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THE BREAK-UP OF THE RUSSIAN CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATION EVACUATED FROM THE KINGDOM OF POLAND IN 1917–1919¹

The question of the functioning of the customs administration (local structures of the Ministry of Finance Customs Duties Department (MFCDD) evacuated from the Kingdom of Poland in the context of the realities of the political processes taking place in Russia in 1917–1918 has so far provoked no interest either in Poland or abroad. These issues are important because both the February Revolution and the Bolshevik coup caused a gradual dismantling of the Kingdom of Poland's customs administration and its absorption by the customs apparatus of Soviet Russia. Especially important was also the lot of customs officials who, refusing to serve “under the red banner”, decided to take up employment in the administrative apparatus of the states that arose upon the ruins of the Russian Empire.

The customs administration in the Kingdom of Poland was the first structure to be evacuated from the area of Russia's potential military confrontation with Germany and Austria-Hungary.² Several months before the outbreak of the war (WW1), there were 85 operating customs offices in the Kingdom of Poland (Chancellery of the Warsaw Customs Division Inspector, customs houses, customs sub-chambers, crossings, and customs posts), in which at least 1865 people were employed.³ The evacuation took

¹ The present article was created as an outcome of a research project of the National Science Centre, Poland: No. 2015/19/B/HS3/01132, entitled *Customs administration in the Kingdom of Poland in the years 1851–1914. Competences – structures – people*.

² See: A. Górak, K. Latawiec, *The Evacuation of the Customs Administration from the Kingdom of Poland to Russia in 1914*, “Quaestio Rossica” 2022, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 423–439.

³ The Warsaw Customs Division had operated in the Kingdom of Poland, with an inspector in charge. Within its jurisdiction there were 46 customs officials. Moreover, 19 customs officials operating in the Łomża and Suwałki governorates (guberniyas) were subordinate to the Vilnius Customs Division Inspector. This was also the case with 18 customs offices operating in the territory of the Chełm, Kielce, Lublin, Piotrków and Radom governorates, which were subordinated to the South-Western Customs Division Inspector. The Warsaw Customs

place in the last days of July 1914. Customs offices (financial resources, movables, documents) together with the employees and their families were placed in many cities in the European part of Russia, far away from the potential military threat from the armies of the Central States.⁴ In anticipation of changes in the military initiative and the possible end of the military conflict, from the moment of evacuation until the beginning of 1917, the offices in question were half-operative⁵ or inoperative.⁶ The lack of military successes as well as the deepening internal crises manifested in protests triggered by the impoverishment of society resulted in the overthrow of autocracy in Russia. In mid-March 1917 central authority fell into the hands of the Provisional Government, which, however, was restricted in its activity by the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies.⁷ The seizure of power by the Provisional Government did not at all improve the general living conditions of Russian society. In foreign policy, the new Russian government continued the previous line developed under the rule of the old regime. This meant the further waging of the war in the hope of success in late spring or summer 1917. The Provisional Government wanted to fulfil its international agreement with the Entente powers. It was aware that only an unwaveringly continued alliance with France and Great Britain could guarantee final victory in the war and the preservation or even expansion of Russia's borders of late July 1914. In its internal policy, a distinct breakthrough was noticeable. The process of broad democratisation began to progress at different levels of public life, together with respect for civil liberties.⁸ In the first months of its activity, the new government in Russia unexpectedly decided to solve the question of the evacuated state administration structures from the Kingdom

Office was directly under the jurisdiction of the MFCD Director. Latvijas Valsts Vēstures Arhīvs [hereinafter: LVVA], Fonds 545, Apraksts 2, Lieta 27, List 37v-44; "Указатель Правительственных Распоряжений по Министерству Финансов" (Index of Government Orders for the Ministry of Finance) [hereinafter: "UPRMF"], 1913, no. 2, pp. 72-74, 76, 81-83, 85; *Смета доходов, расходов и специальных средств Департамента Таможенных Сборов на 1914 год* (Estimated income, expenses and special funds of the Department of Customs Duties for 1914), Санкт Петербург 1913, pp. 83, 81-110, 148; *Личный состав Департамента Таможенных Сборов и учреждений таможенного ведомства (кроме застав и постов). По сведениям до 21 Января 1914 года* (Personnel of the Department of Customs Duties and institutions of the customs department (except for outposts and posts). According to information up to 21 January 1914), Санкт Петербург 1914; *Личный состав учреждений таможенного ведомства. По сведениям Департамента до 6 Марта 1914 года* (The personnel of the institutions of the customs department; according to the Department, until 6 March 1914), Санкт Петербург 1914; A. Górak, K. Latawiec, *Rosyjska administracja specjalna w Królestwie Polskim 1839-1918*, Lublin 2015, pp. 92-95, 114-115, 163.

⁴ Государственный архив Российской Федерации [hereinafter: GARF], Fond R-1041, Opis 1, Delo 852, 854; *Список адресов эвакуированных правительственных и общественных учреждений и должностных лиц* (List of addresses of evacuated government and public institutions and officials), Москва 1916, pp. 104-110.

⁵ Offices operated with a limited number of full-time personnel. The remaining officials were transferred to other customs agencies or were assigned to military administration. There was a tendency not to appoint new officials to vacant posts from August 1914 to the end of 1916. GARF, Fond R-1041, Opis 1, Delo 852, 854; "UPRMF" 1914-1916.

⁶ The operation of offices was entirely terminated, their personnel having been assigned to other tasks (in military or customs administration). GARF, Fond R-1041, Opis 1, Delo 852, 854.

