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Forced Settlement of Novorossiya and Crimea in the Second Half of the 1770s and 1780s, and Attempts to Stop It (as Exemplified by Poland)*

Zarys treści: Nazwa Noworosja została wprowadzona w Rosji w XVIII wieku, oznaczała nowo zdobyte, słabo zaludnione ziemie na południu, pozyskane głównie w wojnach z imperium osmańskim. Choć rosyjska historiografia utrwalała obraz dobrowolnego osadnictwa, artykuł ujawnia, że zasiedlanie tych terenów często odbywało się przymusowo – poprzez porywanie i przesiedlanie tysięcy ludzi z państw sąsiadujących z Rosją, w tym z terenów Rzeczypospolitej.

Outline of content: The term *Novorossiya* was introduced in Russia in the eighteenth century to describe newly acquired, sparsely populated territories in the south, seized mainly during wars with the Ottoman Empire. Although Russian historiography perpetuated the image of voluntary settlement of the region, the article demonstrates that this settlement was often forced, through the abduction and resettlement of thousands of people from countries neighbouring Russia, including the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Słowa kluczowe: Krym, Nowa Rosja, wojny rosyjsko-tureckie, Polska, Rosja, Katarzyna II, Grigorij Potiomkin, wioski potiomkinowskie

Keywords: Crimea, Novorossiya, Russo-Turkish wars, Poland, Russia, Catherine the Great, Grigory Potemkin, Potemkin villages

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The history of the emergence of Novorossiya[1] and the annexation of Crimea

The term Novorossiya – New Russia – was introduced in Russia in the eighteenth century and denoted a 'new Russia', newly acquired territories in the south. The Novorossiya Governorate was officially established in 1764 by Catherine II's *ukase*. The governorate's military authorities initially resided in the Fortress of Saint Elisabeth in Yelisavetgrad. In 1765, Kremenchug was made the first official capital of the governorate. Over its history, the Novorossiya Governorate underwent four administrative reforms. Initially, until 26 March 1765, the governorate was divided into seven military regiments: (1) Dnieper Pikers Regiment, (2) Donetsk Pikers Regiment, (3) Yelisavetgrad Pikers Regiment, (4) Black Hussars Regiment, (5) Yellow Hussars Regiment, (6) Luhansk Pikers Regiment, (7) Samara Hussars Regiment, and (8) Bakhmut Hussars Regiment. On 26 March 1765, the governorate was divided into three provinces: Bakhmut Province, Yekaterinoslav Province, and Yelisavetgrad Province.[2]

The Novorossiya Governorate comprised mainly territories seized in the wars with the Ottoman Empire. Russia's expansive policy in the eighteenth century and its desire to play a major role in international politics led to a conflict with its strongest neighbour, Turkey, whose territory became a natural direction for St Petersburg's political and territorial expansion. On the other hand, Russia's growing ambitions were a threat to the Porte. Conflicts between the two states were inevitable. In the first half of the eighteenth century, they did not bring Russia any spectacular benefits; even the campaign of the second half of the 1730s, despite several important victories for the Russian troops, ultimately forced St Petersburg to conclude a not very favourable peace treaty in 1739. The situation changed in the second half of the eighteenth century, when Catherine II became the ruler of the Russian Empire. A pretext for another conflict came in 1768 with the incursion from Polish territory of a unit of Russian Cossacks, who were suppressing the Bar

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[1] Although Crimea became part of the Novorossiya Governorate after its subjugation, the fact that it was ruled by Grigory Potemkin, Catherine II's favourite, and his involvement in its development, combined with the enormous influence he wielded, meant that it was treated as exceptional, as was the process of its 'colonisation'. This is why the present author has decided to highlight this in the title.

[2] The Russian and Ukrainian historiography dealing with the territories that became part of Novorossiya, and describing its administrative, social or economic development is vast and in most cases repeats the earlier findings. I refer the reader to the basic literature on the subject comprising the following studies: N.F. Dubrovin, *Prisoyedineniye Kryma k Rossii* (St Petersburg, 1885–1889); V. Kabuzan, *Zasielenie Novorossiyi (Yekatierinoslavskoy, Khersonskoy gubernii) v XVIII – pervoy polovinie XIX vv.* (Moscow, 1976); M.S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774–1923* (New York, 1966); M.S. Anderson, 'The Great Powers and the Russian Annexation of the Crimea, 1783–1784', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 37 (1958), pp. 17–41; E.I. Druzhinina, *Severnoye Prichernmore v 1775–1800* (Moscow, 1959); A.W. Fisher, *The Russian Annexation of the Crimea 1772–1783* (Cambridge, 1970).

Confederation in Poland at the time, into Balta, which was ransacked, prompting Sultan Mustafa III to declare war on Russia.[3]

In January 1769, a 70,000-strong Turkish-Tatar army under the Crimean Khan Qırım Giray invaded central Ukraine, ravaged New Serbia, and abducted a considerable number of the local inhabitants. In response, the Russian army crossed the Dniester and entered Moldavia a few months later, in September 1769. After some initial failures, it managed to seize the key fortress at Khotyn, take the Moldavian capital, Jassy (7 October), and then the capital of Wallachia, Bucharest (17 November).

A highly significant confrontation occurred during the Battle of Kagul (1 August 1770), in which the Russian troops defeated the army of the Grand Vizier, Mehmed Emin Pasha. What also must have come as a shock not only to the Turks but also to Europe's naval powers was Russia's victory in the naval battle at Chesma (5–7 July 1770), off the coast of Asia Minor. The ships of the Russian fleet, which was commanded by Alexei Grigoryevich Orlov and which was still being formed, sailed into the Mediterranean Sea to draw the Turkish navy away from the Black Sea, and, despite the enemy's great superiority, pulled off a victory that seriously undermined the Turkish morale. In 1771 Russians seized Crimea. Under the impact of these defeats, the following year, the Turks decided to conclude a truce, though not for long, as in 1773 they resumed the hostilities. However, the Porte no longer had enough strength to change the outcome of the war. The Russian advantage was consolidated by the Battle of Kozludzha (20 June 1774), where the Russian army under Alexander Suvorov routed the Ottoman troops. Russia used this victory to force the Ottoman Empire to accept its demands. On 21 July 1774, the Porte was forced to sign the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca. Under the treaty, Russia received reparations of 4.5 million; two key sea ports of Azov and Kerch, providing the Russian navy and merchant fleet with direct access to the Black Sea; and the territory between the Rivers Dnieper and southern Bug. Compared with the territory seized by the Russian troops in the course of the hostilities, the annexation may not seem impressive, but it was the annexation of a key region. We also need to bear in mind that at the same time Russia acquired vast territories as a result of the partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; in addition, it had to curb its appetite owing to the attitude of other European powers, not very keen on such a strengthening of St Petersburg.

