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Soviet Power and Natural Scientific Societies in the 1920s: Forms and Phases of the Interaction

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Scientific societies have traditionally played a very important role in the academic community. They contributed to the formation of civil society in Russia, determined the self-identification of young scientists and scholars, and were also particularly important as a platform for the presentation of new scientific information. The aim of this article is to discuss the place and role of natural scientific societies in the system of science organizations and their relations with Soviet power in the 1920s. The study is based on a variety of sources, primarily archival materials of natural scientific societies and governmental bodies that are stored in the State Archive of the Russian Federation, St. Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Central State Archive of St. Petersburg, etc. The article focuses on the legislative and regulatory framework for relations between Soviet power and natural scientific societies, the forms of control over their activities, and governmental support for their work. In general, the relationship between the Soviet authorities and natural scientific societies in the 1920s can be described as contradictory. On the one hand, the regime considered the work of natural scientific societies useful and supported it. In the system of scientific societies, natural scientific organizations occupied leading positions. The new regime intended to utilize the skills of natural scientists. On the other hand, the state's control over their functioning was tightening throughout the 1920s. In the late 1920s/early 1930s, the political changes in the country resulted in total control over scientific and public spheres.

Keywords: scientific societies, science and power, public organizations, social history of Russian science, the system of science organization.

Introduction

A number of books and papers addressed the history of the initial period of Soviet science. Since the Academy of Sciences has traditionally dominated Russian and Soviet science, encompassing all fields of knowledge, the history of its fate under the first decades

of the Bolsheviks regime is virtually general history of early Soviet science for most historians (Graham, 1967; Vucinich, 1984; Levin, 1988; Esakov, 1971; Belyaev, 1982; Perchenok, 1991). However, several studies devoted to some other scientific organizations such as scientific-research institute, an innovation adopted in the 1920s (Graham, 1975; Josephson, 1991) and universities (Kupaigorodskaya, 1984; Krivonozhenko, 2012; Kail', 2013). In contrast, the history of scientific societies and their struggle for a place in the new system of science organizations is a field of study that is underdeveloped. It may be explained by the fact that scientific societies were a specific form of science organizations, occupied an ambiguous position in the system of scientific institutions, since these associations, at the same time, were also specific public organizations of scientists. This duality has meant that societies have not been typical subjects of study for historians of science or for historians of Soviet voluntary associations.

Scientific societies have been passingly discussed in a few monographs and articles (Fitzpatrick, 1970; Kupaigorodskaya, Lebina, 1989; Read, 1990; Kurepin, 2003), although there are only a few special studies on scientific societies in the first period of Soviet Russia history (Swanson, 1968; Bradley, 2016; Krivosheina, 2019), apart from my own papers on scientific societies and their relations with Soviet power in the 1920s (Sinelnikova, 2015, 2016, 2019). Still, it seems fair to say that scientific societies need to be further researched.

The aim of this article is to discuss the place and importance of natural scientific societies in the system of science organizations and their relations with Soviet power in the 1920s.

Natural Scientific Societies before the October Revolution

Scientific societies have traditionally played a very important role in the academic community. They contributed to the formation of civil society in Russia, determined the self-identity of young scientists and scholars, and were also particularly important as a platform for the presentation of new scientific information. The first natural scientific society in Russia, the St. Petersburg Mineralogical Society, was founded in 1817. Such scientific organizations were actively created in the first half of the 19th century, and from the 1860s they began to hold All-Russian Congresses of Naturalists and Physicians.

The largest of natural scientific societies, such as the Moscow Society of Naturalists, the Imperial St. Petersburg Society of Naturalists, the Novorossiysk Society of Naturalists, existed at universities, and the main source of their budgets, especially in the province, remained subsidies from the central and local authorities. Financial support has always been received for specific projects: conducting expeditions, organizing museums, studying local flora and fauna, soil analysis, searching for deposits, etc.

With the outbreak of the First World War, natural scientific societies had to greatly reduce their activities, primarily publishing and expeditions. It especially affected the societies that located in the combat zone or in the front-line provinces.

Despite the war, the process of science institutionalization continued. New scientific societies were also formed, primarily in Petrograd, as the capital of the Russian Empire was called from 1914. In particular, at the end of 1915, the Russian Botanical Society was created "for the purpose of the scientific association of Russian botanists"[1]. On February 9, 1916,

[1] *Gosudarstvennyĭ arkhiv Rossiiskoĭ Federatsii* [State Archive of Russian Federation] (GARF). F. 2306. Op. 2. D. 140. L. 2.; *Sankt-Peterburgskiĭ Filial Arkhiva Rossiĭskoĭ Akademii nauk* [St. Petersburg

the charter of the Russian Paleontological Society, consisting of geologists, paleontologists, zoologists and botanists, was registered.

After the February Revolution, scientific societies quickly admitted a new power, and even managed to get assurances of funding for their work from the Provisional Government. For instance, The Russian Paleontological Society was promised a subsidy of 5,000 rubles per year[2].

Despite all the financial support, one of the most characteristic and sad trends in the post-revolutionary life of scientific societies was a significant reduction in the number of organizations and the number of their members. The situation in the capital was especially desperate. The fact is that many scientists left hungry Petrograd for provincial cities, others perished in the midst of the revolutionary struggle, as well as due to hunger and disease.

