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IALHI Conference, Rome, 6-8 September 2007

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Reflection of processes of forming democracy in Russia (late 1980s - 2000) in the collection of the Museum of Political History of Russia (Saint Petersburg)

1.

Briefly - about Museum.

The State Museum of Political History was founded in 1919 as the State Museum of Revolution. Firstly it was located in the Winter Palace, since 1957 to present day - in the former mansion of the ballet dancer Matilda Kshesinskaya. It was the first historical and revolutionary museum in the country, founded by the new Bolshevik power.

Nowadays it is the only museum of political history in Russia.

The exhibitions and expositions of the Museum reflect political history of the country of XIX-XXI centuries. Nowadays the Museum of Political History of Russia is also the institute studying modern political realities, key events of modern social life, activity of authorities and political parties.

2.

The Museum possesses wide collection, numbering over 450 thousand units.

In the collection there are museum exhibits that disclose such global topics as:

- history of Russian revolutions;
- history of political parties and social movements;
- history of working and trade union movements;
- reforms and great reformers;
- history of Russian parliamentarism;
- history of independent social idea.

The collection contains personal funds of prominent political and social figures of the past and present time.

Our report is devoted to the collection reflecting processes of forming democracy in Russia (late 1980s - 2000), created for the last 20 years in the Museum's funds.

Radical transformations in different spheres of social life of Russia, started after coming Mikhail Gorbachev to leadership of the country and proclaiming policy of "perestroika" in the late 1980s, have caused significant changes in the political system of the Russian society. In the late 1980s the Museum of Political History of Russia among the first actively became to collect materials and documents that reflected new political realities. As a result, nowadays in the funds of the State Museum of Political History of Russia the collection of materials (nearly 10 thousand units of issue), reflecting development of political process in Russia in 1987-2000, is created.

Structure of the collection:

- Political parties and politicized social organizations. Late 1980s - 2000.
- Independent periodical press.
- Forms of political activity: meetings, demonstrations, other protest actions.
- Reformation of political system.
- Election campaigns to state authorities of different level.
- Political leaders and chiefs of political organizations, statesmen.
- Key political events of the present time.

3.

For a long period of time the Museum was a "museum of one party - CPSU". During the period of Stalin regime the Museum's funds alongside with funds of other state depositories were subject to purges as

a result of which the documents of all Russian parties, apart from the Bolshevik party, have been destroyed or classified as secret and concealed in special depositories.

In 1987-1991 gradual replacement of one-party political system for multi-party system occurred in the country. The abolition in 1990 of the 6th article of the USSR Constitution on leading and guiding role of the party meant legal strengthening of the Russian multi-party system.

The priority direction for the Museum at that time was collection of materials for revival of the Russian multi-party system. For these years the Museum has collected documents on political events vitally important for the country.

The evidence about the activity of parties and social movements, their participation in political struggle, in creating new political and social structures has appeared in the collection. Many of these documents were exhibited at the exhibition "Democracy or dictatorship? Parties and authority in Russia from autocracy to perestroika". Its visitors were able to receive rather comprehensive idea about the spectrum of political life of modern Russia.

4.

In 2002 the Museum published the Catalogue of documents on history of modern Russian multi-party system (part 1), including the period of 1987-1991. Leaflets, programs and charters, party-membership cards and certificates, materials of party conferences and theoretical seminars, autographs of political leaders, protocols of working conferences of leading authorities of political parties are presented in the Catalogue. The Catalogue also includes descriptions of documents of informal entities, independent working and trade union organizations of the USSR and the Russian Federation of wide political spectrum of perestroika period.

The trade union was organized in the USSR in 1978 under communist regime. Before 1987 it existed as law-protecting organization. It was restored in 1987.

5.

Two sections of the Catalogue are devoted to independent trade union and working organizations of perestroika period – late 1980s - 1991.

During the perestroika period powerful growth of labor activity, upsurge of strike and protest movement happened in the USSR and Russia. The working masses acted at that time as the part of wide general democratic front for modernization of the country and destruction of monopoly power of the CPSU.

In the summer of 1989 powerful surge of strike movement took place in the country, speeches of miners of the largest coal fields of the country - Donbass, Kusbass, Caraganda and Vorkuta were particularly significant. After mass strikes of miners and threat of their support by railwaymen and metallurgists the law on labor conflicts, declared the right to strike, was adopted on October 9, 1989 in the USSR.

In 1989 the exhibition "Hot summer of Kusbass" was exhibited in the Museum. Photos and documents for this exhibition were received directly from leaders of strike committee during the business trip of research workers of the Museum to Kemerovo.

Early 2000s marked significant decline of strike, protest labor activity. In post-Soviet Russia there was and is none of influential political organization grown "from the bottom" - out of working, trade union or other social movements.

The final surges were strike of miners in Primorie (1998), strike on Vyborgsky pulp and paper industrial complex (1999) (Leningrad region).

6.

1. In the fund of rare book of the State Museum of Political History of Russia the collection of alternative (it is also called informal and unconventional) periodical press is created. It has played a great role in forming multi-party system in new Russia. It was a unique phenomenon in the political history of Russia of the last decades of XX century.

