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Foreign Trade Experiments in the Arkhangelsk Province (1916–1921): Historical Experience of Survival under Sanctions*

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Abstract. Based on historical material, the article presents the regional experience of searching for a model of economic development on the example of the Arkhangelsk Province's desire to get rid of the image of a "resource province" in the context of the growing importance of this region for the state. The article considers the period of the military-revolutionary era and the early NEP, which is short by historical standards, when, in the conditions of the inaction of other Russian ports, foreign policy sanctions, and a "trade blockade", the economically active community of Arkhangelsk sought to diversify the economic life of the region as much as possible, choosing a different vector of further development. The author noted the forms of responding to the challenges of the era that forced look for new ways of solving problems. There is a desire to find its way for the Arkhangelsk Province within the framework of a single state, and the unification of the European, Ural, and Siberian territories gravitating towards the White Seaports. These issues should be considered in terms of only economic interregional cooperation.

Among the variety of development projects, the foreign trade aspect was selected for consideration. During the study, the general motivation for planning foreign trade activities through Arkhangelsk changed. In the conditions of post-revolutionary devastation, the main motivator is the food supply of the population, which could return the value of raw materials to the region, while making it more dependent on external partners. In these circumstances, the local commercial and industrial community was ready to give up part of their rights in favor of the state foreign trade monopoly. On the other hand, the state was ready to transfer part of its powers so that local authorities interested in obtaining food and other items of life support ensure the formation of the necessary "export fund". Thus, projects to diversify the regional economy were thwarted; in the 1920s the province retained the significance of the "all-Russia sawmill"; during the period of industrialization, industrial development was also associated mainly with the forest industry, and this one-sided development subsequently led to a severe structural crisis.

Keywords: *European North of Russia, World War I, Revolution of 1917, Civil War, new economic policy, economic and political sanctions, trade blockade, economic prospects, foreign economic activity, Northern Regional Directorate of Foreign Trade.*

Introduction and relevance

Economists note "the necessity and usefulness of knowledge of traditions, similar trends and accumulated practice in economic history" [1, Pakhomov A.A., p. 90]. Among the top issues with historical roots is the imbalance between exports and imports in Russian foreign trade relations [2, Moreeva S.N., p. 21], which is the result not only of economic backwardness, but also of political problems.

The appeal to the regional experience in overcoming difficulties arising under the influence of various foreign policy and economic sanctions, blockades and restrictions aggravated by the

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conditions of the “time of troubles” (weakening of the state apparatus, demoralization of the former elites and the inexperience of new ones) has not only scientific but also practical relevance. In this regard, it is interesting to study the activities of the authorities of the Arkhangelsk province (which, due to natural and climatic circumstances, needed both export and import) under the conditions of a state monopoly on foreign trade and an economic blockade by traditional trading partners. This refers to the last stage of the Civil War (1920) and the beginning of a new economic policy (1921-1924).

The European North of Russia, like a significant part of the non-industrial regions of the country, before the revolution was heavily dependent on the foreign market, supplying it with raw materials of various types. White Sea ports at the beginning of the 20th century were mainly used for the export of northern (timber, flax, resin) and Siberian (wheat) goods. Such a turnover provided a small population in general with work, imported food and some goods necessary for the life support of the region (the most important of which was coal). The First World War significantly diversified the region's economy. Due to military circumstances, the northern ports began to play an important role primarily for the delivery and re-shipment of imported cargo of military and defense-industrial importance. Export operations in the initial period of the war were practically stopped, and then they were allowed only for the export of state goods that served as payment for military supplies.

Throughout the war, and especially during the Revolution and the Civil War, local entrepreneurs were in a state of turbulence. Many traditional economic activities were at risk. Sawmilling was severely damaged; the first effect was the “moratorium on foreign trade” introduced in 1914, as well as the mobilization of a significant part of the workers. The “boom” of defense-related work, which required the attraction of labor resources on a permanent basis and at incomparably higher wages, led to an outflow of workers from seasonal activities (which included logging and rafting, working at sawmills and the stock exchange). As a result, Russia's competitors began to seize the sphere of timber exports: Sweden, which did not participate in the war, and then Finland, which gained independence.

During the Revolution, additional threats were added to the loss of competitiveness of local production due to the growth in the cost of northern timber. Under the influence of a number of reasons, including “the fall in labor productivity caused by high wages, on the one hand, and social slogans of different shades, on the other” [3, Danishevsky I.I., pp. 5, 6], the cost of forest products increased in 1917 in comparison with the pre-war 15 times; to this should be added the increase in the cost of freight in the context of the refusal of western insurance companies to take responsibility for the risks of northern navigation in wartime.