⁷ See: M. Heller, A. Niekricz, *Utopia u władzy. Historia Związku Sowieckiego*, vol. 1, *Od narodzin do wielkości*, trans. A. Mietkowski, Warsaw 2016; R. Pipes, *Rewolucja rosyjska*, trans. T. Szafar, Warsaw 2006.

⁸ On the internal policy of the Provisional Government in Russia, see: *Ibid.*

of Poland, which had been placed in the interior of the Empire. A manifestation of the government's activity in the field was the establishment on 15/28 March 1917 of the Liquidation Commission for the Kingdom of Poland. This institution, chaired by a Polish lawyer Aleksander Lednicki, was, inter alia, to prepare, in consultation with the authorities of individual ministries, the order of the liquidation of the state administration agencies evacuated from the territory of the Warsaw Governorate-General.⁹ Worth noting is that two days later the Provisional Government issued a proclamation concerning the sovereignty of the Polish state.¹⁰ The Provisional Government vigorously began to carry out the idea of dismantling the administrative structures evacuated from the Kingdom of Poland. Already at its sitting of 20 March 1917 a decision was taken to set up an Interdepartmental Conference concerning the further fate of the evacuated agencies of various departments from the Kingdom of Poland's governorates. The task of the Conference, operating under the chairmanship of the minister of internal affairs, would be to prepare guidelines for the liquidation of the evacuated offices. The guidelines would be handed down to the Liquidation Commission for the Kingdom of Poland for approval.¹¹ On 23 April 1917 the Provisional Government published an act that sanctioned the participation of representatives of central departments, including the Finance Ministry, as members of the Liquidation Commission.¹² During the next months the Liquidation Commission began to collect the appropriate information on the offices of all the departments which had been evacuated from the Kingdom of Poland and were to be closed down. Relevant documents concerning movables and immovables, financial resources, as well as personnel, were also obtained from the boards of the Warsaw Customs Division (WaCD), the Vilnius Customs Division (VCD) and the South-Western Customs Division (SWCD.) The work of the Liquidation Commission was also supported by the heads of the Kingdom of Poland's governorates. Moreover, actions were specified aimed at financially supporting the state administration officials who were condemned to lose their basic and sometimes only maintenance following the liquidation of the offices. Worth noting is that the customs offices operating in the Chełm governorate (Krzyszów Customs House (hereafter CH), the Podmajdan Customs Post, the Tomaszów CH, and the Podbełżec Customs Post) were excluded from the closedown preparations.¹³

⁹ "Вестник Временного Правительства" (Bulletin of the Provisional Government) 1917, no. 10(56), p. 1; *Сборник указов и постановлений Временного Правительства*, Выпуск 1, 27 Февраля – 5 Мая 1917 г. (Collection of decrees and resolutions of the Provisional Government, Issue 1, February 27 – May 5, 1917), Петроград 1917, pp. 273–274; W. Toporowicz, *Sprawa polska w polityce rosyjskiej 1914–1917*, Warsaw 1973, pp. 297–298.

¹⁰ "Вестник Временного Правительства" 1917, no. 11(57), p. 1; W. Toporowicz, *Sprawa...*, pp. 275–276.

¹¹ *Журналы заседаний Временного Правительства*, том 1, Март – апрель 1917 года (Journals of meetings of the Provisional Government, volume 1, March – April 1917), сост. Е.Д. Гринько, О.В. Лавинская, ред. Б.Ф. Додонов, Москва 2001, pp. 140, 150.

¹² "Вестник Временного Правительства", 1917, no. 28(74), p. 1; *Сборник указов...*, p. 288; W. Toporowicz, *Sprawa...*, p. 299.

¹³ GARE, Fond R–1041, Opis 1, Delo 852, passim; Archiwum Państwowe Białymstoku Oddział w Łomży, Mazowiecki Zarząd Powiatowy, Delo 1127, List 27–30; K. Latawiec, *Inteligencja urzędnicza Królestwa Polskiego i Imperium Rosyjskiego wobec nowej rzeczywistości. Wybory byłych urzędników carskich po 1917 roku*, in: *Rok 1918. Odrodzona Polska i Sowiecka Rosja w nowej Europie*, vol. 2, ed. by L. Zasztowt, J. Szumski, Warsaw 2019, pp. 247–248.

Table: Personnel Movement in the Customs Administration Evacuated from the Kingdom of Poland in 1917

Year	1917 (until 30 August / 12 September)
Appointments within the evacuated customs administration of the Kingdom of Poland	21
Appointments from the evacuated customs offices to customs offices operating outside the Kingdom of Poland	19
Appointments from the customs administration outside the Kingdom of Poland to the evacuated customs offices	9
Customs officers transferred from their posts to retirement	4
Deaths of customs officers while on duty	9

* The data in the Table does not take into account appointments to the lowest positions of chancellery clerks and customs attendants, which fell within the remit of the directors of customs houses. Such appointments did not take place during the presented period.

Source: DAKO, Fond 292, Opys 2, Sprava 359; Eesti Rahvusarhiiv Tartus, EAA.2481.1.17; LVVA, Fonds 4935, Apraksts 4, Lieta 108; "UPRMF" 1917.

