labour squads on the territory of the Russian Empire was revealed.

The analysis of the formation of voluntary student labour squads and their activities in Russia is based on the study of the materials of official case management. The main corpus of the fund sources is represented by the journals and reports of local departments of the Committee, as well as reports of heads of educational districts and it allows recreating a complete picture of the situation with the student labour squads in various guberniyas and their constituent uyezds (counties).

### 4 Findings and Discussion

The events of the First World War, in which the Russian Empire had been involved since 1914, affected the state of the sphere of volunteerism. Wartime difficulties have contributed to increased social consciousness and independent social actions of the

citizen in Russia. A significant direction of patriotic activity of students of educational institutions was labour assistance on a voluntary basis to the families of soldiers. The shortage of workers was particularly acute in rural areas, and student squads were able to partially fill the labour resource gaps there. It is the young students who become one of the strategic resources to overcome the numerous challenges in the new economic, social and political conditions created by the wartime, primarily addressing the lack of labour in agriculture.

By the circular orders of 28 July, 2 August and 9 October 1914, The General Department of Land Administration and Agriculture addressed the directors and managers of agricultural educational institutions with a proposal to consider the possibility of mobilizing young students.

In the autumn of 1914, the first labour units were arranged by the students of pedagogical educational institutions of Minsk guberniya. Organizing small groups, they went to villages and hamlets and assisted families in need. The demanding job of the students was highly appreciated by the Minsk governor, who visited the labour squad of the students of the Minsk classical gymnasium on June 5, 1914 and thanked the volunteers for such timely and necessary assistance. In order to summarize, regulate and replicate the unique experience of student labour associations, a special commission consisting of the principals of educational institutions of Minsk, members of the land administration commission, district agronomists and other persons is established by order of the Minsk governor.

The result of the work of the commission was the developed "Basic Rules of the Organization of Labour Squads of Senior Pupils of Educational Institutions of the Ministry of National Education in the Minsk Guberniya" (Central State Archive of Moscow, 1914, sheet 126). The Rules emphasized in particular the voluntary nature of the formation of labour associations of students whose participation in the squads required parental consent.

The idea of voluntary work of youth for the benefit of society was reflected in paragraph 4 of the Rules. The absence of remuneration or payment to the volunteers was compensated by the provision of housing for the squad members and giving them the peasant ration. Paragraph 5 is very interesting, as it prohibits voluntary squad member to refuse to perform all the planned types of agricultural work in peasant farms, but gave the right to "request special instructions" from the agronomic personnel.

The developed rules became a prototype for all subsequent instructions on the formation of voluntary student labour squads. Supporting the Minsk initiatives, the Ministry of Public Education sent a circular on the organization of labour squads at all educational institutions in the summer of 1915.

The next step in the development of the idea of labour assistance was the abolition of the transitional examinations for students by the General Department of Land Administration and Agriculture in 1915, which led to the changes in the curricula of summer practical classes (Labour Squads and their Organization, 1916, p. 11). In the circulars of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Public Education, it was repeatedly stressed that the participation of students in the squads "cannot be mandatory", and certainly, they cannot be subject to coercive measures.

In April 1916, the Department of Public Education sent "The Sample Rules of Organization of Student Labour Squads" to all educational districts in order to unify and speed up the process of organizing and managing student labour squads.

Being formed on a sectoral basis, the multifaceted activities of squads reflected the division of voluntary labour.

The basic rules of organization of labour squads established by the Department of Public Education determined the key principles of formation of youth voluntary associations.

Since the beginning of the formation of voluntary squads, educational institutions had established close contacts with urban, zemstvo (system of local administration) and public institutions on organizational issues (place and time of the "labour practice" of students and accommodation during agricultural work). The costs associated with food, work clothes and shoes, as well as transportation of the squad members to the place of work were the objects of expenditure of educational institutions, local zemstvos, public and charitable institutions.

Archival materials of CSA of Moscow testify that student labour associations were created with active support of various organizational structures of local administration. Projects of the organization of voluntary student squads were repeatedly initiated by the local departments of the Committee of Grand Duchess Elizaveta Fedorovna to provide charitable assistance to the families of people called up for war.

