

**NININS 2020****International Scientific Forum «National Interest, National Identity and National Security»****INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY: URBAN SELF-GOVERNMENT IN RUSSIA 1917**

Valery L. Danoyan (a)\*, Elena B. Bespyatova (b), Oksana Y. Yatsenko (c)

\*Corresponding author

- (a) Russian Technological University RTU-MIREA, 20, Stromynka str., 107996, Moscow, Russia danoyan@mail.ru  
(b) Russian Technological University RTU-MIREA, 20, Stromynka str., 107996, Moscow, Russia elena\_besp@list.ru  
(c) State University of Management (GGU), bl. 99, Ryazansky Av., 109542, Moscow, Russia yatsenkoox@mail.ru

**Abstract**

The article reviews the process of emergence of new forms of local self-government during the February bourgeois revolution. The extensive information material of this period shows the modernization of state authorities, which necessarily followed the change in public structure. The history of the of bourgeois society formation and the legitimation of democratic processes, characteristic of this short but important period of national history, were closely connected to the organization of a new type of local government. And, although at the level of the highest political power, the widest rights and freedoms were offered to citizens, they received their first practical embodiment in the implementation of the primary organs of local self-government. The huge range of powers that local authorities were ready to accept for themselves, the difference between both the forms of organization of self-government and their class, national and gender composition are not sufficiently studied in modern scientific literature. Meanwhile, a creative approach to determining both the powers of local authorities and the areas of its application gives a rich material for research and allows to predict with high accuracy the development of similar processes in modern Russia.

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## 1. Introduction

Social management is the basic ontological constituent of any social activity. The problem of power is one of its most important components. By the sphere of the set up tasks, state power is divided to three forms, that is: a legislative, executive and judicial one. It consists of federal power that anchors the country's unity on the territory of all the state, regional that manages the country's parts in respect with the particularity of re-entrant subjects (with autonomous republic, province or city statuses) to a region consistency and local power. Just the local power is that connecting-link which let us consider citizens' needs and realize programs having concrete aims without getting estranged of their interests. That is why the problem of democratic processes' development and civil society's formation is closely relative to the development of a local self-government system in modern Russian actuality. Local self-government may be conventionally divided to urban and rustic. But under the conditions that are transitive towards the urbanity conception of the development of a society which is connected with a denser population in towns and a larger activity of the urban population conditioned by this fact, it's necessary to stress urban self-government in exploring the institute of the local one. Urban self-government is one of important elements of a society's life the, closest power, school of a society's and a legislative state's formation. The concern for elections to the bodies of self-government as the opportunity of ingoing to power, the acquisition of a carpetbagger status is outright evaluated by some opposition parties. Their strides in the affair of the carriage of their candidates to power show that the opportunities of self-government are connected not only with a downstream administrative and thrift activity but with a political potential the development of which we are watching today, as well.

The problems of local and state power in the past of Russia and at the modern stage of the state's development are becoming the factor of the national safety (Anishchenko & Anishchenko, 2015) and scientific polemics (Zabelina & Milkina, 2019). Local and urban self-government is playing the modern phase of a civil society's development a fundamental part in the management of the society on all levels when becoming a key element supplying a first-hand dialogue of the state power and the society. Self-government is aimed at solving common social-economic problems (Salov, 2008). But for this complicated and important process to be optimized it is necessary to take the experience that our country accumulated in the 20-th century into consideration. And the period from February, 1917, till October, 1917, became one of key moments, when the formation of the self-government bodies of new type was conducting to passing the local power from liberal and bourgeois forces into the Bolshevik Party's hands. Within this short temporal period, the political space changed pivotally that as a consistent pattern led to the socialist revolution.

The revolution of February became one of determinative events of the Russian history at the beginning of 20-th century. It led to pivotal changes in the polity of the country to which practically all central management bodies were subject. The alterations that had taken place also touched upon urban self-government bodies. Having been created in the previous period they desisted to response to the changed social-political context in the country. Therefore, their ubiquitous reorganization began.

Besides economic functions, the newly created self-government bodies took in the situation of temporary lack of power all the plenitude of political local power in their hands. They were also deputed for preparing elections into the Constituent Assembly that raised their status.

Thus, urban self-government bodies became one of the key political institutes, designating the contour in the country. A vexed struggle for the control above them among basic political parties and social organizations began.

