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## **Liberation of Classes and Liberation of Nations**

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**Abstract:**

*The urgency of an issue is caused by modern scientific and public interest in a role of ethno-confessional question in the first parliament of Russia – the State Duma of 1906-1917.*

*The article aims to show that the Duma of the first two convocations in 1906-1907 played a noticeable role not only in the class struggle, as it was widely covered in the literature, but also was clear in ethno-political process of multi-ethnic Russia. Based on the systematic, statutory and regulatory and statistical methods the author traces as special Election Rules from outlying regions (1905-1906) with the low level of representation, especially from non-Russian population group, and territorial and ethnic districts that created as a result new ethno-political geography of the Russian Empire.*

*The author concludes that despite these restrictions, the non-Russian peoples' representation in the First and Second Duma was very noticeable that allowed to organize the Duma ethno-confessional factions. These factions and groups legally demonstrated ethnical, confessional and regional interests and tried to join in legislative process with requirements of ethnic and confessional groups equality, restoration of an autonomy of Poland and development of local governance, the court and the school in national languages.*

**Keywords:** *Russia, Duma, Ethno-Confessional Geography, National Identity, New National Elites, Liberation Movement.*

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## **1. Introduction**

It is obvious that reconsideration of the first state Russian Duma short period started 111 years ago in 1905 is now currently important along with the system of value of parliamentary system and the ethnopolitical experience of the interrupted constitutional experiment in the Russian Empire. This is due, firstly, to the necessity of overcoming of sketchiness and narrow class approach to the "imperial" Duma history; secondly, to historiographic necessity of study the totality of the ethno-confessional and regional problems associated with the Russian Empire in the course of the Duma discourse; thirdly, to the analysis of experience of parliamentary presentation of ethno-confessional and regional interests by national political parties and attempts of legislative reflection of these interests in the political system of prerevolutionary Russia; fourthly, to the necessity of research of the Russian parliamentary system model characteristics; fifthly, to the possibility to rethink the first Duma experience for understanding of modern parliamentary development trend in Russia and in other states, namely, the former republics of the USSR.

## **2. Methodology**

The methodology of research of an ethno-confessional foreshortening of the Duma history is based on the principles of objectivity, comprehensiveness, principle of many factors and historical method. A variety of political ideas (liberalism, conservatism, revolutionist) and the ethnopolitical concepts (imperial, ethnic and confessional, regional) is reflected in the Duma political life and defines the use of the principles of a dialogism and polyphony. Along with traditional methods, the main methods of this research were systematic, statutory and regulatory and statistical methods. The following sources are used: the Duma legislation, statistics, shorthand reports of sessions of the Duma.

## **3. New scientific facts and results**

The point of departure of reflections about the ethno-confessional and regional measurements of the Russian Duma parliamentary system is the admission of the facts that Russia at the beginning of the XX century was the largest continental empire in which the autocratic regime nevertheless was compelled to look for a new formula of preservation of high centralization with options of various multinational regions management process taking into account the traditional ethno-confessional and regional asymmetry.

The compelled political reforms of 1905-06 (the declaration of the rights and freedoms, the convocation of the elected legislative Duma, the transformation of the Council of State into the semi-elected upper house of parliament, the creation of the united Cabinet) carried out by the government during the First Russian revolution despite of their shortcomings opened ways of legal transformation of political system of late imperial Russia. These reforms could create a new political legal

framework for the gradual formation of the civil society and of the constitutional multinational state. Despite the counteraction of the Imperial Court and of the government the State Duma (1906-1917) was both the important subject and object of political process. It became the legal center of attraction for social and national forces. The State Duma considerably promoted the formation of national and regional identity of the borderland inhabitants.

### ***3.1. The ethno-confessional geography of the electoral system: from "the first State Duma period" to the model of "the third of June"***

With the advent of the State Duma the political life of the Russian Empire clearly designed ethno-confessional and regional characteristics and vectors. Creating the elected State Duma and the Council of State semi-elected by the privileged circle, the imperial central power proposed the new national and regional election legislation. In the elections rules the government purposefully tried to create electoral privileges for the Russian voters of the European Russia and to limit the representation of the outlying regions. A selective design of the State Duma and State Council (especially after the law on June 3, 1907) had to maintain the imperial center monopoly power and the advantages in the legislative practice of the traditional political elite, but it didn't protect the interests of social, ethnic and regional groups and communities. This task was seen by one of the chief authors of the two-chamber parliament draft bills Sergey Kryzhanovsky (future deputy of Pyotr Stolypin, the Minister of Internal Affairs) when at the beginning of October, 1905 he wrote in an official note to the count Dmitry Solsky, the head of the Special meeting on the electoral laws development: "In Russia the dominating nationality that forms the state is only about 66% of the total population (he included in this calculation the Great Russians, the Little Russians and Belarusians – R. Ts.) and alien nationalities reach 34%... Now the ethnic struggle is eminently shown, and in the very near future it will make the taking priority question with which the territorial integrity of the empire will be hardly connected" (Tsiunchuk, 2004).

