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Organizational and National Aspects of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine Activities in the Camps for Captured Ukrainians of the Tsarist Army in Germany between 1914 and 1918

STRESZCZENIE

Organizacja i narodowy aspekt działalności Związku Wyzwolenia Ukrainy w obozach jeńców ukraińskich z armii carskiej w Niemczech w latach 1914–1918

W artykule przeprowadzono analizę wybranych aspektów działalności organizacyjnej i narodowościowej Związku Wyzwolenia Ukrainy (ZWU) w obozach jeńców ukraińskich z armii rosyjskiej w Niemczech w latach 1915–1918. W celu jej utworzenia ZWU zaangażowało szereg galicyjskich i bukowinińskich pedagogów i pisarzy, których działania początkowo polegały na selekcji jeńców ukraińskich w wielonarodowych obozach, którzy w okresie maj–listopad 1915 r. zostali przeniesieni do przyszłych obozów ukraińskich (Rastatt, Wetzlar, Salzwedel). W każdym



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z tych obozów utworzono wydziały edukacyjne ZWU, których członkowie oprócz prowadzenia różnorodnych kursów edukacyjnych zajmowali się także jednocześnie jeńców ukraińskich w organizacjach narodowych oraz pełnili funkcję mediatorów pomiędzy komendantami obozu a mieszkańcami obozu. Swobodny rozwój życia ukraińskiego w obozach spowodował rozwój narodowego światopoglądu wśród zdecydowanej większości więźniów tych obozów. Niedługo potem wybierane samorządne organy jeńców ukraińskich przejęły nie tylko funkcje wydziałów oświatowych, ale także ogólne kierownictwo gmin ukraińskich. Dzięki temu wśród jeńców ukraińskich możliwe stało się wychowanie świadomych narodowo kadr przyszłego państwa ukraińskiego, gotowych wystąpić z bronią w rękach, aby bronić Ukrainy przed najazdem bolszewików.

Słowa kluczowe: jeńcy Ukraińcy, obóz, Związek Wyzwolenia Ukrainy, świadomość narodowa, społeczność ukraińska, Niemcy

ABSTRACT

The article aims to analyse selected aspects of organisational and national activities of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (ULU) in the Prisoner-of-War Camps of Captured Ukrainians from the Tsarist Army during the First World War. To accomplish this task, the ULU involved a number of Galician and Bukovyna intellectuals (educators and writers), whose actions initially provided for a selection of captured Ukrainians in multinational camps and who were transferred to the future Ukrainian camps in Rastatt, Wetzlar and Salzwedel between May and November 1915. In each of these camps, the ULU educational departments were established and their members were engaged in uniting prisoners in Ukrainian communities and acted as mediators between camp commandants and camp residents in addition to conducting various educational presentations and courses. They were in direct contact with the Heads of the Ukrainian communities of the camps, seeing them daily for joint meetings. The free course of Ukrainian life in the camps caused the development of a national worldview among the vast majority of prisoners of these camps. Soon after, the elected representative bodies of Ukrainian prisoners took over not only the functions of educational departments, but also the general leadership of Ukrainian communities. Due to this, it became possible to raise among the prisoners nationally conscious citizens for the future Ukrainian state, ready to come forward with weapons in their hands to defend Ukraine against the Bolshevik attacks.

Keywords: captured Ukrainians, prisoner-of-war camp, Union for the Liberation of Ukraine, national awareness, Ukrainian community, Germany

Introduction

IN general, the unsuccessful course of the First World War for the Russian Empire had as one of its consequences the capture of hundreds of thousands of its soldiers, who were held in special camps on the territory of Germany and

Austria-Hungary. The governments of the latter had every reason to consider Russia “a giant on its feet of clay”, and therefore – from the very beginning of hostilities – made every effort to weaken it by supporting national aspirations of the peoples enslaved by the empire. One of the promising ways of undermining the apparent power of the Russian Empire involved separation of prisoners of the tsarist army on the basis of their nationality and their separate detention in the so-called “national” camps. The German government entrusted the practical implementation of this task (regarding captured Ukrainians) to the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (ULU), a non-partisan political organisation founded by Ukrainian revolutionary emigrants at the beginning of the First World War. The ULU members consistently advocated anti-Russian slogans, identifying as their most important tasks the assistance in achieving military defeat of Russia and the creation of independent Ukraine on its ruins.