Despite preparations for the liquidation of the evacuated customs offices from the Kingdom of Poland, measures taken in relation to the clerical personnel from the end of August 1914 were not abandoned. Employees continued to be transferred to the customs administration agencies operating at different sections of the state's borders.¹⁴ As can be observed in the foregoing Table, there was a decline in the number of customs personnel caused by various factors compared to the previous years. The MFCDD decided to fill the resulting vacancies by transferring some officers from customs structures located at other border sections and by promoting those already employed in the offices in question.¹⁵ At the request of the MFCDD Director in 1917, the Finance Minister took over a dozen decisions resulting in changes to the full-time job structure of the customs offices in Russia. It should be emphasised at once that the Finance Ministry authorities did not want a total break-up of the evacuated customs offices because of the possibility of their full re-activation in case of the final victory of the Entente states, with the restoration of customs supervision in the conditions of a stabilised international situation. Several changes to full-time jobs in customs administration affected the administrative agencies in question. Three full-time positions were liquidated in the Szczypiorno CH (bookkeeper, assistant superintendent of the customs warehouse, and a category-five controller) while four jobs of WaCD assistant inspectors were transferred as follows: two landed at SWCD, one to

¹⁴ GARE, Fond 1459, Opis 1, Delo 286, List 8v–9; Fond 1777, Opis 1, Delo 92, 96, 99; Fond R–1041, Opis 1, Delo 854, List 19–19v; "UPRMF" 1917.

¹⁵ Державний архів Київської області [hereinafter: DAKO], Fond 292, Opys 2, Sprava 359; LVVA, Fonds 4935, Apraksts 4, Lieta 108.

the Petrograd Customs Division, and one to the Odessa Customs Division.¹⁶ It should be observed that the democratisation of the internal structure of administration institutions gave officers occupying lower positions the right to control the functioning of the whole office. Such activities often led to jurisdiction disputes, mobbing, blackmail, and even the use of violence. Wishing to avoid the crisis situation that was arising, on 5 May 1917 the MFCDD sent a circular letter to customs inspectors and directors of first-class customs houses, in which it recommended the establishment of mixed commissions (committees) associating representatives of employees of all levels of the customs offices in order to discuss and solve all problems connected with the functioning of these agencies. However, the emergent committees were unable to regulate all issues arising from official relations in individual customs offices. Hence the idea appeared of creating an all-Russian organisation associating officers of the customs administration structures: it was backed up in early August by MFCDD Director Sergei Grinwald.¹⁷ Within the next two weeks representatives were elected to the All-Russian Congress of Customs Officials, prepared in Petrograd. The Congress, held between 14 and 29 September 1917, was attended by 136 delegates representing 41 customs offices. A six-person-strong representation of the evacuated customs agencies was also present. One of the most important decisions of the Congress was the establishment of the All-Russian Union of Customs Officials and the approval of its statute. Alexei Smirnov, first-rank controller, Warsaw CH,¹⁸ was elected one of the Vice-Chairmen of the Union. The union declared itself a non-party organization, not intending to participate in the political life of Russia at the time; however, the events in the nearest months showed how difficult it was to for Union members to avoid being involved in political activities.

Unexpectedly, in early November 1917, the Bolsheviks led by Vladimir Lenin (Ulyanov) overthrew the Provisional Government. As a result of the political coup, a new government was constituted – the Soviet of People’s Commissars (SPC), which, despite far-reaching populist promises (declaration of peace, handing over land to peasants, granting rights to independence to nations inhabiting Russia) in the first weeks of its existence, did not gain wide support from Russian society. Especially problematic for the Bolshevik government was the resistance of officials in central departments (ministries) concentrated in Petrograd. First of all, representatives of the Finance Ministry and Central Bank refused to put themselves at the disposal of the new authorities, i.e. the People’s Commissariat of Finance. They did not recognize the government, which took over power in the aftermath

¹⁶ *Сборник узаконений и циркуляров по таможенной части за 1917 год* (Collection of legalisations and circulars on the customs part for 1917), Петроград 1918, pp. XVIII, XXXIX, XLVI.

¹⁷ Н.А. Беляева, *Таможенные учреждения Приамурья в 1917 г.: общественная жизнь и профессиональная деятельность* (Customs Institutions of the Amur Region in 1917: Public Life and Professional Activities), “Гуманитарные исследования в Восточной Сибири и на Дальнем Востоке” 2017, no. 4, pp. 89–91. DOI: 10.24866/1997-2857/2017-4/87-93; С. Дейнеко, *Всероссийська спілка митних службовців у 1917 році* (All-Russian Union of Customs Officials in 1917), “Вісник Харківського національного університету імені В.Н. Каразіна. Серія «Історія»” 2014, no. 49, pp. 58–59.

¹⁸ *Первый Всероссийский съезд таможенных служащих 1–16 сент. 1917 г.* (First All-Russian Congress of Customs Officers 1–16 Sept. 1917), Петроград 1917; *Положения относящиеся к организации Всероссийского союза служащих таможенного ведомства* (Provisions related to the organization of the All-Russian Union of Customs Employees), Петроград 1917; С. Дейнеко, *Всероссийська ...*, p. 60.