On the other hand, for weakening of the oppositional movement of the outlying regions and implementation of further integration of the national imperial territory the government bureaucracy decided to give the possibility of any representation for all regions and ethno-confessional communities, including Jews (Levin, 2009).

Key questions of the political geography of elections that is the registrations of borders of constituencies connected with the sizes of their territory and the density of population, with the ethno-confessional and social composition of society, were under strict control of legislators. To provide a priority for the Russian and orthodox population in some outlying regions the special constituencies of three types were created: ethnic (for "inorodtsy" of Kazakhstan, Central Asia, Astrakhan and Stavropol provinces and Transbaikalia), confessional (for the orthodox population of Lublin and Sedlets provinces of Poland) and estate districts for Cossacks. In the national regions the issue of the recognition of the Russian identity for the voter could be resolved by the local governor, and the citizen professing not only the

Orthodoxy and the Old Belief, but also Lutheranism, could be recognized as the Russian. Actually, the political space of the empire was renewed during the development and changes process in the electoral system. The electoral laws divided the empire into 10 parts with their elective models. After the basic election rules adoption for 51 provinces and regions of the European Russia (the first model), with delay as though "in pursuit of" within nine months 1905-1906 9 special regional models (the Election rules for the Poland and for the Orthodox population of East Poland, Siberia and Yakutia, the Far East, the Caucasus, Steppes and Turkestan regions). For weakening of possible influence of non-Russian deputies from outlying regions and areas during Special meetings at the Council of Ministers the ministers made the decision to establish lower rates of representation (one deputy for about 350 thousand people from outlying regions and for 250 thousand people from the central provinces). The real figures according to our estimates could differ more than 12 times, for example, the Olonetsk province had one deputy for 121,3 thousand people but the "inorodtsy" of the Fergana region had one member of the Duma for about 1564 thousand people on.

Regional asymmetry of the electoral system was considerably shown in city districts. It was originally offered that each of 19 cities of the empire with the population number more than 100 thousand people had to have the possibility of deputies elections. When it became clear that among these 19 cities, 3/4 (15 cities) had multinational structure of the population (Warsaw, Lodz, Vilna, Riga, Odessa, Kiev, Ekaterinoslav, Kharkov, Tiflis, Tashkent, Kazan, Rostov-on-Don Baku, Kishinev, Astrakhan), the authorities made the decision to increase their number to 26 cities and to include in this list "purely Russian cities". The choice of these cities was defined, first, by the number of the Russian inhabitants, secondly, by the cities location in "the Russian provinces" of the European part of Russia, thirdly, by the social loyalty of their inhabitants. For example, among the cities, whose population number was higher than in Orel (70 thousand) that received the representatives, the multinational provincial centers such as Minsk, Kovno, Orenburg, the regional center Kokand didn't acquire the right to elect their deputies. However, such Russian cities as Voronezh, Kursk, Nizhny Novgorod, Samara, Yaroslavl with number of the population is less than 100 thousand people, received the representatives. The Siberian center of a general governorship Irkutsk received the most preferential right in the empire city rate of representation (51 thousand), and Odessa - the lowest one (1 deputy for 404 thousand inhabitants). Riga, Kiev, and even Moscow and St. Petersburg (the capital!) received the rate of representation underestimated almost twice (1 deputy for more than 200 thousand people), the Polish cities of Warsaw and Łódź - three times less.

The law on elections of June 3, 1907 reduced number of members of the Duma (the III and the IV convocations) from 524 to 442 deputies. The representation of the European Russia was reduced by 11 deputies. The representation of Poland was reduced by 23 mandates, the Caucasus - by 19, Siberia - by 5, and from 23 deputies for Kazakhstan and Central Asia there was only one place for the Ural Cossacks.

The separate city representation remained only for St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Riga, Odessa, Warsaw and Łódź (Hosking, 1973). In the Caucasus it was decided to aggregate the constituencies, having reduced their number to 6 (i.e. twice). In Transcaucasia, in Vilno and Kovno provinces and in Warsaw there were special ethno-territorial districts for the Russian population. Thus, the asymmetry of the election system in the Russian Empire was amplified therefore the political geography of the empire changed: 5 selection models for regions remained from 10.

