DISPLACE OF DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE FROM THE SOVIET UNION TO POLAND DURING THE THIRD DECADE OF THE XXTH CENTURY

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The paper explores the displace of Polish archives from the Soviet Union that was performed in 1920s according to the Riga Peace Treaty of 1921 and other international agreements. The aim of the research is to reconstruct the process of displace, based on the archival sources and literature. The object of the research is those documents that were preserved in the archives of Belarus and together with archives from other republics were displaced to Poland. The exploration leads to clarification of the selection of document funds to be displaced, the actual process of movement and the explanation of the role that the archivists of Belarus performed in the history of cultural relationships between Poland and the Soviet Union. The articles of the Treaty of Riga had been formulated without taking into account the indivisibility of archive funds that is one of the most important principles of restitution, which caused the failure of the treaty by the Soviet part.

Key words: displaced archives, restitution, cultural values, Belarus, Treaty of Riga of 1921.

I. THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE PROBLEM

Since 1918 much attention has been paid to the restitution of cultural values on the territory of the USSR in the Polish historiography. Primarily it is defined by the immensity of these attitudes. Upon 23 largest acts of interstate documents return on the territory of the USSR Poland is second to Hungary (relatively 5 and 7 facts) (Kozlov, 1999, p. 279). Transferring of the documents were held in 1918, 1922–1924, 1925, 1945, 1954, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1961, 1963, and 1967.

The first scientific studies in Polish historiography highlighting this problem appeared during the implementation of Art. XI of the Treaty of Riga of 1921, which presupposed the return of Polish archives. First the problem was raised by K. R. Sochaniewich (Sochaniewicz, 1921), and the documents of the Polish-Soviet commission on restitution were published in 1922–1923 (Dokumenty dotyczące akcji delegacji polskiej, 1922–1923). Then the results of the activity of mixed commissions have been described by K. Tyshkowsky.
problem of the Polish archival heritage hadn’t become the object of a thorough study on the part of the Soviet science except for the E. Starostin’s publications especially, as well as of the modern Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian science (Старостин, 2001; Старостин, 2003). This situation creates not only the tendentious coverage of the events, but omits the essential aspects of a restitution process. One of these aspects is the problem of Belarusian archival heritage as a part of Polish claims to return and the ways of resolution of the problem of storage for documentary values related to the history of several states.

In this article we deal with the history of that part of archival collections which had been stored in the archives of Belarus and then together with the available fonds of the other republics of the Soviet Union were displaced to Poland. We aimed to find out how the funds for the transferring were determined and how this work was held and what role the Belarusian archivists played in cultural relations between Poland and the USSR.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL AND LEGAL ASPECTS OF THE DISPLACE OF DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

The legal basis for the displace of the Polish cultural heritage was made on the initiative of the decree of the Soviet government “On the restitution of cultural values”, which was adopted in 1917 because of the difficult political situation and the war with Germany (Старостин, 2001, p. 155). However, the issue on this matter was solved later under Article XI and Annex № 3 to the Treaty of Riga Peace of 1921 (Ольшанский, 1969, p. 221–225). Special Mixed Soviet-Polish commission headed by A. Olshevsky on the Polish part and O. Schmidt (who was replaced soon by P. Voykov) on the Soviet part was established mostly for making a list and a storage area of cultural values.

In 1921 the Polish Commission directed the memorandum to the Soviet delegation about the returning of the State Archive of the Republic of Poland (the Crown Archive, also called the Krakow Archive, the Crown Archive from Warsaw, Archive of the Crown Register, Lithuanian Metrica and Lithuanian archives), the archive of Stanislav August Poniatovsky, materials on the Kostushko Uprising, and the President of Warsaw Zakrovska, the Permanent Council, the commission of police and jurisdiction of the marshalka, the Commission of National Education, the Archive of Historical Records in Warsaw (the State Council, the Administrative Council of Duchy of Warsaw, the Provi-
As a result of the following negotiations the Polish-Soviet consular convention that marked the relations between Warsaw and Moscow and gave the possibility for following research of Polish cultural heritage was signed on July 18, 1924.

