



RULE-MAKING AND ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITY OF POLTAVA PROVINCE REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEES IN ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SPHERES (1919–1920)

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Summary

The article deals with the activity of UkSSR Poltava province revolutionary committees in economic, social and cultural spheres from December 1919 till April 1920. Revolutionary committees' implementing the War Communism policy is analyzed. Revolutionary committees' land and food policies as well as forming factory committees are characterized. Revolutionary committees' establishing typhus epidemic control, taking measures aimed at province ukrainization, and performing foundational work to substitute labour school for old school are analyzed. The extraordinary Soviet power bodies' surveillance over ideological, political and cultural processes in the province is characterized.

Key words: UkSSR Poltava province, extraordinary bodies of the Soviet power, revolutionary committees, Poltava Provincial Revolutionary Committee, food policy, nationalization, typhus epidemic control, ukrainization, ideological surveillance.

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается деятельность революционных комитетов Полтавской губернии УССР в хозяйственной и социально-культурной сферах в период с декабря 1919 по апрель 1920 г. Проанализировано осуществление революционными комитетами политики военного коммунизма. Охарактеризованы, в частности, земельная и продовольственная политика революционных комитетов, организация фабрично-заводских комитетов. Проанализировано организацию революционными комитетами борьбы с эпидемией тифа, мероприятия по украинизации губернии, подготовительную работу по замене старой школы трудовой. Охарактеризовано надзор за идейно-политическими и культурными процессами в губернии этих чрезвычайных органов советской власти.

Ключевые слова: Полтавская губерния УССР, чрезвычайные органы советской власти, революционные комитеты, Полтавский губернский революционный комитет, продовольственная политика, национализация, борьба с эпидемией тифа, украинизация, идеологический надзор.

Formulation of the problem. Avoiding authoritarianism and totalitarianism manifestations in the development of contemporary Ukraine depends to some extent on unbiased study of the Soviet stage of historic development. In this respect, not without interest is the period of establishing Soviet power in Ukraine, in particular, in the form of its non-constitutional extraordinary temporary bodies, first of all revolutionary committees, as well as the issues of their rule-making and organizational activity in different spheres.

Soviet law and history scholars turned to the subject of revolutionary committees' activity. However, despite significant accumulation of factual material, they could not avoid the mandatory set of ideological clichés answering a range of important questions. In turn, modern historiography has shown no significant interest in the problems of the Soviet state-building, which reinforces the relevance of the proposed research. Revolutionary committees led by the Provincial Revolutionary Committee in the Poltava province, that covered a significant part of Ukraine, fell off the

radar of both Soviet and contemporary history-law science, which proves the significance of the suggested article, whose aim is to investigate rule-making and organizational activity of Poltava Province revolutionary committees in the social and cultural sphere.

The purpose of the article is to study the key areas of UkSSR Poltava province revolutionary committees' activity in economic, social and cultural spheres from December 1919 till April 1920.

Main body of the article. In the late 1919 all powers of government were assumed by extraordinary Soviet bodies – revolutionary committees, led by the Poltava Provincial Revolutionary Committee. They were formed by the Russian Soviet military authorities. Revolutionary committees of Poltava Province carried out extensive business activity, in particular, implemented the land policy of the Soviet government. According to the Land Decree, adopted by the All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee on 5 February, 1920, the Provincial Land Department had to form district land committees whose duty was to register farmers' land and determine

peasants' need in land while local revolutionary committees had to make lists of those peasants. The distribution of land plots among the peasants of the province was completed in April, 1920. At seedtime special committees were formed within the Provincial Land Department and county ones. The committees played a part in supplying seed grain, repairing agricultural implements etc. [2, p. 132].

The food policy in the province was implemented by the Provincial Food Committee, headed by provincial food commissar, who involved previous governments' food departments' employees to form his own staff. One of the first measures taken by the Provincial Food Committee was registering basic consumer goods and restricting their trade.

The characteristic feature of the Provincial Food Committee's food policy was its substantial fluctuation which was mainly caused by the Revolutionary Committee head's standpoint. The Provincial Revolutionary Committee's report of 20 January, 1919, presented to the All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee, stated that not to aggravate the food



problem the Provincial Revolutionary Committee gradually approached the state food monopoly, therefore, at first, free trade was permitted [3, fol. 41]. Order 12 of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee permitted free entry, removal and trade of basic consumer goods (i.e. free trade), and punishment under the martial law of those individuals who would create obstacles to the abovementioned activities [4, p. 1]. Soon that order was cancelled by order 35 and state monopoly was introduced [5, fol. 9].

