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BOLSHEVIST DOCTRINE AND TERROR. EXTRAORDINARY COMMISSIONS IN THE UKRAINIAN SSR IN 1918-1920

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In the article, a relationship between the Bolsheviks' political doctrine and the terror they employed is studied. The process of establishing Chekist agencies in Ukraine during the Civil war is shown. The author considers the article as the first step towards rethinking of the essence, origins and mechanism for the implementation of the "red terror" from a present-day perspective.

Keywords: *terror, counterrevolution, extraordinary commissions, special departments of Cheka.*

БОЛЬШЕВИСТСКАЯ ДОКТРИНА И ТЕРРОР. ЧРЕЗВЫЧАЙНЫЕ КОМИССИИ В УССР В 1918-1920 ГГ.

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В статье исследуется связь политической доктрины большевиков с проводимым ими террором. Показан процесс создания чекистских органов на Украине в период гражданской войны. Автор рассматривает данную статью как первый шаг к переосмыслению сути «красного террора», его истоков и механизма реализации с позиций сегодняшнего дня.

Ключевые слова: террор, контрреволюция, чрезвычайные комиссии, особые отделы ЧК.

În articol, este studiată o relație între doctrina politică a bolșevicilor și teroarea pe care o foloseau. Este arătat procesul de constituirea agențiilor chekiste în Ucraina în timpul războiului civil. Autorul consideră articolul ca primul pas către re-gândirea esenței, originilor și mecanismului de punere în aplicare a „terorii roșii” dintr-o perspectivă actuală.

Cuvinte-cheie: *teroare, contrarevoluție, comisii extra ordinare, departamente speciale din Cheka.*

Problem setting. Nowadays, as never before, it is of current interest to study the practice of terror in various countries and to trace its interrelation with religious and social doctrines. It is necessary, in this regard, to take a fresh look at domestic historical experience: to research the process of the Soviet power formation in Ukraine, ideological support of the process and implementation mechanism of state terror, on the edge of which the extraordinary commissions were.

State of research. The problem of terror in Ukraine was covered in the works by S.P. Melgunov and many other historians. All noted philosophers, contemporaries of the revolutionary events in Russia and Ukraine, in one way or another, addressed this issue. There

exist studies by S. Dukelskij, M. Latsis, A. Malitskij, Ya. Peters, A. Lunacharskij, N. Bukharin, and other known chekists and party figures. Later on, the process of formation and legal forms of the Extraordinary Commission activity were reflected in the works by L.N. Majmeskulov, A.I. Rogozhin, V.V. Stashis, A.S. Velidov, I.B. Usenko, O.P. Ben'ko, etc.

In modern conditions, the relation of terror and the extraordinary commissions' activity with the Bolshevik ideology should be more clearly traced based on archival documents and analysis of normative base. The author considers the present article as the first step on this way and sets **the task** to demonstrate how the Bolshevik doctrine was implemented, what Chekist agencies and when

were established in Ukraine to suppress the resistance of political opponents of the Bolsheviks.

Basic material. According to a classical Marxism, one of the directions of the activity of a new state (the dictatorship of the proletariat) was supposed to be "the suppression of the resistance on behalf of the overthrown exploitative classes". The civil war and foreign intervention put this function to the forefront, bringing about a number of repressive and punitive bodies. Very quickly, their activity assumed a character of mass terror, from which all strata of the population already suffered.

Philosopher I.A. Iliin infers logical substantiation of the Bolshevik terror from economic and moral unnaturalness of the com-



munist doctrine, denying private property. In his opinion, communism is realizable only through the system of terror, i.e. violently, by force of fear and blood. The philosopher points out its unnaturalness and the fact, that an active and sound instinct can accept it only as a hated yoke, which will be imposed on it by threat, humiliation, hunger and the fear of death. I.A. Il'in emphasizes that the habits of thousands of years, generated by nature itself, cannot be abolished by a simple ban, and the omnipotence of state is possible only where people are totally intimidated. He believes that it is impossible "of people's free will" to overcome the resistance of the masses and to destroy the historically developed way of life, especially if one is to achieve a rapid "revolutionary pace". The destruction of hostile classes is unrealizable on paper: it inevitably leads to the mass killing of people. He concludes that the abolition of private property requires flows of human blood and brings to a system of terror [1, p. 123].