The ULU began its activities in Germany by establishing its own office (the so-called headquarters) in Berlin and securing its financing for the agitation campaign and choosing those camp residents who felt Ukrainian in the general mass of war prisoners of the Russian army. And although because of Russification and partial illiteracy (or complete illiteracy) of the vast majority of captured Ukrainians and their fear of future repressions by the tsarist guards conducting this action was quite a difficult task, the ULU representatives managed to draw up lists of Ukrainians willing to move to Ukrainian camps, the first of which became Rastatt (in the autumn of 1915, Wetzlar and Salzwedel were also established). In these camps, intensive cultural, educational and national-organisational work was started thanks to the secret material and financial support of the German non-governmental organisation “Society of Internal Colonisation”, which resulted in the national awareness of a significant number of captured Ukrainians.

Historiography

Although in German (and mostly in Ukrainian) historiography there is a considerable number of papers dealing with the problem of the staying of captured Ukrainians from the tsarist army in German camps (primarily Rastatt)¹, this problem remains insufficiently

¹ P. Katerenuk, *Bericht über die ukrainische Aufklärungsarbeit im Lager Rastatt*, Rastatt 1917; O. Terletsyy, *Ukrayintsi v Nimechchyni 1915–1918*,

researched. Brief information on the peculiarities of separation of prisoners by their nationality was given in the works by I. Sribnyak², yet it was more of an overview. In turn, in some of his works German researcher F. Golchevski examined in detail some general aspects of keeping soldiers of the Russian army in POW camps, but he did not focus on investigating the specifics of the process of separating Ukrainians from the general mass of prisoners, which was carried out by the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (ULU) in the so-called “mixed” camps³.

It should be noted that certain aspects of the ULU political activities were the subject of scholarly interest for several German historians, who studied German-Ukrainian relations both on the micro and macro levels. In this context, it is worth mentioning C. Rehmer’s monograph, where one of the chapters deals with the attempts of German authorities to revolutionise the Ukrainian prisoners in POW camps, which, in turn, could help destabilise the foundations of the Russian autocratic regime in social and national aspects⁴. Two more of C. Rehmer’s articles on the history of prisoner-of-war camps for Ukrainians in Germany are also of undeniable scientific value⁵. Another German researcher of the ULU history, Rudolf Mark, assessed the plans of this organisation concerning creation of independent Ukraine as maximalist

vol. I (*Istoriya ukrayinskoyi hromady v Rastati*), Kyiv–Leipzig 1919; I. Sribnyak, *Enzyklopädie der Kriegsgefangenschaft: Das ukrainische Rastatt. Zur Gründung und Tätigkeit der Gemeinschaft «Die Unabhängige Ukraine», 1915–1918*, München–Paris 2020.

² I. Sribnyak, *Poloneni ukrayintsi v Austro-Uhorshchyni ta Nimechchyni (1914–1920 rr.)*, Kyiv 1999, pp. 29–31; idem, *Orhanizatsiyna diyalnist Soyuzu vyzvolennya Ukrayiny u taborakh polonenykh tsarskoyi armiyi (1914–1916 rr.)*, “Eminak” 2016, vol. I, no. 2(14), pp. 99–103; idem, *Działalność narodowo-organizacyjna Związku Wyzwolenia Ukrainy w obozie jeńców armii cesarskiej Rastatt w Niemcach (1915–1918)*, “Wschodnioznawstwo” 2018, vol. XII, pp. 231–242.

³ F. Golczewski, *Die deutsche «Gefangenearbeit» mit Ukrainern im Ersten Weltkrieg*, [in:] *Lebendige Sozialgeschichte. Gedenkschrift für Peter Borowsky*, eds R. Hering, R. Nicolaysen, Wiesbaden 2003, pp. 551–572; idem, *Deutsche und Ukrainer 1914–1939*, Paderborn 2010.