The generally short period of the Revolution and the Civil War (1917–1920) showed that in conditions of weakening domestic ties, the entire system of not only domestic but also foreign trade collapses. Sawmills, aimed at export, were located in Arkhangelsk, where it was possible to deliver timber by rafting, and after processing, immediately load it onto sea transports. A signifi-

cant part of the forest was harvested in the Vologda province. Having received broad rights of self-government, the volost authorities began to prohibit the Arkhangelsk industrialists from harvesting in their territories, demanding the payment of high duties and the involvement of only the local population in work. When, in connection with the “cash crisis” in the Arkhangelsk province, the issuance of their own money (checks of the local branch of the State Bank - the so-called “walrus-es”), which were circulating only on the territory of the province, began to be issued, an insoluble problem arose of payments for the harvested forest with the Vologda peasants¹ [for details see: 4, Troshina T.I.]. In 1918, it was stated that “the desire of some large timber merchants to liquidate their business in the North and the difficulty of finding buyers for timber materials who would agree to pay [them] the cost at current rates plus a small percentage of earnings” [3, Danishevsky I.I., p. 8]. The transfer of power in the province to the Provisional Administration of the Northern Region in August 1918 did not change the situation since the new government had to continue its policy of “flirting” with the workers.

During the war, its own fishing industry practically ceased, and under the circumstances there was no incentive for its development. “Foreign currency and transport have become much more expensive, but we still continue to buy fish from our neighbors abroad” [3, Danishevsky I.I., p. 6] – at the beginning of 1918, it was spoken out by I.I. Danishevsky, a co-owner of the White Sea-Baltic and Severo-Oceanic Steamship Companies.

The search for economic prospects in the postwar period

At the same time, the active economic community of the Arkhangelsk province saw the nearest prospects for the region: it was assumed that after the war Russian timber would be required (the increase in export demand was estimated 2.5 times, that is, up to 20-21 million logs per year [5, Gaevsky P., p. 9]), while the Baltic Sea will not become fully navigable for a long time due to the active hostilities taking place there. It was expected that in connection with the post-war devastation, Russia could be among the importers of food, including fish and even bread. But even in the event of a shortage for its own population, one could expect the continuation of the export of wheat, since the export fund of the Urals and Western Siberia, which would need foreign exchange for the purchase of machines and machine tools to restore the industry, mainly consisted of grain products. Finally, the need to pay the debts accumulated during the war will force the state to increase imports of raw materials, and primarily through the northern ports, since “89% of forests fall on the eight provinces of the North-East of European Russia ..., [there are] mineral resources ... if there are surpluses bread ... then surpluses can only be in Siberia, which also gravitates to the northern ports [6, Danishevsky II, p. 16, 19].

At the same time, the local community, taught by bitter historical experience showing that after the end of a dangerous period for the country, the state could forget about the northern ports, and Russia would again return to the exploitation of its Black Sea and Baltic harbors, had well-

¹ Central State Archives of St. Petersburg (TsGA SPb). F. 1578. Op. 2.D. 34.L. 2 ob.

founded fears of post-war stagnation. Therefore, possible alternative options for economic and, above all, foreign trade prospects were actively discussed.

There were good reasons for optimism. In 1914-1916. Projects were implemented that patriots of the Northern Territory had been petitioning for many years: the Arkhangelsk port was expanded, which now had not only export, but also import orientation, and thanks to the icebreaker fleet and the winter outport (Murmansk was perceived as such), year-round navigation was carried out. The transport infrastructure was significantly improved: after dredging and lighting the fairway, the Northern Dvina became navigable, an impressive river fleet appeared here (in 1917 it consisted of 394 tugboats and 1,058 barges with a total carrying capacity of 440 thousand tons); the Murmansk railway was built and the Arkhangelsk railway was converted to a wide gauge. It was assumed that after the end of the war, the icebreaker and trawl fleet purchased to serve military needs would be leased or owned by entrepreneurs and labor artels, which would allow moving to a new level of sea fishing and animal trade.

The next task was to create our own ocean shipping company so as not to pay high freight rates to foreign carriers, as well as to organize an insurance company that would take on the risks of sailing in the northern seas. A plan to levy a ruble levy on each standard of exported timber in order to raise funds for the creation of its own merchant fleet was discussed in Arkhangelsk since 1916. The first step in this direction was taken in 1917: the largest local entrepreneurs I. and P. Danishevsky, J. Belyaevsky, D. Valnev and others organized the Severo-Ocean shipping company and established the Russian North joint-stock company to exploit the natural resources of the region². The plans to move the enterprises evacuated from the front zone of the western provinces to Arkhangelsk were supported in every possible way. Already scheduled delivery in Arkhangelsk Revel shipyard "Becker and C^o" did not take place in connection with the October events in Petrograd³, and the public in Arkhangelsk demanded that the local authorities urgently take some measures, "since after the war, trade relations with abroad will expand, and we will need our own fleet" [7, Danishevsky I.I.] (plant was taken to Novorossiysk and operated there under the names "Sudostal", "Red Engine", etc.)