Obviously, the aftermath of the war and the newly acquired territories were reflected in administrative changes in the Novorossiya Governorate. Between 1775 and 1777, it was expanded to include the Kherson province and the right-bank part of the Sich. At the same time, the Province of Bakhmunt, hitherto within

[3] The most complete analyses of the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1774 can be found in A.N. Petrov, *Voyna Rosii s Turkiey i polskimi konfederatami s 1769–1774*, vols 1–5 (St Petersburg, 1866–1874); B.L. Davis, *The Russo-Turkish War, 1768–1774. Catherine II and the Ottoman Empire* (New York, 2017).

the borders of Novorossiya, was incorporated into the Azov Governorate. On 1 January 1776, the region was divided into four provinces (Yelisavetgrad, Poltava, Slaviansk, and Kherson) as well as twelve *uyezds*.

The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, which ended the Russo-Turkish War (1768–1774), did not provide a satisfactory solution to Crimea for either Russia, which did not hide its appetite to annex the Khanate, or Turkey, which wanted a return to the pre-1774 state of affairs. The Russo-Turkish convention of Aynalıkavak in 1779 reaffirmed the terms of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca – no European state wanted to intervene at the time to maintain balance in the Black Sea basin. The Porte pledged to recognise the lifelong rule of the pro-Russian Khan Shahin Girey and to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of Crimea, and to give up its religious sovereignty over the Khanate. Russia, on the other hand, promised to withdraw its troops from Crimea and gave Turkey a piece of land near Ochakov. This, however, did not calm the situation on the peninsula or repair the relations between the conflicting states. The following years were marked by conflicts between the khan and the opposition, as well as numerous riots, which provided an excellent pretext for Russian intervention. In the summer of 1782, the Russian army under Grigory Potemkin entered Crimea and caused the insurgents to disperse. Protected by Russian bayonets, Shahin Giray returned to Bakhchysarai and launched harsh repressions against his political opponents, which, however, did not stabilise the situation.

With an army stationed in Crimea, the takeover of the peninsula by Russia was only a matter of time. On 8 April 1783, a manifesto on the annexation of Crimea was drafted in St Petersburg, but was not released until July. Russians needed that time to ensure a 'peaceful' takeover of power over the peninsula, urging the last khan to abdicate and organising a public ceremony for various representatives to swear allegiance to Russia.

On 28 December 1783, Russia signed a treaty with the Ottoman Empire on peace, trade, and borders, recognising the incorporation of Crimea, Taman, and Kuban into the Russian Empire. The territories were made part of New Russia, with Catherine II's favourite Grigory Potemkin becoming their ruler.

The settlement of Novorossiya and Crimea

One of the main problems facing the authorities of the new lands that were being conquered and incorporated into the empire was depopulation: the newly annexed areas were poorly urbanised due to frequent wars, and in Crimea, most of the indigenous inhabitants had emigrated to Turkey. Therefore, the most important goal was to settle these territories. One of the first steps in the process was not only to bring in new settlers, which required time, but also to prevent the existing population from leaving – this concerned the locals who already owned land or had craft skills and knew the place where they lived. For this reason, the new authorities

ordered the troops to exercise 'restraint' in dealing with people living in the conquered areas of Novorossiya. Such an order was sent to A.V. Suvorov, who was commanding troops in Kuban: "Once the Tatar people have come under the rule of the empress, it is highly important to enable them to feel all the benefits of their current status". Suvorov had to make sure that "ours [Russian soldiers] treated the local inhabitants as their brothers". Particular importance was attached to the religious aspect: "the most severe [punishment] will be imposed on any rebel who dares to neglect respect for his holy places and violate the prayers of the Muslims".[4]

The problem of the exodus of the local population was particularly acute in Crimea – after its incorporation into Russia, many Tatars began leaving the peninsula and moving to Turkey, encouraged by the Porte through its agents. On the one hand, Russia officially allowed them to leave and instructed its officials to issue relevant documents (passports) to anyone who wished to obtain them; on the other – the same administration officials were told to prevent as many locals of the newly conquered territory as possible from leaving by hindering their departure or encouraging them to stay through tangible benefits. To this end, a new decree was issued on 22 February 1784, granting the Crimean upper class all the rights and benefits of the Russian nobility. In order to achieve that, however, it was necessary to identify the individuals belonging to this class, which proved by no means easy, as the Murzas often lacked documents confirming their noble status. It was customary to record the dates of birth of boys – such data were needed because the eldest in the clan would become a bey, with the next in line becoming a kalga. An 'analysis' carried out by officials produced lists of 334 noble names and these individuals retained the land they owned.[5]

Initial attempts to intensify settlement in the region – by decrees issued in 1762 and 1763 that encouraged settlement while introducing some restrictions – did not yield satisfactory results. A breakthrough came with the decree issued in March 1764, which served as the basis for the colonisation of Novorossiya in the 1760s and 1770s. All willing "foreigners" as well as "inhabitants of Poland and other countries" and Zaporozhian Cossacks were allowed to settle in the Novorossiya Governorate. Foreigners received thirty roubles each "for furnishings", if they signed up for military service, while others, as well as Russian newcomers and Cossacks, classified as settlers, received twelve roubles each as a non-refundable allowance. Poor settlers were given plots of land to farm and were exempt from taxes "for a period of six to sixteen years". Landowners had to settle people on their land at their own expense.[6]

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[4] Druzhinina, *Severnoye Prichernmore*, p. 93.

[5] Ibid., p. 97.

[6] Kabuzan, *Zasielenie Novorossiyi*, p. 102; The dynamics of settlement are reflected in the following figures: in the early 1760s there were 24,627 people living in the Yelisavetgrad province (if its borders are to be reconstructed), and in 1767 the entire population of the province was already 73,761; ibid., p. 107.

An additional asset intended to attract settlers was the fact that the government sacrificed the principle of the nobility's monopoly on land ownership – representatives of most social classes (with the exception of peasants) could be given large estates in the south of the country, provided they settled them. Peasants settling on landowners' lands concluded relevant contracts with the landowners, under which they remained personally free, retaining the right to move to a new place.

Settlers were brought from abroad as well as from the hinterland, with the former being the more desirable group and with the process being managed by special recruiters.

In the period between the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca and the annexation of Crimea the contingent of foreign settlers had its own specificity: there were many Ottoman subjects among them. The war of 1768–1774:

> [S]trengthened Russia's ties with the Turkish peoples of the Balkan Peninsula, Crimea, and Caucasus, who were Turkish subjects, sympathised with Russian victories, and actively helped Russian troops. In order to protect these peoples against reprisals, the Russian government made sure that the 1774 peace treaty would include a provision granting amnesty to all subjects of both contracting parties who had fought on the side of the enemy; in addition, Turkish subjects were granted the right to move to Russia within one year – for those who had joined the Russian services there was no such time limit. These provisions prompted a mass-scale movement of Bulgarians, Albanians, Greeks, and Poles, who settled in Russia. Entire regiments would quit Ottoman service and set off for Russia.[7]

With time, recruitment within the empire became increasingly difficult in unfavourable political circumstances – Turkey was reluctant to see its subjects move to the territory which had been taken from it by force and the loss of which it was unable to accept.[8] In response, the Russian authorities looked more and more liberally at people arriving from there – all those willing were accepted: they included those who had "violated the law", that is, had broken some regulations in their country, and beggars – provided they were fit to work.[9]

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[7] Druzhinina, *Severnoye Prichernmore*, p. 67.