of a military coup and stopped their work taking strike action (27 October/9 November). A resolute anti-Bolshevik attitude was also taken by the personnel of the MFCDD, which was part of the Ministry of Finance. They also joined the strike, which meant that it was impossible for Lenin's government to take over control over the local structures of customs administration.¹⁹ It appeared that the boycott of the Bolshevik government by the officials of the MFCDD headquarters would last for a long time. However, after several weeks the Soviet of People's Commissars managed to find remedial measures. It was assisted by the personnel of the local structures of customs administration, including the offices evacuated from the Kingdom of Poland. On 10 January 1918, by using different means of persuasion, the Bolsheviks brought about the appointment of a provisional body (Provisional Board), whose task was to manage the MFCDD. The Provisional Board of MFCDD consisted of: Konstantin Stefanov (Assistant Inspector of the Petrograd Customs Division), Ivan Veselov (Superintendent of ships, of the Petrograd CH), Timofey Velikhov (the Sosnowiec CH Director) and Alfons Staude (third-rank controller in the Warsaw CH). It was chaired by Vincent Kopaitich (previous Assistant Director of Białoostrow CH, who was elected on 12 January 1918 by the Central Executive Committee and by the local divisions of the All-Russian Union of Customs Officials. By the decision of the People's Finance Commissar, this official was confirmed as the Commissar of MFCDD and its Finance Customs Duties Department. Kopaitich actually became the department's "director", whose competence included the right to sign orders and circulars issued for all the structures of customs administration in Russia²⁰. The above-mentioned members of the Provisional Board were entrusted with managing the MFCDD's divisions, whereas other specialist posts in those divisions and in the MFCDD Chancellery were manned by officials who approved of the existence of the Soviet of People's Commissars.²¹ The foregoing measures meant the dismissal of the previous officers employed at MFCDD headquarters. This happened under the orders of the People's Finance Commissar issued on 23 and 26 February 1918. All opponents holding key jobs in the MFCDD were dismissed from their posts retroactively (6 and 11 January 1918) or resigned because of illness, inter alia, the MFCDD Director S. Grinwald (13 February 1918).²² This paved the way for the assumption of the MFCDD's management on 1 March 1918 by the aforementioned V. Kopaitich, who was loyal to the Soviet of People's Commissars RKL.²³ Worth noting

¹⁹ See: M. Heller, A. Niekricz, *Utopia...*; R. Pipes, *Rewolucja...*; С. Дейнеко, *Всероссийська ...*, pp. 61–62.

²⁰ Taking into consideration the methods of pacifying the resistance of officials of the central administration authorities in Petrograd, one can only conjecture how the MFCDD Commissar and Provisional Council were appointed. "Таможенный Вестник" (Customs Bulletin) [hereinafter: "TV"] 1918, no. 1, p. 2. It is worth noting that by mid-September 1917 V. Kopaitich was connected with the aforementioned customs administration in the Kingdom of Poland because for 4.5 years he had held the post of Assistant Director of the Aleksandrów CH. DAKO, Fond 292, Opys 1, Sprava 7, List 69v; Sprava 46, List 30v, 33v; "UPRMF" 1917, no. 39, p. 610.

²¹ Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas [hereinafter: LVIA], Fondas 551, Apyrašas 1, Bylos 330, List 1v–2; "TV" 1918, no. 1, pp. 2–3.

²² LVIA, Fondas 551, Apyrašas 1, Bylos 330, List 18v; "TV" 1918, no. 5, p. 36; "Газета Рабочего и Крестьянского Правительства" (Newspaper of the Workers' and Peasants' Government) 1918, no. 33(78), p. 1.

²³ LVIA, Fondas 551, Apyrašas 1, Bylos 330, List 18v; "TV" 1918, no. 5, p. 36; "Газета Рабочего и Крестьянского Правительства" 1918, no. 42(87), p. 1.

is that those decisions began the process of a personnel purge in the local structures of the MFCDD, including those evacuated from the Kingdom of Poland: inter alia, Vasily Cherniavsky was dismissed from the post of the Szczypiorno CH Director.²⁴ Interesting was also the personnel strength of the customs structures evacuated from the Kingdom of Poland in early 1918. According to the official data of 8 February that year, in the structures in question there were 30 vacancies, of which as many as 14 managerial posts were not filled (inter alia, 2 divisional customs inspectors).²⁵ When discussing the process of subordinating the MFCDD to the authority of the SPC, attention should be drawn to the issue of incorporating this agency into the structures of Soviet governing authorities. First, on 29 May 1918, a decree of the SPC was issued, under which all customs offices were subordinated to the MFCDD under the supervision of the People's Commissariat of Finance. Soon, under the decree of 29 June 1918, the MFCDD was transformed into the Main Customs Control Administration (MCCA) and transferred under the jurisdiction of the People's Commissariat of Trade and Industry.²⁶ One of the crucial actions taken by the Lenin-led Soviet of People's Commissars was the conclusion of peace with the Central States. This specific implementation of the "Decree of Peace" was meant to enable the consolidation of power of the Bolshevik government in Russia by focusing on the elimination of all sources of political opposition which did not accept the Provisional Government. In the first half of December 1917 peace negotiations began in Brest-Litovsk between the delegations of the Central States and the Russian (Bolshevik) delegation. The negotiations, under fairly difficult political circumstances, lasted almost three months and ended with two serious results for our discussion. To maintain chronology, first, on 9 February, 1918 the German Empire and Austria-Hungary, having signed an agreement with the Ukrainian People's Republic, recognized it and accepted its borders. Then, after several weeks, a separatist peace agreement was signed by Bolshevik Russia, which also meant the recognition by the Central States of the new Russian leftist government in the international arena.²⁷ On 3 March 1918 the new line of the western and southern frontier of the Russian Federative Soviet Socialist Republic (RFSSR) was delineated, which meant the need to restore customs administration in peace conditions. Work on the restoration of customs supervision was begun in late January 1918 and was a clear sign of the normalisation of the international situation in that part of Europe. Between 28 January and 2 February 1918, a commission operated in the pacified MFCDD, set up to draft the principles of the organisation of provisional customs houses on Russia's western border. It was decided that if they were established, they would be located on the main communications routes (railway lines and roads) that did not suffer disruption as a result of the

²⁴ LVIA, Fondas 551, Апыраšas 1, Bylos 330, List 18v; "TV" 1918, no. 5, p. 36.