During the war of 1914-1918 trade relations with new partners expanded new types of export and import appeared. In August 1917, the Northern Department of the Russian-American Committee for Assisting the Economic Rapprochement of Russia and the United States (RussAmCo) was opened in Arkhangelsk; its chairman was I.I. Danishevsky, who had business connections in America [8, Rogachev I.V., Silin A.V., p. 52]. Direct steamship flights between New York and Arkhangelsk, which began to be practiced since the beginning of the war, in connection with the closure of the Baltic and Black Sea ports, gave hope for the acquisition of oceanic and intercontinental importance by the northern ports.

² Arkhangelsk: daily newspaper. 1916.27 Feb. ; 1917.29 Jan., 31 Jan.

³ News of the Arkhangelsk Society for the Study of the Russian North. 1917, no, 11–12, p. 449.

At the state level, they also thought about post-war reconstruction, but they proposed projects that were unpopular among the patriotic public in general to allot large forest areas for foreign concessions. The patriots of the Northern Territory feared that the transfer of forests on a concession to foreigners could lead to an increase in the economic dependence of the province on external capital (from which they managed to get rid of to a certain extent during the First World War, as part of the “fight against German dominance”).

The degree of study of the problem

Turning to the previous and modern historiography, it should be noted that the entire range of questions posed to one degree or another was at the center of the research interest of historians studying the restoration period, which began in 1918 and, interrupted by the Civil War, resumed in the 1920s. ... With regard to attracting foreign investment, the questions of concessions in the initial period of NEP were studied in more detail; including the northern ones [9, Kiselev A.A.; 10, Sannikov L.I.]

The experience of local foreign trade bodies operating under the control of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade (NKVT) is reflected in the works of the employees themselves [11, Krasin L.B.; 12, Krasin L.B.]. Researchers in this aspect draw attention to the predatory interests of potential economic partners of Soviet Russia, who planned to solve their post-war difficulties at its expense [13, Katasonov V.Yu., pp. 178 - 207; 14, Troshina T.I.]. The issue of restoring trade relations in these circumstances had to be resolved in non-standard ways. In the post-revolutionary period, Soviet Russia was under Western sanctions, which were expressed in various forms. State foreign trade relations to a greater extent developed with eastern and southern neighbors [15, Borisova I.D.; 16, Goreshein S.G.; 17, Dyachenko N.V.].

In the West, the issues of restoring foreign trade with Russia depended on the development of events on the fronts of the Civil War. Since the “breakthrough” of the trade blockade announced at the end of 1919 was initially associated with the admission of only cooperative organizations to the European market, the problem of foreign trade relations during the war communism and early NEP period is most often considered in this vein [18, Kabalkin Yu.M.; 19, Schwittau G.G.; 20, Borodina E.V.].

Traditionally raw materials and export-oriented regions had their own experience [21, Valitov A.A., Dmitrishchak T.M.; 22, Komarov S.Yu.; 23, Timoshenko V.P.], which relied on the fact that in the pre-revolutionary period there was a strong influence of foreign investments and established economic ties, and their restoration became the task of local bodies of the NKVT, to a certain extent, bypassing the state-declared monopoly on foreign trade and foreign economic activity.

Foreign researchers focus on the food problem that has arisen in Russia under the influence of the war, under pressure and where political decisions are taken [24, Lih L.T.]. Canadian historian R.B. Day analyzes the discussions in the Soviet government regarding the main directions of relations with Western states [25, Day R.B.]. As for foreign economic relations, here the attention of foreign

researchers is mostly attracted by the issues of foreign concessions. Studied, in particular, technologies for sharing expertise raw material [26, Sutton A .C.] And the role of foreign aid in raising the economies of Russia and the USSR [27, Heywood A.]

The issues of export trade through Arkhangelsk in the revolutionary and first post-revolutionary period are often considered in the aspect of restoring traditional trade relations with Norway [28, Historical ties ...; 29, Karelin V.A., Repnevsky A.V.; 30, International Relations ...; 31, Porcel A.K.]. Certain aspects of the activities of the North-White Sea administration of the NKVT (then transformed into a regional department) are disclosed in his article by V.N. Bulatov [32, Bulatov V.N., pp. 124-126].