[8] Ibid., p. 130. Kontantin Kosapi, a Greek who arrived in Balaklava, reported that "the customs officials in Constantinople detain the Greeks from the White Sea islands who want to settle in Taurida and look everywhere – even under bales"; which is why two families from the island of Skopelos were arrested during Kosapi's journey on his ship. Nevertheless, the data show that from, for example, Moldavia 2353 willing migrants – men, women, and children – arrived in Taurida; ibid.

[9] Druzhinina, *Severnoye Prichernmore*, pp. 129–130. This is how O. Igelström described a group of 'Albanians' (or perhaps Greeks), who came to Crimea in 1784 and who initially were to be conscripted into the Albanian army: "All these Albanians, having not only no weapons, but no clothing and footwear either, except for shirts covered with torn rags, asked the six of them to be released from service and allowed to earn a living on the Taurida peninsula with their handicrafts and labour". Those making the request included two tailors, a leatherworker, a baker, a cook, and a goldsmith; ibid.

A large group of settlers were runaway peasants from other countries. Most of them were fleeing from Russia, from the oppression of their lords. The new territories, although part of the same empire, tempted them with a vision of an easier way to earn a living, a new life, a lack of established legal norms associated with impunity, and often anonymity. The authorities of Novorossiya were aware of that. On 5 May 1779, they published a manifesto "To peasants and commoners who have moved abroad without permission".[10] The manifesto not only allowed all of them to return to Russia without being punished, but it also granted them a six-year tax exemption. Serfs could return not to their landowners, but become state peasants. It seems, however, that in reality, few of them admitted to being runaways, as the punishments were very severe and the *ukase* must have seemed not very credible in their eyes. Thus they arrived under various pretexts, presenting themselves as persons associated with the clergy, as foreigners, or finding other ways.[11] It is likely – a conclusion that, in my opinion, has not been sufficiently stressed in publications dealing with the subject – most of these people arrived illegally. In addition, the so-called permission officially applied only to those returning from abroad, though when it came to individuals arriving from the Russian hinterland, the government, officially opposing the acceptance of such runaways and declaring that various punishments would be administered, nevertheless treated them with leniency. Only in some cases were threats of punishment carried out (especially when the escape was easy to prove); in the vast majority of cases, the runaways who settled on the estates of new landowners were recognised by the local administration as undetected and never returned to their former landowners.[12] It is difficult to provide an estimate of their number in view of the above; it was in the interest of the peasants themselves or their new owners for them not to be identified as runaways. Yet given the high level of desertion in this social group, their percentage among the settlers in areas with so much free land and enormous demand must have been very high.

What constituted a natural 'human resource' was the army. It was not ideal material for the purpose, but the soldiers were a good labour force that was easy to acquire – as a commander of thousands of soldiers, Grigory Potemkin could use them as he pleased. Soldiers in the Russian army served for many years, and only those who were no longer fit for service were discharged: depending on their state of health, some of them were transferred to garrison service or to public places, where they worked as guards, messengers or performed other duties, while others were sent to various regions as settlers. No wonder, therefore, that the first wave of settlement relied mainly on soldiers. It was regulated by relevant decrees which prompted a mass migration to Russia of entire regiments composed of foreigners

[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., p. 131.
[12] Ibid.

in Russian service – Bulgarians, Albanians or Greeks. The Russian government supported those initiatives, additionally granting the settlers cash loans for their move, providing various benefits, and building houses and churches. For example, in 1771, 15,526 individuals of Moldavian, Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, and other nationalities moved to the Moldavian Hussars Regiment, with an additional 1,150 people arriving in 1773.[13] Another group came in 1775, and was stationed in Taganrog, Kerch, and Yenikal. A new group of settlers came to Russia in 1778 – 32,000 Greeks and Armenians brought by Alexander Suvorov from the Crimean Khanate. The Greeks were given land near the Dnieper and Sea of Azov line, the Armenians – on the Don, between Azov and the Fortress of St. Dmitry. In 1784, O. Igelström, on Potemkin's orders, conducted a personnel survey of the regiments in the Taurida area, after which he selected several hundred soldiers to form soldier settlements.[14]

There was a significant problem associated with military settlement – we are dealing with a large number of men alone, while in order to run a farm to ensure continuity, a family consisting of a man and a woman was needed. In the 'old' regiments, the number of men exceeded the number of women only to some extent, but in, for example, the Moldavian Hussars Regiment, which was formed only in 1772 from among the 23,259 people living on regimental territory, 16,790 people were males (72.19 per cent) and only 6,496 were females (27.81 per cent).[15]

Consequently, it became necessary to organise a large-scale resettlement of women to the region. In early 1785, decrees were issued, sending the wives of recruits serving in regiments under Potemkin's command to the south. The number of women to be resettled was substantial – 4,425 individuals. Two months later, the decree was followed by another one, issued on 18 March and ordering each soldier to be allocated a cart, an ox, and daily pay, a decision that must have provided significant motivation to settle.[16] We are thus dealing here with a deliberate, long-term, planned action.

The scale of the problem is evidenced by the mass recruitment of women for lonely settlers, organised through various methods. One of the men behind the campaign was V.V Kakhovsky, who, already in August 1784, reported in a letter to V.S Popov that in order to provide women who would be suitable housewife material, he had sent Captain Zhdanovsky to Little Russia to find wives for all lonely men. He hoped he would manage to marry all of them. There were enough

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[13] Kabuzan, *Zasielenie Novorossiyi*, p. 107.

[14] Druzhinina, *Severnoye Prichernmore*, p. 126. Judging by the practice in other newly conquered regions, the figure quoted by Druzhinina may at best have been severely underestimated, or, more likely, merely a starting point for a widespread campaign to settle Crimea with soldiers. On the other hand, we can unquestionably agree with this author that the soldiers were considered poor farmers; ibid.

[15] Kabuzan, *Zasielenie Novorossiyi*, p. 110.

[16] Druzhinina, *Severnoye Prichernmore*, pp. 127–128.

recruiters who received not only money for travel and food for the women, but, above all, remuneration for each recruited female. As the money spent on recruitment was not subject to legal control, we do not know how many of the women voluntarily agreed to leave their hometowns and villages to move to an unknown, distant region, and how many were simply abducted.[17] One of the surviving lists of the women brought to the region in 1786 demonstrates the scale of the problem. We learn that among the 1,497 women brought from the country's central provinces, 1,032 already had links to the army and came to join their husbands, while the remaining 465 were single. Some of them (218) immediately(!) married Russian settlers. The soldiers who married the newly arrived women and agreed to settle in designated areas in Crimea, were immediately provided with furnishings and "supplies from the treasury".[18]

The scale of the resources used brought impressive results: across the entire territory of Novorossiya alone, between 1764 and 1775, the population increased from 143,786 to 205,588 or by 42.98 per cent, and between 1776 and 1782, the population almost doubled (increased by 79.82 per cent).[19]

Forced resettlement of Polish subjects

The methods of settling Novorossiya and Crimea cited above, as well as the related figures, are based mainly on Russian historiography, which presents the reader with a picture of the hard work of the Russian administration in settling deserted lands that came under Russian rule, and the myriad benefits that anyone could receive by coming voluntarily to these regions of the empire.[20] However, it would

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[17] For example, in the first three groups that began to arrive in Ak-Mechet from Poland in February 1785, there were 92 women and only 7 men; Druzhinina, *Severnoye Prichernmore*, p. 130.