²⁵ LVIA, Fondas 551, Апыраšas 1, Bylos 330, List 9; "TV" 1918, no. 2–3, p. 17.

²⁶ *Собрание узаконений и распоряжений правительства за 1917–1918 гг.* (Collection of legalizations and orders of the government for 1917–1918), Москва 1942, pp. 650–651; *Декреты советской власти*, том II, 17 марта – 10 июля 1918 г. (Decrees of the Soviet Power, Volume II, March 17 – July 10, 1918), Москва 1959, pp. 340–341, 516–517.

²⁷ R. Pipes, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 596–626; M. Mirowski, *Rola Lwa Trockiego podczas rozmów pokojowych w Brześciu Litewskim*, "Piotrkowskie Zeszyty Historyczne", vol. 7–8, 2005/2006, pp. 81–115.

war. Places of their possible location were even singled out but the break-off of peace negotiations and the German offensive commenced on 17 February 1918 resulted in the shift of the borders to the east.²⁸ Several weeks after the conclusion of the Brest Treaty, a decision was made to establish a provisional border supervision on the functioning demarcation line. This was meant to prevent duty-free goods traffic and to control the movement of ordinary passengers and refugees crossing the borderline. By the circular of 27 May 1918 dispatched to local customs structures, the MFCDD ordered that officials from the evacuated customs offices should take part in establishing customs structures at the functioning demarcation line. The circular also indicated the names of new customs offices and their locations. New agencies would bear the names of these frontier customs supervision points with their number defined with an Arabic numeral and were as follows: no. 1 (Yamburg), no. 2 (Toroshino railway station), no. 3 (Karamyshevo railway station), no. 4 (Novosokolniki railway station), no. 5 (Nevel), no. 6 (Vitebsk) and no. 7 (Orsha)²⁹. This decision clearly showed the will to use the administrative agencies under discussion to store up the new border and customs supervision.

The building of the full structure of customs offices on the western border of the RFSSR took place as late as in August 1918. Under the 29 June 1918 decree of the People's Commissar of Trade and Industry, after an earlier consultation with the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, an opportunity arose to transfer the offices from Russia's "old" western frontier to the "new" borderline. This meant obtaining full consent to re-establish the offices evacuated from the Warsaw Governorate-General, and from the Volhynia, Podolia, Kovno (Kaunas) governorates and the Baltic governorates (Courland, Livonia and Estland), in entirely new locations.³⁰ At this point the question arises: when and to what extent was customs administrative supervision re-established on the new border of the RFSSR? On 23 August 1918, by the decision of the People's Commissar of Trade and Industry, a provisional customs administration was set up on the border (demarcation line) with Finland, with the territories under the German rule, and with the Ukrainian People's Republic. These customs administrative units were based on the customs regulations of 1912 (which had introduced a new structure of customs administration agencies). At the end of August 1918 the following structures were set up: the Petrograd Customs Division, Velikiye Luki Customs Division (headquarters located in Velikiye Luki) established after the transformation of the Vilnius CD, the Smolensk Customs Division (with its headquarters in Smolensk) after the transformation of the Warsaw CD, the South-Western Customs Division (with the headquarters transferred from Radivilov to Kursk), and the Black Sea Customs Division (with the headquarters transferred from Odessa to Novorossiysk). In the area of each customs division there operated customs supervision units numbered with Arabic numerals. They were established as a result of the following transformations: the Wierzbołów CH was transformed

²⁸ LVIA, Fondas 551, Apyrašas 1, Bylos 330, List 10v–11; "TV" 1918, no. 2–3, pp. 20–21; R. Pipes *Rewolucja...*, pp. 616–617.

²⁹ LVIA, Fondas 551, Apyrašas 1, Bylos 330, List 44v; "TV" 1918, no. 11, p. 88; no. 16–17, p. 141.

³⁰ "TV" 1918, no. 16–17, p. 141.

into Customs Supervision no. 5 of the Velikiye Luki Customs Division (with its headquarters in Nevel), Warsaw CH into Customs Supervision no. 6 of the Velikiye Luki Customs Division (in Vitebsk), Aleksandrów CH into Customs Supervision no. 7 of the Smolensk Customs Division (in Orsha), Mława CH into Customs Supervision no. 8 of the Smolensk Customs Division (in Mohylev/Mogilev), Szczypiorno CH into Customs Supervision no. 9 of the Smolensk Customs Division (Zernovo railway station of the Moscow-Kiev-Voronezh Railway), Sosnowiec CH into Customs Supervision no. 10 of the South-Western Customs Division (Zhelobovka railway station of the Moscow-Kiev-Voronezh Railway), and Granica CH into Customs Supervision no. 11 (Prokhorovka railway station of the Kursk-Kharkov-Sevastopol Railway).³¹ As can be observed, the re-establishment of customs administration entailed the direct restoration of the activities of seven customs houses from the Kingdom of Poland.

