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THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND THE FINNISH PROBLEM IN THE FIRST YEAR OF THE WORLD WAR I (ON THE MATERIALS OF A.N. YAKHONTOV)¹

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Abstract. The article based on A.N. Yakhontov's documents examines the problems of relations between the center and the Finnish borderlands in the Russian government at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries and, in more detail, during the first year of the Great War. A.N. Yakhontov held the post of assistant to the administrator of the Council of Ministers during the difficult period of the beginning of the War, retreat at the Russian-German front, and mobilization of the economy. As the documents show, the work of the Council of Ministers was hampered by numerous conflicts, both external and internal. The relationship between the Council of Ministers as the government of the Empire and the authorities of the Grand Duchy, represented by the Minister of State, the Governor-General and the Senate of Finland was not regulated in detail. As Yakhontov's materials clearly demonstrate, decisions were made largely on the basis of military and strategic considerations, the economic needs of the country at war, and accepted bureaucratic practices. An important factor in the relationship between Petersburg–Petrograd and Helsingfors was the international trade: issues of transit, Triple Entente military cargo and exports from Russia to Scandinavia.

Keywords: Council of Ministers, Finland, Sweden, World War I, Finnish problem, A.N. Yakhontov.

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СОВЕТ МИНИСТРОВ И ФИНЛЯНДСКИЙ ВОПРОС В ПЕРВЫЙ ГОД ПЕРВОЙ МИРОВОЙ ВОЙНЫ (ПО МАТЕРИАЛАМ А.Н. ЯХОНТОВА)

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Аннотация. В статье на основе документов А.Н. Яхонтова рассматриваются проблемы взаимоотношения центра и финляндской окраины в русском правительстве на рубеже XIX–XX вв., и более подробно — в первый год Великой войны. А.Н. Яхонтов занимал должность помощника управляющего делами Совета министров в тяжелый период начала войны, отступления на русско-германском фронте, мобилизации экономики. Как показывают документы, работа Совета министров была затруднена многочисленными конфликтами как внешнего, так и внутреннего характера. Взаимоотношения между Советом министров как правительством империи и властями Великого княжества в лице министра статс-секретаря, генерал-губернатора и Финляндского Сената не были подробно регламентированы. Как наглядно демонстрируют материалы Яхонтова, решения принимались во многом исходя из военно-стратегических соображений, экономических потребностей воюющей страны, принятой бюрократической практики. Немаловажным в отношениях Петербурга-Петрограда и Гельсингфорса стал внешний фактор: вопросы транзита, военных грузов Антанты и экспорта из России в Скандинавию.

Ключевые слова: Совет министров, Финляндия, Швеция, Первая мировая война, финляндский вопрос, А.Н. Яхонтов.

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Identification of the mechanisms for solving problems besetting the Russian Empire before and during the First World War contributes to a deep understanding of the specific features of the management of the Empire on the brink of collapse. The need to comprehend the experience of the government functioning in the new extreme working environment, faced with the problems that have accumulated in previous decades, emphasizes the relevance of the study. For the last three decades, there were attempts to identify the tools for solving these problems both in foreign and Russian historiography. Quite applicable in the context of our study is the view on the borderline territories of continental empires as “complex borderlands”, where the influence of not two, but three neighboring powers clashed” [Rossiiskaya imperiya mezhdru reformami i revolyutsiyami..., 2021, p. 264].

In the second half of the 19th–early 20th centuries a range of problems was identified in relations between the center in St. Petersburg–Petrograd and Helsingfors. The intensification of the Finnish problem was connected with the assertion of Russian national identity after the January Uprising of 1863–1864, and the development of Finnish nationalism, which was “based on the theory of the Finnish state, acting under the Instrument of Government of 1772 and The Union and Security Act of 1789 as constitutional laws of Finland” [the Swedish Law of the Instrument of Government of 1772 – *D.Ya., M.F.*] [Dmitrieva, 2020, p. 116–117].