[18] Ibid., p. 128.

[19] Kabuzan, *Zasielenie Novorossiyi*, pp. 129, 139.

[20] Even in comparison with the above-mentioned works, on which the first part of this article is based, the foreign scholar Simon Montefiore stands out. In his monumental, excellently written history of Potemkin's life, he portrays Potemkin as a caring father whose subjects are incredibly lucky to have come under Russian rule. "His first moves were to protect the Moslem Tartars from the brutish philistinism of his own soldiery: again and again, he ordered his generals to 'treat the inhabitants kindly and not to offend them. The chiefs of regiments must set an example'. He put special observers with regiments to keep an eye on their behaviour – or, as he put it, 'for the villages' protection' – and report to him 'all forbidden actions', and placed the Taurian region under Crimean murzas, especially the renegade Iakub Aga, who had become Yakov Rudzevich. As he told Catherine, he gave money to maintain mosques and muftis. […] Potemkin gave the Tatar murzas Russian nobility and the right to own land. Typically, he formed a Tartar Crimean army, a little one for display. It was traditional Russian imperialism to co-opt the Moslem hierarchies, but Potemkin's sensitive care for them is unusual in a Russian soldier of any epoch", S. Montefiore, *Prince of Princes. The Life of Potemkin* (London, 2000), p. 273, Polish edition: *Potiomkin. Książę książąt* (Warszawa, 2006), p. 321.

be difficult to find in these publications one of the main methods of settlement, often used by Russia – coercion. We will not find there information about Russian regiments invading the neighbouring, weaker states, abducting and forcibly resettling thousands of people, often entire villages with their inhabitants' possessions.[21]

These methods were used in, for example, the eastern territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth bordering Russia, especially in the so-called Ukrainian provinces.

The Russian army had a long tradition of plundering Poland. Taking advantage of the neighbouring country's political weakness, the Russian troops stationed in Poland since 1764 allowed Catherine II to impose her will on the Poles and maintain Russian influence. Officially, they were allied troops, but, in fact, their conduct was no different from the behaviour of a victorious army in a conquered country. The suppression of the Bar Confederation and the pacification of resistance after the First Partition prompted St Petersburg to withdraw Russian troops from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, though only briefly. This was because the plan for the annexation of Crimea provided for the entry of Russian troops into Poland-Lithuania to protect the wing of the main invading forces from Moldavia and Wallachia, or to neutralise the mood of the Polish nobility (Turkish aid to the Bar Confederates was remembered). The Russian army most likely crossed the border around mid-June 1783. The Russian authorities did not feel obliged to notify the Polish authorities of this, let alone to seek their permission. The first corps was commanded by Prince General (later Field Marshal) Nikolai Repnin, who had earlier served as ambassador to Warsaw. Repnin established his headquarters in Uman. The commander of the second corps was Count General Nikolai Soltykov, the then deputy head of the College of War (from 1788, its head). Soltykov had his headquarters in Niemirów. According to government estimates, in October 1783, there were 60,000 Russian troops within the borders of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The incorporation of huge new territories into Russia following the victorious war against Turkey, the First Partition of Poland, and the annexation of Crimea created a demand for settlers. The first province governors and estate owners who were granted newly seized land were usually Russian army commanders. Some of them had previously been stationed in Poland. Aware of the weakness of the Polish state and its impunity in its previous abuses, they treated the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a place where they could get the needed labour by force without consequences.

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[21] E.g. the official opinion in the best monograph published to date, by E.I. Druzhinina, contains a very misleading reference, quoted above, that colonists *were recruited* (emphasis mine – A.D.) in Poland, although they were mostly Polish Ukrainians. The first three groups, which began arriving in Ak-Mechet in February 1785, comprised 92 women and only 7 men; Druzhinina, *Severnoye Prichernmore*, p. 130.

The norm for the Russian troops in eastern Poland was to collect provisions and fodder from the inhabitants without paying for them.[22] This intensified particularly before the departure of the Russian troops, when the commanders of the various units resorted not only to local looting and abuse, but also to wasteful exploitation of the country's natural resources. The scale of the phenomenon is demonstrated by the Russian demands in, for example, the Letichev District, where people were ordered to supply 3,000 carts of wood, or in the Province of Volhynia – 9,000 carts! "This unnecessary abundance would not be believable, had it not been proven by the commanders' orders", read a protest note addressed to the Russian ambassador Otto Stackelberg.[23]

It is worth referring to the actions of the Seversky Regiment, commanded by Colonel Pyotr Lunin, who, during the regiment's march through the Trakai Province, would instruct his troops to stop for two or three days every few kilometres, ordering that "all manner of sufficient supplies be provided at this time, down to the every last luxury and thoughtful comfort".[24] Vast quantities of fodder and provisions had to be delivered by the inhabitants in ox-drawn carts, which were then requisitioned by the army. Particularly at risk were women – regardless of their 'condition', he ordered that their hair be cut, intending to sell it for a good price. There were also cases of severe beatings and killings.

The Russians' impunity made them even bolder. In border regions, the Russians would brazenly and provocatively invade Polish territory, and take with them grain or hay, chasing away peasants working in the fields, or even bringing in Russian subjects, who reaped and took the crops across the border under the protection of the Russian troops.[25]

Presumably, the first attempts were a test, as it were, of the possibility of engaging in this practice and of the reaction of the Polish state. Given the lack of any significant resistance on the part of Warsaw, the practice intensified. Lieutenant Colonel Fadeyev, who became famous for "selecting several thousand peasants [in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth], became notorious for tyrannically beating and killing tax officials, taking treasury money, and imposing tributes on citizens", showing other Russians that it was possible to do anything virtually without facing consequences. This encouraged others to follow suit, and his case was merely

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[22] E.g. Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych (Central Archives of Historical Records, hereinafter: AGAD), Archiwum Królestwa Polskiego (Archives of the Kingdom of Poland, hereinafter: AKP) 25, List of unpaid receipts for provisions issued by the Russians for 1774–1776, fols 210–215; ibid., fols 225–227, Memorandum of the Province of Polotsk submitted to the king, 24 Oct. 1777; AGAD, AKP 26, Note of the Mazyr Sejmik to Stanisław August, 10 Feb. 1780, fol. 604.

[23] AGAD, AKP 26, fols 361–362, Note of the Permanent Council of 18 Sept. 1779.

[24] AGAD, AKP 263, fol. 5, Excerpt from a memorandum from the citizens of the Trakai Province to the king and the Permanent Council, 10 Nov. 1779.

