

A Revolutionary Feeling of Justice? Emotion and Legal Judgement in Late Imperial and Early Soviet Russia

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This article explores the intellectual history of the concept of ‘feeling of justice’ and related concepts and the attempts to make them central to legal practice in the context of early 20th century Russia. It starts by tracing the emergence of new modes of thinking about judicial emotion in the fin-de-siècle Russian Empire and accounts for both international and local influences on these ideas. It further examines the development of these theories after the 1917 Russian Revolution and notes both continuities and ruptures across this revolutionary divide. Finally, the article explores the attempts to put these radical ideas into practice by focusing on the experimental legal model of ‘revolutionary justice’ that was employed in Soviet Russia between 1917 and 1922, which highlights the discrepancies between the bold utopian projects and harsh material realities of the revolutionary period.