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NATIONAL AUTONOMY AND FEDERAL STRUCTURE IN THE RUSSIAN STATE

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Abstract

The globalization processes cause irreparable damage to the values historically established in each community, forcibly unifying the legal, political, national and cultural space of the peoples living in different states. One of the peoples inhabiting Russia for more than four centuries are the Kalmyks. At the beginning of the XVII century a significant part of the Oirats, ancestors of the Kalmyks, migrated from their historical homeland (Dzungaria) to the Russian state, voluntarily joining it. On the territory of the vast steppe plains between the Volga and the Don, they created their own, almost independent nationhood - the Kalmyk Khanate. Since then, the history of the Kalmyk ethnic group is inseparably associated with the history of the peoples of multinational Russia. In the process of the Kalmykia's nation building, one of the fateful historical events was the First All-Kalmyk Congress of Soviets, which was attended by the Kalmyks from all the uluses located in the Kalmyk steppe, on the territory of the Don and Terek regions, in the Urals, in the Astrakhan, Stavropol and Orenburg provinces, etc. At the Congress on July 5, 1920, the Declaration of the Rights of Working and Exploited People was adopted, proclaiming "the unification of all scattered parts of the Kalmyk people into one administrative and economic unit within the RSFSR" – "the Autonomous region of the Kalmyk people" which was reorganized into the Kalmyk Autonomous Republic in 1935.

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Keywords: Russia, Kalmykia, federalism, the All-Kalmyk Congress, autonomy.



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1. Introduction

At the present stage of development of the Russian society, one of the most acute problem is the attitude to the Federal structure of the state. In the scientific community there is no disagreement that the most optimal form of a state system is the federation. However, there is no solidarity among scientists, politicians and legislators in the question of what principles should underlie it, especially in the relations between the center and the regions. The vast territory, multinational and multi-confessional composition of the population, uneven development of the regions of our country give this problem not only theoretical but also practical significance and special relevance. A number of researchers of the Russian federalism argue that in practice our type of federalism implements those principles that do not always coincide with the principles enshrined in the Constitution of the Russian Federation. In these conditions, a deep analysis of the historical experience of centuries-old cooperation and cohabitation in Russia of different peoples is required. At the beginning of the XX century, and also at its final stage, one of the most acute problems of the Russian State was the national question. In the first quarter of the last century, the Bolsheviks associated the solution of this problem with the establishment of the Soviet system subject to the maintaining a unitary state. However, the conceptual principles of the Bolshevik Party began to evolve towards federalism in 1917. The changing of their guidings was promoted by military defeats in the First World War, and the real danger of disintegration of Russia. Therefore, based on the current situation, the Bolshevik Party proposed the idea of creating a federation of equal peoples, which could stop the process of disintegration of Russia and ensure state unification. And they did it. Modern Russian federalism has many problems, and it has a lot of work to do to reach a model that will ensure not only the stable development of the state, but also the prosperity of peoples. And this model can be only be the one that takes into account the historical experience of all the peoples of Russia, including the Kalmyk people who has been part of it for four centuries.

2. Problem Statement

During the period of modern development of historical science, the problems of national-state building of the Russian peoples, including the Kalmyk people, acquire special relevance which is associated with the rethinking and the changing of scientific paradigms, the development of new approaches in the development of national policy and federative relations in the Russian Federation. Different aspects of these problems are reflected in the works of Russian scientists, such as Abdulatipov et al. (2010), Avakyan (2003), Payn (2007), Stolyarov (2003), Tishkov (2003), Kalinin (2012) an others. So, Abdulatipov et al. (2010) in their fundamental studies, associate federalism with the decentralization of power, with the distribution of competence between the Federation and the Subjects, ultimately, with the main goal – to put the management of state affairs to a particular person. The problems of federative relations in the regional strategy, the issues of national and cultural revival are considered in the works of Bulakov (2003), Maksimov (2013), Seleyeva et al. (2019), Usalko et al. (2019), Goryaev and Ubushaev (2019) and others.

Theoretical aspects of the study of federative relations in foreign countries, taking into account the problems of ethnicity and the state unity were covered in the works of Laband (1901), Ellinek (1903),

Ermacor (1976), Dukhachek (1990), King (2000) and others. The famous theorist of federalism Elazar (1994) notes that federalism must combine two concepts [system and process]. It is their connection that creates the Federative system. If a structure exists without a corresponding federal process, its influence will be secondary (Elazar, 1994). During the Soviet period, most foreign researchers focused their attention solely on the features of the Soviet model of Federative relations. Preservation of integrity of modern Russia, one of the most significant requirements of today's time. Therefore, only an objective and conscientious historical and legal analysis, the study of the practice of our past will be a condition for moving forward, strengthening Russia as a subject of international relations.