The intention to forbid free trade can be justified not only by combatting of profiteering, but also by ideological motives of Bolshevik authorities of both national and local levels who hoped to cancel completely the flow of goods and trade.

When implementing the food policy revolutionary committees of the Poltava province used extensively confiscations and requisitions. Thus, under the Provincial Food Committee's order of March 28, 1920, signed by the deputy head of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee and the member of the Provincial Food Committee's Board, livestock and food products, hidden from registration were subject to audit with decreasing payment by 25% compared to fixed price [6, p. 2].

In line with the War Communism policy, revolutionary committees, in particular, the Provincial one extensively implemented its important constituent – nationalization (or diligently performed corresponding foundational work) of different sectors of province's economy, both following the relevant regulatory acts issued by central government authorities and adopting their own ones. The Provincial Council of National Economy played a special part in this process. Apparently, the Provincial Revolutionary Committee and the Provincial Council of National Economy, in the matter of nationalization, followed primarily the economy management resolution of the third All-Russian convention of councils of national economy, adopted on the basis of the decisions made by the seventh convention of Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic (RSFSR) Councils (January, 1920). The resolution focused on the necessity to combine economic centralization with active participation of local authorities in economic activity [7, p. 54–55].

In late February 1920, based on the UkSSR Council of People's Commissars decree on banking monopolization, the Provincial Revolutionary Committee adopted a compulsory regulation on winding up former private joint-stock commercial banks and National Bank branches, formed from former private joint-stock banks in the Poltava province [8, p. 3].

In some cases revolutionary committees had to opt for the cooperative system. On January 20, 1920, at the Provincial Revolutionary Committee meeting Ya. Drobnis, the Revolutionary Committee Head, made a report on the state and prospects of resuming the production of agricultural implements and tools, matches and textiles. The Revolutionary Committee resolved to take immediate measures to resume these branches with the help of cooperative societies, which the Revolutionary Committee Head was authorized to organize [9, fol. 17].

In order to take the province's economic life under control, revolutionary committees contributed to forming factory committees and encouraged their activity. Factory committees were organized not only in province cities and towns but also in counties, in particular, in the Poltava county [10, p. 4].

The Provincial Revolutionary Committee called economic meetings, which took administrative decisions on managing particular branches or enterprises. According to the estimation of the Information and Instruction Subdivision of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee's Management Department economic meetings were aimed at “defusing all departmental conflicts” in the sphere of economic life [11, fol. 4].

Province revolutionary committees took active measures in the social and cultural sphere. Thus, the compulsory resolution of the Poltava Provincial Labor Department, issued in the Vlast Sovetov newspaper on December 23, 1919, confirmed the validity of all decrees, circulars and regulations, issued by the UkSSR People's Commissariat of Labor and the Poltava Provincial Labor Department before June 27, 1919 (i.e. before Denikin's soldiers captured Poltava). In the part concerning workers' unemployment and health insurance those documents came into force from December 1, 1919. The Department obliged employers to pay 10 per cent

of salary to the sick benefit fund, 4 per cent (from regular employees) and 6 per cent (from reasonable employees) to the unemployment benefit fund. It is interesting to note that in its resolution the Labor Department obliged institutions, enterprises and individuals that had used wage labor at the time of Denikin's occupation and had not make an 8 per cent contribution to the sick benefit fund in accordance with the Poltava governor's order (of August 26, 1919) to make it with late payment charges [12, p. 4].

An important and effective, for those conditions, area of province revolutionary committees' activity was the sphere of healthcare, which was particularly topical for a complicated health and epidemiological situation caused primarily by military actions. In the Provincial Health Care Department's order 1, signed by its head and issued in the Vlast Sovetov newspaper on December 18, the Department highlighted typhus epidemic control as its key priority and called all institutions and each citizen to contribute to this activity. This order declared valid all orders and regulations issued by then head of the former Medical and Sanitary Department under Poltava garrison commander [13, p. 1].

On December 31, 1919, at the Provincial Revolutionary Committee's meeting there was adopted a regulation on intensifying typhus control obliging the Health Care Committee (later it was renamed into the Health Care Department) within the Provincial Revolutionary Committee with the assistance of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee and the Provincial Food Committee (as the most organized at that time) to immediately form the commission comprising representatives of the Provincial Military Registration and Enlistment Office, the Provincial Food Committee, the Provincial Health Care Committee, the Fuel Committee and the Provincial Revolutionary Committee for clarifying the situation related to the spread of typhus in the province. In addition, the Provincial Health Care Committee was set a task to form appropriate committees (departments) in counties of the province [14, fol. 178].