### ***3.2. The State Duma as the legal political platform of the presentation of the ethno-confessional and regional variety of the Russian Empire.***

The creation of the State Duma and the election campaign for the first time gave the chance to present legally ethno-confessional and regional interests that also promoted the formation of the new political geography. All ethno-confessional communities supported national and religious equality, the Poles demanded the Kingdom Polish autonomy restoration and the lifting of restrictions entered after 1863, Jews and Muslims wished to receive a cultural-national autonomy, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Ukrainians, Armenians, Georgians supported ideas of creation of regional and national self-government. For the first time national, confessional and regional interests were legally reflected in political programs, in the press and they became the consolidating slogans of election campaigns. During the first parliamentary elections in the history in 1906 many national parties (officially unregistered) took part, for example: the Polish national democratic party, the Latvian constitutional democratic party and the Lithuanian democratic party, Estonian people's party of progress, the Union of Muslims (Ittifak al-muslimin), the Ukrainian, Georgian, Armenian, Jewish political parties which received the Duma representation, and some of them even created the Duma factions (Emmons, 1983). The Russian national parties and the right monarchist unions also formulated the programs, but their first election campaigns were unsuccessful and didn't allow them to be consolidated in faction.

The government, though created an asymmetric election system, didn't expect to get such multinational (and polyconfessional) and oppositional structure of the first elected body, the Duma. About 200 representatives of the non-Russian people were in the First Duma (27.4.1906 - 08.7.1906). For the first time elected politicians, members of the Duma, began to specify in the questionnaires not only religion, but also a nationality which was offered to be determined by the native language. The creation of the Duma for the first time in history of the Russian Empire led to emergence of the legal opportunity to present ethno-confessional and regional interests and requirements at the national political level, and the elected representatives of the people had an opportunity to take part in the legislative process.

The deputy Victor Obninsky (the Kaluga province) noted that the "local, regional, national" interests of deputies predetermined the characteristic ethno-regional configuration in the meeting hall of the first national state representation. He wrote:"

Having taken place on benches of Tauride Palace ... on the first day deputies had to notice that there is the Polish Koło, near it there are the Lithuanian deputies, Ukrainians crowded round southerners, skullcaps of Tatars are near the characteristic profiles of the east suburb representatives, the raven locks of Caucasians are on an extreme left bench, and, at last, the extensive center of Russia ... dominated the middle of a hall as usual". He figuratively generalized: "The real ethnographic map of Russia!" Sharing idea of a federal reorganization of the Russian state Obninsky (1913) considered that "it was the type of imperial parliament of the autonomous and constitutional state; and here the local, regional, national interests reigned over the minds and even dominated over the nation-wide business though in the hidden form so far" (Obninsky, 1913). The ethno-confessional and regional factions and groups formed in the Duma persistently presented these regional and national interests. Already in the First Duma members of the largest and more arranged national group the Polish Koło in Jan Garusewicz's speech (the Lomzha province) supported the Poland autonomy restoration (Duma, 1906). Members of Muslim group Abussagit Akhtyamov and Shakhaydar Syrtlanov demanded cancellation of confessional and national oppressions for 20 million Muslim citizens of the empire (Duma, 1906). Members of the Autonomist group: the Pole Piotr Massonius (the Minsk province), the Latvian Francis Trasuns (the Vitebsk province), members of Trudovik group: Ukrainians Timofey Lokot (the Chernigov province), Ivan Zabolotny (the Podolsk province) and the Moldavian Fedor Seffer (the Bessarabia province) supported the social equality with assistance of the Russian deputies from liberal and socialist factions. From a tribune of the First Duma the Lithuanian Laurinas Lopas (the Kovno province), the Ukrainian Leonti Shtefanyuk (the Podolsk province), the Belarusian Semyon Kondrashuk (the Grodno province), the Latvian Janis Kreicbergs (the Kurland province), the Kazakh Ahmet Beremzhanov (the Turgai area), the Bashkir Shakhaydar Syrtlanov (the Ufa province) spoke about the close connection between agrarian and national questions. The Polish deputy Jan Stecki (the Lublin province) proved that in Poland the agrarian question "can be correctly resolved only of the local population's free will, i.e. on the resolution of the local legislative assembly" (Duma, 1906). The representatives of most multinational regions such as one of the leaders of the Ukrainian Gromada of Duma Pavel Chizhevsky (the Poltava province), the member of group of the Western borderlands the prince Hieronim Drucki-Lubecki (The Minsk province), the member of the autonomist group Czeslaw Milwid (the Kovno province), the member of the Estonian group as a part of the constitutional and democratic faction Oscar Rutli (Estland province) and others shared this point of view. At the beginning of the activity of the Duma the representative of the Cossack group Timofey Sedelnikov (the Orenburg province) required the democratic reforms and presented the Cossack demands. Discussion at the Duma meeting of the Jewish "pogrom" in Białystok caused a considerable political resonance in the country and abroad. Not only Jewish members of Duma constitutional democrats Maxim Vinaver (St. Petersburg), Mikhail Sheftel (the Ekaterinoslavsk province), Shmarya Levin (the Vileno province), the Trudovik group member Vladimir Yakubson (the Grodno province), and also one of the leaders of constitutional democrats Fedor