The periodic press including parties' issues is one of valuable, but insufficiently explored sources that allow studying the shaping-up and the activities of urban self-government bodies as well as their influence on the social-political situation of that time.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The studying of urban self-government new democratic bodies of the Russian cities of Petrograd and Moscow in the critical historic period between the two revolutions is the aim of the research.

A particular activity of these bodies and the political struggle, which spread for the influence in them among political parties, social organizations and the state, are representing a historical interest.

## **3. Research Questions**

A set of important questions is being considered in the article for the realization of the work's practicability:

- 1.The process of urban self-government urban bodies' institutionalization passing.
- 2.The part of the state, political parties and social organizations in the bodies of self-government.
- 3.The part and the purport of the bodies of self-government in preserving order and stability in a town's life. The tasks that town self-government managed to execute.
- 4.The elimination of the bodies of self-government, their change for the Soviets of folk deputies.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The analysis of the influence of urban self-government bodies on a common political situation in Russia in March-October, 1917, is the aim of this study.

## **5. Research Methods**

For creating the integrative picture of urban self-government bodies' formation in Russia in March-October, 1917, historically comparative and typological methods which let in the most effective way find out the common tendencies and particularities of this process in conditions of the situation of crisis in the country were being used. When exploring correlation between the activity of urban self-government bodies and the common political situation in the country a structural and system method were used. Together with the methods mentioned above, other common scientific methods, such as: analysis, synthesis and so on – as well were used.

## 6. Findings

The changes in social-political life, which were caused by the February Revolution, put the question of the necessity of all the state's managing system reorganization on the agenda. Having been created in the pre-revolutionary period on the base of the reforms "from above", its bodies desisted to correspond to the society's needs and therefore began to be replaced with new ones practically overall. The begun alterations could not do without touching upon the bodies of municipal self-government.

The February Revolution caused a spontaneous process of the formation of local power bodies in towns that owned the proxies of different amount including the ones appurtenant to the activity of municipal bodies such as the Committee of Social Organizations (KOO) and the Soviet of Working and Folk Deputies, as well.

On trying to create a holistic picture of alterations which had taken place in urban self-government the Headquarters of Local Economy Affairs of the Home Office (MVD) held a plebiscite in accordance with that by the data, received for the beginning of July. New self-government bodies were created in 5 from 144 towns, in 287 of them their makeup renewal took place on account of replenishment, and 122 continued to work in an old consistency.

Characterizing the process of the creation of new authorities, the article-writer of "Future Destiny of Moscow City Duma" specifies justly that the KOO concentrated an overwhelmingly wide circle of town-management proxies of urban self-government in its hands without having either experience or a state-power machinery by this.

The situation of diarchy, formed in the country, reverberated outright on the part of local self-government, as well, that is – around each of the powers its own system of local district bodies also began to come right (Arapova, 1968).

The procedure of the instituting of new municipal bodies had a variable character depending on the region. Thus, in Moscow district dumas were being built in the way of co-optation – by one representative from a common city organisation and 5 others from local ones.

The consistency of this kind of organizations was rather "brindled", political institutions as well as social ones, such as the ones of sanitary tutelage, hospital tills, trade unions and trusteeships of the poor, entered into their composition.

The City Duma in Petrograd was under the necessity of accepting 20 men from commonplace committees – the future district dumas – to its consistency with brought pressure of the Soviet of Working and Folk Deputies. A Soviet including the members of the Duma, social city brass, urban militia and deputations from city employees and the command staff was being created nearby the city headman. For the realization of the "equal rights idea" women – Doctor Shishkina-Yavein, countess Panina, authoress Tyrkova, Doctors Shabanova, Nechayeva and others were withdrawn to the consistency of the city duma. Estate representativeness was also taking place. The spontaneous creation of self-government bodies brought the task of the soonest adopting of a new City Post.

A vexed discussion, which came unfold in the press, was devoted to the question of state interference into the activity of municipal bodies – that is the question of the country's power decentralization. The decision of Provisional Government to establish the positions of province

commissars controlling local self-government authorities since March, 5, 1917, was one of the reasons that initialized this discussion.