At the same time, sources that more holistically reflect the regional experience of economic “survival” in extremely unfavorable external and internal political conditions have not been fully introduced into the scientific circulation. This is the current documentation of various state and regional authorities and institutions; journalism; the chronicle of events reflected in the mass media; as well as more subjective sources (personal documents).

Difficulties of the war and post-war period and plans to overcome them

The desire to use the revolutionary transformation of all aspects of life and get rid of foreign economic dependence brought entrepreneurs and the central government closer (which changed three times in 1916-1918). If the commercial and industrial class saw prospects for its development in the national orientation, then the government understood the relationship between economic and political dependence (Russia's entry into the First World War, which ended tragically for it, was largely due to the financial obligations of the state to its allies in the Entente). The solution to this problem was also seen in different ways. State authorities, including “quasi-states” on the territory of Russia during the Civil War, sought to introduce a foreign trade monopoly, which involved the participation of private entrepreneurs under strict control and with the obligatory delivery of all foreign exchange earnings to the treasury (in fact, this was a generally accepted practice of all states that left economic consequences of the First World War). Private capital wanted, of course, complete freedom. And in the conditions of the weakening of the authorities at all levels, entrepreneurs received this freedom; however, they failed to take advantage of it [33, Troshina T.I.] As for the Soviet state, it found itself in especially difficult conditions; to the problems common to all the warring countries, an economic blockade was added, the ever-expanding devastation of transport and industry, and as a result - the rupture of trade ties between town and country.

Without dwelling on the well-known forms of state survival in these circumstances, let us turn to the issue of the flexibility of the policy of Soviet Russia, when, even in the conditions of the intervention and the Civil War, negotiations were held on economic cooperation on terms that were certainly beneficial to the West. Such a policy was not abandoned, despite the fact that such “flexibility” outraged the public and increased the influx of Russian patriots into the ranks of the white army. Even the peasants reacted sharply to what was happening: “The communists ... fought for

three years, but they defeated everything, but robbed. And now we are again at the same time with them - we invite them to build factories and factories with us, but they said that we would destroy everything old and create something new, good, and bright. And without the capitalists they could not do anything ..."- this is how the delegate of the county peasant congress introduced the new economic policy⁴.

At the same time, the admitted concessions, indeed, made it possible to resolve many issues of the moment; not only to create an "export fund" at the expense of foreign capital, but to ensure the restoration of the former trade ties, which were difficult for state bodies to do, because after the anarchy, requisitions and violence, foreign partners did not trust them.

As for the organization of foreign trade operations, in the conditions of the weakening of the state (in 1917-1920), work was going on for regional unification on the basis of common interests and similar opportunities. In European Russia, Arkhangelsk became the "pioneer" in this respect. Local entrepreneurs expressed an idea (which was probably present before, but which became especially relevant in connection with the war and the Revolution) about the unification of the provinces gravitating to the White Sea ports, which have large reserves of timber: Arkhangelsk, Vologda, Vyatka, Olonets, Perm, Yenisei, Irkutsk, Tobolsk, Tomskoy [34, Danishevsky I.I.] When food became the most important problem in 1917, at the initiative of the Arkhangelsk community, a congress of representatives of the Arkhangelsk, Olonets, Vologda, Vyatka, Novgorod, Yaroslavl, Kostroma, Perm provinces was held, at which the question of creation of the North-East region. It was supposed to combine efforts through joint export-import operations to solve the food problem and create a regional economic union for the future.

When discussing the issue of the political organizations of the northern provinces (the Union of Communes of the Northern Region, which eventually included the Petrograd, Pskov, Arkhangelsk, Vologda, Olonets and newly formed Severo-Dvinsk and Cherepovets provinces), in Arkhangelsk, based on their interests and understanding, believed that one should also unite with Vyatka and Perm, "which are associated with [them] and the way of life of the people. In case of non-alignment of the Vyatka and Perm provinces to the Northern Region, due to the inextricable connection of the five northern provinces, try to immediately organize a "union" at least from Vyatka, Perm, Vologda, Olonets and Arkhangelsk. These provinces could provide the Oblast with part of the grain and products of the factory industry that it needs; they would link the Oblast to Siberia as a major supplier of food products. ... It is especially important to include the Vyatka and Perm provinces, since relations [of Arkhangelsk] with them can be maintained by water transport - both cheaper and less frustrated than the railroad". At the same time, it was especially emphasized that "the Northern region should be separated only in economic terms into a separate unit, being in the closest relationship with the rest of Great Russia"⁵.

⁴ Archive of the FSB Directorate for the Arkhangelsk Region. D. P-21274. T. 7.L. 67-68.