3. Research Questions

One of the most acute issues at the present stage of development of Russian society is the attitude to the Federative structure of the state. In this regard, the study of the history of formation and development of statehood of one of the ethnic groups of multinational Russia – the Kalmyks and other peoples of our country, is undoubtedly relevant. The history of federalism in Russia is closely connected with the history of the emergence and development of the Soviet state. In October 1917, the victorious Soviet government faced with the separatism of the national outskirts of the Empire had to solve the problems of unity and integrity of the country. Therefore, the Bolsheviks were forced to refuse the original conceptual principal of their party in solving the national question subject to maintaining a unitary state in the form of a federation. In the conditions of the collapse of the army, the economic devastation, the First World War, the new government began to solve the accumulated national problems in multinational and multi-confessional Russia, to change the state structure, and to create national-state entities. The national statehood of the Kalmyk people developed in the common way of general historical processes in the country and was determined by its ethno-cultural features and specifics. The Kalmyk people divided and living before the revolution of 1917 on the Don, in the Astrakhan, Orenburg, and Stavropol provinces, in the Urals and did not understand of the prospects of its development, the program of national policy of the Bolsheviks impressed. Thus, the Soviet government offered the peoples of Russia a different form of cohabitation, in the form of autonomous entities of different levels, that was extremely attractive to them and at the same time relieved tension in relations between the center and the national outskirts. In addition, it gave the Bolsheviks the opportunity to preserve the integrity and unity of the Russian State in the most difficult conditions of the Civil War and the struggle against the intervention.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this work is to study the historical experience of national-state construction in the Russian Federation exemplified by of one of its Subjects – the Republic of Kalmykia, which has its own specifics and features (1917–1935).

5. Research Methods

The main methodological principles of the research are scientific objectivity, expressed in the involvement of the maximum possible number of sources and a systematic approach to the analyzed material which is considered in the relationship of all constituent elements, as well as the principle of historicism, when the object is considered in a certain historical context. The paper used problem-chronological, civilizational, historical-genetic, historiographical and source analysis. It is these principles and methods that make it possible to solve the tasks set in the paper.

6. Findings

The formation of the Autonomy of the Kalmyk people took place in the most difficult conditions of the Civil War and devastation, the confrontation of two systems – the nascent power of the Bolsheviks and the tsarist autocracy leaving the historical arena. In this situation, the Bolshevik Party carried out its scheduled stages. In the summer of 1918, the Council of People's Commissars issued a resolution on the convocation of the All-Kalmyk Congress of Soviets. The Constitution of the RSFSR, adopted in 1918, created the legal basis for the formation of "Autonomous regional unions". By the autumn of 1918, Soviet authorities were formed in Kalmykia, consisting of the Congress of Soviets of the Kalmyk people, the Kalmyk Executive Committee, ulus and aimach councils. In establishing the power of the Soviets in the Kalmyk steppe, the representatives of the small Kalmyk intellectuals, who were in various movements, fought for the rights of their people, took an active part. In the second part of 1918 – the beginning of 1919, the Soviet authorities under the leadership of the Bolsheviks took measures to develop the political system of the new state power, the basis of the socialist economy. Everywhere in the Kalmyk steppe Trade Union and some party organizations, collective production farms – communes and artels were created, the livestock of large cattle owners was kept. In the government of the Soviet Republic opened the People's Commissariat for nationality affairs, whose task was to organize and to create autonomous entities, which were the implementation of the national policy of the Bolshevik party. In October 1918, the Kalmyk Department was opened in the People's Commissariat. The Department immediately joined the work on the autonomy creation of the Kalmyk people. It was the first articulated principle about the Autonomy of Kalmykia and the association of the Kalmyks in the report of the Executive Committee of the Council of Working and Exploited deputies of the Kalmyk people and the Kalmyk Military Commissariat of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic on November, 4 in 1918. The report noted: "The All Kalmyks living on the territory of the Russian Republic, as a united nation, should have a united organization, headed by the Central Control Department, uniting the all Kalmyks into the unified entire having the rights of an independent region, subordinated directly to the center" (The National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia). At that period an important event was the V.I. Lenin's letter to the "Kalmyk Brothers" of July 22, 1919, which was actively promoted and explained to the steppe residents by the local Bolsheviks. In his proclamation, the leader of the proletariat called the Kalmyk people to unite and resolve issues of self-determination, to create the autonomy for the Kalmyk people.

After the emancipation of the Kalmyk steppe from the White Guards, to the beginning of 1920 there were real opportunities to create the autonomy for the Kalmyks. On the eve of the convocation of