At the turn of the century, the authorities sought to justify the Russification policy towards Finland at the ideological level, which led to the appearance of numerous works on the Grand Duchy of Finland [see, for example: Liprandi, 1909; Trizna, 1911], including works on the economic situation of these borderlands [Morozov, 1895; Pravilova, 2006]. “Among liberal lawyers during this period, “one can clearly identify the defenders and the opponents of the “special state theory”. For these authors, the content of this concept was reduced to determining the status of the borderlands within the Empire and those legal grounds that made it possible to clearly establish it” [Dmitrieva, 2020, p. 113]. With the emergence of political associations, the Finnish problem becomes a part of the programs of the emerging parties. “The discussions focused on finding an answer to the question about the original political and legal status of the Grand Duchy of Finland within Russia and its transformation during the reign of Nicholas II” [Dmitrieva, 2020, p. 120]. The author of the seven-volume “History of Finland” M.M. Borodkin [Borodkin, 1905] wrote that the seizure of this territory was caused, above all, by military-strategic plans. Abroad, by this time, “there was already a clear idea that Russia traditionally dreamed not so much of capturing Finnish territory, but continued threatening Sweden and even Norway until the beginning of the 20th century” [Baryshnikov, Daudov, 2013, p. 182].

Traditional Anglo-American approaches, developed during the Cold War, require studying the history of Finland–Russia relations exclusively in the context of imperial “colonial” policy. The works of Frederick Starr, Mark Raev, Edward Thaden focus, quoted by Thaden, on the administrative Russification of the national borderlands. International treaties, according to which these territories were incorporated into the Empire, often “created a serious problem in domestic politics, since they objectively undermined the unitary nature

of the Russian monarchical state" [Zlobin, 2009, p. 5]. During the period under review, this statement is true for almost every European country. Soviet and Russian historians have made a serious and much more balanced contribution to the assessment of the problems presented. Writings by A.Ya. Avrekh, B.D. Galperina on the basis of documentary sources show the work of the main state institutions. The monograph by A.Yu. Bakhturina describes financial issues of the relationship between the center and the borderlands during the war years.

Reformed in 1905, the Council of Ministers takes the most important place among the institutions of the Duma Monarchy. The nominal decree of 19 October 1905 determined its organizational structure and competence and turned the Council into a permanent body – Government of the Russian Empire. The decree assigned "management and unification of the actions of the chief heads of departments on subjects of both legislation and higher state administration" [State system of the Russian Empire, 1995, p. 145] to the Council and limited the rights of the relevant senior officials in favor of the Council as a whole and its Chairman. The decree, and then the Law on the Council (establishment of the Council of Ministers) in its original version avoided the question of the relationship between the Council of Ministers as the government of the Empire and the authorities of the Grand Duchy of Finland represented by the Secretary of State and the Governor-General.

After the suppression of the revolution, the government policy of limiting Finland's autonomy changed the situation. In early 1907, Pyotr Stolypin, the Chairman of the Government, obtained the right to participate in the preliminary (before the report to the Emperor) consideration of requests to the Tsar made by the Minister–Secretary of State for Finland on issues related to the local laws and initiatives of the Senate of Finland [RGIA, f. 1276, inv. 4, d. 874, l. 29ob.]. Thus, Minister–Secretary of State, the representative of Finland's interests in the capital, was treated as ordinary ministers, who were obliged inter alia after the reform of the Council in 1905 to inform the prime minister about their actions. On January 22 and May 14, 1908, the members of the Russian cabinet discussed the draft Regulation, which, as indicated, provided the Council with the opportunity to influence Finnish affairs, and considered the adoption of this document a natural development of the principles described in the Decree of 19 October 1905. It put the end to the "former separation of management thus far fragmented between individual independent ministers" [Special journals of the Council of Ministers ..., 2011, p. 224]. The discussion took place in an atmosphere of heated debates around the status of the Grand Duchy that unfolded at the top as well as in society.

Approved by Nicholas II on May 20, 1908, the Regulation officially entrusted the Council "to judge which of the cases arising in the Grand Duchy of Finland affect the interests of the Empire and therefore require the closest considerations from the ministries and main departments" [Special journals of the Council of Ministers..., 2011, p. 225]. The Regulation required the Minister–Secretary of State for Finland, as well as the Governor-General of Finland, to coordinate their reports to the Monarch with the government and its Chairman [Special journals of the Council of Ministers..., 2011, p. 225–226]. The Regulation of 1908 itself although undoubtedly having a legislative character was implemented in the order of

supreme administration on the basis of the Council of Ministers Regulation sanctioned by the Tsar. As such, after the codification it was included in the next edition of the Regulations of the Council of Ministers, while being subjected to very significant reductions. Probably in order not to give the Finnish people one more excuse for resentment, the final version excluded references to the constraint of the Minister–Secretary power in favor of the Council and the Prime Minister. Of course, it did not mean the abolition of such restrictions. [State system of the Russian Empire..., 1995, p. 147].