However, it is erroneous to reduce the problem of terror and violence only to the activities of the Bolsheviks aimed at implementing their political policy. Revolution and civil war were preceded by a world war when death became usual, and the value of human life was diminished. Deeper causes of terror and violence involve weakening religious feelings and legal consciousness of the ruling class and the people. There is an illustration given by A.I. Denikin, where an officer without permission quartered a company in the church, and the altar he converted into a closet, and several thousand Russian Orthodox people were indifferent to the desecration and violation of the sacred place [2, p. 79-80].

The unsolved problem with peasants should be particularly mentioned. Thus, N.A. Berdy-aeu, a contemporary of I.A. Il'in, noted that the Russian revolution was possible only as an agrarian one, relying primarily on the peasants' dissatisfaction and their long-standing hatred against noble landowners and bureaucrats. In the Russian peasantry, the memories of the horrors of serfdom and the humiliation of the human dignity of the peasants have not disappeared yet. The peasants were ready to avenge their forefathers. According to the philosopher, It was the agrarian nature of the revolution that, in the philosopher's opinion, made possible the establishment of "a dictatorship of the idea of the proletariat", which turned out to be "a dictatorship over the peasantry" as well [3, p. 111].

On the eve of the abolition of serfdom, Karl Marx predicted that if the real emancipation of the peasantry was not realized, the Russian year 1793 (he meant the Jacobin dictatorship in France) would come, and foresaw that dominion of the terror of those "semi-Asian" bonded peasants would be unprecedented in history [4, p. 701]. When 1917 came, the Bolsheviks, after the seizure of power, used all the power of terror to hold it, taking into account the Jacobins' experience. Even before the October coup (revolution) G.V. Plekhanov repeatedly accused V.I. Lenin of Blanquism (conspiracy), since in the current political situation he recommended to seize power by the example of the French National Convention [5, p. 54]. Calling the Convention "dictatorship of the lower classes", V.I. Lenin persistently supported the methods of terror that this dictatorship used against "the enemies of the people", without denying that imitates the Jacobins in 1793 [6, p. 216].

It did not worry the leader of the Bolsheviks that almost any Frenchman could be seen as "an enemy of the people", which was punished in all cases with the death penalty and that innocent people were often [7, p. 238-240]. Apparently, he was satisfied with Zh.-Zh. Danton's justification that the revolution can not be carried out in terms of geometry and the burden of revolutionary measures falls even on ordinary citizens [8, p. 95]. The work, similar to that carried out by the Committees of Public Rescue and Public Security accountable to the Convention, in Russia and Ukraine during the early years of the Bolsheviks rule, was carried out by the revolutionary military committees and other special agencies established by the revolutionary committees and councils. At the local level, investigative legal departments or headquarters attached to military revolutionary committees were set up for combating counter-revolution; commissioners were appointed to deal with sabotage, speculation, and other especially dangerous crimes. Those bodies were led by the Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee, which operation also extended to the territory of Ukraine [9, p. 32-55, 62, 63].

During the Civil War, punitive functions were also performed by revolutionary tribunals, chairmen of executive committees and secretaries of provincial committees, retreat-blocking and food-requisition detachments, special commissioners of the party's Central Committee and VTsIK (in Ukraine - VUTsIK). The terror was carried out by the Red Army and detachments of the "revolutionary" sailors, left-wing Socialist Revolutionists and all kinds of anarchists. Bolshevik detachments often went out of control. It was informed in the information



report The information summary for the first half of October 1920, regarding the Kiev province, read that the units of the First Cavalry Army of Budionyj, while marching throughout the province, burned houses, undressed the local inhabitants straight on the streets, regardless whether they were the poor of rich, Jew or Ukrainian, removed the rings from their fingers, robbed of money, raped young ladies, searched for the communists, commissars, and militiamen to inflict reprisals [10, д. 59а, л. 1]. Thus, separate military units also acted as bodies of terror. The White Guards committed such actions as well. The Red Terror and White one merged into one flow of violence [11].

They could declare as counter-revolutionists not only those who supported the restoration of the Monarchy, but also the Bolsheviks' political opponents, and even workers (in this context, a prominent example is the shooting of the demonstration defended the Constituent Assembly). Any resistance to the communist regime from the peasantry could also be considered as counter-revolution, but more often classified as political banditry.