⁴ C. Rehmer, *Die Ukraine im Blickfeld deutscher Interessen. Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts bis 1917/18*, Frankfurt a. M. 1997.

⁵ Idem, *Das Ukrainerlager Wetzlar-Büblingshausen (1915–1918). Ein besonderes Lager?*, “Mitteilungen des Wetzlarer Geschichtsvereins” 1994, vol. XXXVII, pp. 77–116; idem, *«Revolutionierungspolitik» und Ukrainer-Lager*, [in:] idem, *Die Ukraine im Blickfeld deutscher Interessen. Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts bis 1917/18*, Frankfurt a. M. u. a. 1997, pp. 245–280.

and unrealistic, whereas, in his opinion, the optimal format could have been the autonomy of Ukrainian lands within the Austro-Hungarian Empire⁶.

In contrast to this, Ukrainian historians regarded the ULU maximum programme as the one that highlighted Ukrainian independence aspirations⁷. At the same time, it should be noted that although in the papers of the ULU researchers and its formal officials certain facts concerning the process of segregating captured Ukrainians are given, they fail to give a complete picture of its course and consequences⁸. There is no full information about it in several recent publications dealing with the ULU activities⁹ either.

The most comprehensive analysis of German-Ukrainian relations was conducted by the Kyiv researcher O. Kuraev, who used a representative range of sources, including those from German archives. In his works, he thoroughly examined the Ukrainian vector of the policies of Germany and Austria-Hungary, and furthermore, he outlined the real influence of the ULU on the formation of Ukraine's image in the German society during the wartime period, making his research an important contribution to the study of German-Ukrainian relations during the First World War¹⁰.

⁶ R.A. Mark, *Zur ukrainischen Frage im Ersten Weltkrieg. Flugschriften des «Bundes zur Befreiung der Ukraine» und ihm nahestehender Publizisten 1914–1916*, “Zeitschrift für Ostforschung” 1984, vol. XXXIII, no. 2, pp. 196–226.

⁷ P. Dubrivnyy, *Soyuz vyzvolennya Ukrayiny v 1914–1918 rr.*, “Naukovi zapysky Ukrayinskoho tekhnichno-hospodarskoho instytutu” [München] 1968, no. 15(18), pp. 76–87; B.I. Korolov, I.S. Mykhalskyy, *«Soyuz vyzvolennya Ukrayiny» (1914–1918 rr.): do istoriyi stvorennia ta diialnosti*, Luhansk 1996; Yu.P. Lavrov, *Pochatok diialnosti Soyuzu Vyzvolennya Ukrayiny*, “Ukrayinskyy istorychnyy zhurnal” [Kyiv] 1998, no. 4, pp. 17–32; no. 5, pp. 3–16.

⁸ I. Pater, *Soyuz Vyzvolennya Ukrayiny: problemy derzhavnosti ta sobornosti*, Lviv 2000; Yu. Nazaruk, *Orhanizatsiyno-politychna diialnist Oleksandra Skoropysa-Yoltukhovskoho sered polonenykh ukrajintsiiv u Nimechchyni ta Avstro-Uhorshchyni (1914–1917 rr.)*, “Naukovi zapysky Instytutu politychnykh i etnonatsionalnykh doslidzhen” [Kyiv] 2005, no. 26, pp. 126–132.

⁹ O. Suprunyuk, *Diialnist Soyuzu vyzvolennya Ukrayiny ta yoho chasopysu “Visnyk Soyuzu vyzvolennya Ukrayiny” yak etap zmahan za derzhavnist Ukrayiny (do 100-richchya vynyknennia)*, “Svitohlyad” 2014, no. 4(48), pp. 44–53, I.H. Pater, *Soyuz vyzvolennya Ukrayiny: viyskovo-politychnyy aspekt (1914–1918 rr.)*, “Viyskovo-naukovyy visnyk” [Kyiv] 2021, no. 35, pp. 81–113.