The question arises: what was the fate of the other customs offices evacuated from the Warsaw Governorate-General? The aforementioned decision by the People's Commissar of Trade and Industry specified that the other first- and second-class customs houses, customs sub-chambers and customs posts that were part of the Vilnius CD, Warsaw CD and South-Western CD would be at the disposal of divisional customs inspectors. Their personnel would be assigned, if the need arose, to other customs agencies. If it was necessary to establish another customs supervision unit, the suspended operation of a given customs agency would be reactivated.³² These guidelines were in fact used in the next weeks. In September 1918, a number of decisions were taken, setting up successive customs supervision agencies (the Grajewo CH was transformed into Customs Supervision no. 12 with its headquarters in Gdov in the Pskov Governorate; Herby CH was transformed into Customs Supervision no. 13 with the headquarters at the Unecha railway station on the Briansk-Homel (Gomel) line of the Polesie Railways) and over a dozen customs points, using for this purpose the offices in question evacuated from the Kingdom of Poland.³³ The customs offices evacuated from the Kingdom of Poland were re-established as Soviet customs offices on the demarcation line laid down under the Treaty of Brest and according to international agreements with the Ukrainian state. The question arises, however, whether any customs offices that were transferred into inland Russia in August 1914 were entirely liquidated? As has been mentioned above, the Provisional Government appointed the Liquidation Commission for the Kingdom of Poland. This institution was very active in dealing with Polish affairs in Russia's interior, which resulted in the stocktaking of the assets taken out of the Kingdom of Poland and in the making of records of personnel employed in all of the administrative agencies operating in the Warsaw Governorate-General before evacuation. The seizure of power

³¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 142–143; *Сборник декретов и постановлений по народному хозяйству. (25 октября 1917 г. – 25 октября 1918 г.)* (Collection of decrees and resolutions on the national economy. (October 25, 1917 – October 25, 1918)), Москва 1918, pp. 790–792; *Собрание...*, pp. 830–831.

³² *Ibid.*; GARF, Fond R-1041, Opis 1, Delo 854, List 10v.

³³ "TV" 1918, no. 18–19, pp. 155, 158; Г.Т. Трофимова, *Очерки истории себежской таможи 1918–1927 гг. (По документам Государственного архива в г. Великие Луки)* (Essays on the history of the Sebez customs in 1918–1927. (According to the documents of the State Archives in Velikiye Luki), Великие Луки 2012, p. 14.

by the Bolshevik Soviet of People's Commissars (SPC) also influenced the further work of the Liquidation Commission. When the SPC was established, its constituent was the People's Commissariat of Nationalities headed by Joseph Dzhughashvili (Stalin). It was clear that the Commissariat for Polish Affairs (Polish Commissariat) would be set up within it. The Polish Commissariat began to operate on 11 December 1917, Julian Leszczyński having been appointed as its head. Its tasks included, inter alia, the defence of Poles' rights in Russia, taking care of refugees, prisoners of war and soldiers of Polish origin, and the provision of assistance to Polish social and cultural institutions. The Liquidation Commission for the Kingdom of Poland was soon, though not without opposition, subordinated to the Commissariat's authority, which was confirmed by the SPC's decree of 5 February 1918.³⁴ The Polish Commissariat thus became an institution that would possibly take part in the process of dismantling the administration from the Kingdom of Poland, including customs offices.

The attitude of the SPC towards the Kingdom of Poland's evacuated customs administration was characterized by explicit pragmatism. No decision to liquidate it was taken as the SPC realized that sooner or later it would be necessary to create customs supervision on the western and southern sections of Soviet Russia's border, which has been mentioned above. However, not all customs institutions from the Kingdom of Poland were successfully integrated into the Soviet customs structures. Moreover, in Russia there was the property placed before 31 July 1914 in customs warehouses of the customs agencies in question, which was also evacuated. That is why the Bolshevik government took appropriate decisions in order to liquidate the customs warehouse of the Warsaw CH. On 1 October 1918 the SPC issued a decree on the formation of the People's Commissariat of Trade and Industry Commission for the liquidation of the warehouses of the aforementioned CH. This legal act ordered the preparation of exact records of goods stored in the Warsaw CH's warehouses, temporarily kept in Moscow, and then their confiscation for the State Treasury.³⁵ Worth noting is that closely connected with the creation of the Commission was the establishment of the Special Liquidation Division at the Main Administration of Customs Houses (MACH), with its headquarters in Moscow. What were the powers of this Division? The preserved sources show that the Division's task would be to coordinate the process of the final liquidation of customs offices that did not obtain the opportunity to continue their functioning in the structures of Soviet customs supervision in 1918. The process of the liquidation of customs offices from the Kingdom of Poland initiated in October 1918 lasted until early autumn 1919. In this way, inter alia, the Wieruszów CH was abolished, which was in charge of the Provisional Administration of the Riga CH in Odessa (also evacuated). On 29 April 1919 the MACH requested the Riga CH authority to send to Moscow, in

³⁴ *Декреты советской власти*, том I, 25 октября 1917 г. – 16 марта 1918 г. (Decrees of the Soviet Power, Volume I, October 25, 1917 – March 16, 1918), Москва 1957, pp. 397–398; W. Toporowicz, *Komisariat Polski i Komisja Likwidacyjna do Spraw Królestwa Polskiego w Piotrogradzie w świetle nowych dokumentów archiwalnych*, "Dzieje Najnowsze", Yr. IX, 1977, nb. 2, pp. 22–31.

³⁵ *Декреты советской власти*, том III, 11 июля – 9 ноября 1918 г. (Decrees of the Soviet Power, Volume III, July 11 – November 9, 1918), Москва 1964, pp. 390–391; *Сборник декретов...*, pp. 792–793; *Собрание...*, pp. 998–999.

addition to the movables of the customs house, the most important documents produced as a result of the operation of the Wieruszów CH, containing, inter alia, the personnel's personal files, books/records (inventories, account books, pledge records, promotion files, and records of customs warehouses), registers of confiscated goods, unfinished matters, and documents of historical importance.³⁶ However, the MACH's order was not carried out until August 1919, when the remaining depleted personnel were dismissed from service.³⁷ This action led to the final conclusion of the matter of the existence of the customs offices evacuated from the Kingdom of Poland.