The dispute that came unfold obviously demonstrated the absence of unity in this question. For instance, if Danilov (Achadov) reflecting the majority's views in the article «Central Power and Local Self-Government» (Danilov, 1917) gave out-and-out tongue in favour of the transition of all proxies' plenitude to new democratically elected city dumas and zemstvos' (now – ,rustic districts'') assemblies as well as of immediate elimination of the position of government commissars, the role of the central power is seen by him only in the fulfilment of common state tasks – the organization of defense, the realization of public relations, the work of mail, telephone, telegraph and so forth.

Petrov in his article «Revolutionary Government Commissars» (Petrov, 1917) vocalizes a diametrical point of view. On disagreeing with the position mentioned above, he specifies that there are only “two decisions – either to negate the government commissars' institution completely or to admit it an efficient governmental body depending only on central power”. Opposite to the opinion of the necessity to abolish the government commissars' institution that was abundant in the socialistic midst he makes an utterance in favour of its preserving by impartial reasoning this with the need of real-power authorities from the side of any power.

An attempt to co-ordinate these positions was made in the article «Centralization and decentralization». The author of the article denotes that “life can follow neither the route of utter, overpowering centralism, nor other way round, that is the route of decentralization which may turn Russia into a semi-barbarian mass of places having no connection...” As for him, the designation of the border that is the average line between centralization and decentralization consists in the following: “Common norms, common laws should bind Russia into a unified solid and working them out is all country's elected persons. But... to adopt them in situ is the business of the locals” (Centralization and decentralization, p. 2, 1917). A correct model of interrelations between local and central powers ought to come right as a result of a day-by-day life practice.

Aware of the necessity of local self-government, Provisional Government set about the reform of urban local self-government in the most concise terms (Danoyan, 2014).

On April, 15, 1917, a new law about social management “Temporary Rules of the Creation of Elections of Urban Dumas' Deputies and Site Headmen of Urban Departments” that were partially overviewed by a Decretal from the 9th of June was adopted by Provisional Government. The adoption of that law was ambiguously met by basic social-political forces of the country. For instance, the author of the article “Urban Reform”, Constitution Democrats – “Cadets” – Party representative gives a glowing account of it with calling it the first large-scale organization act exteriorizing the most democratic principles of suffrage, which constitute just the subject of dreaming even in mostly free states with regard to policy (Urban Reform, 1917).

Somewhat another view is upheld by the representatives of the majority of socialist parties. Giving on the whole positive value to the adopted law electoral disfranchisement of segregate groups of population, control from the side of the state and so on is subject to justified critics.

Modern historiography is represented by two cross-points of view. If Pisarkova regards that the Provisional Government's reform tendered too wide rights and in practice unlimited independency

(Pisarkova, 1998) – Sudavtsov comes into an alternative position: “...Provisional Government without letting development to local self-government as sovereign self-government authorities shattered basic population masses’ trust in them and created conditions when Bolsheviks weighed in with the slogan “All the power – to Soviets!” again” (Sudavtsov, 2001).

Elections are the key elements of any democratic system, which expresses population’s will and expectations that reflect social-political conditions and the layout of political forces in this or a different populated locality or a state on the whole.

From March till October, 1917, two election campaigns were held – “summer” and “autumn” ones – correspondingly in May-June and August-September. The summer campaign in Petrograd had two phases – elections to district dumas and the central city дума.

The elections to the district dumas of Petrograd took place in the 27th, 28th and the 29th of June and on the third, the 4th and the 5th of July. The creation of 12 district dumas out of 18 became their summation, 6 residuary ones were elected in August. Central Petrograd City Duma was elected on the 30th of June by the voting of district dumas’ representatives. 54 es-ers (Socialist Revolutionaries), 47 cadets, 40 Mensheviks, 37 Bolsheviks, 11 trudoviks (‘Laborists’), 6 Folk Socialists and 5 members of Plekhanov’s “Unity” Group gained places in the city parliament.

Having a majority the socialist block headed by socialist-revolutionary persons and Mensheviks formed a provisional Central City Duma with city leader Shreider at the head.

Such public characters and carpetbaggers as Chernov, Spiridonova, Gots, Lunacharsky, Kalinin, Sverdlov, Shingaryov, Martov, Plekhanov and others became City Duma’s members.

On the 25th of June elections in which the party of es-ers carried the day on gathering 58 % votes and gained 116 out of 200 deputies’ places and the remaining places were distributed as shown below: 34 to cadets (17 %), 24 to Mensheviks (12 %), 23 to Bolsheviks (11,66 %) and 3 to folk socialists (1,5 %)

– took place to Central Moscow Duma. Es-er Rudnev was elected city head.