The number of members of scientific societies of all-Russian scale was still significant. The most numerous of the natural scientific societies in 1917 were the Russian Geographical Society, which had 1,446 members. In other natural scientific societies of Petrograd there were also several hundred people: the Russian Physicochemical Society — 480, the Russian Society of Natural Science Amateurs[3] — 401, the Russian Mineralogical Society included from 408 to 481 people during 1917, the Society of Naturalists at Petrograd University — 456, Russian Astronomical Society — 307[4].

According to the Commission on Scientific Institutions and Organizations under the Ministry of Public Enlightenment, created in April 1917 by the Provisional Government, at that time 122 scientific societies were functioning in Russia. Natural scientific societies made up nearly 29 percent of this number. Besides, the Commission decided to organize a congress of representatives of scientific societies and institutions in Moscow. The representatives of scientific societies of Petrograd, Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, Kazan, Kharkov, Rostov-on-Don, and Yekaterinburg were supposed to become participants of the congress. It is noteworthy to mention that almost half of 34 invited scientific societies were natural scientific ones. This indicates the great importance of natural scientific societies in the system of scientific organizations. However, the congress was not held. A brief "springtime" of 1917 ended after the October Revolution. Scientific societies now had to establish relations with the new Soviet power.

Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences] (SPbF ARAN). F. 125. Op. 2. D. 65. L. 45.

[2] Obyknovennoe zasedanie 21-go dekabria 1917 g. v pomeshchenii Geologicheskogo Komiteta [Ordinary meeting on December 21, 1917 in the premises of the Geological Committee], *Ezhegodnik Russkogo paleontologicheskogo obshchestva* [Yearbook of the Russian Paleontological Society] (Vol. II. pp. 135), Petrograd, 1918.

[3] *Russkoe obshchestvo liubiteleĭ mirovedeniia* in Russian. The term "mirovedenie" has not analogies in English. The society was engaged with natural sciences and mathematical knowledge, carried out different kind of observations.

[4] *Tsentral'nyĭ gosudarstvennyĭ arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga* [Central State Archives of St. Petersburg] (TsGA SPb). F. 2555. Op. 1. D. 272. L. 22, 29, 40, 49, 60, 74, 96, 120, 125, 133, 136, 140.

The Beginning of Cooperation with the Bolshevik Regime

Science in Russia has always considered by scientists and government officials to be close to politics. Indeed, according to Loren Graham, "the effects of science are often political, its philosophy may have political implications, its promotion is usually political, and it is, in turn, frequently affected by politics, but the practice of science is divisible from the practice of politics" (Graham, 1967, p. 193–194).

After the October Revolution the new Bolshevik government adopted a very positive attitude toward science but retained the view that science and politics are intertwined. But the influence of politics on science can be harmful as well as beneficial.

Scientific societies agreed to cooperate with the new political authority willingly, in contrast to the Academy of Sciences. Most scientific societies submitted their prerevolutionary charters for registration to the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (the NKVD) and the People's Commissariat of Public Enlightenment (Narkompros). But some societies (e.g., the Russian Society of Natural Science Amateurs) made adjustments to their charters "in accordance with the current situation"[5].

Before the October Revolution all scientific societies possessed a small amount of capital, which, by law, they were obliged to keep in the form of interest-bearing securities as "government" and "guaranteed by the city council and zemstvo[6] credit" institutions (Plato, 1903, p. 5). At the time of the revolution, for example, the Russian Society of Natural Science Amateurs had its money in both the State Savings Bank and in the Society of Mutual Credit of The Petrograd District Zemstvo. The All-Russian Central Executive Committee Decree "On the Nationalization of Banks"[7] was adopted at a meeting on December 27, 1917, and the supplemental decree of the Council of the People's Commissars "On Former Private Banks Joint-Stock Capital Confiscation"[8], published on February 8, 1918, deprived societies of their capital. Membership dues could not be paid regularly and, in any event, they were not enough to cover the expenses of organizations.

As a result, the state became the only funding source for scientific societies in the new political and economic conditions. They received subsidies from Narkompros to rent meeting halls, pay for light and heat, and publish some their member's papers and reward a few employees. However, financial support was differentiated. The authorities were subsidized only those scientific societies in whose activities they were interested. It depended on the study field of a particular scientific society, since the technical and natural sciences were in the foreground. The significance of them was especially great for the socialist reorganization of the national economy and the state defense.

For example, in November 1918, the Scientific Department in Petrograd reported to Narkompros regarding the allocations for the first half of 1919 that "the motives presented by the society seem, in the opinion of the department, to be sound and therefore the department asks to issue

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[5] TsGA SPb. F. 2555. Op. 1. D. 184. L. 28.

[6] Zemstvos (zemstvo institutions) were elected bodies of self-government (zemstvo meetings, zemstvo councils) in the Russian Empire at the local and provincial level. They were created by the Zemstvo Reform in 1864.

[7] *Sobranie uzakonenii I rasporiazheniĭ rabochego i krest'ianskogo provitel'stva RSFSFR* [Collection of Laws and Decrees of the Workers and Peasants Government of the RSFSR] (here SU). No. 10 (1917). Art. 150.

[8] SU. No. 19 (1918). Art. 295.

the requested 3,000 rubles to the Paleontological Society"[9]. In the second half of 1919, the estimate of the Society of Naturalists at Petrograd University did not cause "any objections from the Scientific Department"[10]. The same society was denied funding for an auxiliary institution — the Murmansk Biological Station, "due to the finding ... [of it] in the hands of the imperialists"[11] during the foreign intervention.

