



STRUCTURE AND COMPETENCE OF REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEES IN POLTAVA PROVINCE (DECEMBER 1919 – APRIL 1920)

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Summary

The article deals with the legal framework of forming revolutionary committees and their functioning in Poltava Province (December 1919 – April 1920). The structure of these extraordinary bodies of Soviet power is characterized. The competence of the Poltava Province Revolutionary Committee's and county revolutionary committees' structural units is analyzed. The Management Department's role is determined. The structure and competence of provincial and county revolutionary committees generally met the task of strengthening the Soviet power, brought in Ukraine by the Red Army. The optimal structure of the provincial and county revolutionary committees was provided through constant reorganization of their departments.

Key words: extraordinary bodies of Soviet power, the Poltava Province Revolutionary Committee, county revolutionary committees, structure and competence of revolutionary committees.

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается нормативно-правовая база организации и функционирования революционных комитетов в Полтавской губернии (декабрь 1919 – апрель 1920 гг.). Охарактеризована структура этих чрезвычайных органов советской власти. Проанализировано компетенцию структурных подразделений Полтавского губернского революционного комитета и уездных революционных комитетов Полтавской губернии. Определена роль отдела управления губернского ревкома. Структура и компетенция губернского и уездных ревкомов в целом соответствовала задачам строительства советской власти, принесённой в Украину Красной армией. Оптимальная структура губернского и уездных революционных комитетов достигалась путем постоянной реорганизации их отделов.

Ключевые слова: чрезвычайные органы советской власти, Полтавский губернский революционный комитет, уездные революционные комитеты, структура и компетенция ревкомов.

Formulation of the problem.

Setting up Soviet power in Ukraine during the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1920, its organizational and legal framework required unbiased research. Studying the experience of the Soviet state-building, including extraordinary bodies of Soviet power, in particular, the revolutionary committees, will help prevent practices of totalitarianism and authoritarianism in the development of modern Ukraine. National Soviet History and Law scientists have repeatedly approached these problems [1], but their studies with ideology blinkers were not related to the proposed regional aspect. Modern historiography's not showing significant interest in the problems of the Soviet state-building proves the importance of the suggested issues. Revolutionary Committees headed by the Provincial Revolutionary Committee in Poltava province, covering a significant part of Ukraine, fell out of sight of both Soviet and modern History and Law science, which

reinforce the relevance of the proposed article.

The aim of the paper is to study the legal framework, structure and competence of the Poltava Provincial Revolutionary Committee and county revolutionary committees of Poltava province.

Basic material. In October 1919 the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Defence Council of Soviet Russia adopted the «Regulations on revolutionary committees», which defined the legal status and approaches to the formation of these extraordinary bodies of Soviet power. The Regulations indicated the possibility of forming and developing departments which had to immediately establish relations with relevant people's commissariats, receive from them circular orders and be financed by them. Civil authorities established before revolutionary committee formation had to obey it [2, p. 225–226].

винение принадлежит потерпевшему. УПК Украины не определяет особенностей процедуры частного обвинения. В статье подчеркивается про необходимость определения процессуальных различий между производством публичного и частного обвинения. Определение особенностей процедуры частного обвинения даст возможность потерпевшему более полно защитить свои права во время досудебного расследования и реализовать свое право поддержания обвинения в суде.

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However, the local organizations of the Communist Party (of Bolsheviks) of Ukraine were guided by another document on Soviet power reconstruction in Ukraine. In the late 1918 on the basis of the Decree of the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of Ukraine »Organization of local authorities" there were developed »Temporary Regulations on the organization of workers' and peasants' local governments" which stated that small mobile revolutionary military committees had to be immediately organized on the liberated territories. It also focused on the mandatory formation of a military department, a department for combating counter-revolution, a people's police department, a food and supply department and an economy management department within revolutionary committees. Besides, revolutionary committees were allowed to form other departments depending on local needs [3, p. 7–8].