The elections’ ending became the time of comprehending their results and analyzing the reasons of victory or failure and defining the course of further activity and actions.

When commenting the summations of the elections to Petrograd district dumas the es-ers’ newspaper “Folk’s Will” was writing, “The distribution of votes at the elections to district dumas is overwhelmingly illuminative in the sense of the determination of up-to-date political moods. Basic democracy staff appeared not to be poisoned by the preachment of group egoism and gave votes to the socialist block. A limited measure of headlong Leninists’ success is surely not subject to its negating ... but this limited measure of success is in effect bordering with failure. A concurrent of the socialist block, and – we should acknowledge it – a very dangerous concurrent, anywhere appeared to be the Folk Freedom Party. Anyway, the victory of revolutionary democracy may be regarded indubitable” (Results of elections to district dumas, 1917). A relevantly large quantity of votes received by Bolsheviks Kantorovich explains the degree of a working mass’s putrefaction, its low cultural level. And a large quantity of votes received by bourgeois parties, cadets in the first turn, is being explained by the bourgeoisie’s social fright, its drought of order even at the cost of freedom decrease (Results of elections to district dumas, 1917).

A contently close estimate of the elections is being represented in the article of the member of Moscow Mensheviks' Committee, member of Russian Social-Democratic Worker Party Central Committee Tsederbaum "Petrograd Urban Elections". He sees their main summation in the victory of socialists and the defeat of Bolsheviks which gained the third place (Levitsky, 1917).

By estimating the victory of the block of es-ers and Mensheviks Bolshevik press denoted that in consequence of the district elections they had managed to receive an inhibitory number of votes with thousands hundreds of votes of workers which had not yet got free of petit bourgeois influence among them. But at the same time we fairly noticed that the gained upper hand was superimposing all responsibility for the state of affairs in the country, the necessity of being through with the remnants of autarchy and realizing the program of the political remake of the country utterly (Ol'minsky, 1917).

And one of the main particularities of the elections taken place is the split of the rows of Mensheviks whose one part blocked with Bolsheviks and another one – with vindicators and Co.

By criticizing the drawbacks of the passed elections in Petrograd the cadets' press specifies that political amounts expressed in mass presence of citizens at the elections, insignificant breakage of votes. And the full fail of the lists representing insufficiently organized electoral groups had become their strong side and that the rationale of the victory of socialist parties consisted in "the revolutionary mood of the moment". That is when the bulk of population was believing in socialistic promises, disappointment in what would come in the process of day-to-day life, "... when business incapability of many a socialist and his disability to fulfil own pledges would be found out".

Moscow elections that had passed in less than a month after the ones in Petrograd reflected some changes of the state political situation. Whilst the es-ers' press declares an undoubted victory of their party and the correctness of the chosen course that brings it forward onto "... the role of a social-political resultant of the Russian revolution called up to strike a blow against both the element of diffuse socialism and the element of middle accidence fright. That is on the joint of two poles – bourgeoisie and proletariat (Lessons of Moscow Elections, 1917). The cadets' press by acknowledging this victory makes an important remark that the reason of it is outside Moscow being conditioned by the connection of a considerable part of the population with village" (Kisewetter, 1917). Accepting this assertion, the cadets' press also points at a set of other particularities. For instance, Kerzhentsev (Platon Mikhailov) is fairly denoting the fact that the mode for es-ers' ideas which recruited their followers having nothing in common with both revolutionary movement and socialism. That turns it into a formless peasantry and petty bourgeoisie urban party with an undoubtedly democratic program, but a hugely opportunistic and diffuse interpretation of socialist problems of the day, – became one of the es-ers' victory reasons (Kerzhentsev, 1917).

A blankly little percentage of votes gathered by Mensheviks' party became another particularity of the elections which was denoted by practically all the periodic press. One of the basic reasons that had led to this result was hidden within fractionary struggle inside the party as well as against the Bolsheviks (Larinsky, 1917), and the way-out from such situation was the ceasing of fractionary struggle taking away three fourth of their energy.