Medical scientific societies, as well as technical and natural scientific societies, did not raise doubts among the authorities about funding. On the contrary, humanitarian societies had a harder time than others, as they had to prove their right to subsidies.

It should be noted that all the work of scientists in societies was voluntary and free of charge. Only a few people received salaries (most often librarians, messengers, clerks or secretaries), as a rule, the staff of paid employees of one scientific society did not exceed three people.

Of course, under the conditions of the Civil War, the activities of scientific societies could not be carried out on the same scale. The most accessible forms of work were public lectures and presenting papers on societies meetings. At the same time, some societies managed to continue the work of laboratories and biological stations, and even equip expeditions. As a rule, those expeditions covered the surrounding areas. All that work was also carried out with state support. The Russian Botanical Society, for example, in April 1919 received an appropriation for botanical and geographical research of the North of Russia and the Petrograd province[12].

After the October Revolution scientific societies had to make changes in their activities to correspond to the main directions of the Bolshevik scientific policy. In January 1918 the Division for the Mobilization of Scientific Forces for the Peasant and Workers Service in Russia was formed in Narkompros. The Division prepared "Memorandum for the Mobilizing Science Project for the State Construction Needs" — a document transmitted by L.G. Shapiro to the Academy of Sciences Permanent Secretary S.F. Oldenburg at the end of January 1918. The essence of the Bolsheviks' scientific policy was proximity to the problems of production, collective forms of research, priority of applied science, and state centralization of scientific work. In this connection, scientific societies began with establishment of some new divisions — for example, the Applied Entomology Division appeared at the Russian Entomological Society,[13] the Committee of the North, chaired by Y.M. Shokal'sky, was created at the Russian Geographical Society (Agafonov, 1995, p. 183). The applied nature was common for those structures.

Scientific societies communicated to other scientific institutions through these applied divisions. For example, the Meeting on the Study of the North was held at the Russian Geographical Society on May 16–24, 1920. Among the participating scientific institutions were the Russian Mineralogical Society, the Russian Geographical Society, and the Society of Naturalists at Petrograd University, along with the Russian Academy of Sciences Permanent Polar Commission, the Zoological Museum of the Academy of Sciences and

[9] TsGA SPb. F. 2555. Op. 1. D. 64. L. 3.

[10] TsGA SPb. F. 2555. Op. 1. D. 63. L. 4.

[11] Ibid. P. 6.

[12] TsGA SPb. F. 2555. Op. 1. D. 186. L. 8.

[13] TsGA SPb. F. 2555. Op. 1. D. 180. L. 60 ob.

the Hydrological Institute[14]. Thus, scientific societies were recognized as an actual part of the system of science organization.

Natural Scientific Societies and the NEP

The transition to the New Economic Policy (NEP) in Soviet Russian began after the official end of the Civil War. According to the Russian historian L.G. Berlyavsky, "NEP foreshadowed the flowering of such a traditionally least bureaucratic element of the science system as scientific societies" (Berlyavsky, 1996, p. 18). But for the scientific societies themselves, it was not so obvious, because in 1921–1922 they were heavily criticized: "Organizations of private societies, and even more so of societies whose personnel have positions that are definitely class hostile to the proletariat, should not be allowed under any circumstances"[15]; "The October Revolution took place. What have the so-called lights of science done? Some of them fled abroad, and some locked themselves up, as in bastions, within the walls of their scientists and scientific institutions and societies"[16]. Indeed, under the conditions of the financial and economic crisis, the situation was uncertain and NEP seemed to most scientific societies "threatening", as "the question of money was in the full sense open"[17]. Many scientific societies previously receiving subsidies were removed from government procurement at the beginning of 1922. They began to apply to Narkompros with a request to return the subsidies. For example, the Petrograd Society of Naturalists tried to return not only its subsidies but even its own capital, confiscated in 1918. However, "petition to Moscow to return the capital of society has not yet met with sympathy"[18]. At the end of 1922 the society, due to its "serious significance for the state", was accepted by Narkompros, as an exception, for financial support[19].

Archival data show that most scientific societies, deprived of state funding, from the middle of 1922, began to receive regular subsidies. In general, from July 1, 1922, 10 scientific societies of Petrograd were included in the number of subsidized ones (the Russian Archaeological Society, the Russian Botanical Society, the Petrograd Society of Naturalists, the Society of Ancient Writing Amateurs, the Russian Society of Natural Science Amateurs, the Scientific Society of Marxists, the Russian Mineralogical Society, the Russian Paleontological Society, the Petrograd Society of Physiologists, the Russian Entomological Society)[20]. Perhaps this was a consequence of the greater interest of the authorities in their activities in comparison with other societies. It is also impossible to exclude the influence of personal ties between leaders and activists of societies with representatives of state and party bodies.

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[14] GARF. F. 2306. Op. 19. D. 174. L. 184 ob.

[15] Dokladnaia zapiska SO VCHK v sekretno-operativnoe upravlenie VCHK ob obshchestvennykh organizatsiiakh pri Narkomatakh i drugikh tsentral'nykh uchrezhdeniiakh RSFSR (16 dekabria 1921 g.) [Report of the SB VCHK to the secret-operational management of the VCHK on public organizations at the People's Commissars and other central institutions of the RSFSR (December 16, 1921)], published in (Ochistim Rossiiu nadolgo..., 2008, p. 22).

[16] *Pravda*. 1922. 1 September. P. 1.