That was the legal framework for structuring the Provincial Revolutionary Committee, organized in December 1919 by the Soviet Russian military power, and county revolutionary committees of the province.

During the whole period of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee's functioning the Management Department which directly supervised the district revolutionary committees' work was the most important [4, fol. 233 v]. In order to enable the provincial revolutionary committee to focus on work, as noted, of exclusively institutional nature and to carry into life the results of that work (decrees, orders, regulations) by a once established procedure it was decided to release the Revolutionary Committee from the necessity to examine all the »clerical details" and pass over the implementation of all made decisions to one body – the Management Department, which had to be »an executer" of the provincial revolutionary committee's and central government's decisions and an intermediate body for issues addressed to the latter. The Management Department consisted of administrative and rules subdivision, information and instruction subdivision, civil registration subdivision, special registration subdivision and police subdivision [4, fol. 238].

The functioning of all Management Department's subdivisions was

determined by the administrative and rules subdivision, which issued orders, regulations and instructions and provided explanations on behalf of the Revolutionary Committee. Information and instruction subdivision was divided into organization section, instruction section, legal counsel section and publishing section [4, fol. 238]. 2 instructor-organizers who represented the Provincial Committee of the Communist Party (of Bolsheviks) of Ukraine worked in that subdivision for a while [4, fol. 214]. The subdivision collected on-the-spot information, communicated daily with the county revolutionary committee over the phone, if necessary sent telephone messages and, in an emergency, telegrams and special couriers. Copies of all orders, regulations and minutes of meetings as well as periodicals (newspapers, newsletters, etc.) and copies of district and village revolutionary committees' resolutions were sent to the information and instruction subdivision from all the departments, agencies and boards of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee. The subdivision mailed to counties circulars, orders, explanations on the organization of Soviet power, besides, it sent instructors for the purpose of improving the work at the local level. The legal counsel section was responsible for reviewing the compliance of all orders and resolutions, issued by the Revolutionary Committee and its departments, with »central government's" orders; considering the legality of statutes and draft statutes of all companies, organizations, etc. which were registered in the Management Department; filing central government's decrees and orders; considering the complaints about the actions of departments and agencies; providing conclusions on all kinds of issues concerning their compliance with the Soviet legislation. The publishing section had to prepare daily information for the Provincial Revolutionary Committee's newspaper »Soviet Power" and send central and local authorities' resolutions to counties [4, fol. 239–239 v].

The objectives of the special registration subdivision were registering bourgeoisie, persons arriving for business and vacations and going away on business to other cities; issuing passes to public servants leaving for business; issuing permits for making stamps and seals; administering affairs concerning

foreign nationals; registering institutions, enterprises, associations, unions, cooperatives, etc.; registering public servants throughout the province. The special registration subdivision included the personnel section responsible for the registration of provincial senior officials and public servants of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee and the Management Department [4, fol. 238 v].

Thus, administrative and regulatory functions of the Poltava Provincial Revolutionary Committee was mainly carried out by the Management Department.

The Labour Department of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee consisted of the general office, the labour protection subdivision, the conflict subdivision, the statistic subdivision, the tariff subdivision and the instruction subdivision [4, fol. 233 v – 234]. The Department was headed by a three-member board (head and 2 board members). The labour protection subdivision was first to be formed in order to improve the sanitary condition at the production site and further general job safety work. The Conflict Subdivision was responsible for regulating the relationships of problem nature between the workers and regular Red Army, deployed in Poltava or passing through the town, that is, it opposed the unauthorized requisitions. One of its major objectives was instructing trade unions and relevant subdivisions of district revolutionary committees [4, fol. 234].

