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THE HISTORY OF THE FORMATION OF THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF POLTAVA REGION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE XXI CENTURY

Abstract. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the process of forming a political culture, and with it the evolution of the political consciousness of Ukrainians, acquired new orientations in view of the fact that the old communist political ideology was collapsing and ultimately disappearing. These phenomena of social life had local specificity. The regions of Ukraine demonstrated differences in the value aspects of the development of "local parliamentarism", the history of the formation of local self-government and the functioning of civil society in regions and territorial communities had its differences in the plane of normative regulation of this process. The rational and even subconscious choice of one or another political force to represent their political interests in local authorities by residents of different regions of the state had their vectors.

This study is designed to describe the perceptions of citizens who lived in the territory of Poltava region at the turn of the XX-XXI centuries, taking into account the relations with the institutions of power and with each other in the process of electoral choice to realize their participation in the management of society and the state. With the development of its own specific model of democracy in post-Soviet Ukraine, the political culture of the population of Poltava Oblast acquired eclectic features and at the beginning of the 21st century resembled Frankenstein's monster, which was based on leftist ideological beliefs. The study showed that this ideology actually did not go beyond the loyal attitude to the authorities, which was characteristic of Ukrainian society since the times of totalitarianism.

The formation of political culture on the eve and immediately after the Orange Revolution of 2004-2005 largely depended on the populist statements of charismatic leaders, and the direction of the political process in the region, which lay at the intersection of worldview choices (Russia and the West), did



not bring stability to the political system of the local community. The political maturity of the electorate of Poltava Oblast most likely began to form only after the Orange Revolution and was finally established after the Revolution of Dignity in 2014. This is evidenced by the kaleidoscopic political map of the region in the 2006 elections and the instability in the number and quality of political parties in the region.

Keywords: history of parliamentarism, political culture, electoral behavior, Poltava region, history of Ukraine, political consciousness, Communist Party of Ukraine, Socialist Party of Ukraine.

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ІСТОРІЯ ФОРМУВАННЯ ПОЛІТИЧНОЇ КУЛЬТУРИ ПОЛТАВЩИНИ НА ПОЧАТКУ ХХІ СТОЛІТТЯ

Анотація. Після розвалу Радянського Союзу процес формування політичної культури, а разом із ним еволюція політичної свідомості українців набув нових орієнтирів з огляду на те, що руйнувалася і, з рештою, зникла стара комуністична політична ідеологія. Ці явища суспільного життя мали специфіку на місцях. Регіони України демонстрували відмінності у ціннісних аспектах розбудови «локального парламентаризму», історія формування місцевого самоврядування та функціонування громадянського суспільства в областях та територіальних громадах мала свою відмінність у площині нормативного регулювання цього процесу. Свої вектори були й раціональному та навіть підсвідомому виборі тієї чи іншої політичної сили для представлення своїх політичних інтересів у місцевих органах влади мешканцями різних регіонів держави.

Дане дослідження покликане описати уявлення громадян, що проживали на території Полтавщини на зламі ХХ-ХХІ століть з урахуванням зв'язків з інститутами влади й між собою у процесі електорального вибору для реалізації своєї участі в управлінні суспільством і державою. З розбудовою в пост-радянській Україні свої специфічної моделі демократії політична культура населення Полтавщини набула еkleктичних рис і на початку ХХІ століття нагадувала чудовисько Франкенштейна, в основі якого лежали ліві



ідеологічні переконання. Дослідження показало, що ця ідеологія насправді не вийшла за межі лояльного ставлення до влади, що було властивим українському суспільству з часів тоталітаризму.

Формування політичної культури у переддень і одразу після Помаранчевої Революції 2004-2005 рр. значно мірою залежало від популістських заяв харизматичних лідерів, а напями політичного процесу в регіоні, що лежав на перетині шляхів світоглядного вибору (Росія – Захід), не приносив стабільність політичній системі локальної спільноти. Політична зрілість електорату Полтавщини найвірогідніше стала формуватися лише після Помаранчевої Революції та остаточно утвердилася вже після Революції Гідності у 2014 р. Про це свідчить калейдоскопічність політичної мапи регіону у виборах 2006 р. та нестабільність у чисельності та якісному складі політичних партій в області.