[17] TsGA SPb. F. 2555. Op. 1. D. 545. L. 23 a.

[18] Ibid. D. 546. L. 5.

[19] Ibid. D. 357. L. 13.

[20] Ibid. D. 418. L. 39.

In general, the monthly state subsidy of scientific societies consisted of money for the payment of staff positions and separate appropriations for operating expenses, and the sum of these receipts, for example, from the Russian Society of the Russian Society of Natural Science Amateurs in 1923 amounted to 75% of the total budget of the society, membership fees — 12 %, income from the sale of publications — 10%, the remaining 3% — donations from individuals[21]. The monthly state subsidy to the Russian Mineralogical Society in 1924 was 30 rubles[22], and the Russian Paleontological Society in the same year received 15 rubles a month[23], as did the Russian Entomological Society[24].

In 1923 already 12 scientific societies of Petrograd "enjoyed the subsidy of Narkompros"[25], and these societies had "worldwide importance"[26].

State financial support for scientific societies was enshrined at the legislative level in 1925. On February 17, 1925 the RSFSR Council of People's Commissars Decree approved a list of scientific, scholarly-art, museum and nature protection institutions and societies that were under the jurisdiction of the Main Directorate of Scientific, Artistic and Museum Institutions (Glavnauka) of Narkompros and dependent on the state budget. There were nine Leningrad and six Moscow scientific societies as well as 25 provincial scientific societies and 12 offices of the Russian Geographical Society[27]. The word "state" was added in the title of six Leningrad scientific societies. Thus, the authorities additionally emphasized their importance for the country. There were the Russian Paleontological Society, the Russian Botanical Society and the four oldest scientific societies: the Russian Mineralogical Society (organized in 1817), the Russian Geographic Society (1845), the Russian Entomological Society (1859) and the Russian Physicochemical Society (1878). The other three societies from the list were the Leningrad Society of Naturalists, the Russian Society of Nature Science Amateurs, and the Scientific Society of Marxists. Except the latter all societies were natural scientific organizations. Also from six Moscow societies in that list four also were natural scientific societies: the Moscow Society of Naturalists, the Association of Physicists, the Moscow Protistological Society, the Society of Natural Science, Anthropology and Ethnography Amateurs at Moscow University. That testified to the special interest of Soviet power in certain scientific fields. They were also fully funded by the state and were under the ideological and administrative supervision of Glavnauka.

Scientific societies from that list received guarantees of funding and support. Determination of the status of scientific societies played a significant role in their relationship with the authorities in the first post-revolutionary decade.

[21] Ibid. D. 720. L. 41, 67 ob.

[22] Ibid. D. 722. L. 16.

[23] Ibid. D. 719. L. 13.

[24] Ibid. D. 727. L. 7.

[25] Ibid. D. 625. L. 32.

[26] Ibid. D. 667. L. 41.

[27] SU. No. 14 (1925). Art. 95.

Natural Scientific Societies and Re-registration Campaign

After the end of the Civil War, both local and central authorities turned their attention to the situation with public organizations. Despite the fact that in the first years after the revolution a number of Soviet decrees were issued, it was still necessary to create a comprehensive legislation on public organizations.

The decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR "On the procedure for approving and registering societies and unions that do not pursue the goal of making a profit, and the procedure for supervising them"[28], adopted on August 3, 1922, solved the task. The decree was important for the development of public organizations, since it formalized the foundations of their relationship with the Soviet government bodies.

The mass re-registration of scientific societies began after the decree publication: scientific societies submitted documents to the NKVD or to the Administrative Department of Provincial Executive Committee, and a copy of the charter was also sent to the local body of the Narkompros and Glavnauka in Moscow. So, the Petrograd Society of Naturalists on January 17, 1923 was registered by Gybispolkom[29].

The re-registration process of all-Russian societies assumed many difficulties as they had to register directly in the NKVD since it took much longer to receive a response from the center than from local authorities. The registration process was often complicated and delayed by the outdated charters of scientific societies, which they submitted to the authorities. The Russian Society of Natural Science Amateurs on September 7, 1922, submitted an application and all documents for re-registration in the NKVD, but received no response. Only on June 4, 1923, the society received a notification from the NKVD that "the independent work of the society is recognized as inexpedient, and it is invited to join one of the existing scientific societies, without specifying which one"[30]. The society turned to the Glavnauka with a request for support in continuing its registration as an independent one, as well as the chairman of the society, famous revolutionary N.A. Morozov personally applied to the NKVD. As a result, the decision was canceled, "after which the society was asked to revise its charter in accordance with the Normal Charter"[31]. Thus, the interaction between the authorities and this natural scientific society developed in several spheres at once: administrative and personal.

Indeed, the "Normal Charter of Scientific, Literary and Art Societies, Managed by Glavnauka of Narkompros", published on July 15, 1923[32] was undoubtedly aimed at expanding the social membership of scientific societies, which were obliged to revise their charters within three months in accordance to the Normal Charter. Scientific societies had to start the process of re-registration again with new charters.

Although a few months were given for re-registration and process was often delayed, failure to comply with the deadlines led to different consequences. The Russian Society of Natural Science Amateurs began to re-register in 1922. Its revised charter was submitted to the NKVD on August 4, 1923. Despite the fact that even in March 1924 the society was still

[28] SU. No. 49 (1922). Art. 622.

[29] TsGA SPb. F. 2555. Op. 1. D. 627. L. 13.