In the framework of this Convention the identification of Polish documents was started in the Central Archive of Belarus. Basis for it was the claim by an expert of the Soviet delegation at the Special Mixed Commission S.Bogoyavlensky. He had revealed that under the supervision of Central Archive of the Byelorussian SSR were a large number of documents related to the territory of Poland, and formerly part of the Minsk province (or to be exact Pinsky uyezd and Novogrudsky uyezd) (Опись дел, книг и чертежей тех уездов Минской губернии, которые отошли в ведение Польского правительства, л. 48).

According to the catalogue of those materials Central Archive started working on the funds selection that was to be displaced (Опись дел, книг и чертежей тех уездов Минской губернии, которые отошли в ведение Польского правительства, л. 9–11). However, during the work the became clear that if Poland would be displaced all archival materials related to the territories ceded to Poland, it would cause a huge damage to the “cultural construction” in the BSSR, because the documents of Pinsky uyezd and Novogrudsky uyezd were in all funds of provincial institutions which were kept in the Minsk Historical Archive. The allocation of these materials was not only contrary to the principle of the indivisibility of funds, but also put Belarusian science in a difficult position. All of these materials were under active study of the Institute of Belarusian culture, Belarusian State University, Belarusian State Academy of Agriculture, a number of local history organizations and individual researchers at that time. And taking into consideration the fact that there were very few historical documents in Belarus, it becomes clear that this issue had caused controversy and a desire to preserve as much as possible for the history of the Byelorussian SSR. Naturally in those political conditions the Byelorussian SSR could not refuse the displace. Therefore, archival management used to seek support to prevent the Polish representatives in archival institutions and displace only those materials which had no great historical significance.

Besides the archives of province institutions Belarusian archivists were concerned about the documents related to judicial bodies for the period 1800–1872. They were to be completely displaced to Poland but as the deputy manager of the Central Archives M.Meleshko noted “they had some connection with other
materials remaining in Belarusian archives”. For this reason it was decided that the least valuable materials that had been subjected to be displaced to Poland (300 poods) would be put in a separate room outside the Historical Archive for not to allow the Polish representatives to question the comprehensiveness of selection.

At the same time the Belarusian archival leadership understood that the character and components of funds which were stored in Minsk are known in Poland. During the occupation Usas was the head of the Minsk archive, as well as Barantshevich, who were both in Poland at that time. Besides that, that archival information has been published at various times.

The General Treaty between Poland and the Soviet Union concerning the return of the cultural values, which had been taken away during the period of the Russian Empire, was signed in Warsaw on November 16, 1927. It concerned 32 cases which had not been solved by the Mixed Commission and became the foundation for the activation of restitution processes. For instance, under it the archive and library of Branitski family which contained so called “Gomel Collection” that was kept in Katkovsky house in Moscow (removed by field marshal Paskevich from Warsaw for his Palace in Gomel) and the property of Branitski family from the estate of Ros’, Grodno province (kept after evacuation in Gomel in the building of Azovo-Donsky commercial bank) were returned. If the “Gomel Collection” could relate to the evacuated values then the collection from the estate of Ros’ had a completely different character and its composition also belonged to the Belarusian land but at that time the question was not raised that way.

At that time in distinction from the previous years the Soviet state was not in such a desperate international position as at the time of the Treaty of Riga and could afford not to give the archival complexes considered as important for it. As, for instance, it happened with the diplomatic acts of the Office of the Vicar of the Kingdom of Poland (taken away after 1864 from Warsaw), among which was the final act of the Treaty of Vienna on June 9, 1815 about the formation of the Kingdom of Poland. The Soviet part did not want to give these materials as they contained the information about spies and informants of Tsar’s secret police on the territory of Poland. For this reason when the Polish delegation visited the Historical Museum in the Archive of the History of the Revolution in Moscow it saw only the empty covers of the cases and the cartons.