Ключові слова: історія парламентаризму, політична культура, електоральна поведінка, Полтавська область, історія України, політична свідомість, Комуністична партія України, Соціалістична партія України.

Formulation of the problem. The development of civil society institutions on the territory of independent Ukraine undoubtedly leads to the activation of a politically conscious part of the population of our country. This becomes especially noticeable on the eve of each next elections – either presidential or parliamentary. Consideration of party activity at the national level has long become relevant for many institutes (Institute of Post-Communist Society, Institute of Politics, centers of sociological research, etc.). Citizens of certain territorial units, forming public organizations, regional, district, and city branches of parties, show considerable political activity and desire to play a role in state management.

It should not be forgotten that in 2006, for the first time, citizens of Ukraine were able to elect not individual candidates for council deputies at various levels, but only political parties. Therefore, the relevance of the study of political parties in the Poltava region stems from the socio-political development of the region and the country as a whole. Considering the history of creation, activity of political forces, their programs and determination of authority among the local population, in our opinion, can satisfy the demands of a society that is taking steps towards more effective functioning of its institutions. The difference between the proposed work and many others is that, along with the description of the development of parties on an all-Ukrainian scale and their participation in the created social,



legal and democratic state, there is coverage of party activities on the ground – in the region, in its cities and districts, that is, where direct social and political life rages.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The specified topic of work still remains insufficiently developed even at the local level. Most of the materials on the activity of party organizations of the Poltava region before the Orange Revolution of 2004-2005 are scattered in individual articles in periodicals of political forces or as notes in the regional press. An even greater part of interesting facts about congresses, conferences and meetings of Poltava regional organizations of political parties can be found in the documentation of regional party headquarters. The history of the formation of the political culture of the Poltava region, as well as the study of the evolution of electoral preferences and the development of political parties and movements in the region, despite the interest in this topic, remains a frankly under-researched topic. The scientific works of historians of the state and law, political scientists, sociologists and culturologists mostly contain information about national trends (B. Maksymets, M. Tomenko, M. Lytvyn, L. Pavlova and others). The regional aspect is somewhat revealed in the scientific work of Petro Vorona “Explanation of the local self-governance in the programs of political parties of Ukraine”. However, even there, the regional aspect is only an illustration of national trends, and not the subject of meticulous scientific research. Therefore, the study of the history of the formation and development of the political life of Poltava Oblast after the declaration of independence in 1991 is urgent.

The purpose of this work is to systematize data on the development of political parties of the Poltava region at the brim of Orange Revolution of 2004-2005, their ideological foundations, place and role in the social, political and cultural life of the region; evolution of civic activity and political preferences of the region’s residents.

Presenting main material. Multipartyism is a necessary phenomenon in the development of every democratic society. Without it, it is almost impossible to imagine a democratic system of government. It allows eliminating the monopoly of one party on power in the state. Multipartyism becomes a means of implementing public interests that are legitimized at the state level. Thanks to it, the masses are offered an alternative vision of the future state of affairs in society and the country. Therefore, multipartyism is inseparable from the principle of democratic society [1, p. 106]. It should be noted that multipartyism is not something easily created. It is the result of the long-term development of the political system of the state. Political pluralism in Ukraine has gone through several stages: from the creation of political



clubs and informal public associations, the birth of the first political parties to the formation of a full-fledged party-political system.

The political preferences of the residents of the Poltava region at the break of the XX-XXI centuries, which were revealed by the results of the regular elections, clearly indicated the dominance of left-wing ideas in the territory of the region. Thus, during the 1998 Verkhovna Rada elections, the undisputed leaders of the race were the Communist Party of Ukraine and the electoral bloc of the Socialist Party of Ukraine and the Peasant Party of Ukraine “For the Truth, for the People, for Ukraine!”, which got 23.74% and 21.30%, votes of voters of Poltava region respectively [2].