⁵ State Archives of the Arkhangelsk Region (Hereinafter - GAAO) F. 352. Op. 1.D. 15.L. 50-51.

The intervention and the Civil War thwarted these plans; Subsequently, the unification of several northern provinces could not take place due to the increased centralization of power, and the Arkhangelsk province, finding itself isolated from Soviet Russia, carried out its own foreign economic activities under the control of representatives of the British authorities⁶.

After the end of the intervention and the end of the Civil War, the Arkhangelsk businessmen hoped that they would be able to work in peace, including restoring traditional trade relations with Norway, from where, immediately after the arrival of the Red troops in Arkhangelsk in February 1920, a telegram came to the name of the new administration with a proposal to “tie relationship”. In this regard, the Arkhangelsk Provincial Executive Committee organized a foreign trade department and created an “economic commission” for “relations with foreign states”, which included an extraordinary representative of the Defense Council for the supply of the Northern Front, a provincial food commissioner, a representative of local cooperatives and the chairman of the provincial Council of National Economy⁷. In Murmansk, which formally still continued to be part of the Arkhangelsk province, its own “committee” was created to establish foreign trade relations⁸. In an effort to restore the economic life of the region, he immediately began exchange operations with Northern Norway [32, Bulatov VN, p. 125].

Until a state body was created that was in charge of the declared monopoly of foreign trade (NKVT), all “trade transactions with abroad” were carried out through the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (NKID). Immediately after the restoration of Soviet power in Arkhangelsk, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, taking into account the “extreme importance of the Northern Region for Soviet Russia and the need to clarify the possibilities of commodity exchange”, sent its authorized representative, G. Shklovsky, whose task was to develop a plan for foreign trade through Arkhangelsk and Murmansk. Given the difficult food situation in the province, they promised to pay special attention to the restoration of the Pomor (exchange) trade with Northern Norway. For example, the peasants of the northern volosts of the Mezen district, who especially suffered from lack of food, were allowed “at their own risk and risk to send a sailboat with a forest to Norway and buy fish there, which they did”⁹.

Shklovsky made sure that there is a sufficient amount of export raw materials (timber and forest products) in Arkhangelsk, for which many buyers have appeared. The catch was the payment; from the side of potential buyers there were only “vague promises”, and the country and the region needed imported goods, primarily coal, for which, according to Shklovsky, “it is necessary to maintain those trade relations that existed in the North before the restoration of Soviet power”¹⁰.

⁶ State Archives of the Russian Federation (hereinafter - GARF). F. 17. Op. 1. D.11. L. 5-7, 48ob.

⁷ GAAO. F. 352. Op. 1.D. 4.L. 12.

⁸ GAAO. F. 352. Op. 1 D. 215. L. 1-4.

⁹ Mezentsy trade. Northern poor: organ of the Arkhangelsk Provincial Committee of the RCP. 1921.3 oct.

¹⁰ Our Foreign Trade Policy. Conversation with the Secretary of the Ombudsman of the Narokminotdel in the North of the RSFSR comrade G.A. Zalkind. News of the Arkhangelsk Revolutionary Committee and the Gubkoma of the CPSU. 1920. 20 Apr.

In the summer of 1920, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade (NKVT) was created, which was given the exclusive right to manage "all foreign trade relations of institutions and individuals" [35, Decree ...]. This was preceded by a trade blockade declared by the Western countries of Soviet Russia, which in early 1920 was somewhat weakened by the permission of trade with cooperative associations. NKVT tried to establish work in these difficult political conditions; trying to direct the trade exchange in the direction necessary for the state, he began to control the formation of the export fund and give permission for the purchase of goods. It was necessary to break the centralization of foreign trade by creating local organizations. In the opinion of the head of the foreign trade activity of Soviet Russia L.B. Krasin, the "general export-import plan" had to be combined "with the needs of the outskirts and with local economic needs" [12, Krasin L.B.]. According to the decisions of the Council of People's Commissars and the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, the local bodies of the NKVT were granted "the right of initiative and independence in meeting local needs without contacting the center". Thus, for operational work, first of all, on the formation of local "export fund", the NKVT formed 12 "local bodies" [36, Kaufman M.Ya.], including Arkhangelsk, Ural, Siberian. By the way, unlike the concession policy of the Soviet state discussed since 1918, L.B. Krasin was a supporter of ensuring import operations "relying solely on internal forces"; in particular, the delivery of Siberian goods to the consumer was to be carried out exclusively through Arkhangelsk and at the same time on their own sea transport [11, Krasin LB, pp. 19–20].