The collection of alternative press of the Museum of Political History of Russia is unique both in structure and quality. Nowadays in the Museum's funds there are over 14 thousand issues (over 300 names) of

newspapers, magazines, special issues of different political orientation. This collection became natural continuation of the Museum's collection of free press of pre-revolutionary Russia and first years of the Soviet Russia.

2. The appearance of alternative periodical press is the result of perestroika and glasnost policy in the USSR of 1985-1987.

3. By the early 1990s the periodical press has become mass phenomenon in the USSR and exerted significant influence on the rise of multi-party system, on political events, in particular on break-up of the USSR in 1991, on constitutional reform and elections of deputies of the Russian parliament - the State Duma in 1993, on elections of the RF President.

4. In 1987-1991 more than 1000 alternative politicized editions in Russian came out on the territory of the USSR.

Since the end of 1993 the alternative periodical press has received a new impulse of development owing to transformation of Russia into the presidential republic. At the time of conducting election campaign to the State Duma in 1995 the whole spectrum of political movements, associations, participated in elections, was presented on the pages of alternative press.

The alternative periodical press in the course of 1987-1996 was closely connected with political associations and exerted significant influence on appearance and development of social and political associations and parties.

7.

Fund of alternative press of perestroika period

1. Press of social clubs and associations of perestroika period.

2. Democratic editions (Newspapers in support of democratic reforms).

3. Communist press and editions in protection of socialism achievements.

The alternative periodical press reflected real situation in the Soviet and then in the Russian society. Nonofficial viewpoints on questions of maintenance or break-up of the USSR, military conflict in the Chechen republic, national conflicts, shooting of the White House in October of 1993 and etc. were published on its pages.

8.

The important place in the structure of the Museum's fund collection is taken by materials, connected with key political events of the present time.

8.1. For example, the elections to the USSR People's deputies in the spring of 1989 gave powerful stimulus of reformatory movement in the USSR. These were the first alternative elections to the legislative authoritative body of Russia for 70 years of existing one-party regime on which open political struggle occurred. On Elections-89 the CPSU candidates came off second-best. Thus, in Leningrad the "independent" young candidate, at that time known to nobody, Yuri Boldyrev, spoken under "perestroika slogans" and taken 55,1% votes, has won on the elections of deputies of the USSR Supreme Soviet. His opponent was the secretary of the CPSU Leningrad regional committee A.N.Gerasimov who lost the elections.

In the course of collecting materials devoted to these elections the unique experience of effective documentation has been acquired. The collection of materials devoted to election campaign of 1989 was created in the Museum's funds – it is more than 1000 posters, leaflets, other documents.

8.2. 16 years ago, the attempt of coup d'état occurred on August 19, 1991 in Moscow. The group of conservative high-ranking officials declared itself the State Committee for Emergency Situation (GKChP) and suggested Gorbachev to introduce emergency situation in the country and rejected reforms. Gorbachev who had a rest on the presidential summer residence in the Crimea at that time did not agree, he was isolated and it was declared that the group assumes power in its hands. The conspirators' actions met with resistance of wide masses. The confrontation between people and army, between the country's president Gorbachev and GKChP has come to the end with people's victory. The putsch's organizers were arrested. Shortly thereafter the USSR ceased to exist. It was in these 3 days that

complete and final collapse of the communist regime in our country happened. Since August 23 the CPSU ceased to exist as the ruling party. The whole world watched the events of August 19-21. The collection of materials about this democratic revolution is kept in the Museum's funds.

It is a large collection – nearly 500 author's photos, reflecting chronicle of events and slogans under which the people made speeches, documents, reflecting position of different political parties and politicians, special issues of newspapers, leaflets, materials received personally from the President Gorbachev about this event.

Since December 1991 after the break-up of the USSR Russia has entered into a new stage of its history. It can be characterized as the period of rapid destruction of old and forming new social and economic and political structures. The history of Russian political parties has also entered a highly new phase.

9.

The important place in the structure of the collection of social and political materials and documents is taken by pre-election propaganda materials relating to different election campaigns of 1990s-2000.

The materials of modern election campaigns keep on similar pre-revolutionary and "soviet" collections, kept in the funds of the State Museum of Political History of Russia. They reflect atmosphere of time and expectations of people of periodical press, reflect dynamics of political process, show how in the course of alternative elections the formation of the Russian political PR has taken place.

These are posters, leaflets, postcards, calendars and other kinds of documents devoted to elections to the RF State Duma of 1995, 1999, 2005, Presidential elections of 1991, 1996 and pre-term elections - 2000.

10.

In our report we have presented only some constituent parts of the Museum's modern collection. The materials about other events, crisis stages of the country's development and today's Russian political realities are also kept in the Museum's funds. They include break-up of the USSR, political crisis of the autumn of 1993, resulted in liquidation of the Soviet regime, national conflicts, activity of the State Duma, social and economic crisis of 1998.

Nowadays the Museum of Political History is the only museum in Saint Petersburg and one of the few in Russia that successfully keeps on developing the direction of its activity connected with integration of materials devoted to modern political history of Russia.

Evgeny Artemov, general director of the State museum of the political history of Russia, Elena Kostjusheva, vice-director of museum.