[25] AGAD, AKP 25, fol. 737, Copy of a report by Vice Brigadier Drohojewski to J. Malczewski, 19 July 1777; ibid., fols 110–111, Report by Józef Stempkowski, 3 Sept. 1777.

the beginning of an endless series of abuses and violations against citizens living in the borderlands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

As the border was poorly protected and patrols were infrequent, only isolated cases were reported. The first recorded attempt by Russian soldiers to abduct a large group, over one hundred individuals, of Polish subjects came in June 1780. Fortunately, a detachment of over thirty Polish cavalrymen came across the convoy advancing towards the Russian border, and after a short skirmish, with minor losses on their side, took all the Russians, including their commander, prisoner. More importantly, a highly valuable item was found on the commander – written orders of his superior, Engelhardt, instructing him not only to abduct people, but also to use weapons, if Polish troops try to rescue them.[26] The *regimentarz* of the Ukrainian division, Józef Stempkowski, immediately sent a message about the clash to the Military Department, which in turn passed on the information to the Foreign Interests Department. At the same time, Stempkowski asked the immediate superior of the detained Russians, Colonel Schütz, for an explanation of the incident. Schütz replied, with insolence characteristic of Russian commanders, that the Russian troops were escorting free people who voluntarily expressed their intention to settle in Novorossiya. He falsely cited Catherine II and Stanisław August ordering that people should live in harmony and friendship with each other, and at the same time threatened severe reprisals against anyone who wished to attack the Russian soldiers.[27]

Under the pretext of capturing Russian fugitives, the Russian Voronezh regiment commanded by Józef Sołłohub entered the south-eastern territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1783. The unlawful and ruthless actions of this regiment gradually escalated, reaching unprecedented levels in 1785. The Permanent Council and the king began to receive countless complaints, which forced them to take a stand.[28] Stanisław August submitted a complaint to the

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[26] AGAD, Zbiór Popielów (hereinafter: ZP) 200, fols 91–91v, Report by Zielonka to J. Stempkowski, 12 June 1780 (copy).

[27] Ibid. fol. 85, Schutz to J. Stempkowski, 15 June 1780 (copy).

[28] AGAD, ZP 204, fol. 56, Excerpt from a letter written in Berdychiv on 11 Feb. 1785; ibid., fol. 123, Reports from Kamianets, 15 Feb. 1785; MNK Biblioteka Czartoryskich (MNK The Czartoryski Library, hereinafter MNK MNK BC) 735, fol. 847, S. Potocki to Stanisław August, 25 Feb. 1785; MNK BC 929, fols 191–192, A. Poniński to Stanisław August, 15 March 1785. "When the author does not name himself", wrote the king to the Polish minister in St Petersburg, Augustyn Deboli, after quoting the 'Excerpt… from Berdychiv' mentioned above, "and his various expressions are in doubtful terms, it is difficult to form a ministerial complaint out of this; but so many different letters of this kind come from there, and the Ruthenian governor, as the commander there, reports in the old fashioned way about the intolerable excesses of this regiment, that it is impossible for me not to believe that a lot of bad things are happening there. And it is not right for me to neglect the rescue of our people, especially in view of the obvious and significant depopulation of the Polish land", AGAD, AKP 268, fol. 198v, Stanisław August to A. Deboli, 5 March 1785. The scale of the problem was underestimated by A. Czaja, author of a study on the Permanent Council in that period, despite the fact that issues relating to it

Russian ambassador, Otto Stackelberg, while Polish troops were ordered to check people taken from Poland by Russians and take back Polish subjects from their midst.[29] The effect of that last move was instantaneous – a cavalry detachment under General Stefan Lubowidzki intercepted a group of about 200 prisoners at Khodorkov (which prompted an immediate protest from Józef Sołłohub to Szczęsny Potocki). A lack of experience in conducting interrogations forced the Poles to return all the others. Only later did it come to light that those who had been abducted were forced by the Russians, under threat of severe consequences, to give false evidence when questioned by Polish soldiers. Fear of Russian soldiers meant that the results of interrogations varied depending on whether an officer from the Voronezh Regiment was involved, as was the case here, or not.[30]

Before launching an official diplomatic intervention against the abuses of Russian troops, Stanisław August intended to collect as much evidence as possible. "I demand", wrote the king to the Ruthenian governor, "that the citizens of Kyiv, Volhynia, and Bratslav come with an official proclamation to me, and the Council, formally submitting their grievances and pointing to persons, places, days, and deeds that would authorise us to lodge complaints where necessary". However, the paralysing fear of revenge from the soldiers, who had gone unpunished, prevented people from making official complaints, thereby limiting the possibility of remedial action.[31]

Arrangements made in the spring of 1785 between the Ruthenian governor and Sołłohub may have given hope that the conduct of the Voronezh Regiment would improve. It was agreed, for example, that convoys with people would always follow one route and Poles would be able to interrogate those being taken away and take back the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's subjects. It soon turned out, however, that this was only an attempt to deceive on the part of the Russians, and

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occupied a significant part of the council's deliberations and concerned its two most important Departments, Foreign and Military: A. Czaja, *Między tronem, buławą, a dworem petersburskim. Z dziejów Rady Nieustającej 1786–1789* (Warszawa, 1988), pp. 146–147. See also A. Danilczyk, *W kręgu afery Dogrumowej. Sejm 1786* (Warszawa, 2010), p. 17. Some of the sources in this part of the article were cited by the author in his monograph on the Sejm of 1786 (pp. 17–25). However, as this article will be published in English and reach a wider audience unfamiliar with Polish, the author has decided to refer not only to the study in question but also to archival sources that may provide important guidelines for further research.

[29] MNK BC 929, S. Potocki to Stanisław August, 18 Aug. 1785, fol. 326.

[30] AGAD, Militaria z Jabłonny 34, fols 224, 228, J. Sołłohub to S. Potocki, 2 and 6 Apr. 1785 (copy); Danilczyk, *W kręgu afery*, p. 18.

[31] Stanisław August to S. Potocki, 19 Apr. and 10 May 1785; "What has hindered me the most so far in giving you open and serious orders to take ministerial steps is that the violence of the Muscovite soldiery causes such fear of revenge on the part of the accused Muscovites, revenge even worse than the initial wrongs, that it is most difficult to persuade our citizens to submit a signed formal complaint, namely, which Muscovites, where, when, and what harm they caused them", AGAD, AKP 268, fols 243–243v, Stanisław August to A. Deboli, 11 May 1786; Danilczyk, *W kręgu afery*, pp. 18–19.

the situation even escalated when the nobles living in the Kyiv Province began to receive orders from the Muscovites to surrender any Russian subjects who had arrived since 1770.[32] This exacerbated the already tense relations between the Polish and the Russian troops, eventually leading to armed clashes. Particularly notorious was the night-time raid on the village of Babczyńce, belonging to a Polish nobleman, by a detachment from the Voronezh Regiment, which abducted the people living there. This abuse was met with a counter-action of Polish troops – a Polish cavalry detachment recaptured the abducted, disarmed the escort, and took the Russian soldiers captive. The man most frightened by the incident was the Ruthenian governor, clearly motivated by personal interests – he feared that his estates in the Bratslav Province would be used as a supply base for the Voronezh Regiment. He ordered that the Russians' weapons be returned to them, that everyone, including the civilians, be escorted to the border, where the inhabitants of the village were to be questioned with regard to their citizenship, and put all the blame for the incident on Rafał Dzierżek, accusing his subordinate of overstepping his orders.[33]