The All-Ukrainian Extraordinary Commission became a special agency for combating counter-revolution in Ukraine. The Bolsheviks used the VUCheka not only to suppress and prevent any resistance to the Soviet rule but also to combat contraband, speculation, banditry and other purely criminal offences. To maintain discipline within the fast-growing State machinery, a peculiar threat was also required. Eventually, the new state, like any other, needed its secret services capable to carry out reconnaissance and counterespionage.

The VUCheka was formed almost a year after the establishment

of the All-Russian Cheka and Ukraine took into account the experience of the KGB organs of the RSFSR. They used the directive and regulatory materials of the CC RCP/b/, the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR, the Cheka, and other Russian bodies. The All-Ukrainian Cheka acted in unity with the Cheka, Russian personnel took part in its staffing. Plenipotentiaries of the Moscow Cheka, M.Ya. Latsis, from April 1919, and V.N. Mantsev, from December 1919 to 1922, held the post of a chairman of the VUCheka [12, p. 39, 40, 57]. The leadership of the Communist Party, which controlled all state bodies, including the Cheka, was uniform for Russia and Ukraine, and they considered the entire territory on which the Soviet rule was established to be a base for the world revolution.

In August 1918 there was the beginning of the Ukrainian extraordinary commissions' creation in the Kursk province and some Ukrainian territories adjacent to the RSFSR [13, p. 20, 22, 23]. After the restoration of the Soviet rule on the territory of Ukraine at the end of 1918, this process accelerated. On November 28, 1918, the Provisional Workers'-Peasants' Government of Ukraine adopted a resolution «On the organization of local power», which provided for the creation of local bodies of Cheka [14, № 1, art. 3], and the decree of December 3, 1918, established the All-Ukrainian Extraordinary Commission [14, №1, art. 7].

The following normative acts were important for the creation of organizational forms of the VUCheka and its local bodies: the resolution of the NKVD of Ukraine «On the Organization of Administrative Departments at Executive Committees» adopted in February 1919 [[14, № 6, art.

184]], the provision «On the All-Ukrainian and Local Extraordinary Commissions», adopted by a joint decision of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee, the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR, the NKVD of the Ukrainian SSR and the All-Ukrainian Extraordinary Commission on May 30, 1919 [13, p. 87], approved on July 4, 1919 by the Presidium of VUCheka «Instructions for the organization of extraordinary commissions in provinces for combatting counter-revolution, espionage and banditry.»

The Government of Ukraine appointed a chairman of VUCheka and his deputies. The chairman of VUCheka headed a board of seven persons approved by the NKVD. The chairman of the All-Ukrainian Cheka was a member of the board of the NKVD with a casting vote. The central office of VUCheka consisted of the secret, field, nonresident and instructor departments, the auditing board, the department for foreign control, subdivisions of information and communications, and the transport and commandant departments [12, p. 43,49-50].

Local extraordinary commissions were established at the respective councils as departments. Executive Committees appointed the Cheka's staff, and the VUCheka approved chairmen. The highest bodies of the Cheka had the right to send their representatives with a casting vote to the lower ones and to suspend, cancel or change the decisions of local extraordinary commissions.

The composition of the local Cheka often included random people, careerists, and people with criminal psychology. Such employees, especially in the periphery, were engaged in extortion, robbery, and outright banditry, terrorizing the population and dis-



crediting the Soviet regime. It was for this reason that the uyezd (district) extraordinary commissions, having not yet formed properly, were completely abolished by the decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR «On some changes in the organization and competence of the Cheka» of May 21, 1919 [13, p. 84-85]. Their cases were transferred to the provinces' extraordinary commissions. The extraordinary commissions were left only in Berdichev, Cherkasy, Konotop, Kremenchuk, Romny, Aleksandrovsk, Pavlograd, Proskurov and some other uyezds (districts). Instead of the liquidated uyezd (district) extraordinary commissions, there were secret subdivisions created at the administrative departments of the uyezd (district) executive committees, which were later replaced by political bureaus at the uyezd (district) police stations. The functions of the bureau included mainly search work.