[30] Ibid. D. 539. L. 42.

[31] Ibid. L. 76.

[32] The NKVD Bulletin. No. 12 (1923). Art. 158.

not re-registered, its scientific work continued, as it received regularly government subsidies for the publication of its journal "Mirovedenie"[33].

In was noted in the Russian Geographical Society annual report of 1923 that the society registration, which began in 1922, "was delayed in connection with the development of a normal charter"[34]. In that situation the Russian Geographical Society appealed to the Petrograd Department of Scientific Institutions with a request "to assist in accelerating the registration of the charter"[35]. At the same time this request was also addressed to Glavnauka. The following answer was received from Moscow at the end of October 1923: "from direct negotiations with the chairman of the NKVD Administrative Department it turned out that the revised charter of the Russian Geographical Society had been reviewed and approved by the Department of Scientific Institutions of the NKVD"[36]. The charter of the Russian Geographical Society was eventually registered on November 9, 1923[37].

The Russian Mineralogical Society pre-revolutionary charter was revised in accordance with the Normal one in the summer of 1923, and in September sent for registration[38]. At the beginning of 1924, still not receiving an answer, the society, represented by senior geologist of the Geological Committee D.V. Sokolov, contacted the Department of the Central Administrative Department of the NKVD. The assistant to the head of this authority body said that the approval of the society charter was postponed. D.V. Sokolov noted that "the Russian Mineralogical Society is a scientific society approved by the Glavnauka". But the assistant objected that "now every society should bring practical benefits to the country, and if a society deals only with scientific casuistry, then it is not needed"[39]. This seemed to reflect the Bolsheviks view on soviet science in general. On November 30, 1924, the Mineralogical society applied to the Leningrad Department of Glavnauka (LOG) for assistance in the prompt approval of the charter and registration[40]. In 1925 the society wrote in its annual report that "if from the fall of 1923 to the fall of 1924 fundamental disputes were concentrated around this charter, as well as around other similar charters, then over the past year the whole matter was apparently completely has died out, and society has no information about his position"[41]. Indeed, despite the fact that the Russian Mineralogical Society did not abandon its attempts to register the updated charter, making appropriate amendments to it, the society did not succeed in re-registering its new charter. But the existence of society was not prohibited by the authorities and it was even subsidies by the state. Meanwhile, the society continued to function until 1929 on the basis of its charter, approved back in 1920[42].

A similar situation has developed with one of the oldest natural scientific societies — the Russian Botanical Society — began its re-registration on the basis of the new charter

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[33] TsGA SPb. F. 2555. Op. 1. D. 720. L. 8.

[34] Ibid. D. 625. L. 135.

[35] Ibid. L.157 ob.

[36] Ibid. L. 166.

[37] Ibid. L. 168, 196, 197.

[38] Ibid. D. 722. L. 20.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid. L. 22.

[41] Ibid. D. 791. L. 26 ob.

[42] TsGA SPb. F. 2556. Op. 3. D. 93. L. 217 ob.

on September 17, 1923. However, even after two years it was still not re-registered[43], but continued to receive a state subsidy, as already mentioned, it was included in the number of "state" scientific societies in 1925.

Contrary to the Russian Mineralogical Society and the Russian Botanical Society re-registration experiences, the Russian Paleontological Society was under threat of closure due to impossibility of re-registration in the allotted time. The process of re-registration began with the new society charter submission to the LOG on October 9, 1923. It was sent to the NKVD on December 14. The charter was returned for revision, and after that, the revised charter was ones again sent to the Glavnauka and the NKVD[44]. But on June 19, 1924, a notification was received from the Administrative Department of the Provincial Executive Committe that, due to the non-approval of the charter by the NKVD, society "must be closed after three days"[45]. The Russian Paleontological Society believed that on its part all the registration formalities had been complied and the charter could have been detained by the NKVD. The society appealed to the LOG on June 24, 1924 for help in solving this problem[46]. The LOG, in turn, appealing to the Provincial Executive Committe, asked not to liquidate the society until the notification from the NKVD[47]. As a result, the Russian Paleontological Society charter was approved on July 18, 1924[48].

Despite the difficulties of re-registration, the number of natural scientific societies grew steadily. For example, there were 12 natural scientific societies in Petrograd in 1922. But in 1926 there were already 13 of them. In 1930 there were 14 natural scientific societies. Thus, these societies, on average, accounted for more than 26 percent of the total number of scientific societies in Petrograd-Leningrad during the 1920s.

The studied material shows that re-registration for all types of scientific societies was difficult and lengthy, which was enhanced by the bureaucratization of the activities of the Glavanuka and the NKVD. Most of the societies liquidated during the campaign were humanitarian. This is another confirmation that the authorities supported primarily the natural science, technical and medical societies. Thus, the re-registration campaign was indicative, since the differentiated attitude of the authorities towards scientific societies was expressed in the permission or prohibition of registration.

Government Control over Scientific Societies

The scale of governmental control over scientific societies activities gradually increased during the 1920s.

The historian A.A. Kurepin correctly remarked that "one of the forms of bureaucratic management of science and political control over scientific and scientific-pedagogical workers was their quantitative and qualitative accounting control" (Kurepin, 2003, p. 44). That certainly was accurate regarding scientific societies. Since the early 1920s, the authorities required submission of

[43] TsGA SPb. F. 2555. Op. 1. D. 795. L. 2.

[44] Ibid. D. 723. L. 9.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid. L. 10.

