

**SCTMG 2020****International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the  
Context of Modern Globalism»****DEVELOPMENT OF THE LAW-ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM IN  
THE URAL REGION IN 1917**

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***Abstract***

The article discusses the development of the law enforcement system by zemstvos (provincial assemblies) in the Ural region in 1917. The security of citizens' lives is always an important value. That's why the government and local authorities must constantly take care of their ability to ensure the personal and property rights of citizens. They developed a program and a set of various activities aimed at developing the law enforcement system. In this respect their historical value is huge. After the February Revolution, which took place in 1917, Zemstvos started to manage police, legal advisers, justices of the peace, etc. The multi-faceted activities of zemstvos were aimed at reforming the law enforcement agencies, improving their facilities, and recruitment quality. Primarily, zemstvos took active measures to replace the former Tsar's police with people's militia. The main task of this research is to uncover the historical role of zemstvos in the development and improvement of the law enforcement system in the Ural region. This topic is of great interest, as evidenced by many foreign publications. The reform of the law enforcement agencies that takes place in Russia can't do without referring to the experience of the past and finding the internal pattern of development and mutual influence of different structures of the society. Based on the research we recommend modern self-government authorities to use the historical experience of zemstvos in their work.

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**Keywords:** Zemstvo, militia, legal advisers, justices of peace.



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## **1. Introduction**

Zemstvos welcomed the February Revolution. The news about the fall of autocracy and the establishment of the Russian Provisional Government made the self-government authorities in the Ural region politically active. Zemstvos even sent telegrams in support of the Provisional Government. For example, on the 7th of March 1917, the zemstvo of Orenburg congratulated the new government with revolutionary changes in the life of the state and ensured it would do its best to support the order in the uyezd. In the Russian Empire administrative subdivision an uyezd was approximately equal to a county. Rallies, demonstrations, and prayer services in support of the democratic changes were held all over the Ural region. These changes affected the law enforcement system, as well. Zemstvos started to manage police, legal advisers, and justices of peace (Dur & Vollaard, 2019; Friehe, Lam Pham, & Miceli, 2018; Koops & Kosta, 2018).

They created a program and a set of activities aimed at improving the law enforcement agencies. The first was the police. Zemstvos based their work on the Provisional Government decrees.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The research aims to uncover the positive and negative sides of zemstvos' activities related to the reform of the law enforcement system in the Ural region after the February Revolution. The work takes into account local features in the context of the all-Russian process.

## **3. Research Questions**

The authors discuss the historical role of zemstvos in the development of the law enforcement system in the Ural region. They also uncover the set of zemstvos' activities aimed at reforming the law enforcement agencies and recruitment policies.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The research aims at studying the activities of local self-government agencies related to improving the law enforcement system, its human resources, facilities, and main activities.

## **5. Research Methods**

The research involves descriptive, chronological, and biographical historical methods as well as the methods of synthesis, analysis, and comparison.

## **6. Findings**

On the 6th of March 1917, the Provisional Government ordered the elimination of the Special Corps of Gendarmes, and on the 10th of March, it ordered the abolition of the police department. These documents announced the replacement of police with people's militia which started to be managed by local self-government authorities. This process was very difficult and ambiguous. The problem of

transforming the police into the militia was discussed during the meetings of provincial assemblies called zemstvos.

The most important and debated issue was the recruitment of militia officials. Some zemstvos believed it was necessary to keep experienced officers of the former police while recruiting new candidates. Other zemstvos stated that militia is a completely new law enforcement body and the officers of the former police should be fired. However, the Provisional Government itself believed that it was necessary to recruit former experienced police officers and gendarmes. The zemstvo of the Vyatka uyezd noted that it is necessary to recruit honest citizens who were police officers and could perform their duties. The zemstvo of the Perm uyezd also advocated for the involvement of decent people, who were former police officers, believing that such an approach was right and useful for the country (Semenchenko, 2013).

The decree of the zemstvo in the Zlatoust uyezd and the resolution of the zemstvo in the Ekaterinburg uyezd stated the same.

