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THE SYSTEM OF CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES IN THE BELARUSIAN SSR IN 1920-1930 YEARS: FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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The article is dedicated to the history and activities of the system of management of the customs bodies on the territory of the BSSR during the period from 1921 to 1939 years. It discusses the most interesting breach of customs control and customs activities, problems of management, proposes the analysis of the customs system in its socio-economic dimension.

Introduction. The Soviet Socialist Republic of Belarus (SSRB) was divided into two (east and west) parts in accordance with the Treaty of Riga in 1921. Supervision over the export, import and baggage was carried out by the customs offices, which were administrated by the People's Commissariat of trade. The creation of custom system of the young republic had to virtually zero (old customs in Vitebsk and Orsha were on the territory of the RSFSR). This fact bears examination and it is necessary to go into this issue in more detail.

Results, their discussion and perspectives. The transition to the new economic policy, the restoration of the state budget, the establishment of trade and economic relations had forced the soviet government to look at the place and role of the customs authorities in a new way. The signing of trade agreement between Soviet Russia and SSRB was tantamount to the creation of the customs union between them. The entry of Soviet Belarus (decision IV of the All-Belarusian Congress of SSRB in December of 1922) into the USSR legally consolidated the status of the Belarusian customs authorities as the all-Union [1, p.61].

The beginning of the 1920s was a period of an active organizational work (for instance, General Administration of Customs was created on 24 December, 1921). In 1922 People's Commissars of the RSFSR adopted the "Provisional Regulations on local customs institutions", according to which customs department was once again an independent administrative office, separated by customs 1, 2 and 3 bits. However, a lot of unresolved problems and weak legal framework did not allow the customs department qualitatively solve all tasks and set up an appropriate system. It was not known which agency was responsible for protecting the state and customs border, customs officers did not have enough professionals. The financial situation in the country also did not add optimistic prospects [2, p. 65].

It's necessary to bear in mind that the Customs management on the whole territory of the USSR was the responsibility of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade. At that period customs carried out its tasks through The General Administration of Customs and The Customs Tariff Committee. People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade opened and canceled the customs authorities, determined their location.

In accordance with paragraph 4 of the Order of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Belarus of 12 January 1922 Customs of the I class with a staff of 59 people was opened in Minsk (fig.). Customs was in the center of Minsk in the building, preserved to this day on the Leningradskaya street. Initially customs consisted of department stores, the inspection department and accounting department. The history of customs department in Minsk is full of interesting cases. For example, 16 May 1923, during an auction in Minsk customs house there was a fire in the room where the confiscated alcohol was stored. Three people were killed, and the smugglers were charged in it. [3]

General Administration of Customs in accordance with the provisions of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade, which was approved by the CEC of the USSR on 12 November 1923 implemented the following tasks:

- organization of customs agencies and their management;
- participation in the development of international treaties and conventions in those parts which concerned customs;
- development of the customs tariff;
- development of activities and monitoring of the implementation of measures to combat smuggling through the customs;
- maintaining customs statistics [4].

The structure of the Customs Administration was established in accordance with these objectives, and consisted of five divisions: general, tariff, operational trial, estimate-billing and statistical.

The new position of the General Administration of Customs and the new structure were approved in September 1925 and consisted of the following departments: administrative and economic, tariff, operational, combat of smuggling, estimate and calculation, statistical, and an inspectors staff [5].

"Regulations on the General Administration of Customs" was implemented on 13 September 1926 [6].



Fig. Customs of the I class in Minsk (1920s)

It is necessary to underline that the Belarusian branch of the General Administration of Customs (hereinafter – BB GAG) under the Commissioner of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade of the BSSR was created on the basis of Western Customs District on 2 June, 1925.

On 18 June, 1925 the first director of the BB GAG Zalogin N. signed a decree №39 about creating of BB GAG. BB GAG lasted until 1933. At different times the department was headed by Zalogin (1925–1926), Apan-ski (1926–1927), Ziolkowski (1927), Polishchuk (1927) and Mulyavka (1927–1931) [7].

The staff of BB GAG consisted of 18 employees: Head of the Department, his assistant, five inspectors, head of the secretariat, architect, producer of works, 2 senior clerk, clerk 2 discharge, 2 typist, courier, the watchman-cleaner.

It should be emphasized that the fight against smuggling was one of the most important and influential activities of the customs authorities. The desire of the authorities to put an end to the smuggling during the economic crisis had caused a negative attitude to the work of customs officers among the peasants and even the soldier guards. For example, the Sebezh Customs management in 1922-23. noted the next information: "The peasants do not allow customs officials to live in their houses. Service under these conditions on the border was at the risk of one's life at any moment. Such service deserves every encouragement. Farmers say to customs officers with all honesty: you work at your own desire and you don't need help. If the customs officer says about protection of the border, the peasants do not want to listen. In the foreground, they speak directly: "Smuggling is the easiest way of making good money. Customs officers are fighting, gain enemies in any person who was arrested with smuggling" [2].

We must pay attention to the fact that this period was marked by the formation of the special "Flying squads" to strengthen the fighting against smuggling. "Instruction on the flying squad" was published December 15, 1921. It notes the following:

1. Flying squads are created in customs system for a more successful fight against smuggling.
2. Flying squad consists of 5–10 employees.
3. The head of flying squad acts independently, but in contact with the head of the customs.
4. Flying squad officers should be armed, but to resort to arms with the possible consideration".

Each employee of the "Flying squad" had received a certificate stating that he was entitled to:

- 1) inspect the locomotives, trains, passengers traveling on the rail in order to detect smuggled goods;
- 2) carry out a search of the goods in compliance with the established rules;
- 3) carry out checks of the goods in the cooperative organizations and private individuals;
- 4) all military and civilian institutions as well as individuals are invited to assist [8].

The establishment of the kennel for dog training June 16, 1925 should be noted as a further measure to strengthen the fight against smuggling. Some of the staff of the units of combatting smuggling took part at the training process at the center. The kennel for dog training provided dogs for the canine service in each customs.

Since September 10, 1925 in accordance with the order of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade fight against smuggling had been transferred to border authorities, customs riot had been eliminated, and the whole operative work was transferred to security officers. It was believed that it would eliminate confusion and competition between agencies.

Conclusion. It must now be clear that the situation with the customs department had completely changed in 1930s. The head of the BB GAG in order to "streamline and improve anti-smuggling" reorganized the de-

partment of confiscation of the customs in Negoreloye in the authorized unit to combat smuggling in Minsk. Such office consisted of 6 employees: manager, three customs guards and two cleaners. The tendency for a reversal to the administrative-command management model in all spheres of public life had increased during all period of 1920-1930. The trend of reducing the role of customs finally entrenched in the 1930s. Customs warehouses for temporary storage of import and export of goods were eliminated in 1932. Number of customs officers also had declined. In 1930s the trend of reducing the role of customs authorities in foreign trade relations finally fixed. Customs management system had been consistently simplified. Such structure of customs authorities with minor changes lasted until the mid-1980s.

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