The clash did bring tangible benefits – 54 Polish subjects were returned to Targowica, where Lieutenant Giżycki escorted the convoy. More importantly, however, the incident served as a warning to the Russian troops, which had hitherto gone unpunished. The commander of the Voronezh Regiment, unsure whether this was an arbitrary move by the Polish unit or the beginning of a larger campaign against his actions, decided to gather his dispersed soldiers. He also turned to Szczęsny Potocki, warning that in the event of a hostile attitude of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's troops, he would be forced to call on the Russian troops stationed on the Polish-Russian border for help. He brazenly demanded that the Ruthenian governor withdraw the Polish troops stationed in Sharhorod, Podolia. In addition, he complained arrogantly about obstacles to obtaining fodder and to fulfilling his duties associated with catching 'Russian fugitives', on several occasions threatening to intervene with Prince Potemkin. This time, too, the Ruthenian governor proved submissive, agreeing to the withdrawal of Polish troops and handing over Russian deserters under Polish command. At the same time, he sent copies of his correspondence with the commander of the Voronezh Regiment to the Military Department, partly blaming the Department for the conflicts with the Russians.[34]

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[32] AGAD, AKP 268, fol. 230, Stanisław August to A. Deboli, 27 Apr. 1785; ibid., fol. 242v, Stanisław August to A. Deboli, 11 May 1785; Danilczyk, *W kręgu afery*, p. 19.

[33] AGAD, AKP 268, fol. 266, Stanisław August to A. Deboli, 6 July 1785; AGAD, Militaria z Jabłonny 34, fols 234–235, Report by Brigadier Rafał Dzierżek to the Military Department, 12 Aug. 1785; AGAD, AKP 268, fol. 266, Stanisław August to A. Deboli, 6 July 1785; Danilczyk, *W kręgu afery*, pp. 19–20.

[34] MNK BC 929, fols 421–422, J. Sołłohub to S. Potocki, 9 Aug. 1785 (copy); ibid., fols 423–424, S. Potocki to J. Sołłohub, 12 Aug. 1785 (copy); S. Potocki to the Military Department, 12 Aug. 1785, MNK BC 929, pp. 419; Danilczyk, *W kręgu afery*, pp. 20–21.

The complaints made by the Russian general must have reached St Petersburg, as in early September, Stackelberg reported that, in accordance with his orders, he would intervene in the matter of Polish abuses against Russian troops.[35] This provides indirect evidence that the actions of the Voronezh Regiment were not an arbitrary decision by Sołłohub but were inspired by the highest authorities, probably Potemkin.

On 12 November 1785, after the Permanent Council's reply to his allegations had been presented to the ambassador, the points included there were reiterated by Stanisław August in his correspondence with Deboli. The king put particular emphasis on the activities of the soldiers of the Voronezh Regiment.[36] The letter, in French and not encrypted, was undoubtedly written with the intention that it would be read by the Russian ministry through postal surveillance. Not being sure how many Polish demands would be passed on by Stackelberg, the king may have wanted, in this way, to present to the Russian side the Polish position on the fugitives and the abuses perpetrated by the Russians, who, on the pretext of catching the fugitives, wreaked havoc in the south-eastern provinces of the country.[37]

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[35] Arkhiv Vneshney Politiki Rossiyskoy Imperii (Archives of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire, hereinafter: AVPRI), f. 79/6, no. 1196, O. Stackelberg to Catherine II, 22 Aug./2 Sept. 1785. The diplomat fulfilled the promise, submitting an official letter to the Permanent Council in which he presented the Russian side's allegations concerning the border disputes. In pursuing the interests of the empire he represented in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, he nevertheless sought to present to his superiors the Polish side's situation in a fairly objective manner. He noted that a few years earlier, the Permanent Council had already drafted rules of procedure for border commissioners, which the ambassadors had presented to the Russian commissioners. If these rules were observed, then, in Stackelberg's opinion, this would facilitate the work of border courts and would prevent many disputes. "Il y a quatre ans que le Conseil avoit dressé un nouveau projet pour servir du règle aux commissaires de frontières réciproques. Dès ce tems là je l'avois communiqué non seulement aux commissaires de frontières, mais aussi partout, où il étoit nécessaire. Je n'ai reçu d'autre réponse de la part de premiers, sinon qu'ils en ont rendu compte en son tems à leurs supérieurs, en leur demandant des ordres en conséquence. J'ai l'honneur de remettre ci-joint le projet en question. […] Je crois que cette nouvelle règle une fois adoptée fera fortifier l'idée et remédiera une fois pour toutes aux irrégularités des jugemens de frontières dont on se plaint de part et d'autre", AVPRI, f. 79/6, no. 1196, O. Stackelberg to Catherine II, 6/17 Sept. 1785. A similar tone was that of the ambassador's report sent to St Petersburg following the receipt of the Permanent Council's reply to the letter. In the report, Stackelberg once again highlighted the idea of regulating the work of border courts as a means of conflict prevention; ibid., O. Stackelberg to Catherine II, 5/16 Nov. 1785; Danilczyk, *W kręgu afery*, p. 21.

[36] AGAD, AKP 268, fols 309–313, Stanisław August to A. Deboli, 12 Nov. 1785.

[37] The king's initiative was criticised by Stackelberg, who jealously guarded his exclusive right to deal with all Polish-Russian affairs bypassing the Polish minister in St Petersburg, A. Deboli: "When we communicated the contents of your last two dispatches to the ambassador, he said the following words: "I wish very much that Mr. Deboli would had not talked about these seven points of our complaints against the Poles, which I presented on 1 September and which I received a reply from your side in the note dated 9 November. Because these seven points were entrusted to me not through the usual channels of the Foreign Department, but in a separate letter from the empress to me", AGAD, AKP 268, fols 330–330v, Stanisław August to A. Deboli, 10 Dec. 1785.

These endeavours by the Polish side did not bring the desired results, and the lack of response from St Petersburg to the arguments and proposals included in the notes clearly demonstrates the true Russian intentions. Deboli's efforts to have the Russian ministry deal with the matter of the Voronezh Regiment proved futile – Ostermann would repeatedly rebuff the Polish diplomat. In mid-January 1786, Deboli wrote resignedly, "I hesitate with myself as to what I am to do next in the matter in question", since his actions "receive no final answer, but only one delusion after another".[38]

By the end of January 1786, the actions of the Voronezh Regiments had not been curbed, Stanisław August decided to raise the matter again and to send another official letter.[39] He attached evidence of abuses by Russian soldiers as well as another 'lettre ostensible'. Under the guise of addressing its content to his minister, he expressed a wish that the royal memorandum be presented not only to Ostermann, but, unofficially, also to Catherine II, as a matter "uniquement destinée á être jugée par l'impératrice Elle-même". In addition, he expressed the hope that Catherine II would not approve (implicitly, after reviewing the attached evidence) of the methods used by the soldiers to reclaim the emigrants. We do not know what the monarch wanted to achieve by resorting again to a method that had failed before. The Russian reply was even more dismissive than the replies to the previous letters. Ostermann, to whom Deboli presented the king's memorandum and letter, read only the first page of the correspondence, saying that he could not show it to the empress, for it contained too many shocking words (!). A few days later, he openly stated that Catherine II approved the vice chancellor's refusal to accept the memorandum and added that St Petersburg would not agree to the withdrawal of the Voronezh Regiment from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.[40]

The hopelessness of the Polish efforts was confirmed by Stackelberg's confession to the king in the second half of February 1786. The ambassador admitted

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[38] "On Wednesday […] the minister [Ostermann] replied that he had no instructions. According to local custom, I should have stopped there that day, and indeed I did so. A few days afterwards, under the pretext of the approaching holidays, during which our conferences would again be interrupted, I tentatively resumed the matter, at least as a reminder, demanding that a resolution be drawn up, and mentioning explicitly Sołłohub's regiment, that complaints against it are multiplying, and that we would very much like to bring the matter to some sort of resolution. And here again the vice chancellor declared that he was not yet empowered to provide a reply and ended by recommending me to be patient", AGAD, AKP 269, fol. 7, A. Deboli to Stanisław August, 3 Jan. 1786; ibid., fol. 11, A. Deboli to Stanisław August, 13 Jan. 1786; Danilczyk, *W kręgu afery*, p. 22.