When analysing the process of the break-up of the Russian customs administration and its removal from the Kingdom of Poland, one cannot ignore the issue of the thinning of the ranks of the evacuated structures after the seizure of power in Russia by the SPC. The process itself of the reduction of personnel, which has already been mentioned, began at the moment of the evacuation of the offices in question from the Kingdom of Poland. This process intensified after the subordination of the MFCDD to the SPC, and then after its transformation into the MACH. We look below at what factors had a significant impact on this.

A fairly substantial number of evacuated customs offices from the Kingdom of Poland were, as has been mentioned, placed in the governorates on the Black Sea. The overthrow of the Provisional Government by the Bolsheviks and the proclaimed establishment of the Soviet of People's Commissars significantly impacted upon the situation in Ukraine ruled by the Central Council, which cooperated with the Provisional Government with regard to maintaining its autonomy. On account of the events that took place in Petrograd, manifested, inter alia, by the boycott of the Bolshevik authorities by the MFCDD personnel, Ukraine's department of finance, in its circular of 22 December 1917, suggested that all customs offices operating in Ukraine (including evacuated ones) should sever all relations with Petrograd and send all accounts and reports to the General Secretariat in Kiev.³⁸ This step by the Ukrainian government meant in fact the beginning of construction of its own structures of customs administration, whose coordinator became the Department of Customs Duties of the Ukrainian People's Republic's Ministry of Finance. This process intensified after the signing of the Treaty of Brest on 9 February 1918, when German and Austrian-Hungarian troops appeared in the territory of the Ukrainian state, which enabled the restoration of public order. This made it possible, on 6 April 1918, to open over a dozen customs offices on the border with Austria-Hungary.³⁹ However, it

³⁶ Documents without any significance were ordered to be deposited in the Archive of Odessa CH. LVVA, Fonds 4935, Apraksts 4, Lieta 22, List 1–1v.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, List 10.

³⁸ П.П. Гай-Нижник, *Зародження митної справи в УНР (1917–1918 рр.): організація служби, основи діяльності, правові засади*, in: *Історія торгівлі, податків та мита. Збірник наукових праць* (The origin of customs affairs in the Ukrainian People's Republic (1917–1918): organization of the service, basis of activity, legal principles, in: History of trade, taxes and customs. Collection of scientific papers), Дніпропетровськ 2007, pp. 146–147.

³⁹ It should be emphasized that some customs houses were established where Russian customs offices had previously operated (Volochnyska, Radivilov, Isakivtsi, Husiatyn). П.П. Гай-Нижник, *Фінансова політика уряду Української Держави Гетьмана П. Скоропадського (29 квітня – 14 грудня 1918)* (Financial policy of the government of the Ukrainian State of Hetman P. Skoropadskyi (April 29 – December 14, 1918)), Київ 2004, p. 126; idem, *Зародження...*, pp. 147–156.

was only the political coup by General Pavlo Skoropadskyi supported by German troops, that allowed the establishment of local structures of customs administration in what was known as the “Hetmanate”.⁴⁰ The question arises whether the establishment of the Ukrainian structures of customs administration was connected with the incomplete staffing of the offices in question? When the Department of Customs Duties of the Ukrainian People’s Republic was created, its top management (director, vice director and heads of 4 divisions) included five officials previously employed in Russian customs offices, with Yakov Tokarskyi, a previous controller in the Szczypiorno CH, having been appointed the head of the Tariffs Division.⁴¹ With the creation of the first Ukrainian local customs agencies in 1918 there began the transfer of successive persons previously employed in Russian customs offices. Wishing to gain some stability, the customs officials, already with bitter experiences of the activities by the Bolshevik authorities, decided to take up employment in the Ukrainian administration. This was also the case with at least a dozen or so personnel of the structures in question (including those of Polish descent), which is shown by personnel orders issued between June and December 1918 by the Ukrainian Finance Ministry for the Department of Customs Duties.⁴² Several examples are worth quoting to support this thesis. In October 1918 the post of inspector of the Western Customs Region was held by Stanisław Lucjan Jasiński, who in 1917 was still an assistant inspector of the South-Western Customs Division.⁴³ Also in the Western Customs Region was January Krajewski, previously a third-category controller of the Szczypiorno CH; he began to work as expert-technician in early November 1918.⁴⁴ From 1 November 1918 the position of regional expert-technician of the Odessa Customs Inspectorate was taken up by Kazimierz Bieliński, a former third-category controller of the Sosnowiec CH.⁴⁵ The depletion of the ranks of customs personnel in 1918 was also caused by the political situation in Russia. Officials who decided to continue to serve in the SPC-controlled customs structures, sought ways to leave their current workplace after several months of working under the new socio-political conditions and the intensifying terror. One of the simplest decisions they made was to request to be relieved from service. This meant gaining more room for manoeuvre at the cost of being deprived of a regular source of income from remuneration as an employee. In this way the evacuated structures were abandoned by another dozen or so officials, inter alia, Antoni Jakowicz (Warsaw CH’s customs warehouse assistant inspector), Paweł Pawłowicz (fifth-category controller in the Tomaszów CH), and Stefan Charłampowicz (third-category controller in the Herby

⁴⁰ П.П. Гай-Нижник, *Створення митної кордонної служби України у 1918 р.*, in: *Україна XX ст.: культура, ідеологія, політика. Збірник статей*, Випуск 7 (Creation of the customs border service of Ukraine in 1918, in: *Ukraine of the 20th century: culture, ideology, politics. Collection of articles, Issue 7*), Київ 2004, pp. 234–244; idem, *Фінансова...*, pp. 24, 126–138; see: W. Mędrzecki, *Niemiecka interwencja militarna na Ukrainie w 1918 roku*, Warsaw 2000.