However, in some places, the police forces were seriously purged. For example, in the Orsk uyezd, all former police officers were fired. At the same time, new militia recruits were terrible. Some of them even had a criminal past. The same situation was in the Verhneursk uyezd. The research of Safonov (2008) clearly describes difficulties, weaknesses, and excesses during the establishment of militia in the Orenburg governorate. The author states that;

“quite often militia was formed in the same way as other authorities by the election. In the Verhneursk uyezd, even the militia commander was elected. In the Chelyabinsk uyezd, all senior and junior militia officers were elected. The commander of the militia in the same district was elected by the zemstvo. Typically, commanders were appointed and dismissed by zemstvos.” (Safonov, 2008, p. 36)

Safonov (2008) notes that “the inflow of people with criminal past into militia was quite unexpected, but predictable. This was especially true for the Orsk uyezd, where the new militia was predominantly formed of criminals” (p. 44).

The downsides in the process of militia creation were everywhere. Chramtsov (2011) describes the following situation in the Tobolsk governorate:

“The new government faced a lot of problems in creating the uyezd militia, in particular, the recruitment. Many police officers left service in the spring of 1917. Many of them died, while others refused to serve because of the “difficulties of time” or had to resign due to conflicts and animosity of the population. We should note the low educational level that militia commanders had. There was a small number of people who had higher education (in the northern uyezds of the Tobolsk governorate there were none), especially in law. Needless to say that militiamen had a low level of legal culture. Moreover, small salary contributed to staff turnover, low professionalism, and high corruption in the militia.” (p. 192)

On the 17th of April 1917, the Provisional Government accepted “The Decree on the Improvement of Militia” and “The Temporary Regulations on Militia”. These documents established a legal base for organizing the activities of a militia. The militia is an executive body. Locally (except for cities) it reported to zemstvos in uyezds. Zemstvos defined the number of militia stations and officers in uyezds

and the amount of their financing. One of the members of each zemstvo was the commander of the militia.

Only people who were 21 years old or more could become militiamen. Also, they had to be literate. The main responsibility of a militia officer was “to ensure the execution of obligatory orders related to policing”.

The main functions of militia were discussed during the assemblies of zemstvos. The Ufa zemstvo stated that the main responsibility of militia was policing and the struggle against robbery and hooliganism. The Bira zemstvo ordered that militia must supervise the execution of all state laws by the citizens. The Sterlitamak zemstvo believed that militia had to put all the efforts into the struggle with robberies. The Perm zemstvo decided that militia must fight with corruption and profiteering. The Zlatoust zemstvo stated the necessity to fight with alcohol abuse and moonshining. The Verhneuralsk zemstvo drew militia’s attention to dirty streets, squares, and yards. The Orenburg zemstvo obliged militia to watch for the road traffic. The Orsk zemstvo encouraged militia to ensure law and order during disasters, for example, fires and floods, as well as provide assistance to victims.

Zemstvos improved the facilities of law enforcement agencies. They financed the construction and maintenance of premises, bought furniture, stationery, typewriters, and telephones. Substantial budgets were allocated for gear and uniform as well as salary and bonuses for outstanding officers.

For example, the salary of a district militia officer was 100–150 roubles a month. The bonuses for outstanding work were 20–80 roubles. Zemstvos also gave accommodation to militia workers. They organized and financed training courses, where militiamen could acquire both theoretical and practical skills, such as shooting and wrestling. Such courses were run in Ufa, Chelyabinsk, and Ekaterinburg.

Both militia and zemstvos had joint meetings, where they discussed the harm of moonshine-making and excessive alcohol consumption in the region. For example, this topic was addressed by a district militia officer A.P. Feofanov during the assembly of the Zlatoust zemstvo in June of 1917. He described a sad situation in the Duvan village, where the majority of men were drinking and producing moonshine. The assembly decided to address teachers, librarians, priests, mullahs and ask them to explain to people the harm of alcohol abuse.

Militia officers, librarians, and teachers gave lectures about the dangers of alcoholism in different volosts (an administrative subdivision of a zemstvo) of the Zlatoust district. For example, they gave 11 lectures in the Dunayskaya volost, 9 lectures in the Kusinskaya volost, 6 lectures in the Michailovskaya volost, and 5 lectures in the Verhne-Kiginskaya volost. Also, militia and zemstvos jointly addressed the problem of robberies in the railroad transport sphere, profiteering, and hooliganism, the enforcement of trade rules during fairs. In 1917 militia solved many crimes related to the theft of construction materials from wagons at Zlatoust and Urzhemka stations. Law enforcement agencies indicated the need to fight with any signs of mismanagement, noxious treatment of state property, and negligence. Militia workers checked the way goods were stored in shops and warehouses. The authorities in the village of Sharovka fired a woman who neglected the sanitary state of the shop premises which resulted in the damage of goods.