Kokoshkin (Moscow) condemned the imperial system of discrimination of Jews and massacre. The speeches of the Chechen Tashtemir Eldarkhanov (the Terek region), the Armenian Hristofor Bagaturov and the Azerbaijani Ismailkhan Ziatkhanov (both from the Elizavetpol province), the Georgian Isidor Ramishvili (the Kutaisi province) indicated the importance of national question. They demonstrated the national conflicts provoked by the authorities in the Caucasus. One of leaders of the Duma Autonomist group (including to 150 deputies) the lawyer Alexander Lednicky, the Pole from the Minsk province, declared that for an appeasement of the country "it is necessary to liberate not only classes, but also the whole nation", and that we waited for "support of our national requirements" from the Russian people (Duma, 1906). The scale, the topicality and the variety of an ethnic question in the empire became evident for members of the Duma as well as for considerable part of society. However, the oppositional First Duma existed only 72 days and was dissolved by the tsar. This fact didn't allow putting through the plans of a reorganization of the national relations in the Russian Empire.

The Second Duma (20.2 – 2.6.1907) included 190 non-Russian deputies and the largest number of national factions: the Polish Koło, group of the Western borderlands, the Muslim faction, the Autonomist group, the Ukrainian Gromada, the Cossack group, the Siberian group. In the Second Duma deputies started again to discuss the ethnic and confessional questions. In 104 days of life of the Second Duma two flows of the bills concerning arrangement of national and regional life of Russia began to confront. The first was the government flow, limited and narrow in terms of its content (9 bills allowed to defuse the controversy over the ethnic and confessional issue). The second opposition stream of the Duma involved the establishment of national and confessional equality, the autonomy for Poland, the abolition of the national languages restrictions in local government, schools, courts, etc. 173 deputies, including members of the Polish Kolo, the Muslim faction, representatives of Baltic, Ukraine, Belarus and the Caucasus signed the oppositional project concerning the cancellation of restrictions on political and civil rights (Duma, 1907). Legislative initiatives of national factions were ignored by both the government and pro-government factions that considered that the solution of ethno-confessional and regional issues will destroy a traditional monarchy and "united and indivisible" Russia. The new Chairman of the Cabinet Stolypin, making the declaration on behalf of "the government resistant and purely Russian" agreed with the need of carrying out the principles of toleration, but emphasized that "the orthodox church as the dominating confession is under special protection from the state" (Duma, 1907). The discussion of government projects on transformation of confessional life of Old Believers and non- orthodox people, was brought in the second Duma, then passed into the following Dumas and didn't end till 1917. The dissolution of the second Duma on June 3, 1907 didn't give a chance to deputies to realize at least part of the available draft decisions of the ethno-confessional question as opposition of the Duma and imperial power ended again in favor of the monarch and the omnipotent executive authorities.

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#### **4. Results and discussion**

The first basic approaches to the declared subject have been realized by us in the early nineties, the subsequent monographs and articles developed an ethno-confessional and regional foreshortening of the Duma history. Our research methods, approaches and conclusions concerning the role of the Duma in the formation of national identity were attracted in several projects, and new results are discussed annually at the international conference "the Taurida Palace Reading" (St.-Petersburg).

#### **5. Conclusion**

The retrospective view of the first Russian constitutional experiment from the ethno-confessional and regional position, allows to note already that the first steps of the Russian parliamentary made out new political geography of the power, gave the chance to representatives of regions and the people of the empire, firstly, for the first time to enter into the electoral imperial representation, secondly, to declare national and regional interests during the election campaign from the Duma tribune legally, thirdly, to form the national and regional political organizations and political elite, fourthly, to promote the growth of political culture of society and development of both national and ethno-regional consciousness, to distribute democratic ideas of parliamentary, national and regional self-consciousness, fifthly, to create a political platform for nation-wide national / international dialogue. The state authority showed the delay and the unwillingness to level the status of non-dominating ethno-confessional and regional communities. On the contrary, in 1907 it changed the electoral law in favor of loyal part of voters of the European Russia. Pursuing an imperial policy under pressure of the state authority, the Third and the Fourth Dumas began to turn from a potential factor of consolidation of the democratic movement of various nations into a real factor of the society separation by the nationality / by the confession.

#### **6. Recommendations**

Some researchers of national problems of the Russian Empire use our research approaches and conclusions regarding a role of the Duma in formation of national identity (Cadiot, 2007; Jurkowski, 2010; Glushkovetsky, 2010). Materials of this article can be of interest of readers, concerned about the ethno-political historical geography, the national, confessional and regional problems in the Russian Empire, the formation and the development of the Duma model of parliamentary, the formation of the national identity, and the characteristics of political culture of the people of the Russian Empire.



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