⁴¹ *Список личного...*, col. 558, 580, 606, 670, 693; П.П. Гай-Нижник, *Зародження...*, p. 147.

⁴² DAKO, Fond 292, Opys 2, Sprava 388.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, List 7; *Список личного...*, col. 579; *Памятная книжка Волынской губернии на 1914 год* (Commemorative book of the Volyn governorate for 1914), Житомир 1913, p. 440.

⁴⁴ DAKO, Fond 292, Opys 2, Sprava 388, List 9; *Список личного...*, col. 683.

⁴⁵ DAKO, Fond 292, Opys 2, Sprava 388, List 9; *Список личного...*, col. 577.

CH).⁴⁶ Some officials also decided to choose a radical termination of employment relationship by leaving their workplace without permission or by failing to appear at their service post after a granted leave. This is the case with the following employees: Wilhelm Rezner (expert-chemist, Wierzbołów CH), Waław Górski (head of controlling inspection, Korczyn CH), Klemens Pietszawski (assistant customs superintendent, Warsaw CH), Vasily Zhukov (third-category controller, Granica CH), Yevgeny Strashevski (assistant customs warehouse superintendent, Warsaw CH), Aleksei Smirnov (first-category controller, Warsaw CH), Fyodor Shatko (second-category controller, Szczypiorno CH) and Arkady Jaworowski (second-category controller, Wierzbołów CH).⁴⁷ Interestingly enough, the illegal outflow of employees from customs structures began at the moment when opportunities arose under the Treaty of Brest to leave the territory of the RFSSR and to cross the delineated demarcation line (inter alia, as refugees).

The MFCDD and its successor, MACH, conducted in 1918 an active personnel policy in the territories where the SPC had well-established political influence. That is why the majority of personnel appointments at that time occurred at the headquarters of the MFCDD and of the MACH, as well as the restored customs supervision points on the border (the border as determined in Brest Litovsk) and thus alongside the area occupied by German troops and the territory of the Ukrainian state as well as concerning border sections in different parts of Russia that were not affected by war operations conducted by the anti-Bolshevik military opposition.⁴⁸ The depleted ranks of the customs personnel were also caused by the deaths of officials. The work at a customs office was the last place of employment of, inter alia, Piotr Domalewski (interpreter, Wierzbołów CH), Aleksander Bieliński (assistant bookkeeper, Wierzbołów CH) or Nikolai Lozinski (second-category controller, Szczypiorno CH).⁴⁹

The process of the break-up of the Russian customs administration evacuated from the Kingdom of Poland into the interior of Russia, initiated in the first weeks after the establishment of the Provisional Government, ended in 1919. Some offices were reactivated in an entirely new form, creating the Soviet structure of the customs administration agencies. The others, which turned out to be redundant, were liquidated whereas their leftover property and documents were secured, if possible, in different parts of Russia. The end of the operation of customs offices occurred at very turbulent times. The fire of the civil war had already spread over most of Russia's territory, which had a negative impact on the state of preservation of the records of the liquidated institutions. The most tenacious officials, who lived to see the liquidation of their posts, were absorbed by the newly created customs structures or dismissed. It should be emphasised that the personnel of the structures under discussion actively participated in the establishment of customs administration structures in the countries arisen on the ruins of the former Russian Empire after 1918.

⁴⁶ "TV" 1918, no. 18–19, pp. 160, 162; no. 22–23, p. 208.

⁴⁷ "TV" 1918, no. 18–19, pp. 160–161; no. 22–23, p. 208.

⁴⁸ GARE, Fond 1263, Opus 1, Delo 16, List 3v; Fond 1459, Opus 1, Delo 86, List 46; Fond R-1041, Opus 1, Delo 852, 854; "TV" 1918, no. 18–19, pp. 160–162; no. 22–23, pp. 208–209.

⁴⁹ "TV" 1918, no. 18–19, pp. 160–161.

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The Break-up of the Russian Customs Administration Evacuated from the Kingdom of Poland in 1917–1919

This article discusses the dismantling of the customs administration in 1917–1919, evacuated from the Kingdom of Poland further inland into Russia in 1914. On the basis of archival and published sources the author presents the process of the slow break-up of the structure of the customs offices. This process initiated by the Provisional Government was continued by the Bolshevik authorities. Some offices were closed down while some of them were absorbed by the Soviet structure of customs administration agencies.

KEYWORDS

Kingdom of Poland, Russia, customs administration, Provisional Government, Bolsheviks

Dekompozycja rosyjskiej administracji celnej z Królestwa Polskiego w latach 1917–1919

Niniejszy artykuł dotyczy kwestii demontażu administracji celnej w latach 1917–1919 ewakuowanej z Królestwa Polskiego w głąb Rosji w 1914 r. Na podstawie źródeł archiwalnych i drukowanych autor przedstawia proces powolnej dekompozycji struktury urzędów celnych. Proces ten zapoczątkowany przez Rząd Tymczasowy był kontynuowany przez władze bolszewickie. Część urzędów została zlikwidowana, niektóre z nich zaś zostały wchłonięte przez sowiecką strukturę organów administracji celnej.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

Królestwo Polskie, Rosja, administracja celna, Rząd Tymczasowy, bolszewicy

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