The Arkhangelsk provincial "department of foreign trade" was reassigned and transformed into a local branch of the NKVT, which was called "Severnoye Belomorskoe" and extended "its activities to the Arkhangelsk, Severo-Dvinskaya, Vologda, Vyatka, Murmansk, Perm, Yekaterinburg, Tyumen provinces" (like this and was conceived once by local enthusiasts). As the work on the creation of the export fund expanded, "subsidiary" organizations were created, which were subordinate to the local departments of the NKVT, or directly to the center. By November 1, 1921, there were 15 regional directorates with 42 branches, 14 offices and 22 agencies; the export-import office of the NKVT of the Autonomous Region of Komi was spun off from the Arkhangelsk branch; the North-Dvinskoe branch with the center in Veliky Ustyug arose Sibvneshtorg, located in Omsk, had an Irkutsk branch and an "agent" in Biysk. As a result, by 1922 the territory served by the Northern White Sea administration narrowed to the former Arkhangelsk and Vologda provinces (taking into account the North Dvina province and the Autonomous Komi region separated from them; Murmansk was no longer included here) [37, Report ..., p. 86]

It was not immediately possible to restore the former economic ties, although Norway, for example, interested in selling the products of its fisheries, actively sought to restore the traditional trade turnover (this issue was put before its government by the Norwegian parliament; the Union of Fishermen of Northern Norway directly addressed its proposals to the head of the trade delegation to L.B. Krasin). The obstacles were created by the lack of political and economic relations between states. The representative of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs in Arkhangelsk, answering the question: "will there be a trade with Norway?", Noted that while "the government is silent",

transactions are taking place on a private initiative in the form of smuggling trade of “individual foreign industrialists with the population of Pechenga, Vayda-Guba and other camps of the Coast”. Taking advantage of the lack of protection of internal Russian waters, “Norwegian merchants can buy valuable products of the trade for a trifle”; in particular, the Murmansk Council began, on its own initiative, trade with Norway, as a result “our valuable goods were traded almost for pipe tobacco and ladies' galoshes”.¹¹

The executive committee, according to its chairman S.K. Popova, met “the task of preparing for the restoration of trade relations with abroad” that was “from the moment of the occupation of Arkhangelsk”¹². For the population of the northern province, the beginning of foreign trade meant getting work and food. With bated breath, the locals waited for any news of the conclusion of at least some kind of trade relations with abroad. Already in the fall of 1920, the timber mills had accumulated a decent amount of export timber; hoped, if permission was obtained, to start navigation using icebreakers even in winter¹³. The Norwegians were also on standby. So, in September 1920, the Norwegian government allowed the authorized representative of the Central Committee of the RCP for gold and foreign exchange operations abroad M.M. Litvinov entering the country to resolve the issue of bilateral trade¹⁴.

Use of previous experience in organizing foreign trade operations by the Soviet government

One of the principles of the NKVT's activity was “to combine the old with the new, the communist with the capitalist”¹⁵. In particular, in the conditions of the destruction of the former system of foreign agents and the rupture of foreign trade relations at all levels, specialists from the “former” - representatives of the commercial and industrial class were involved.

Back in 1918, the Arkhangelsk Provincial Executive Committee attracted local entrepreneurs to work on foreign trade operations. Thus, a large Murmansk industrialist E.V. Mogytchy one was “sent by the Arkhangelsk authorities to buy fish”. He recalled his trip to Norway: in order not to become a victim of lynching then flourishing on the roads, not relying only on a certificate from the Soviets, “dressed in all the worst”. According to E.V. Mogytchy, “until mid-March [1918] the Bolshevik government did not use violence. [Chairman of the Food Committee] Panilov ordered all the purchased fish to be handed over to the Arkhangelsk Food Committee at a fixed price, and the exchange rate for the purchase of fish in Norway was set. With such a formulation of the case, [it was] possible to work ...”¹⁶. However, supporters of “free trade” – initiative entrepreneurs had a hard time not only “under the Bolshevik regime”, but also under the “white” Provisional Govern-

¹¹ Sachs G. Will there be a trade with Norway? News of the Arkhangelsk Revolutionary Committee and the Gubkoma of the CPSU. 1920.15 apr.

¹² News of the Arkhangelsk Revolutionary Committee and Gubkoma of the CPSU. 1920.30 June.

¹³ To the beginning of timber export through Arkhangelsk. News of the Arkhangelsk Revolutionary Committee and the Gubkoma of the All-Union Communist Party. 1920.23 Sept.

¹⁴ News of the Arkhangelsk Revolutionary Committee and the Gubkom of the CPSU. 1920. 12 Sept.

¹⁵ Foreign trade of Soviet Russia. News of the Arkhangelsk Revolutionary Committee and Gubkoma of the All-Union Communist Party. 1920. 4 Sept.