By estimating the post of the es-ers and Mensheviks the Bolshevik press was writing: "These two parties are already far from being what they were in the times of struggle with the autarchy. Their social

consistency has changed, the mood and tactics have changed, and old programs are being increasingly turned into an appendage to a dress-coat”, that is – an inner transformation of these parties towards bourgeoisie that is being displayed in both one part of the consistency of Provisional Government and the work of Petrograd City Duma.

The remark of Folk Socialists’ Party member Mel’gunov who admonished the party of es-ers of a probable loss of their support from a substantial part of the population disappointed by the intangibility of the satisfaction of demands “here and now” seems to be all-important (Mel’gunov, 1917).

A little temporal break between the “summer” and the “autumn” election campaigns led to pivotal alterations in the social-political situation in the country that just found its reflexion in the result of autumnal elections of the 20th of August to Petrograd Central Duma and of the 24th of September – to Moscow district dumas. 75 cadets (37, 4 %), 67 Bolsheviks (33, 5 %), 42 cadets (sooner than all – es-ers) (21 %) and the representatives of the remaining parties – 8 deputies from each (4 %) – became members of the democratic Central Duma of Petrograd with the previous quantity of places. On Moscow elections Bolsheviks carried the day by receiving 51 %, cadets – 26, 3 %, es-ers – 14 %, all the remaining parties – 8, 2 %. The common quantity of Bolshevik district deputies made up 359 out of 710 persons. Bolsheviks received the majority of places in 11 out of 17 district dumas. Considerable fall of the presence of voters that bore witness of the disbelief of a part of population in the possibility of their post improvement and disappointment in the activity of municipalities became a common feature of the over past elections.

On analysing the results of the elections the es-ers’ press comes to the conclusion that the increase of the quantity of Bolsheviks’ and cadets’ supporters is conditioned by the “mood of the moment” caused by “... conscience devastation. That is being continued together with life devastation and the success of Bolsheviks is the evidence of morbidic beginnings in the working class, and the prime addendums of Bolsheviks’ success is the support from the side of Mensheviks, irresponsible soldiers and middlebrows who voted for their platform as well as the tactics of Provisional Government, full of indecision and hesitations. With sincere regretting about the defeat of Mensheviks the es-ers’ press was writing that “Mensheviks – this healthy mother root of social-democracy in Petrograd – knowingly “died off” on the elections” (State Duma RI, 1917).

The Mensheviks’ press saw the attachment of suburbs to the city that increased the electorate of Bolsheviks. The weakness of the creative work of democracy and shambolic, nonsensical, incongruous repressions pouncing Bolsheviks after the events of July 3-5, and creating the aureole of martyrs around them as well as the absenteeism of voters saw the reason for the strengthening of Bolsheviks. And there was loss of their own face that got expressed in the fact that wide folk masses were comprehending them as “a spoilt issue of Bolsheviks” and preferred to vote for the original – their defeat (B.G., 1917).

On declaring that the political barometer is being bound to the side of a storm with connection with the strengthening of es-ers that received 21 more places and in the first turn –Bolsheviks that gathered 34 places the representative of cadets’ party Shingaryov is giving the most piercing estimate of the elections (Shingaryov, 1917).

The Bolshevikic press attributed the ruination of the es-ers’ party, which had lost almost 400 thousands of votes, the reinforcement of its own position and the growth of the absenteeism of a sufficient part of population that spoke for the transition of a part of urban petty bourgeoisie to the encampment of

“the party of order”, ready to greet any general of decision who promised to establish “order and calmness”, – by the main summations of the elections.

The results of Moscow elections caused political parties’ majority shock. The es-ers’ press that dallied off any serious analysis per se sees dogmatic, insufficiently thought of one-sided critics of the new city дума, finding sympathy in “the dark soul” of “dark masses”, the reason of the victory of Bolsheviks’ Party. The estimate of the Mensheviks’ press, which considers the defeat of es-ers a consequent of the disappointment of wide folk masses in them and the Bolsheviks’ victory – a hard despair that brewed in the masses under the influence of increasingly escalating situation in the country is little informative as well.

The cadets’ periodic press is stating obvious facts, they are the decrease of the interest to elections, the disappearance of belief in socialist revolutionaries and the increase of the influence of folk freedom party and a huge strengthening of Bolsheviks – from another side.