[48] Ibid. L.15.

various questionnaires by all societies' members. The authorities were especially interested in the presence of party members in such associations, as including party members in scientific societies may be regarded as a way for the regime to control membership.

One of the most detailed questionnaires was sent by the NKVD to scientific reviews in 1925. In a short time, scientific societies were required to provide information on their executive bodies, founders and members according to the following form: 1) surname, first name, patronymic; 2) age; 3) residence; 4) occupation and place of work; 5) social situation prior to 1917 and social origin; 6) political convictions and membership; 7) occupation and place of work (under tsarism, during the period from February to October 1917, and from October to the present); 8) criminal convictions. In addition, it was necessary to report statistics "on numerical changes in membership for six-months periods, indicating the proportion of workers, employees, intellectuals, etc."[49]. If a society evaded these orders or failed to provide the required information by the deadline, the associations' officers were subjected to administrative punishment. If the requirement was not being followed again, societies would be a subject to closure[50].

It was hardly feasible for large societies with a large number of members. For example, the Russian Society of Natural Science Amateurs consisted of 639 members; of 540 members of the Russian Geographic Society, only resided in Leningrad, while the rest lived in other cities — Barnaul, Chita, Irkutsk, Khabarovsk, Krasnoyarsk, Omsk, Semipalatinsk, Vladivostok, etc.[51]

The main difficulties for scientific societies were lack of an "administrative recourses that could fulfill this task" and "in the absence of the necessary funds for this, scientific societies have been already carrying out great accountability"[52].

Despite the deadline was postponed several times, only a few scientific societies were able to provide the necessary information. The Russian Astronomical Society on March 8, 1926, sent a summary table with personal data. However, data were presented of only 122 members, 55.45% of the society's total members[53]. After two weeks the Russian Paleontological Society reported data on 53 members (34.42%)[54].The Russian Mineralogical Society was able to gather information on only 28 members (9%),[55] and even these were submitted a month after the deadline. There were no Communist Party members in the Russian Paleontological and Mineralogical Societies, and all their members were classified according the social position as intellectuals[56]. In the Russian Astronomical Society there were also no party members. The society included 5 workers, 15 peasants, 7 military, 19 intellectuals, 19 townspeople, 4 clergymen[57] by social origin, and 21 servicemen, 95 employees by occupation[58].

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[49] TsGA SPb. F. 2555. Op. 1. D. 973. L. 67.

[50] Ibid. L. 67–67 ob.

[51] TsGA SPb. F. 2555. Op. 1. D. 1080. L. 7.

[52] Ibid. L. 65 ob.

[53] TsGA SPb. F. 1001. Op. 6. D. 283. L. 88–89.

[54] Ibid. D. 24a. L. 77–83.

[55] Ibid. D. 24d. L. 17–18.

[56] Ibid. D. 24a. L. 82 ob; D. 24d. L. 18.

[57] Ibid. D. 283. L. 99 ob.

[58] Ibid.

Even so, after the mid-1920s ehe presence of the party members in the societies have particularly attracted the attention of the Soviet authorities. Many societies had one- or two-party members but most of them had none, but they regularly had to report about it to the authorities. In the second half of the 1920s with rare exceptions, there were no more than 2% of Party and Komsomol members, and there were no Party members in the majority of scientific societies.

The objects of close authorities' attention were not only numeral and social composition of scientific societies, but also all types of their activities. It was shown by the increasingly complex and more frequent reporting, formalization has been consistently intensified. Throughout the 1920s control over scientific societies was carried out by three departments: the Narkompros, the NKVD and the People's Commissariat of Finance or their local authorities. Scientific societies activities were controlled in various forms: minutes of all meetings and sessions, as well as lists of officials, were delivered to the authorities, the directions of activity were monitored through regular reporting, including on the expenditure of estimated appropriations.

Since the mid-1920s in addition to the annual report, scientific societies were required to submit reports on their activities every quarter. This could not but cause indignation in scientific societies, since they were public organizations and did not have the necessary administrative staff to carry out such work. The speech of V.A. Kazitsyn, the Russian Nature Amateurs Society Secretary must have been presented on April 1, 1926 at the scientific institutions subordinate to LOG directors meeting. Its abstract was sent to LOG, and, as a result, it did not take place at the meeting. The Kazitsyn's speech title was: "On the Scientific Societies Reporting Forms to Administrative Oversight Bodies, Scientific-Administrative and Financial-Control Institutions". He noted that "scientific societies according to their charter, approved by the NKVD, are private associations, not state institutes", it was further emphasized that "bureaucracy and formalism should be excluded from the work of scientific organizations, as far as possible"[59]. V.A. Kazitsyn said that reporting to the NKVD was especially burdensome, since some requirements were completely impracticable, technically inconvenient. Particularly harsh criticism in the paper was subjected to reporting to financial control authorities, which caused the need for accounting, correspondence, and required special paid workers, "which is hardly rational with relatively low cash turnover"[60]. The conclusions of the speech outlined the ways to simplify the reporting that Kazitsyn proposed to the NKVD and Glavnauka. In particular, to shorten the annual reports, as well as to allow societies to freely dispose of subsidies, but, if possible, without reducing the amount of financial support[61].

Thus, scientific societies were functioning on the basis of new legislative norms of 1922, which were strongly corrected by the real practice of relations between the authorities and societies. The controlling function of power in various forms manifested itself more and more clearly. According the historian L.G. Berlyavsky, "the legislation provided that the management of societies should be built on the basis of their initiative. However, in practice, their real independence was limited to interference in the internal affairs of societies by the authorities, not provided for by Soviet legislation and societies' charters" (Berlyavsky, 2003, p. 267).