The work in the Byelorussian SSR went in a different direction: basically the questions which had been raised in 1924 were only solved and they received a new development based on the item 3 of the General Treaty on November 16, 1927. The meeting on this subject was held in Minsk on November 22, 1928 and concerned the archives of the former Minsk province. On the Soviet side there were D. Zhilinovich and I. Vitkovsky and on the Polish one was Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Minsk G. Yankovsky and an expert of the Polish delegation V. Veytko. A list which had been provided by the Central Archive of the BSSR was accepted as a basis catalogue for future apportionment as there were not inventories and registers in which the work should be done (Дневник работы экспертов Смешанной советско-польской комиссии, 1928, л. 62–63).

The experts revealed 29 archival funds in the amount of 7,621 books, files and sheaves during the work on 23 November – 8 December 1928 (Дневник работы экспертов Смешанной советско-польской комиссии, 1928, л. 60–61). Taking into consideration the unwillingness to return a number of funds by the Central Archive in 1924, it can be supposed that a number of materials was hidden. For example, in previous years the Belarusian archival management concerned about the documents of the judiciary. During the work of the Polish delegation the funds of uyezd governments, magistrates and zemsky’s chiefs were not found. As M. Meleshko explained that a significant portion of these materials had been removed from Minsk during the war and the other one had been plundered during the occupation (Дневник работы экспертов Смешанной советско-польской комиссии, 1928, л. 67–68). It can be presupposed that the answer of the deputy chairman of the Polish delegation W. Suchodolski about the absence of acts concerning the Minsk district court was not true. However, the Polish experts selected some of the materials and added them to the original list. The list was formed and confirmed at the second meeting and according to it the materials were displaced to Poland. Also on 7 December, 1928 the Polish part took the materials of Plotk province on Peasant Affairs (67 sheaves and books) that had been stored in the Byelorussian SSR (Дневник работы экспертов Смешанной советско-польской комиссии, 1928, л. 64–65).

CONCLUSIONS

As a result, we consider that the restitution processes between Poland and the USSR in the 20’s of the 20th century were not always regular and implemented
within the terms of agreements. However, for our part we should notice that the actions of archival management were in contradiction with the implementation of international agreements but in the context of archival restitution were fully justified as the articles of the Treaty of Riga had been formulated without taking into account that the indivisibility of archive funds is one of the most important principles of restitution. Moreover the problem of disputable funds was not discussed during the activity of the Mixed Commission and for this reason this agreement cannot be considered as directed for restoring historical justice.

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DOKUMENTINIO PAVELDO JUDEJIMAS Į SOVIETŲ SAJUNGOS Į LENKIĄ TREČIAJAME XX A. DEŠIMTMYĘ

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SANTRAUKA

Straipsnyje aptariama Lenkios archyvų fonų restituicijos XX a. trečiajame dešimtmetėje
problema, susijusi su Rygos taikos sutartimi ir kitais tarptautiniais susitarimais, vykdan-
Lenkijos archyvų grąžinimą Lenkijai iš Sovietų Sąjungos. Pagrindiniais straipsnio tikslais
– remiantis archyviniais dokumentais ir literatūra, paminėti rekonstruoti dokumentų per-
damą. Daugiausia dėmesio skiriama tiems dokumentams, kurie buvo saugomi Baltarus-
jos archyvuose ir vėliau kartu su kiti Sovietų Sąjungos respublikų archyviniais fonais
buvo perduoti Lenkijai. Pabandyta išsiaiškinti, kaip buvo nustatoma, košio dokumentų
fondai turėtų būti perduoti, kaip vyko šis perdavimas ir ko įvairių asmenų ir apskritai
Lenkijos ir Sovietų Sąjungos kultūrinii ir šiuos įtakos suvaidino Baltarusijos archyvai.