the coming Congress, the Plenum of the Kalmyk Executive Committee was held with the participation of the Ulus Executive Committees, which discussed the fundamental issue of the form of national statehood of the Kalmyk people, then to submit it for consideration at the Congress. At the Plenum on this topic two variants of the structure of national statehood were put forward: Autonomous Republic and Autonomous region. After sufficiently detailed discussions, the Plenum recognized that taken into account the difficult socio-political situation and the dispersion of the Kalmyks' residence, the creation of an Autonomous region was considered as the most expedient. The First All-Kalmyk Congress was held during the week from 2 to 8 July, 1920 in the village of Chilgir, being geographically the center of the Kalmyk steppe, was, to a certain extent, convenient for delegates from the all Kalmyk ulus of Astrakhan, Stavropol and Orenburg provinces, also the Don and Terek regions, the Urals, etc. The Congress was attended by 346 delegates, including 55 Bolsheviks, in fact, it was the entire Kalmyk Party organization of the period. On July 5, 1920, the delegates of the Congress adopted the "Declaration of the Rights of Working and Exploited Kalmyk People", which proclaimed the unification of the scattered parts of the Kalmyk people and the creation of the Autonomous region of the Kalmyk labor people. The Supreme bodies of state power have determined: the Kalmyk Congress of Soviets and the Kalmyk Central Executive Committee. This normative act fixed the relations of the Kalmyk Autonomous region with the Central government, which showed the main signs of a unitary state. In Kalmykia it was formed a three-steps system of government – regional, ulus, aimag and the village Council. The Congress proposed to include 10 Kalmyk uluses of Astrakhan and Stavropol provinces, Kumsky Aimak of Terek region and 13 villages of the Don region in the Kalmyk Autonomous region. The difficulty that the Central and Local Authorities had to face was the high degree of dispersive resettlement of the Kalmyks on the territories of other regions. A certain part of the Kalmyk people, who lived in particular on the Don, and some other territories, led a sedentary lifestyle and did not want to move and change their favorable place of residence. Despite all the efforts made by the Central and Local Authorities, the Don Kalmyks never moved to the region. Issues, concerning the borders of the Autonomous Region of the Kalmyk people, were approved on 25 November, 1920, at that time it was adopted the resolution of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) and the Council of People's Commissars (CPC) of the RSFSR about borders of the Kalmyk Autonomous Region, in which 13 stanitsas of the Don Region were not included.

In November 4, 1920 after the adoption of the Central Executive Committee and the CPC of the RSFSR resolution "About the formation of the Autonomous Region of the Kalmyk people", adopted by the First All-Kalmyk Congress "Declaration of Rights of the Kalmyk people" entered into force and acquired the status of an act of constitutional significance. Thus, through a century and a half after the reorganization of the Kalmyk Khanate, the Kalmyks regained national statehood. Despite the subsequent tragic events in the history of the Kalmyk people, the deportation and the reorganization of the Republic in 1943, the formation of the Kalmyk Autonomy in 1920, the 100th anniversary which will be celebrated in 2020, in the lives of immigrants from Central Asia, confessing Buddhism and the only Asian ethnic group in Europe – Kalmyks, was of momentous character. During the studied period, the statehood of the Kalmyk ethnic group, as well as other peoples of the Federation, developed in the common course of the general historical processes in Russia and was determined by its specifics and ethno-cultural features. In 1935, as a result of the achieved successes, improvement of the national-state structure of the Russian

peoples and updating of the constitutional legislation, the Kalmyk Autonomous Region was reorganised into the Kalmyk ASSR. Raising the status of the Subject of the Federation, despite numerous vicissitudes in the fate of the Kalmyk people, contributed to the further national and cultural revival of the Kalmyk people, its active inclusion in the socio-economic space of the Soviet state.

The global changes of the last decades have changed the political and social situation in Russia, greatly increased the interest in the issues of ethnic and national identity, the problems of federalism, the further arrangement of the lives of the Russian peoples, and focused on the development of the federative relations. The discussion that has made in the country about the ways to reorganize the Russian statehood reflects different points of view: the transition to Unitarianism, Federation, conferring Confederate Rights on the republics within the Russian Federation, etc. We consider, that forecasting the future is impossible without an objective analysis and understanding of the past.

7. Conclusion

The history of federalism in Russia is connected primarily with the history of the emergence and development of the Soviet state. The victorious Soviet Power, faced with the separatism of the national outskirts of the Empire, had to solve the problems of unity and integrity of the country. Based on the really difficult situation, the Bolsheviks were forced to choose a Federal path of development. The new authority considered that situation as the most convenient form of organization of the state, able to ensure the territorial integrity of the former Empire and to offer people a different form of cohabitation. The process of national-state building of the Kalmyk people, as well as others, began with the adoption of the "Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia", which proclaimed the destruction of national oppression, the establishment of a voluntary and honest union of peoples, their right to self-determination. The policy of the Bolsheviks met the interests of the Kalmyk people, scattered over the vast territory of the Russian provinces. The Soviet power was not limited to only declarations. In a short time, the government issued administrative documents aimed at providing economic assistance to the Kalmyks. Held in July 1920 the First All-Kalmyk Congress of Soviets, which proclaimed the unification of all the disparate parts of the Kalmyk people into an Autonomous Region within the RSFSR, despite the serious expenses in the national policy of the State, became a significant event in the fate of the Kalmyk people. The creation of the Kalmyk Autonomous Region was a key factor, largely not only contributed to the national and cultural development, but also saved the Kalmyk people from physical destruction in the era of socio-political upheavals.

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