Militia also actively fought with hooliganism. The council recommended militia to use the educational work in parallel with criminal and administrative sentences to fight hooliganism. The

representatives of militia organized meetings with workers, gave lectures, and talked individually with them. The best workers of militia received commendations and money bonuses. Their work was described in newspaper articles.

The joint efforts of militia and zemstvos helped to raise high-qualified specialists, who were devoted to their duties and sympathetic to the country. As Chudakova (2011) says:

Despite all the efforts, the Provisional Government couldn't fully replace the former police and gendarme service, re-establish the fully-fledged mechanism that would cover all the aspects of state and public life. This wasn't facilitated by the law on police or the acquisition of some former working methods and forms. The situation in the country was still difficult. Russia was at the edge of a national catastrophe. (p. 222)

After the October Revolution, militia started to be managed by workers' and peasants' councils. On the 10th of November 1917, the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs issued "The Decree on Worker's Militia". It stated that all Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies establish the worker's militia which will be managed by these councils.

The elimination of police and the transfer of militia management to local self-government authorities is still questionable in science. Such researchers as Kobzov and Romanov (2009) state that:

While attaching great importance to issues related to ensuring order and peace of citizens, the Provisional Government eliminated the former structures of police management and started to decentralize its successor. In fact, the government withdrew itself from controlling the creation of militia, reducing its own activities to issuing single legal acts of a general character. The analysis of central and local acts shows that they treated militia as an agency that would guarantee the respect of the democratic rights and freedoms of local citizens. At the same time, the militia was a secondary structure that had to facilitate local self-government authorities to ensure that orders and decisions are scrupulously respected. (p. 44)

The transfer of people's militia management to local assemblies is an initiative of the Provisional Government that led, among other things, to its political death. We should note that it was a great mistake to provoke violence against former police officers in some territories. Their mass lay-offs and arrests showed citizens an example of a neglectful attitude towards law enforcement authorities and, finally, the law in general. The government, which found itself amid tough political struggle and decentralization of the law enforcement system, died after it lost the support of the army.

Zemstvos also managed prisons and jails. They spend huge money to build and maintain these buildings as well as provide them with heating. Zemstvos had to find specialists to work in these prisons which involved paying salaries and giving bonuses. During one of the assemblies, it was decided to allocate 1 904 roubles and 38 kopecks for these purposes. Zemstvos gave money to improve the food rations of arrestees. For example, in 1917 the Zlatoust zemstvo established the daily allowance per 1 arrestee in prison equal to 35 kopecks for lunch and 21 kopecks for dinner, i.e. 55 kopecks a day. In 1916 this sum was 7 kopecks a day. Zemstvos also paid money to justices of peace that were elected by the assemblies.

In late 1917 – the beginning of 1918 zemstvos attempted to establish the network of legal advisers locally. Uyezds were divided into several districts. Each district was headed by a legal adviser and

covered several volosts. Legal advisers were the employees of the assemblies and received their salary from them. A legal adviser was responsible for: 1) advising on legal issues to all zemstvos within this district, who would like to hear a professional judgment; 2) advising people who lived within these volosts.

That was the final form of this organization. Its special features are 1) bringing legal advice closer to citizens; 2) establishing the opportunity for all zemstvos to obtain the answer from specialists on all legal issues, arising in their practices; 3) securing the collaboration of these specialists in the organizational forms. The collaboration increased the quality of work of these specialists.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, the development of the law enforcement system was very complex and ambiguous. There were both positive and negative traits, and local authorities had to put in a lot of effort and patience. Zemstvos in the Ural region didn't have a universal approach towards forming the human resource framework of law enforcement agencies. In many cases (for example in Verhneuralsk, Chelyabinsk, and Orenburg uyezds) zemstvos implemented the principle of electivity on their own initiative. On the one hand, this politicized militia, while on the other hand, this lowered the professionalism of law enforcement officers.

Zemstvos created a set of activities aimed at improving the facilities of law enforcement agencies. The historical value of developing law enforcement agencies in the Ural region is huge and should be used nowadays. If local self-government authorities treat law enforcement agencies attentively, this will significantly increase the quality of the latter, which is the key to the peaceful lives of citizens. A perfect law enforcement system always plays a significant role in the life of the state and is an important guarantee for social control and stability.

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