Thus, the documents of the archive contain information about the joint work on the organization of the party of students for agricultural work in the Nizhny Novgorod guberniya, which was done by a Special Commission established on the initiative and under the supervision of A. F. Girs, the Chairman of the Nizhny Novgorod department of the Committee. The Commission included the Guberniy Zemstvo Uprava (government) and the Guberniy Land Administration Commission, local educational authorities and agronomic personnel.

The organizers considered voluntary labour, on the one hand, as a means of promoting the inclusion of students in socially useful and socially significant activities, on the other hand, as a means of educating young people (Central State Archive of Moscow, 1916, sheet 124).

In the course of work of the Commission, the basic provisions of the organization of a squad and plans of its forthcoming activities were developed. Thus, labour squads from 10 to 20 people were constituted with the students from senior classes of secondary educational institutions by a "voluntary note" of the students themselves and the consent of parents or parental representatives. In addition, there was a mandatory medical examination, certifying the suitability of volunteers to perform labour activity that is agricultural work (Central State Archive of Moscow, 1916-1917, sheets 25-26).

Curators from the teaching personnel or the local village intelligentsia were obliged to monitor the internal routine of the squad members. All agricultural work was to be carried out under the supervision of local agronomic personnel. A special training programme for students was provided.

The guberniy and uyezd county councils took the immediate administration of the case on the ground, involving their own agronomic personnel in the supervision of the work of squad members and local teachers, priests, etc. to manage the economic part of voluntary associations of students.

Documentary material provides information about the activities of the labour squads on the territory of the Russian Empire. So, in 1916 the active part of voluntary squads in the Pskov guberniya was represented by the students of the Pskov Man's Gymnasium (68 people), the Mariinskaya Women's Gymnasium (11 people) and Private Woman's Gymnasium of Safonova (22 people) (Central State Archive of Moscow, 1916, sheet 16).

In the summer of 1916, a voluntary squad of 11 students of the Vilenskaya Second Gymnasium rendered assistance in the peasant farms of the village of Vyazov Maloarkhangel'sk uyezd of Orel guberniya under the supervision of the teacher K.I. Bunin (Central State Archive of Moscow, 1916, sheet 174).

Students of Kursk Man's Gymnasium had worked in Oboyansk (Shelkovka village) and Kursk (Popovka village and Klyukva hamlet) uyezds of Kursk guberniya for two summer seasons since 1915. On average, each squad comprised 14 to 20 people

(Central State Archive of Moscow, 1916-1917, sheet 19). Every day the students went to work early in the morning and went back around 7-8 in the evening. In the evenings a briefing was held, the work for the next day was assigned. During the harvest, considerable help for 28 families in need was provided by the student squad working in the summer of 1916 in Shelkova village of Oboynsk uyezd under the supervision of the teacher P. M. Zinkovskiy of Kursk Sandomirskaya Man's Gymnasium. Moreover, in the summer of 1916, 10 squad members worked together with prisoners of war at four agricultural areas under the supervision of agronomists of zemstvo in Oboynsk uyezd of Kursk guberniya. According to the squad leader, more than 200 desyatins (land measure equivalent to 2.7 acres) of wheat were cut with the participation of these students (Central State Archive of Moscow, 1916-1917, sheet 20).

A fairly complete picture of the labour activity of student associations can be obtained from the documentary material of the detailed reports of the Committee Departments. For example, according to the report of the Department of the Committee "On Agricultural Work Performed by the Student Squad of the Odessa Second Gymnasium in the Villages of Kurtovo Volost (district) in the Summer of 1916", 40 to 60 people worked as part of the voluntary labour association of students from June 22 to July 20 under the supervision of the gymnasium inspector V. O. Chemena and teachers A. E. Zbarashenko, P. Kh. Karayanov and I. T. Krshesh. The squad members worked in the hamlets Fersterovo, Dostanovka and Konstantinovka of Kurtovskaya volost. The squad rendered assistance to 42 peasant farms and harvested wheat from the 200 desyatins of peasant fields in three villages (Central State Archive of Moscow, 1916, sheet 156).