[39] "Seeing how you are constantly being dismissed, and seeing how the harm caused by the presence of Sołłohub's regiment to our country is multiplying every day, I have resolved to instruct you to submit the attached memorandum, AGAD, AKP 378, fol. 11, Stanisław August to A. Deboli, 25 Jan. 1786.

[40] Ibid., fol. 9v, Stanisław August to A. Deboli, 25 Jan. 1786; AGAD, AKP 269, fol. 37, A. Deboli to Stanisław August, 10 Feb. 1786; ibid., fols 41–41v, A. Deboli to Stanisław August, 21 Feb. 1786; Danilczyk, *W kręgu afery*, p. 23.

that the note on the abuses perpetrated by Russian soldiers was justified and well argued. He added, however, that in the event of receiving orders from St Petersburg to challenge the Polish position on the matter, he would have to, as before, "talk, act, scheme, threaten, and force".[41]

Despite St Petersburg's unequivocal position, Stanisław August instructed Deboli to hand the memorandum to Russian ministers at all costs, even as an ordinary letter. He intended to achieve a better result by partly rewriting it. "In this new guise, so to speak, who knows, perhaps the memorandum would persuade the ministers in Moscow and the empress herself".[42]

While delaying taking an official position on Deboli's efforts, the Russian ministry, in fact, expressed its hostile attitude toward the Polish efforts as early as March in its correspondence with Stackelberg. St Petersburg firmly rejected the legitimacy of the Polish proposal concerning border courts, arguing that Catherine II was not convinced of either the urgent need for negotiations to conclude a convention or the benefits that could result from it. The ambassador was instructed to present to the Polish side St Petersburg's essential claims, without, of course, the interpretation mentioned above, which he did by submitting to the Permanent Council a letter entitled 'Insinuation verbale'.[43]

It was only in the second half of April 1786 that Ostermann, in a conversation with Deboli, touched upon the issue of fugitives, saying that the Russians would be forced to take from Polish villages as many people as had fled from the Russian borderlands. He placed the entire blame for the situation on the nobility living in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's borderlands, accusing them of harbouring the fugitives. He mentioned the Vice Chancellor of Lithuania, Joachim Chreptowicz, claiming that he was hiding 3000(!) Russian subjects. At the same time, he demanded that 'only' 300 be returned as a gesture of goodwill on the part of the vice chancellor.[44] Ostermann's words signified further hardening of the Russian position – evasions were replaced with threats and intimidation. The Polish side was accused of carrying out recruitment among the Russian population and was presented with fabricated reports with details of the incident. This was only a pretext for threats. As Deboli recounted,

> After the presentation of these reports, the following threats were made, albeit not at the ministerial level (but in my own way, which I have learned to use when making such statements, it amounts to the same thing […]). That no matter what we say to the contrary, they

[41] AGAD, AKP 378, fol. 32, Stanisław August to A. Deboli, 25 Feb. 1786.

[42] Ibid., fol. 33; Danilczyk, *W kręgu afery*.

[43] "Il suffit de dire à Votre Ecellence, que Sa Majesté Impériale n'entrevoit ni la nécessité urgente d'une pareille négotiation, ni l'utilité qui en résulteroit pour le moment", AVPRI, f. 80/1, no. 1410, fol. 147, I.A. Ostermann to O. Stackelberg, 27 Feb./9 March 1786; AVPRI, f. 79/6, no. 1212, O. Stackelberg to I.A. Ostermann, 21 March/ 1 Apr. 1786.

[44] AGAD, AKP 269, fols 73–73v, A. Deboli to Stanisław August, 24 March 1786.

> cannot continue to endure such great emigration, and will, therefore, use every means to prevent it […]. That it might come to pass that many Russian peasants would take refuge in Poland, so as many of our serfs from the first village [across the border] will immediately be captured. That they now regret withdrawing that detachment sent from White Ruthenia in 1783, which, had it remained, like Sołłohub's regiment in Ukraine, would have prevented the emigration, which may result in a detachment being sent once again beyond Duna, and those who at the time supported the evacuation of that detachment will not fail to submit their requests for this to the empress.[45]

Following a series of threats, the Polish minister was advised on how to avoid these repercussions:

> We would at least see some goodwill, if it were established, in agreement with Count Stackelberg, that there and there our fugitives are hiding. Repeated several times, this would discourage the acceptance of serfs, and sparing the innocent would thus serve as justification for such a measure. After this advice was formulated, I was asked whether I understood it.[46]

However, it can indeed be said that the 'insinuation verbal' presented to the Polish side, far from the actual views prevailing in St Petersburg on the matter, as well as the threats made against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the multiplication of further accusations and demands, should be regarded as a means used by Russia to reject Polish complaints and proposals to remedy the problem of cross-border fugitives. St Petersburg had no intention of resolving the issue – confident in its own strength, it sought to maintain a state of affairs that justified the use of force.

Given such a situation, further action by the Polish side seeking to resolve the disputed issues was doomed to failure from the start. Ostermann was unceremonious in his treatment of the reply to the 'insinuation verbal'. "What kind of answer is that?", he asked Deboli dismissively. "You have quoted treaties of which we are well aware. Which power would adhere to the treaties in this case?" The vice chancellor rejected the idea of establishing border courts, arguing that "this would only multiply trials". At the same time, Stackelberg was sent a letter that, in addition to threats against Poland, also contained a non-committal promise to consider the border courts project at some unspecified time in the future.[47]

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[45] Ibid., fols 86–87, A. Deboli to Stanisław August, 14 Apr. 1786. This was a reference to a Russian detachment commanded by Fadeyev, which in 1783 made an incursion into Lithuania under the pretext of catching runaway serfs and acted extremely brutally; J. Michalski, 'Sprawa przymierza polsko-rosyjskiego w dobie aneksji Krymu', in id., *Studia historyczne z XVIII i XIX wieku*, vol. 1 (Warszawa, 2007), pp. 437–438.

[46] A. Deboli to Stanisław August, 14 Apr. 1786, AGAD, AKP 269, fol. 88.

