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Speculation of Withdrawn White Guard Banknotes: The Omsk Incident (1920)

Abstract

This article analyzes an incident of speculation on withdrawn White Guard banknotes that took place in Omsk in the first months of the Soviet power restoration. It is of interest both from the standpoint of the history of finance and currency and from that of the history of law and urban everyday life. Illegal actions suppressed in 1920 by the Soviet police are spiced up by the fact

that the main defendants were representatives of Eastern European peoples who, for various reasons, found themselves in Omsk: the Ukrainian, the Hungarian, the German, and the Chinese. Moreover, the “Chinese track,” notorious in the Siberian economy of the era, had actually created conditions for this rare type of speculation. The study draws on unpublished documents identified by the author in an archival criminal case considered in 1920 by the People's Court of the 1st section of the Omsk uezd of the Omsk uezd bureau of justice. They are stored in the Historical Archive of the Omsk Region in the fond of above mentioned judicial body. The methodological basis of the study is anthropological and systematic approaches, as well as problem-chronological method. This theoretical corpus enables to follow the logic of developments in the region's socio-economic sphere as fully as possible and to explain the causes of the crime, bringing them into correlation with certain people who acted in specific historical situation of the military revolutionary period. The considered episode is unique and revealing in a number of ways. It characterizes the life of the West Siberian townspeople at the final stage of the Civil War in Russia and demonstrates what sophisticated measures the population (including former prisoners of the First World War, refugees, numerous representatives of underclass) was forced to take in order to survive. The case allows us to assess the peculiarities of the work of law enforcement and justice during Soviet power restoration in Western Siberia. This publication may be of interest to a wide range of readers: specialists in Russian finance and currency, Soviet law enforcement system, population's adaptation to social cataclysms, and Siberian everyday life during the Civil War in Russia.

### Keywords

Historical source, social adaptation, everyday life, Civil War, Soviet power, finance, currency, speculation, military prisoners, Chinese, Omsk.

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