The Social Welfare Department at the beginning of its functioning consisted of 11 subdivisions: management, information and instruction, assistance to the disabled, widows and the elderly; pension, ration, care and custody, assistance to counter-revolution victims, aid, child protection, maternity and child welfare, supply [4, fol. 234 v]. The management subdivision management included a general registry office, a reception and an information desk. The information and instruction subdivision was responsible for sending to an appropriate provincial revolutionary committees' department instructions on packed meal and pension provision, developed by the provincial Social Welfare Department and approved by the provincial instructions revolutionary



committee dealing with rations and pensions. The subdivision of assistance to the disabled, widows and the elderly supervised poor-houses, shoemaker's shops and homes for the blind. According to the provincial revolutionary committee's order the pension subdivision took under guidance all residents' pension cases and provided the clarification of pension issues and resolving related problems to county revolutionary committees. The ration subdivision was in charge of of packed meal distribution to the appropriate categories of populations. The subdivision of assistance to counter-revolution victims primarily provided material aid to political prisoners discharged from prison [4, fol. 235]. The aid subdivision performed functions similar to those of the subdivision of assistance to counter-revolution victims primarily the aid for funerals due to high mortality caused by the typhus epidemic. The child protection subdivision including medical and educational sections was in charge of orphanages. The maternity and child welfare subdivision's duty was to supply infants with milk and to help pregnant women and new mothers. The function of the supply subdivision was to ensure the supply of fuel, food and partially implements to all social service agencies. To that end the subdivision organized tailor's and carpentry workshops and shoemaker's shops [4, fol. 235 v].

The Health Department consisted of curative medicine, sanitary, pharmaceutical, financial control, transport and supply subdivisions. The curative medicine subdivision was in charge of all the hospitals of the province and directed its activities at the organization of medical care, in particular, at the fight against infectious diseases [4, fol. 235 v – 236].

The Finance Department, headed by the head and two board members, consisted of the following subdivisions: estimating, direct taxes and customs duties, indirect taxes, banking, legal counsel and secretariat. The primary task of the department was renewing the pre-Denikin Soviet financial system in the province, fundraising, restoration of tax offices, subordinating financial subdivisions emerging in county revolutionary committees, informing and instructing them and

directing their activity to the «scope of revolutionary legitimacy and expedience» [4, fol. 236 v].

The Law Department consisted of court, notary, legal counsel and penitentiary subdivisions [4, fol. 237]. It was responsible for supervising the activities of all judicial institutions, including revolutionary tribunals. In case of detecting violations the department was granted the right to suspend court sentences and decisions and appeal against them at higher courts [4, fol. 209]. The court subdivision of the Law Department established the judicial system in the province, in particular, due to the lack of special liquidation committee accepted the cases from the former district court and court investigators. The main task of the notary subdivision, that was in charge of Poltava notarial archive, was opening in Poltava the people's notary chamber. One of the functions of the legal counsel subdivision was providing legal advice to the population [4, fol. 237].

The Education Department consisted of a preschool, out-of-school, school, arts, supply and finance subdivisions [4, fol. 237 v] and a secretariat. The school subdivision monitored the activities of pedagogical councils and saw the main task in the transition to a new type of school – a labour one. The main function of the out-of-school subdivision was establishing schools for adults. The department was headed by a panel of 5 persons [4, fol. 162].

The provincial Food Committee functioned both as a department of the provincial revolutionary committee and as a separate institution. It consisted of the following subdivisions: bread and fodder, cooperative, organization, legal counsel, transport, storage and products [4, fol. 234]. The provincial Food Committee was managed by a panel consisting of 4 members with a provincial food commissar at the head. Bread and fodder subdivision was responsible for distributing bread among the army units and by orders, registering fuels and lubricants belonging to individuals, providing fodder to troops and bodies of power. Organization subdivision managed the relevant subdivisions of county revolutionary committees. Transport subdivision kept records of goods at railway stations. The provincial

Food Committee's functions were as follows: purchase and distribution of food, consumer and household goods among the army, hospitals and the public; rationing commodity prices; managing commodity circulation [4, fol. 234–234 v]. The Committee consisted of secretarial and commercial subdivisions. [4, fol. 162 v – 163].