[47] Ibid., fols 102v, 103v, A. Deboli to Stanisław August, 28 Apr. 1786; AVPRI, f. 80/1, no. 1410, I.A. Ostermann to O. Stackelberg, 9/18 May 1786; Danilczyk, *W kręgu afery*, p. 25.

The Polish side sought to be as submissive as possible, deluding itself that this would lead to the withdrawal of Russian troops. Aware that runaway Russian subjects were only a pretext for the troops' stay, in the spring of 1786 the Polish authorities sent a warning to the army stationed in the east and to the border nobility against accepting Russian fugitives, along with an order to hand over the earlier fugitives. This was followed by another order, inspired by the king, to the Lithuanian troops, forbidding them to allow Russian peasants to cross the border of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.[48]

Given the scale of the phenomenon, it is evident that the issue of the presence and pillaging activity of the Russian troops in the south-eastern provinces would be raised at the upcoming Sejm. In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in that period, the Sejm would be convened every two years. This assembly of representatives of the nobility from all over the country discussed the most important matters of domestic and international policy. The opposition intended to raise the problem as yet another piece of evidence of the king's indifference to Russian abuses and present Stanisław August's Russian orientation in a negative light.

Indeed, there was an explosion of grievances against the Russian regiment.[49] Inspired by the opposition, the Chernihiv deputy Benedykt Hulewicz put forward a proposal to send an extraordinary envoy to St Petersburg to present the abuses of the Voronezh Regiment to Catherine II. The candidate proposed for this diplomatic mission was Szczęsny Potocki, the Governor of Ruthenia (Hulewicz's protector, and thus probably the author of the initiative), a person who was not yet associated with any particular political camp (his defection to the faction opposing the king was not yet officially known), and who was widely respected, which is why the idea was accepted by the majority of deputies.

Stanisław August tried to counteract. He feared that the opposition would use this as an opportunity to send to St Petersburg a man who would present to Catherine II not so much the problems stemming from the presence of Russian troops in Poland, but the conflict between the malcontents and the king (showing it in an appropriate, that is, favourable to the opposition, light). At the same time, aware of the public's expectations for concrete action, he tried to neutralise the malcontents' idea by proposing to use only an official note to be presented by the Marshal of the Sejm to Stackelberg. This was a solution suggested to him by the ambassador, who, in his correspondence with his superiors, credited himself with blocking the idea of sending the Ruthenian governor to St Petersburg by threatening that the envoy would not be received by the empress. Only thanks to the majority of royalist

[48] AGAD, ZP 325, Order of the Military Department of 22 March 1786; AGAD, AKP 208, fols 278–279, Stanisław August to S. Poniatowski, 30 Apr. 1786; Danilczyk, *W kręgu afery*, pp. 25–26.

[49] Even the Russian Ambassador Stackelberg was impressed by the scale of the complaints: "il est vrai que depuis que je suis dans ce pays-ci, je n'ai pas encore vu une effusion de plaintes comme celle qu'on porte contre ce régiment", AVPRI, f. 80/1, no. 1410, O. Stackelberg to I.A. Ostermann, 17/28 Oct. 1786.

deputies, and not without protest from the opposition, was it possible to push through the initiative to send an official note rather than an extraordinary envoy.[50]

The strength of the parliamentary speeches prompted the monarch to intervene further in the matter. This time, however, the king intended to address Potemkin directly, correctly guessing who was the real inspirer of Russian actions in the Ukrainian provinces. In a letter to the prince dated 27 November 1786, he presented the problem, suggesting the establishment of a bilateral commission to address grievances and complaints. He attached a list of examples of abuse so that, as he said, "you could get a general idea" (although no one doubted that the prince was aware of everything) and added that "the facts look sufficiently disturbing and threatening to demand that they be investigated and that compensation be awarded to those who have suffered". Before the establishment of the commission, the king demanded that Potemkin forbid soldiers from collecting forced contributions and abducting people.[51] The man entrusted with the mission was Colonel Ludwik Trokin.[52] He was to hand over to the Prince of Taurida Stanisław August's letter with the list of abuses perpetrated by the soldiers of Sołłohub's regiment. He was instructed by the Permanent Council to, first of all, persuade Potemkin to establish a joint commission to investigate the complaints and, possibly, provide redress to the aggrieved citizens. The envoy was also to ask that further excesses by Russian soldiers be prevented.[53]

Trokin arrived at the prince's headquarters in Kremenchug on 18 December. Contrary to expectations, he was not received by Potemkin, who dismissed him and sent him to his secretary. For a few days, the Polish envoy was kept in the dark, with no response on the purpose of his mission. It was not until 23 December that he was informed that a commission would be set up and that the task would be entrusted to General Tekeli. Potemkin left without agreeing on any details, and Trokin began to receive information that it was Russian soldiers who had grudges against Polish citizens – this demonstrated that there was little hope that the commission would indeed be established.[54]

On 13/24 December 1786, Potemkin personally, in a diplomatic tone, informed Stanisław August that he had ordered General Tekeli to investigate the grievances with the individuals designated by the king.[55] After that, perhaps on the wave of

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[50] Danilczyk, *W kręgu afery*, pp. 149–150.

[51] *Korespondencja Stanisława Augusta z Katarzyną II i jej najbliższymi współpracownikami (1764–1796)*, vol. 2, ed. Z. Zielińska (Warszawa, 2022), pp. 228–229; French-language version: *Correspondance de Stanislas-Auguste avec Catherine et ses plus proches collaborateurs (1764–1796)* (Kraków, 2015), pp. 420–421.

[52] AGAD, ZP 208, fols 325–325v, Stanisław August to L. Trokin, 27 Nov. 1786.

[53] Ibid., fols 326–326v, Instruction of the Permanent Council for L. Trokin.

[54] AGAD, ZP 208, fols 339–339v, L. Trokin to Stanisław August, 1 Jan. 1787.

[55] G. Potemkin to Stanisław August 13/24 Dec. 1786, *Korespondencja Stanisława Augusta z Katarzyną II*, p. 234; *Correspondance de Stanislas-Auguste avec Catherine*, pp. 422–423.

the empress's demonstrated kindness towards Stanisław August and Potemkin's 'love' for him, connected with the upcoming meeting between the tsarina and the Polish king in Kaniv, in early 1787, the Voronezh Regiment was withdrawn from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.[56]

Abstract

The term Novorossiya was introduced in Russia in the eighteenth century and referred to a 'new Russia', newly acquired territories in the south, mainly those seized in the course of the wars with the Ottoman Empire. As these territories were sparsely populated, Russia carried out a large-scale settlement campaign there. According to a prevailing view in Russian historiography, the settlers were mainly willing people from the empire's hinterland and other countries. The article presents the actual methods used by the Russian Empire to settle the newly seized territories, methods previously unknown to readers, deliberately omitted or inconvenient for research analysis, especially in Russian publications that glorify the scope and progressive nature of the settlement of Novorossiya and Crimea. Tens of thousands of abducted citizens of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is a rather conservative estimate; there were probably many more, as the vast majority of abducted groups were not reported. We do not have such studies for other countries, so we do not know the absolute scale of the phenomenon. The article also shows the helplessness of a country that, in view of its weakness, was forced to yield to the dictates of a stronger neighbour.

Translated by Anna Kijak

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