The experience of training labour assistance during the war in the Petrograd guberniya, on the territory of which there were more than 30 squads in 1916, is of interest (Central State Archive of Moscow, 1916, sheet 224). According to their industry, they were represented by three types of voluntary associations: agricultural association is the most numerous group (20 squads), one squad responsible for organizing nurseries-shelters and the third group included 13 garden squads. So, garden squads worked in the gardens at the hospitals of Petrograd, Tsarskoe Selo, Kronstadt and Kolpin, and were engaged in the improvement of the surrounding area, thus they "at least partially brightened the stay of the wounded at the hospitals".

According to the place of work of the agricultural squads, they were distributed as follows: 1 squad worked in Petrograd uyezd, 8 - in Yamburg uyezd, 3 - in Tsarskoye Selo uyezd, in Novaya Ladoga uyezd and Gdov uyezd - one in each, one squad of the students of Lyuban higher primary school worked in the vicinity of Lyuban (Novgorod guberniya). Another agricultural squad worked in Pskov and Tula guberniyas (Central State Archive of Moscow, 1916, sheet 224).

As follows from the reports, on May 15, the squad members stationed in the three zemstvo schools began agricultural work. The squad members went to villages in groups and worked in the family of those in reserve in quantities which depended on the need of these families in the labour force and the amount of land placed under cultivation. At the same time, female students were distributed to families of those in reserve and took care of their children (Central State Archive of Moscow, 1916, sheet 84).

In general, the activities of the labour squads were so effective from the point of view of socio-economic impact and moral matters, that on June 28 1916 "the highest command" approved the regulations on the badge for participating in student squads in providing employment assistance to the families of people called up for the war.

In the "Case Concerning the Activities of Labour Squads and the Development of the Award Badge for Excellence in Rendering Labour Assistance" there is the Regulation on the Badge for Participation in Student Squads, approved on June 28, 1916.

According to the Regulations, the badge was established in memory of participation in student squads to render labour assistance to peasant farms in the field (Central State Archive of Moscow, 1916, sheet 71). In the materials of the case we also find a description of the badge (Central State Archive of Moscow, 1916, sheet 154).

After the publication of the regulations on the badge, numerous applications for awarding of voluntary participants of labour associations followed. Information about pedagogical personnel and students-volunteers declared to be awarded was sent to educational institutions in the local guberniyas departments of the Committee. In turn, after consideration, the guberniyas department submitted the list of the persons declared to be rewarded to the Committee of Her Imperial Highness with the request "about sending the corresponding number of badges and the established forms of certificates on the right of their carrying to the department" (Central State Archive of Moscow, 1916, sheet 176).

Kaluga Guberniya Committee appealed to the Committee of her Imperial Majesty on sending 300 pcs of badges for participating in student squads in 1916 (Central State Archive of Moscow, 1916, sheet 37). According to paragraph 3 of the regulation on the badge, the Pskov committee requested the Committee of Her Imperial Majesty "not to refuse to send 152 pcs of badges" (Central State Archive of Moscow, 1916, sheet 16).

The materials of the fund often contained general conclusions of the guberniyas departments of the Committee on the results of the activities of voluntary labour associations of students. First of all, the lack of the necessary physical training, labour skills and knowledge of student, the lack of instructor personnel for training, financial difficulties in maintaining the work of squads were noted (e.g.: (Central State Archive of Moscow, 1916, sheet 34, 76, 83). In fact, it turned out that the squad members were not sufficiently aware of the nature of the forthcoming work and the lifestyle in the village and did not expect them.

## 5 Conclusion

Therefore, on the basis of the studied material, we can state that the participation of young people in voluntary labour practices during the First World War was the result of the governmental policy, as well as — and this is the most important — a manifestation of the goodwill of the students themselves, their focusing on helping the society. Thus, voluntary student squads were one of the voluntary forms of labour assistance to the population during the First World War which were firmly and positively proven. The movement of student labour squads, which arose in 1914 and spread in 1915-1916 throughout the Russian Empire, became one of the universal ways to solve economic problems faced by the state. Labour assistance of the squad members was an important type of volunteering in a difficult period for the country. At the same time, it was marked by a special mood, solidarity and lively responsiveness of young students. The young generation of volunteers contributed to the expansion of the sphere of public assistance in wartime by their personal participation in the activities of labour squads.

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