For obvious reasons, during the pre-war years questions connected with the administration of Finland were in the spotlight of the Council of Ministers. The very procedure for discussing the problems of the region in the government was very peculiar. Back in the autumn of 1907, according to the report of Peter Stolypin, Nicholas II authorized the formation of a Special Meeting on the Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Finland [for more details, see: Galperina, 2016]. The Prime Minister was its chairman, and ministers and members of the State Council were among the participants. The most important Finnish affairs were usually, although not always, first discussed during a Special Meeting, and then, with the Tsar's permission, they were submitted to the Council of Ministers, the decisions of which were again presented to the Emperor.

Records of the assistant manager of the Council of Ministers A.N. Yakhontov allow us to fill in the gaps in regard to how political, social and economic problems in relations between Russia and Finland and foreign and domestic policy during the First World War were discussed. Materials of A.N. Yakhontov seen in the context of other sources provide detailed answers to questions about the influence of the high-level bureaucracy on the situation in the Grand Duchy of Finland.

After the outbreak of the First World War, the confrontation between elites in the capital and elites in Finland gained momentum, although direct clashes were avoided until 1917. On July 17(30) 1914, martial law in Finland was declared: military censorship was established, restrictions on movement around the country were imposed, and rallies were prohibited. Some opposition leaders were detained. The Chairman of the Parliament, P.E. Svinhufvud, who would become the head of the Finnish government, was exiled to Siberia.

During the first year of the war, various aspects of relations between Russia and the Grand Duchy of Finland were discussed several times in the Council of Ministers. Notes by A.N. Yakhontov allow us to complement the information regarding this subject, which is reflected in the relevant protocol documents of the Council, Special Journals. In November 1914, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Sazonov brought to the attention the reaction to Svinhufvud's exile to Tomsk province of the Swedish public, who traditionally perceived Finnish problems as their own. Governor-General F.A. Seyn took a firm stand: "Is he a Russian subject? The measure is legal. His punishment is unrelated to his political beliefs" [Special journals of the Council of Ministers..., 2011, p. 101].

Later the question of the Svinhufvud's arrest was repeatedly raised in the Council of Ministers. The punishment was considered too harsh and unlawful. In July 1915 commutation

of sentence was expected. Svinhufvud was supposed to be transferred from Siberia to Kazan or a large city in central Russia. It is obvious that in 1915 the position of the Governor-General F.A. Seyn on this issue remained decisive, although being inconvenient for some ministers. Seyn while recognizing that he acted hastily accused Svinhufvud of violating military law and having connections with "leftist elements in the State Duma" [Special journals of the Council of Ministers..., 2011, p. 196]. Foreign Minister Sergey Sazonov directly pointed out the fallacy of the decision: "The expulsion was a mistake. The opinions abroad and in Sweden are harsh. Our situation has changed from critical to fatal. At least Svinhufvud sentence should be mitigated, and this will soothe the Swedes. We should move him to the center of Russia (Moscow, Oryol, etc.)" [Special Journals of the Council of Ministers..., 2011, p. 196]. Alexander Krivoshein considered it impossible to raise the question of amnesty in the press. The government saw the danger of an alliance between the socialists of Russia and Finland. An illustrative example was the phrase of Nikolai Shcherbatov about Seyn's policy: "They will say: the Tsar favors, but the kennel does not" [Special journals of the Council of Ministers..., 2011, p. 199]. Only Alexei Khvostov remained strict on this issue: "He was rightly condemned by the court. Pardon and then arbitrariness. This impression is heavy" [Special journals of the Council of Ministers..., 2011, p. 199].

The proximity of the Grand Duchy both to the capital of the Empire and the frontline created an unfavorable strategic situation. "The growing expectations of the Finnish national elites to gain political benefits from the clash of empires attracted the close attention of the Russian authorities. In order to secure Petrograd from the north in case Finland took the German side, the Russian General Staff sent regular military reinforcements to the Grand Duchy. During the spring of 1915, troops entered all coastal parishes. In the summer of the same year, the 42nd Army Corps was formed from units of the X Corps of the State Militia and became the basis of the Russian troops in Finland. Military units were also deployed on the territory of the Grand Duchy, which were at the disposal of the commander of the Baltic Fleet, particularly, the garrison of the Sveaborg fortress, which covered Helsingfors (Helsinki) from the sea, and the garrisons of a number of other fortresses" [Dubrovskaya, 2020, p. 27].