The estimation of Bolsheviks’ position is in a mostly representative way introduced into Lenin’s article “The Crisis Has Brewed” where he makes the statement that their results were “... one of mostly earth-shattering symptoms of the deepest turn in nationwide mood” (Lenin, 1980). By characterizing the future of district dumas the Bolshevistic press points out that they must turn into:

... local hearths, strongholds of the revolution that are acting in full contact with revolutionary democracy authorities – the Soviets, and the struggle of dumas for power in new districts, against any attempts of limiting the sphere of the competency of those and engaging the population by itself into this struggle (Kakhiani, 1917).

On analysing practical activity of local self-government from March till April, 1917, it is possible to allege that it was predominantly being narrowed down to executing current tasks demanding immediate solving. Little-effective financial policy of the self-government bodies was leading to substantial expenses’ increase over insubstantial incomes’ growth that menaced desolation to urban economy, which was also twiggy without this. Actual questions of financial thrift activity gave up place to political slogans and declarations, the tribune of urban dumas became the place of basal political parties.

Catastrophic post of city self-government that was typical for the majority of cities was better than ever represented in the article of es-er Mil’chenko (1924) ‘Petrograd Central Duna in February-October, 1917): “Day after day a revolutionary element was more and more swamping the City Duma and economics. The hopes for moderating own urban workers’ and employees’ twenty-thousandth army demands under the City Duma did not come true. Requirements and strikes did not only become unyielding, they swelled even more. The finances appeared to be in a catastrophic state the city till got quite empty ...The finances fetched up the devastation: incomes are catastrophically falling, at the same time expenses are on the similar catastrophic increase ... However, the fraction of es-ers sought after pursuing a “business” work nothing was coming out of these efforts. The curve of the revolution rose upward and upward” (Mil’chenko, 1924).

A still more negative evaluation to urban self-government bodies’ activity is being given by Shingaryov (1917): “having been created in the time of the revolution the new authorities led the city economy to such breakup that self-seeking old дума members couldn’t have made. Inaptitude, nescience,

imprudence, lavishness – everything expressed itself in the new management and destroyed everything both city economy and city’s supply with provision products” (Shingaryov, 1917).

The October Revolution of 1917, which led to the dismantling of all state machinery, touched upon self-government bodies, as well. An active anti-bolshevist position of the majority of urban self-governments became the reason of their liquidation. In November 1917, Moscow and Petrograd city dumas were closed; new elections to them were appointed on the 26th of November. 1917–1918 became the time of the destruction of urban dumas and their replacement by new representative power authorities expressing the interests of urban community – urban Soviets. The first Constitution of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic adopted in July of 1918 unified their structure, functions and election principles.

## **7. Conclusion**

The period of 1917, from March till October, became one of the key ones in the History of Russia of the 20th century that destined a great deal of its further development. Being created after the February revolution, urban self-government played a considerable part in these events when being their active subject.

The analysis of these events and participating of municipal authorities in them lets conclude the following:

By creating “Urban Regulations”, Provisional Government wasted too much time and allowed the formation of self-government bodies slip from control. Without long lasting until its adoption, new self-government bodies took power in their hands by the self-contained defining of their frames of reference as well as their authorities.

As a result of a discussion about centralization and decentralization Provisional Government got led by urban self-government having tendered practically all the plenitude of local power to it and deprived itself of a more or less meaningful instrument of control. That became one of considerable reasons of loss of influence on the situation in the country.

Having received a majority of places in the overwhelming majority of towns and cities of Russia es-ers and Mensheviks was not able to derive a political profit from the situation. This backing and filling became a reason of the loss of impact in folk masses and let Bolsheviks win a victory on the “autumn” elections.

Having carried the day at the elections, Bolsheviks used up urban self-government bodies as supporting points for the takeover of the country’s power.

The Revolution intermitted the complicated and difficult process of the institutionalization of urban self-Government bodies: being created instead of them, the Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies turned rather quickly into local power bodies appearing practically under utter control of the state. The aims and tasks of local Soviets were determined by the political decisions of Bolsheviks’ Party and transformed local power to an instrument of effective management of the country by unified rules and norms. By studying the experience of the two revolutions of 1917, a man may deservedly evaluate a creative approach of citizens to the formation of such power bodies that would response to their social requests. The analysis of the common features and the continuity of local self-government in

different historic periods gives a deep consciousness of the role and meaning of local power for the organization of a modern civil society with humanistic orientation.

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