¹⁶ GARF. F. p-5867. Op. 1 D. 3. L. 16-17.

ment of the Northern Region, when foreign trade was actually carried out under the control of the allies (interventionists), and after their departure, a compulsory a tough exchange rate that exporters had to surrender in exchange for rapidly depreciating local money (“chaikovki”)¹⁷.

Over the course of two years, provincial affairs, including those related to foreign trade, passed from hand to hand several times, resulting in many misunderstandings. In connection with the nationalizations of 1918, there were almost no agents of private entrepreneurs abroad; in the “white” Northern Region, the Provincial Union of Cooperatives dealt with export and import issues. In February 1920, Soviet power was restored in Arkhangelsk; returned from evacuation, the Executive Committee of the Executive Committee and began to create a new control system. “Coups” took place at all levels; the leadership of the Gubsoyuz also changed. The newly appointed commissioner from cooperatives, Pyatigorsky, arrived in Varda, demanded from the board member G.G. Martynov to hand over the cases and return to Arkhangelsk (under the guarantee of personal safety). He refused to return to Arkhangelsk and did not transfer cases, arguing that they were in London. “The negotiations went on for three days, and to no avail”. Pyatigorsky did not arrest him, “so as not to create an unpleasant impression in Norway”¹⁸.

In the early period of the NEP, while the state was engaged in solving global problems, not only small traders and entrepreneurs received relative economic freedom, but also departments - central and regional, which, in addition to the “super task” (creating an export fund for future industrialization), were primarily concerned with solving pressing issues, which included providing the population with food, the most necessary tools and other essential goods. On the part of the people's commissariats, wishes were expressed to abolish the foreign trade monopoly, which was argued by lower administrative costs and the presence of “private traders” of closer contacts with foreign clientele and personal connections [38, J. Heusler, pp. 477, 478]. The monopoly was not abolished, but the local branches of Vneshtorg were charged with the responsibility to “make purchases and sales of goods to meet local needs” [39, Foreign Trade ...]. In February 1921, all the legal successors of pre-revolutionary organizations were instructed to “compile lists of orders and contracts placed abroad from 1914 to the date of nationalization, for which execution had not yet followed, indicating the terms of transactions, entitlements and other funds to be returned in case of default ...”¹⁹.

It was not without bureaucratic delays: since September 1921, at the local department of the NKVT, there was a rather cumbersome commission for developing an “import plan” and considering applications from local institutions for receiving goods abroad, consisting of representatives of provincial organizations: Vneshtorg, Trade Council, Economic Council, Prodkom and “Oblast-Riba”²⁰.

¹⁷ GARF. F. 5237 Op. 1 D. 122. L. 12.

¹⁸ GAAO. F. 352. Op. 1.D. 129. L. 320.

¹⁹ GAAO. F. 352. Op. 1.D. 186.L. 84ob.

²⁰ GAAO. F. 352. Op. 1.D. 186.L.L. 249-256, 257.

In 1921, the North White Sea Administration organized the export of goods from Arkhangelsk (mainly wood, as well as processed products - resin, turpentine, pitch) and their sale, mainly in England, for 5.76 million gold rub. Of this money, 1.8 million gold rub. Food and other goods were purchased to meet the needs of exporting enterprises. For example, the union of tar-making artels, in exchange for their products, received from the Belomorsk branch of the NKVT “for the needs of the tar-making industry”²¹ food, manufactory, tools of labor, including the simplest ones - scythes, shovels, axes, as well as barrels [39, Foreign trade ..., p. 56].

The local initiative in Arkhangelsk resulted in the organization of its own “expedition” in the spring of 1921 to Norway in order to mend lost ties. According to the memoirs of G.Ya. Gurovich, head of the financial department of the Gubispolkom, they decided to “sell the forest (left over from the former owners in considerable quantities) and buy fish”. The delegation consisted of three people - Gurovich himself, the chairman of the Vneshtorg department A. Popov and the former Arkhangelsk merchant M. Ulsen. “There was no visa or a suitable vessel. There was a boat for catching smugglers, but no one dared to go on it as a captain. The navigator agreed to take us to Vardo. But, as it turned out, he did not know the road and was poorly guided at sea. Ulsen himself brought us. <...> In Varda, fishermen surrounded us and the exchange of goods began - for a log of cod. Then the local administration removed them”. After negotiations, the members of the delegation were given permission to go ashore and begin negotiations with local merchants. The situation was mutually beneficial, and the residents of Arkhangelsk “bought fish at a low price”. (However, for such an economic initiative, the chairman of the executive committee was put on trial²²). By the way, the Arkhangelsk delegation was not the only one in Northern Norway: there were also representatives from Murmansk “to buy boats and fishing equipment, they allegedly received a loan of 3 million rubles”²³.