The situation with Finland's pre-war defense expenditure became the subject of research in Soviet and Russian historiography [Avrekh, 1991, p. 155–156]. During the first year of the war, the Council of Ministers repeatedly discussed the issue of the insufficiency of Finland's monetary contribution to the Imperial treasury. A new conflict arose in addition to the old one between the Imperial center and the Grand Duchy of Finland about the jurisdiction of the central authorities. This conflict stemmed from the need for total mobilization, which meant increasing the degree of state intervention in local affairs and expanding the role of the army and military administration in public management. The Finns were accused of hoping to survive at someone else's expense while being freed from military service [Dubrovskaya, 2020, p. 27–28].

This problem is described in-depth in Russian historiography. The correspondence between the Minister of Finance Pyotr Bark and Ivan Goremykin dated August 23, 1914,

draws our attention to the fact that since 1912 the Finnish treasury made regular contributions to the State Treasury in exchange for the absence of compulsory military service for the Finnish people. In 1914 the Finnish treasury paid the state 15 million marks, or 5 million 625 thousand rubles, which, according to the minister, "was obviously inadequate compared to the participation in the military efforts of the rest of the Empire" [Musaev, 2014, from. 203]. 200 million Finnish marks were to be provided in the form of loans in addition to the previously established direct payments. The Senate of Finland generally agreed with the need to participate in military spending but insisted on a smaller amount of payments given the poverty of the region and the unfavorable climate and on the approval of the expenses through the Senate and the Parliament. The Russian government expected to receive a contribution from Finland based on the proportion of the population of the Duchy – 1.8% [Bakhturina, 2004, p. 258].

Since the autumn of 1914, the Ministry of Finance was working on this problem. Under the Ministry operated an interdepartmental meeting chaired by V. Kuzminsky that discussed the Finland's involvement in the imperial expenses. The meeting discussed Finland's participation in the maintenance of the army, the diplomatic corps, the Ministry of the Imperial Court, and the extraordinary expenditures during wartime. The estimated amount that Finland was supposed to contribute for military needs was 25 million rubles. "The situation was complex not only because of the hidden resistance of the Senate, but also the lack of money in the Finnish treasury. Finland's cash was in German banks, and it was not possible to get it" [Bakhturina, 2004, p. 259]. The meeting recommended obliging Finland to make a contribution to military expenses, giving the right to find ways to cover the amount. "It is noteworthy that the Finnish government after the 1850s did not receive funding from the Russian financial market and not a single imperial financial institution took part in the activities of underwriting syndicates on the territory of the Grand Duchy" [Arola, 2008, p. 552].

Alongside the issue of military spending and Finland's contribution to it, trade and transit affairs with neutral countries, Denmark and Sweden, became no less important. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had a unified approach. Anatoly Neratov, who traditionally supported his patron Sazonov, bluntly stated that it was necessary to define "the categories of goods that are unquestionably prohibited and that are allowed. We should not assert our influence over the trade of the Scandinavian states" [Council of Ministers of the Russian Empire, 1999, p. 53]. And for that reason in September 1914 the Council of Ministers addressed the issues of ensuring the transportation of goods from neutral countries with regards to the deliveries from the allies. Naval Minister Ivan Grigorovich pointed out the absence of the Russian icebreaker fleet in the Gulf of Bothnia, the problems associated with the supply of fuel and food for Sweden, and the need to funnel military spending to solve transportation problems [Council of Ministers of the Russian Empire, 1999, p. 67]. The Arkhangelsk port could not provide a reliable way of connecting with Europe. According to the Minister of Communications Sergey Rukhlov, the construction of a strategic railway through Finland required serious investments: "It is feasible if no expense is spared. The game is not worth the candle" [Council of Ministers of the Russian Empire, 1999, p. 71].