The parliamentary elections of 2002 showed that the ideological factor in the choice of one or another political force was significantly inferior to the social priorities of the citizens of Poltava Oblast who have the right to vote. This turned out to be the fact that, along with the Socialist Party of Ukraine, which gained 22.05%, a political force of a non-left orientation began to enjoy great support from the population – the electoral block of political parties “Block of Viktor Yushchenko “Our Ukraine”. He took second place, receiving 20.46% of the support of Poltava residents and residents of the region, relegating the former leader – the Communist Party of Ukraine (17.69%) to third place [3].

When determining the political preferences of the population of the region and the weight of political parties and their ideas in Poltava Oblast, one cannot fail to turn to the analysis of the results of the presidential elections. Although it should be noted that sometimes the rating of the party leader does not coincide with the real level of citizen support for the political force he represents. The presidential elections of 1999 did not differ much from the parliamentary elections of 1998 in terms of the political commitment of Poltava residents: both candidates supported by the region in two rounds of elections were representatives of the left forces: Oleksandr Moroz (Socialist Party of Ukraine, first round) and Petro Symonenko (Communist Party of Ukraine, second round) .

The 2004 elections, the culmination of which was the Orange Revolution, can also to a certain extent could be called the result of a change in the preferences of the residents of Poltava Oblast, which began to take shape already at the 2002 parliamentary elections. Representatives of leftist parties, Oleksandr Moroz and Petro Symonenko, took third and fourth place in the rating. Instead, Viktor Yushchenko (43.64%) and Viktor Yanukovych (25.95%) were in the lead. According to official data, as of December 31, 2005, the number of regional branches of political parties in Poltava Oblast increased from 87 to 114 during the year. The first year after the presidential



elections of Ukraine turned out to be fruitful for the emergence of new political forces. Since January 2005, 27 regional branches of new parties have been founded in Poltava Oblast (such as the State Party, the Freedom Party, the Conscience of Ukraine, the Green Planet Ukrainian Party, etc.). [4; 5]

Simultaneously with the increase in the number of parties, the party network of certain political forces on the territory of Poltava Oblast was also developing. The number of registered party branches in the cities and districts of the region was increasing. At the end of 2005, fourteen regional party organizations report on the activities of numerous primary centers not only in districts and cities, but also in rural settlements. The largest number of branches in the districts and cities of the region (30 local branches of political parties each) were: All-Ukrainian Association “Batkivshchyna” (the Motherland), All-Ukrainian Political Association “Women for the Future”, Communist Party of Ukraine, People’s Democratic Party, the Party “Renaissance”, the Party “Democratic Union”, the Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Ukraine, the Party of Regions, the Political Party “Public Control”, the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine and the Socialist Party of Ukraine [6].

Political activity, and with it the political culture of the inhabitants of Poltava Oblast, were growing at almost the same pace as the number of all kinds of party centers in the territory of the region. Thus, in 2000, the total number of members of political organizations registered in Poltava Oblast was about 33,000. This indicator increased to 100 thousand in 2004. After the Orange Revolution, there are about 170,000 members of all parties in the region. This was 13% of the total number of voters of the Poltava region.

Until 2004, the most numerous party branches had such parties as the Agrarian Party of Ukraine (about 25 thousand members), the Party of Regions (8.5 thousand), the Socialist Party of Ukraine (8 thousand), the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (united) (7 thousand), the Democratic Union (7 thousand), the Communist Party of Ukraine (4.5 thousand members), the Motherland (about 3 thousand), “Labor Ukraine” (2 thousand party members) and the Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Ukraine (up to 2 thousand people) . At the end of 2005, the most numerous party organizations in Poltava Oblast, according to the heads of party branches, were the People's Party, the “Renaissance” Party, the Party of Regions, the Social-Democratic Party of Ukraine (united), “Women for the Future”, the Motherland, Socialist Party of Ukraine and the People’s Movement of Ukraine [2; 3].

In the last years of the 20th century, the general trend in the region was the insignificant representation of members of political parties in local



authorities. The vast majority of deputies of local councils of Poltava region were registered as non-party members. This is supported by the fact that out of 10,007 deputies elected to local councils, only 1,858 associated themselves with one or another political force (18.56%). In 2002, an increase in the influence of political parties was already noticeable following the results of elections to local councils. Thus, out of 9,799 deputies of local councils of all levels in the Poltava region at the time of the elections, 2,412 people were nominated by political parties (24.6%) [7].