In the same summer, having organized the detention of several Norwegian hunting vessels engaged in poaching in Russian territorial waters, the Arkhangelsk Provincial Executive Committee decided to take over the implementation of the local “surplus of animal hunting” in Norway, sending Chairman N.Ya. Kulakov²⁴.

All these experiments have convinced that it is impossible to complete the assigned tasks without experienced specialists. To work in the Northern White Sea Directorate of Vneshtorg, well-known entrepreneurs in Arkhangelsk were attracted, who for some reason did not leave Russia and remained in the Russian North. From the biographies of local representatives of the commercial and industrial class, given in the book of the Arkhangelsk ethnographer E.I. Ovsyankin, we learn that Vneshtorg employees were M.A. Ulsen, Ya.A. Belyaevsky (sent by the representative of the Vneshtorg department to England), R.A. Pec, H.N. Manakov. They were attracted primarily to

²¹ Northern tar-smoking. Northern economy, 1923, no. 1, p. 56–58.

²² State Archives of the Arkhangelsk Region. Department documents social and political history (Next - GAAO ODSPI.) F.1. Op 1.D. 299.L. 30.

²³ GAAO. F. 352.D. 215. L. 1-4; GAAO. ODSPI. F. 8660. Op. 3.D. 121.

²⁴ GAAO. F. 252.D. 186. L.L. 256.

restore their own contacts with foreign trade partners and organize export trade. Even when Ya.A. Belyaevsky and M. Ulsen were arrested by the Cheka, because the coal delivery from England, organized by them in 1920 on behalf of the Gubispolkom, failed (the ship was detained in Norway for alleged debts; the investigator believed that the entrepreneurs informed interested parties about the cargo going to Arkhangelsk²⁵), “the leaders of Vneshtorg regularly went to see Belyaevsky for consultations on the problems of preparing products for export” [40, Ovsyankin E.I., pp. 345–353].

Instead of a conclusion. Collapse of hopes for innovative development

It would seem that in the initial period of the NEP conditions were created for the implementation of plans for the post-war innovative development of the region, which were nurtured by the active community of the Arkhangelsk province during the First World War. Of course, the Revolution made not very encouraging adjustments, but nevertheless, after the destruction of the Empire, which resulted in the loss of many Baltic and Black Sea ports, Arkhangelsk remained in the area of the government's closest attention. The monopoly on foreign trade, as well as foreign economic and political sanctions, gave hope for the development of new types of industry using local raw materials, for the creation of its own merchant fleet.

The experience and knowledge of the “commercial and industrial estate” was involved; it became clear that without them it was impossible to restore the “old world” and not build a “new” one (of course, their ranks thinned; for example, the Danishevskys emigrated from the country back in 1919).

However, national needs made it necessary to focus exclusively on traditional types of economic activity, and above all on the timber industry, since it was timber products that were demanded on the international market to such an extent that Western trade partners were ready to “close their eyes” to the political circumstances of the sanctions announced by Soviet Russia ...

V.I. Lenin attached special importance to the first contracts for the supply of timber to England, demanding that all measures be taken so that timber harvesting would not be disrupted, and organizing strict control “over institutions in charge of harvesting export raw materials” [41, Lenin V.I., pp. 278–279]. In these circumstances, the inhabitants of the province were called upon to start forming an export fund, in exchange for which it would be possible to purchase goods so necessary for the restoration of the national economy: “the northerners should focus on [this], and not on the development of other types of industry”²⁶; “... every worker, every peasant must understand with complete clarity that every unit of forest exported abroad is nothing more than an extra agricultural tool, an extra factory machine, an extra machine”²⁷ .

²⁵ GAAO. F. p-353 O. 1.D. 35.L. 17; GARF. F. 1005. Op. 1-a. D. 381.L. 16.

²⁶ Arkhangelsk province and external trade. News of the Arkhangelsk Revolutionary Committee and the Gubkoma of the All-Union Communist Party. 1920.12 Aug.

²⁷ The beginning of foreign trade. News of the Arkhangelsk Revolutionary Committee and the Gubkom V.K.P. 1920. 30 Sept.

The Arkhangelsk province (since 1937 - the region) for many decades was forced to maintain its significance as an “all-Union sawmill”. The era of industrialization led to the construction of large industrial enterprises (“giants of the five-year plans”) here, but the next complex (economic and political) crisis showed the non-competitiveness of the northern industry, which is quite an important subject for discussion.

The historical experience of finding a way out of the “resource dependence” of the Northern region of European Russia can serve as additional material for such a discussion.

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