[59] TsGA SPb. F. 2555. Op. 1. D. 1001. L. 49.

[60] Ibid. L. 49 ob.

[61] Ibid.

Natural Scientific Societies at the turn of the 1920s–1930s

In the end of the 1920s for the authorities, the need to consolidate new requirements for charter documents and activities of public organizations became obvious. The All-Russia Central Executive Committee and the RSFSR Council of People's Commissars issued "the Regulation on Societies and Associations" on February 6, 1928[62]. There were also published the new "Model charters of scientific, literary and artistic, scientific and technical, etc. companies that have branch offices and do not have them"[63] on August 1, 1928. Scientific societies must to function on the basis of charters agreed with one of them. In general, the new regulation and model charters recorded many practices established by the end of the first post-revolutionary decade in the relations between the authorities and scientific societies: the expansion of the supervisory function of the authorities, detailed regulation of the internal life of societies, and the formalization of their activities.

The re-registration of existing societies began in connection with the new legislation, like the previous one in the early 1920s, proceeded very slowly. The Russian Paleontological Society report for 1929 stated that "despite the long period of time that has elapsed since the start of the campaign to re-register the charters of societies [...] we have not yet received official approval of our charter in one form or another"[64]. Interesting, in contrast to the re-registration of the early 1920s scientific societies did not pay so much attention to this issue in correspondence with the governmental body. It can be assumed that, based on their previous experience, they did not hope that the authorities would strictly observe the time limit for considering their charters and other materials, therefore, the preparation of documents for re-registration and everything related to it did not cause the excitement and haste.

In 1929, Stalin's "the Year of the Great Break", a full-scale reorganization both of the entire system of science and of public organizations began. Scientific societies were fully involved in that processes. At the regional level the re-registration campaign was accompanied by examination of their activities from the spring of 1929 to the summer of 1930, eleven Leningrad societies of all scientific fields were subjected to investigation. Among them were 5 natural scientific societies: the Russian Astronomical Society, the Russian Botanical Society, the Russian Entomological Society, the Russian Geographical Society, and the Society of Naturalists at Leningrad State University. Thus, almost half of the surveyed societies were natural scientific ones.

Investigation conclusions on the Russian Mineralogical Society said that "in order to convey a general methodological materialistic attitude, as well as individual groups of Marxist geologists, sections of Marxist geologists should be organize from members of the society and work under the leadership and in contact with the Communist Academy"[65]. The investigation commission recommended to the Russian Geographical Society to increase its members composition by "the adequate number of young workers with a modern ideological attitude"[66]. A similar recommendation was received by the Russian Botanical Society, with the specification that "it is necessary to open

[62] SU. No. 22 (1928). Art. 157.

[63] The NKVD Bulletin. No. 27 (1928). Art. 247.

[64] Otchet o deiatel'nosti Russkogo paleontologicheskogo obshchestva za 1929 g. [Report on the activities of the Russian Paleontological Society for 1929], *Ezhegodnik Russkogo paleontologicheskogo obshchestva* [Yearbook of the Russian Paleontological Society]. (1931). (Vol. IX, pp. 181), Leningrad.

[65] TsGA SPb. F. 2556. Op. 3. D. 93. L. 219.

[66] TsGA SPb. F. 2556. Op. 3. D. 93. L. 203.

access to the society membership for everyone interested in botany"[67]. The Russian Astronomical Society was asked "to intensify its educational work not only in the area of anti-religious, but also in the area of popularizing publishing activities"[68]. In the opinion of the commission, the Russian Society of Natural Science Amateurs was to "more closely link the work of the society with the economic tasks of Soviet construction and five-year plans"[69].

In a generalized form, the conclusions of the investigations were submitted to Glavnauka. All the societies investigated were accused of the absence of the CPSU members and of the insufficient involvement of the masses and young scientists in the societies' structure. It was decided that societies had to become mass organizations, to link their work to the Red Corners, reading houses and simultaneously to economic and trade union organizations[70].

According to the decision of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the RSFSR Council of People's Commissars, the re-registration of public organizations was extended until March 1, 1930[71]. The result was a reduction in the number of associations throughout the country. Many scientific societies were closed for being unable to pass the re-registration.

"The Regulation on Voluntary Societies and Associations", approved by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the RSFSR the Council of People's Commissars on August 30, 1930[72], a few months after the re-registration had been completed, was the logical continuation. Soviet power used the 1930 Regulation as an instrument to adjust the public sphere. The Regulation differed fundamentally from all previous Soviet documents, which, after its publication, were nullified. The Regulation had a clearly expressed ideological character and raised the supervision of the activities of public organization to a new level.

On the whole, the 1930 Regulation was aimed at reorganizing the system of public associations. The societies' activities became mass activities by "presenting the reports of these associations to broad assemblies of workers, peasants, farmers' collectives, by examining their activities by workers' brigades, and by establishing the patronage of individual enterprises over societies"[73].

"The Voluntary Societies Model Charters" were also approved. The goal of any society was declared to be "active participation in socialist construction of the USSR as well as assistance in strengthening the state defense"[74]. The authorities' representatives were admitted into the societies' councils, which was a fundamentally new feature in the charters. This meant the total elimination of independence and the introduction of all-inclusive control over the activities of public organizations from within.