In April 1915, the Ministry of Finance once again came back to the issue of the contribution of the Finnish treasury to the war expenses and dealing with the aftermath. Direct expenses were not called into question. The Finnish Senate, Governor-General Seyn, and the representatives of Russian ministries discussed the proposals of the Ministry of Finance. The Finnish Senate and the Governor-General unanimously voted for the Grand Duchy of Finland to finance only direct expenses. "At the same time, they referred to § 45 of the Instrument of Government, which stated that military taxes cannot be established without the consent of the Parliament, with the exception for when the state is at war" [Bakhturina, 2004, p. 259]. "Finland has retained its separate monetary and customs system mainly because of practical Russian fiscal policy considerations and the fears of some Russian business circles regarding market competition in case of the abolition of customs barriers between Finland and the Empire" [Russification in the Baltic provinces, 1981, p. 79].

At the meeting on July 30, 1915, the discussion about the participation of the Finns in speculations on the Russian market acquired a practical meaning. Minister of the Interior Nikolai Borisovich Shcherbatov alerted the Council about the unacceptability of dividing finances during the war: "Let me draw your attention to what is happening with the Russian currency in Finland. Our ruble is collapsing there at breakneck speed. Astonishing nonsense. Within one Empire, one region speculates behind the back of the rest of the country. The situation that has arisen causes justified indignation among the nation. In the State Duma, they shrug their shoulders. We should put an end to the audacity of the Finns" [Yakhontov, 1926, p. 35]. With such a harsh assessment, it is noteworthy that before the start of the war and the economic turmoil associated with it, Finnish society was not completely politicized. "A negative attitude towards the Russian government prevailed among those who adhered to constitutional or socialist ideas. Most of the people were neutral and even indifferent towards the government" [Kuyala, 2007, p. 192].

Nikolai Shcherbatov was echoed by the State Comptroller P.A. Kharitonov: "Blessed country. The whole Empire is overwhelmed by the burden of war, while the Finns enjoy themselves and are getting richer at our expense. They are even free from the main national duty – to protect the state from the enemy. They should have long been charged with at least economic responsibilities if military obligations are undesirable. And here they still dare to play tricks with our currency. It would be useful to talk about this with the Governor-General of Finland. What plans does he have, and does he have any plans at all?" [Yakhontov, 1926, p. 35]. Minister of Finance Pyotr Bark had to talk about measures to maintain Russian currency in Finland and about discussions on Finland's involvement in the war expenses. The budget deficit and rapid increase in money forced the government to resort to loans, including the same one from the Bank of Finland. State currency transactions would become the instrument of linking Finland's economy to the Imperial market. The Council of Ministers essentially forced the Bank of Finland "to exchange Russian rubles for Finnish marks at an artificially high exchange rate, which caused an influx of rubles into the Grand Duchy. As a result, inflation began to develop at a rapid pace. It was a phenomenon that was practically unknown before the war. The convertibility of the mark into gold was abolished after 1914. After the war, the mark lost about 90 % of its pre-war value" [Arola, 2008, p. 564].

The Finnish side delayed the issue of direct payments until 1916, but the treasury of the Grand Duchy indirectly participated in measures to maintain the ruble exchange rate in the currency market. According to V.I. Musaev, the total contribution of Finland to Russian military spending amounted to more than 200 million marks, in addition to the 194 million paid in the usual manner during 1902–1916. [Musaev, 2014, p. 204].

Even after the first year of the war, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Sazonov objected to active interference in the affairs of the Grand Duchy, which formally remained autonomous: "For God's sake, do not arouse the zeal of General Seyn and leave the Finns alone. The Swedes are watching closely and it is better to make this issue completely forgotten for the time being" [Yakhontov, 1926, p. 35]. There were reasons for his position. Finnish politicians, representatives of business circles, and intellectuals had influence in the Scandinavian countries. During the war years, the transit flows in Northern Europe went through Norway (Bergen) and Sweden (Stockholm, Gefle, Sundsvall, Haparanda) to Finland (Torneo or Abo (Turku), Raumo, Mäntyluoto, Vasa (Vaasa)), Uleåborg (Oulu). "As the English naval attaché in Scandinavia M. Consett admitted, the Swedish transit route was the most optimal" [Novikova, 2013, p. 56]. "In addition, the Russian military considered the issue of strengthening the Åland archipelago, which was formally part of the Grand Duchy, and – starting in 1915 – began to reinforce the island with the defensive structures. In itself, this was a flagrant violation of the Åland Convention, confirmed by the Treaty of Paris (1856) [therefore, it was imposed on Russia – *D. Ya., M. F.*]. This, in turn, greatly disturbed neutral Sweden and certainly further caused Swedish neutrality to shift in favor of Germany" [Jonas, 2020, p. 119].