Structuring of the provincial revolutionary committee was intense during the first two months of its existence, and was combined with forming and structuring Poltava County Revolutionary Committee and city authorities. For example, according to the decision of the Provincial Revolutionary committee in January 1920 the following structural units merged: the Law Department of the Poltava County Revolutionary Committee and the Law Department of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee, the Economic Department of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee, the provincial Social Welfare Department and the City Social Welfare Department, the City Food Department and the Provincial Food Committee [4, fol. 229].

The Provincial Revolutionary Committee did not control fully its own structuring process, the corresponding self-organization in certain cases occurred at the grassroots level. It can be testified by the order of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee, dated approximately April 1920, which, in particular, obliged its departments to provide the names of relevant subdivisions [5, fol. 69]. As stated in the report of information and instruction subdivision of the Management Department in late February 1920 (the exact date has not been set) the subdivision had data from relevant structural units' reports in which the overall progress of departments, nature of their activities, sometimes – the kind of different subdivisions were only generally estimated, but there were no «technical, data on which one could judge the appropriateness and necessity of bureaucratic units». Interestingly, the author of the report failed to determine the causes of excessive splitting-up of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee's staff, its low labour productivity, the accumulation of extra staff in a number of subdivisions [6, fol. 74].



Temporary commissions were provisional subdivisions of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee. Thus, its first staff when it was established a 3-member committee for dealing with property confiscation from persons fled with Denikin, with the right to conduct requisition [7, fol. 6]. In late December 1919 according to the central government's order there was established a provincial fuel commission consisting of a chairman – head of the financial department, head of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee, representatives of the provincial military commissariat, provincial forestry committee and railway junctions [8, fol. 5 v]. In early January 1920 as part of the Revolutionary Committee there were formed 2 commissions: 1) the commission aimed at finding means to fight epidemic typhus, consisting of the representatives of the Health Department, the Provincial Military Commissariat and the Provincial Food Committee [9, fol. 25 v]; 2) the commission for investigating the atrocities of Denikin's army, which was became part of the provincial Social Welfare Department [4, fol. 229]. Temporary commissions were also created within Provincial Revolutionary Committee's departments. Thus, certification and tariff commissions acted as part of the Law Department for about two months [10, fol. 28].

Structure and competence of county revolutionary committees were similar to those of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee. Thus, as part of the county Kostyantynograd Revolutionary Committee there were established a number of departments (management, labor, education, social welfare, financial, law, land, food), a board of national economy and a commandant. Besides, the Kremenchuk county revolutionary committee contained a housing department [4, fol. 217], the Lubny county revolutionary committee had a secret operations department [4, fol. 218], there were propaganda and editorial departments in the Hadiach county revolutionary committee [4, fol. 218 v].

A great number of various temporary commissions was a specific feature of district revolutionary committees. Thus, a medico-sanitary commission

performed the functions of health department within the Kostyantynograd county revolutionary committee. The Kremenchuk county revolutionary committee had an inquiry commission [4, fol. 217]. The Lubny county revolutionary committee included the commission for confiscating the property of the bourgeoisie fled with Denikin's authorities, the commission on establishing the victims of the previous regime, the labour protection commission and the investigation commission [4, fol. 218]. The firewood and certification commissions acted within Kobelyaky county revolutionary committee, the commission on losses caused by the previous government was part of Pyryatyn county revolutionary committee [4, fol. 218 – 218 v], Pryluky county revolutionary committee had a commission to combat epidemic typhus [4, fol. 219].

Conclusions. It should be noted that formation and structuring of the Poltava Provincial Revolutionary Committee and county revolutionary committees were defined by the legal act of Soviet Russia – »Regulations on Revolutionary Committees» adopted in late October 1919 by the Central Executive Committee and the Defense Council of Soviet Russia. Revolutionary committees' being created as extraordinary war-time bodies of proletarian dictatorship influenced the character of their structuring and competence. The structure and competence of provincial and county revolutionary committees generally met the assigned task of strengthening the Soviet power, brought in Ukraine on the tips of Red Army bayonets. The optimal structure of the provincial and county revolutionary committees was provided through constant reorganization of their departments.

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