Another re-registration began after the new Regulation and the Model Charters were published. In Leningrad, the re-registration was accompanied by a "public review of scientific societies", which took place in early November 1930. Sixty-one people were involved in this investigation and, for the first time, the primary party organizations of factories and plants

[67] Ibid. L. 172 ob.

[68] Ibid. L. 122.

[69] Ibid. D. 92. L. 211.

[70] Ibid. D. 93. L. 248 ob.

[71] SU. No. 7 (1930). Art. 89.

[72] SU. No. 44 (1930). Art. 527.

[73] Ibid.

[74] The NKVD Bulletin. No. 36a (1930). Art. 531.

were involved in that work. The investigation was completed by the beginning of December 1930[75].

In the conclusions it was said that, "societies unite the scientists of pre-revolutionary training from the nobility, the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia" while "the Party-Komsomol element is absent". It was also noted that "societies have not taken measures to attract proletarian students to their ranks, instead passively working behind closed doors"[76].

In the "Proposals on the basis the 1930 Investigations", scientific societies were deemed expedient as they could conduct important scientific research. But entire societies had to be reorganized and their activities had to be completely subordinated to the tasks of socialist construction. To fulfill the tasks set by the CPSU, societies were divided into groups according to their scientific field and were attached to the relevant state institutions: the biological group of societies (the Leningrad Society of Naturalists, the Russian Biological Society, The Russian Botanical Societies, The Russian Entomological Society) shall be united in associations of voluntary societies and attached to Leningrad State University; Attach the Russian Mineralogical Society and the Russian Paleontological Society to Leningrad Geological Research Institute and create a geological association; the Russian Astronomical Society and the Russian Society for Natural Science Amateurs merge and attach to Leningrad State University[77].

The short but extremely active period of Soviet rule making on public organizations ended with the "the Law on Voluntary Associations and Unions" on July 10, 1932[78]. The new Law did not differ significantly from the previous one, but it was of the utmost importance in securing the proclaimed regulatory norms. The Law was in force until the collapse of the USSR. The relationship between the Soviet government and public organizations fixed in it did not change.

Conclusion

Through the 1920s the relations between scientific societies and Soviet power developed dramatically. The material above demonstrated the degree to which natural scientific societies played a leading role in scientific societies system and they were able to maintain considerable high position in public sphere. Among the state scientific societies, the majority were also natural scientific societies thereby highlighting their importance and establishing government funding for it on a permanent basis. The new regime viewed natural scientific societies' activity useful and intended to utilize the skills of natural scientists.

The government control over their functioning was increasing throughout the 1920s. At the turn of 1920–1930s the political changes taking place in the country led to total control over scientific and public spheres. Despite that natural scientific societies worked successfully with the support of the authorities in subsequent years. It must be assumed that those societies managed to survive not only because of the exceptional "necessity and usefulness" of their work for the state but also due to their unconditional subordination to Soviet power. Thus, Professor Y.S. Edelstein spoke at the Geographers Congress in

[75] TsGA SPb. F. 1000. Op. 48. D. 78. L. 31.

[76] Ibid. L. 22.

[77] Ibid. L. 20–21 ob.

[78] SU. No. 74 (1932). Art. 331.

1933 about the new tasks of the Russian Geographical Society: "The society should be a mass organization, attracting a large element of workers to research, mobilizing the masses to carry out the socialist construction work and uniting and coordinating their work with the work of other mass organizations" (Bradley, 1994, p. 42).

The transformation of scientific societies into controlled mass organizations was the result of the Great Break in science and the Cultural Revolution in the public sphere. A scientific creativity independence and freedom inherent in the nature of scientific societies was unacceptable to an emerging totalitarian regime. In the new socio-political realities of the 1930s, the existence of old-style scientific societies was impossible, and the adaptation of remaining scientific organizations became very painful experience.

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Советская власть и естественно-научные общества в 1920-е гг.: формы и стадии взаимодействия

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Научные общества традиционно играли очень важную роль в академическом сообществе. Они вносили свой вклад в формирование гражданского общества в России, определяли самоидентификацию учёных, а также были особенно важны в качестве платформы для презентации новой научной информации. Цель данной статьи — определить место и значение естественно-научных обществ в системе организации науки, а также проанализировать их

отношения с советской властью в 1920-е гг. В основе исследования лежат разнообразные источники, в первую очередь архивные материалы естественно-научных обществ и государственных структур, которые хранятся в Государственном архиве Российской Федерации, Санкт-Петербургском отделении Архива РАН, Центральном государственном архиве. Санкт-Петербурга и др. В статье рассматриваются законодательные и нормативные основы взаимоотношений советской власти с естественно-научными обществами, формы контроля за их деятельностью и государственной поддержки. В целом отношения советской власти с естественно-научными обществами в 1920-е гг. можно охарактеризовать как противоречивые. С одной стороны, власть считала деятельность естественно-научных обществ полезной и поддерживала её. В системе научных обществ лидирующие позиции занимали естественно-научные организации. С другой стороны, на протяжении 1920-х гг. государственный контроль над их функционированием усиливался, одновременно с этим, росла и регламентация их работы. На рубеже 1920–1930-х гг. политические изменения, происходящие в стране, обусловили переход к тотальному контролю над научной и общественной сферами жизни страны.

Ключевые слова: научные общества, наука и власть, общественные организации, социальная история российской науки, система организации науки.