Railway construction in Finland was focused both on the import of goods from the allies and on the export of strategic raw materials to Sweden. The commander of the 6th army, which was defending Petrograd, K.P. Van-der-Vliet protested against the railway line to Tornio, that went through Lapland. In the Council of Ministers, even Grigorovich believed that a commercial line of 20 versts (about 21 km) would not play a fundamental strategic role, especially since the Swedes were slow to build an oncoming line. Ivan Goremykin summed up the discussions: "We will not suspend ours, and we do not insist on closing the line. Ours meets the interests of Sweden itself" [Council of Ministers of the Russian Empire, 1999, p. 99].

On February 13, 1915, the government addressed the issue of smuggling strategic goods (grain, copper, etc.) through Sweden to Germany. The solution included maintaining pre-war export volumes. Contrary to the opinion of the military Pyotr Bark argued that exports to Sweden had decreased and did not exceed the volumes of the year 1913 [Council of Ministers of the Russian Empire, 1999, p. 129]. Sergey Rukhlov pointed out the weakness of the railway network and the lack of wagons for large cargo [Council of Ministers of the Russian Empire, 1999, p. 131]. Obviously, the problem of transit through neutral countries remained in the focus of government attention.

On April 28, 1915, the Council of Ministers considered the supply of high-quality gasoline to Finland and from there to Sweden, suspecting it might be re-exported to Germany

[Council of Ministers of the Russian Empire, 1999, p. 158]. The allies, according to Sazonov, "promised Sweden economic benefits for maintaining neutrality" [Council of Ministers of the Russian Empire, 1999, p. 161]. Thus, the oil products export was a difficult but forced condition for the Swedish status quo.

The government saw the connection between the provision of food to Petrograd and the reduction of traditionally high exports to the Scandinavian countries. The Ministry of Finance confirmed that the export of eggs remained intact despite the restrictions, but there was no data on the wheat export. According to the Minister of Communications Sergey Rukhlov, "The amount of wheat was colossal in Petrograd – 1,800,000 poods. On I / III they deliver daily, and now there are 500–600 thousand poods left" [Council of Ministers of the Russian Empire, 1999, p. 183]. State Controller Kharitonov demanded the assistance of the Finnish authorities to verify this information.

During the spring of 1915, the situation with the delivery of transit cargo to Russia worsened significantly. German sea minefields that obstructed transit routes between Sweden and Finland and German raiders basically shut down the trade between Russia and neutral countries on the Baltic sea. The German government increased the pressure on Sweden to force it to discontinue transit services. "In May 1915, under the pressure of the Iron Teutons Sweden issued the orders restricting both the free export and transit of goods to Russia. In May 1915, rumors spread through the Norwegian envoy that Sweden would soon enter the war [Council of Ministers of the Russian Empire, 1999, p. 167]. After the Swedish government issued prohibition lists of goods, a large amount of transit cargo, the export of which was not allowed, accumulated in the ports. In response, "Russia delayed sending 30,000 tons of grain to Sweden. Relations between Sweden and the Triple Entente deteriorated sharply" [Novikova, 2013, p. 57]. In Finland "... a sharp shortage of food gradually destabilized the socio-political situation" [Jonas, 231, p. 231].

At a meeting on July 30, 1915, Ivan Goremykin bluntly declared his support for the position of the Foreign Ministry, while ensuring the interests of the treasury and the exchange rate of the national currency: "Even without Finland, everything is getting more complicated. Well, to hell with them all. The Minister of Finance will take measures to protect the ruble, and the Finnish Meeting will discuss and prepare common projects. Let's see what happens next. For the time being, I ask you not to address the Finnish question during the general session. We already have a lot of problems on our plate" [Yakhontov, 1926, p. 35].

Fundamental changes in the management of the Grand Duchy occurred only in 1917. In March 1917, the composition of the Finnish Senate changed. The fears of Seyn and the members of the Council of Ministers about social democracy turned out to be prophetic. "The Senate of Finland, the majority of which belonged to the Social Democratic Party of Finland, was united by the national idea and the desire to expand self-government through parliamentary legitimacy" [Petrov, 2017, p. 156]. As the socialists in Russia became more radicalized and the German influence became more prominent, the course towards the political independence of the Grand Duchy became inevitable.

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