But it does not seem possible to name the exact number of members of this or that party, at least because of the fact that recently in Poltava Oblast the process, which the activists of the All-Ukrainian public organization “PORA!” dubbed the “Painted Fox” action, during which supporters of Viktor Yanukovich in the 2004 presidential elections left the parties with which they had been previously associated with by voters and joined the ranks of other political forces that had been participants in the Orange Revolution [8].

We can say with confidence that together with the change in the legislation of Ukraine, the situation with the participation of political parties in the life of local communities also changed radically, because the 2006 elections of deputies to the councils of all levels were held according to the proportional electoral system, which logically more or less led to a hundred percent association of deputies with some political forces [9].

Taking into account the rapid growth of the influence of political parties on the ground and the approaching implementation of constitutional changes, the regional state administration had taken steps to establish cooperation between state authorities and political forces of the region. That is why, on April 8, 2005, under the head of the Poltava Regional State Administration, Stepan Bulba, the Public Board was created. This advisory body included representatives of all regional party and public organizations of the region. The purpose of the council’s activities is to “involve the public in the preparation and adoption of important social and political decisions by the executive power of the region” [10]. The organizers of the Civic Council saw it as a tool for implementing the right of citizens to manage the state, enshrined in the Constitution of Ukraine. The development of relations between parties and state authorities also led to holding round tables at which representatives of the regional leadership meet with local politicians to discuss issues related to the organization of the social sphere, medicine, education, production, etc. And all of them had their own view on the development of the state and the Poltava region, as evidenced by their program statements and activities aimed at gaining authority among the voters of the region.



The Poltava regional organization of the Socialist Party of Ukraine was registered on December 1, 1993. At the moment of 2006 local authorities' elections, the head of the regional branch of the party was Bulba Stepan Stepanovych, the head of the Poltava Regional State Administration. The opposition of the socialists obviously found support among the population of Poltava Region, which had been supporting socialist ideas throughout a long period of cultural and historical development.

Therefore, the joint bloc of the Socialist Party of Ukraine with Peasants' Party of Ukraine is the Electoral bloc of the Socialist Party of Ukraine and the Peasants' Party of Ukraine "For the Truth, for the People, for Ukraine!", created to participate in the 1998 elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, winning 8.55% of the votes in the nationwide electoral district, found great support from the residents of Poltava Oblast – 21.3%. No less support from the population of Poltava region was used by the socialists in the parliamentary elections in 2002.

This time, in the national plan, the popularity of the party decreased and it was forced to give way to the "Our Ukraine" bloc, the Communist Party of Ukraine, the "For a United Ukraine" bloc and Yuliya Tymoshenko's bloc and took only fifth place in the list of parties that were able to overcome the required four percent barrier, gaining 6.87% of the votes of Ukrainian voters. But the Socialist Party had the best results in Poltava Oblast – 22.05% of voters' votes, which brought it to first place in the region among other parties and blocs.

After Viktor Yushchenko had won the 2004 resident elections, the Socialists, as a party that supported Yushchenko as a candidate, came to power in the state. That's why Poltava region, as one of the regions where the Socialist Party of Ukraine had the most support, on February 4, 2005, got Stepan Stepanovych Bulba, a member of the Socialist Party, the head of the Poltava regional organization of the SPU, as governor.

As of February 2006, the region demonstrated high indicators of growth in the number of jobs, receipt of funds to local and state budgets, etc. The management policy of the socialists bore demonstrable fruits, about which the head of the Poltava regional state organization S.S. Bulba remarks: "We, the socialists, prove by deeds that honest government means a better life for everyone!" [11]. According to the regional administration of justice, the Socialist Party of Ukraine was among the leaders in terms of the number of primary centers in the region: in the year from 2004 to 2005, their number increased from 413 to 714. Numerous district, city, village and settlement centers reported on their work not only in official documents, and through the pages of the printed body of the Poltava Regional Branch of the Socialist



Party of Ukraine – the newspaper “Trudova Poltavshchyna” (Labor Poltava Region) [12; 13].