In succeeding years, the network of extraordinary commissions expanded as well through the establishment of military and branch bodies of the Cheka. In Russia, on the Eastern Front establishing of the military extraordinary commissions started in July 1918, and on the Southern one in November that year. By the end of the year, there were front-line, navy and army Cheka almost in the entire front-line forces. Divisions, brigades and separate military units, the posts of commissars of the army Cheka were introduced. The activities of the commission were supervised by the Military Subdivision of the VUCheka, established on June 29, 1918, which was an organizational subdivision of the department for [15, p. 26-28].

On December 19, 1918, by a decision of the CC RCPb, the military extraordinary commissions

were combined with the military supervisory bodies. They formed a Special Department in the Center, as an integral part of the system of organs of the Cheka. There were also Special Departments formed on the fronts, in the navy, in the armies and military command districts, as well as at the extraordinary commissions in provinces. Their structure was regulated by the decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee "On Special Departments at the Cheka", published on February 21, 1919 [9, p. 259-262]. Under an agreement with the government of the RSFSR, special departments of the Cheka were also operating in Ukraine until the spring of 1919. In March, the regulation "On Special Departments at the All-Ukrainian Extraordinary Commission" was adopted. The text of the regulation set up the exclusive rights of the Cheka to provide general guidance for Ukrainian special departments [12, p. 48].

On May 6, 1919, the Government of Ukraine adopted a new provision on the Special Department at the All-Ukrainian Extraordinary Commission, which worked under the supervision of the Southern Front Revolutionary Military Council. As the head of the Special Department, one of the members of the VUCheka board was appointed in agreement with the Revolutionary Military Council, which also had the right to run for the office. Where it happened, it was subject to approval by the central Chekist body of Ukraine [13, p. 67-69].

Under conditions of war, army special departments and military control points were formed at the front and provincial special departments at the rear. In May 1918, border extraordinary commissions started to be created in the RSFSR, and in September all provin-

cial and uyezd (district) extraordinary commissions located along the demarcation line, in turn, were renamed into border ones and divided into okrug, district and point commissions. A special border department was established as part of the Cheka. The Russian border extraordinary commissions also operated at the border between the RSFSR and Ukraine, when the territory of the Ukrainian SSR was occupied by Austro-German troops. As the territory of Ukraine was liberated, control of the border between the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR became unnecessary. According to the decree of the Cheka of December 12, 1918, and the decree of the Government of Ukraine of December 27, 1918, all border extraordinary commissions of this region were placed under control of the Ukrainian SSR. Their personnel were used to form the front-line extraordinary commissions [13, p. 30-32].

Transport Cheka appeared in the RSFSR in 1918. They were charged with a task to fight against counter-revolution, sabotage and speculation on railroad transport [16, p. 112, 131]. Transport Cheka appeared in the RSFSR in 1918. They were charged with a task to fight against counter-revolution, sabotage and speculation on railroad transport. In Ukraine, for the first time, such bodies were created in 1919. They were being built taking into account the railway management organization. These were three regional transport Cheka: Yekaterinoslavskaya, Southwestern and South-Donetsk, which were subordinate to the transport department of the Central Directorate of Emergency Commissions. The provincial extraordinary commissions exercised control over the activities of the transport Cheka within the territory of the province [17, p.



80-81]. Cheka bodies were also created on water transport.

In **conclusion**, it should be noted, that in Ukraine in August 1919, due to the difficult wartime situation, the Soviet state apparatus, including the extraordinary commission, was abolished. In the late 1919 - early 1920, there was a restoration of the Soviet regime in the form of revolutionary committees. The Office of Extraordinary Commissions and Special Departments affiliated with the All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee was organized. By the Decree of the VUTsIK of March 17, 1920, this body was transformed into the Central Office of Extraordinary Commissions for Combatting Counter-Revolution, Speculation and Crimes in Office [18, №5, art. 72]. The head of this body was appointed by the government of the Ukrainian SSR. All Cheka on the territory of the republic were directly subordinate to him. In 1920 machinery of the uyezd (district) Cheka mainly consisted of extraordinary commissions in provinces. Uyezd (district) extraordinary commissions, as a rule, were no longer created; they were replaced by political bureaus. The Central Office of the Emergency Commissions did not exist long, and on March 30, 1921, by a resolution of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee, it was again transformed into the All-Ukrainian Extraordinary Commission [13, p. 272].

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