These typical for extraordinary bodies of the Soviet power steps and a number of other sanitary and anti-epidemic measures, taken by provincial and county



revolutionary committees, contributed to combatting threatening epidemics in the Poltava province in spring, 1920.

Within the Bolshevik party's tactical approach to the Ukrainian language, which had to become "a tool of communist education" of Ukraine's toiling masses, and the All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee's attitude towards the development of the Ukrainian language and culture, appropriate steps were also taken by the province's revolutionary committees. According to the Management Department's order (its exact date hasn't been determined) all its employees were set a task (in the original text – "were suggested", which was an accepted formulation for that kind of acts) to immediately start learning Ukrainian. The order also stated that preferential treatment in promotion would be given to those who had a good command of Ukrainian [15, fol. 56]. Revolutionary committees led by the Provincial Revolutionary Committee conducted harsh ideological surveillance over political and cultural processes in the province. Thus, the Provincial Revolutionary Committee's regulation of March 5, 1920 introduced compulsory censorship for all newspapers issued in the province [16, fol. 36].

The Public Education Department of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee started functioning on January 10, 1920. Among its structural components, the most efficient appeared to be the school subdivision, which by means of its orders managed to conduct re-elections of school pedagogical councils' boards. The subdivision jointly with local authorities performed foundational work to substitute labor school for old school, introduce new spelling, as well as took measures to restore the state of school education following the pattern of pre-Denikin period [17, fol. 162].

Along with that, the Public Education Department of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee tried to monitor the teaching – learning process from the ideological point of view, paying particular attention at Ukrainian Studies teachers [18, p. 4]. The Provincial Education Department's order № 45 of March 9, 1920, signed by the Department Head, obliged all Poltava schools for adults to conduct immediately re-elections of pedagogical councils

and the entire pedagogical staff. The Adult Education Subdivision had to be informed about the time of pre-elections in advance so that to send its instructor there. All re-elections had to be affirmed by the Adult Education Subdivision. Schools, which did not fulfill the order, had to be closed [19, p. 4].

The main duty was to supply food to military units and residents of towns. Revolutionary committees of the province extensively implemented the policy of nationalization (or diligently performed corresponding foundational work) of different sectors of province's economy, both following the relevant regulatory acts issued by central government authorities and adopting their own ones. The Provincial Council of National Economy played a special part in this process. A characteristic feature of local revolutionary committees' activity was their intention to regulate economics activity in the appropriate territories. Under the Provincial Revolutionary Committee economic meetings were convened to discuss and adopt regulations on various economic issues.

Revolutionary committees of the Poltava province took active measures in social and cultural spheres. According to the Provincial Revolutionary Committee's regulation on typhus control all existing state, non-governmental and private organizations were united for combatting typhus epidemic. Sanitary and epidemic measures taken by provincial and county revolutionary committees, contributed to combatting threatening epidemics in the Poltava province in spring, 1920.

Revolutionary committees of the Poltava province contributed to the development of Bolshevik party's tactical approach to the Ukrainian language, which had to become "a tool of communist education" of Ukraine's toiling masses, and the All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee's attitude towards the development of the Ukrainian language and culture. Education Departments under provincial and county revolutionary committees performed foundational work to substitute labour school for old school. Certain measures were taken for illiteracy eradication. Along with that, the Provincial Revolutionary Committee conducted harsh ideological surveillance over political and cultural processes in the province.

Conclusions. Revolutionary committees of the Poltava province took an active part in implementing land and food policies of the Soviet power. The Provincial Revolutionary Committee repeatedly changed its approach to the food policy: from introducing free trade to its prohibition, which could be explained by the attitude to this issue of the Revolutionary Committee's head. Within provincial and county revolutionary committees, there were formed special food commissions whose duty was to supply food to military units and residents of towns. Revolutionary committees of the province extensively implemented the policy of nationalization (or diligently performed corresponding foundational work) of different sectors of province's economy, both following the relevant regulatory acts issued by central government authorities and adopting their own ones. The Provincial Council of National Economy played a special part in this process. A characteristic feature of local revolutionary committees' activity was their intention to regulate economics activity in the appropriate territories. Under the Provincial Revolutionary Committee, economic meetings were convened to discuss and adopt regulations on various economic issues.

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