But the increase in the number of party members of the Social Party of the region was not only related to the ideological beliefs of citizens and their satisfaction with the policy pursued by the Socialist Party of Ukraine in Poltava region. The ranks of the party began to be replenished at the expense of former supporters of Viktor Yanukovich, who began to defect “from camp to camp”, in particular in the Kremenchuk and Komsomolsk districts [8].

At the end of September 1991, the Communist Party of Ukraine was in a deep crisis. Like the CPSU as a whole, it continued the ambitious policy of a monopoly organization, retaining the status of the center of the command-administrative management system. But the situation in Ukraine at the beginning of the 1990s did not contribute to the development of this political force. Numerous new democratic forces are entering the arena, the main goal of which was the destruction of the former party without an alternative.

As Volodymyr Lytvyn points out, “the CPSU has not found the strength to revive itself as a new party, faithful to the ideals of democracy, freedom and true humane socialism” [14, p. 80]. That is why already on August 30, 1991, the Presidium of the Verkhovna Rada, based on the fact that “the leadership of the Communist Party of Ukraine supported the coup d'état by its actions”, banned the Communist Party altogether [15, p. 47]

But the party was revived already on October 5, 1993 under the leadership of Petro Symonenko. The Poltava regional organization of the Communist Party of Ukraine was founded at a rapid pace already a month later – on November 9, 1993. At the moment, it is headed by Oleksandr Mykolayovych Masenko. The newspaper “Communist of the Poltava Region”, which has been published since February 1996, is the printed organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine.

The party enjoyed a great deal of trust from the residents of Poltava Oblast. Thus, in the parliamentary elections in 1998, the slogan of the communists was “Soviet power for the working people! Socialism for society! Ukraine is a voluntary union of equal fraternal nations” [16, p.45] found support in the Poltava region. The Communist Party of Ukraine took first place by the number of votes received – 23.74%.

The presidential elections of 1999 also assured the communists of the Poltava region of their unwavering support from the population of the region - in the second round of elections, the head of the Communist Party of Ukraine Petro Mykolayovych Symonenko beat Leonid Danylovych Kuchma in the region. But the rating of those who urge not to believe in “the falsification of historical truth, the distortion of facts about the non-existent



Holodomor of 1932-1933” began to fall rapidly in the parliamentary elections of 2001 and the presidential elections of 2004 [17]. Thus, in four years (1998-2001), the Communists lost almost 7 percent of the electorate, yielding to non-leftist parties. But this, although it deprived them of the first place in the region, could not dislodge them from the top five – with 17.69%, the Communist Party of Ukraine took third place.

And in the elections for the President of Ukraine, the representative of the Communist Party of Ukraine Petro Symonenko came in fourth place, ahead of only Viktor Yushchenko, Viktor Yanukovich and Oleksandr Moroz. According to official data of the regional administration of justice, the number of Communist Party branches in the region decreased slightly, but this did not prevent it from becoming one of the most numerous parties in the Poltava Region.

Conclusions. The process of forming party branches in Poltava Oblast was logically inseparable from the national policy-making process. From the time of the first steps towards the establishment of multipartyism in the early 1990s to the present day, the main obstacle to the formation of parties and the strengthening of political activity of Poltava residents, as well as residents of all other regions, is the lack of cultural and psychological prerequisites for the formation of multipartyism, which was caused by the long-term rule foreign powers over Ukraine for many centuries. This made it impossible to develop one’s own political preferences and European-style systems.

But after the decline of the communist ideal, there is an impetus in society for the necessary activation in order to develop its own Ukrainian policy-making principles. The change of the electoral system to a proportional in 2006 gave reason to hope that Ukrainian political figures and people who voted for parties would have not acted according to the principle of “the more, the better”, but by choosing the most acceptable ideology, and by no means specific political figures. This should have helped not only in rooting the foundations of a strong party system, but also in strengthening general important social values to which Ukrainians gravitate. The latter, in turn, should have contributed to the formation of a new Ukrainian national idea, the lack of which to some extent caused the manipulation of voters’ linguistic, national and international feelings during various election campaigns till nowadays.

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