¹⁰ O. Kuraev, *Der Verband «Freie Ukraine» im Kontext der deutschen Ukraine-Politik des Ersten Weltkriegs*, München 2000, p. 48; idem, *Ukrayinska problema u politytsi Berlina ta Vidnya u Pershiy svitoviy viyni (1914–1918)*, Kyiv 2006; idem, *Polityka Nimechchyny y Avstro-Uhorshchyny v Pershiy svitoviy viyni: ukrayinskyy napryamok*, Kyiv 2009.

Having used a wide range of archival sources stored in the Central State Archive of the Higher Government and Administration of Ukraine and the Library and Archives of Canada to prepare this article, its authors sought to fill the gap in historical knowledge about the ULU. In addition to materials from the archives, other sources were used, in particular the memoirs of the Head of the Berlin ULU headquarters, Oleksandr Skoropys-Yoltukhovskyy¹¹. Certain brochures published by the ULU efforts during World War I, which contained the specific program statements, should be also included into the category of valuable sources¹².

* * *

In spring 1915, the Presidium of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine made every possible effort to establish direct contacts with the state structures of Germany, which, according to O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskyy, had as their most important task “the establishment of national cultural and educational work among captured Ukrainians”, whereas “political representation of the idea of Ukraine’s sovereignty and its spread among the German citizenry” was subordinated to the above-mentioned task, while remaining an important but merely a “shadow” goal¹³.

Obtaining permission for Ukrainisation of three camps in Germany to start the ULU cultural and educational work was largely achieved thanks to the assistance of the German “Society of Internal Colonialism” with a seat in Frankfurt an der Oder, whose leaders Friedrich von Schwerin (Chairman of the Society) and Mr. Emil Koin (Secretary) were sincerely convinced of the practical expediency of segregating captured Ukrainians into separate national camps based on their nationality. Having become acquainted with the general directions of the ULU political activities, they came to the conclusion that the revival of the Ukrainian state in strategic sense corresponds to the state and political interests of Germany, and decided to support the ULU measures.

¹¹ O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskyy, *Moyi «zlochyny»*, “Khliborobska Ukrayina” [Viden] 1920–1921, book 2, chapters II–IV, pp. 205–235.

¹² *Die Ukraine und der Krieg. Denkschrift des Bund für Befreiung der Ukraine*, München 1915; *Zvidomlennya z politychnoyi diyalnosti Berlinskoyi Tsentrali So-yuza Vyzvolennya Ukrayiny v taborakh ukrayintsiv polonenykh i na Ukrayinskykh zemlyakh, okupovanykh Nimechchynoyu za chas vid polovyny travnya 1915 roku do polovyny travnya 1918 roku*, Viden 1918.

¹³ O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskyy, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

However, despite their efforts to settle this matter at the government level, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs refused to take responsibility for the ULU activities in the camps, which could complicate the conclusion of a separate peace agreement with Russia in the future. Under these circumstances, F. von Schwerin and E. Koin founded the "Intermediary Organisation in Frankfurt an der Oder" and informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that this purely German organisation assumes all responsibility before the government for the ULU activities in the camps. At the same time, they assured the Ministry that no activities would be carried out in these camps that could harm Germany and its allies. These principal agreements in fact made it possible to start cultural, educational and national educational work among the captured Ukrainians in Germany¹⁴.

On April 16, 1915, a joint meeting was held in Frankfurt an der Oder with participation of F. von Schwerin, Dr. E. Koip, and a member of the ULU Presidium O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskiy, where the ULU attitude was determined towards the so-called *Beirat* (consultative council of several people which supervised the organisation of Ukrainian agitation in the camps). During the meeting, the ULU representative declared that the cultural and educational work in the camps would not be anti-German. At the same time, O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskiy stated that the ULU, as well as the Ukrainian camp organisations, would not undertake to work for the benefit of Germany and Austria-Hungary, and that on the internal level they would enjoy full autonomy and have their own elected authorities.

These conditions set out in the Memorandum called "Vermittlungstelle Frankfurt a. O." were sent to Vienna on April 17 to be approved by the ULU Presidium. Having introduced some changes concerning mutual obligations between *Beirat* and the ULU (in particular, the Union reserved for itself the right to full autonomy in the organisation and conduct of educational work in the camps), the Presidium agreed to it (the ULU letter of May 15, 1915). After official permission to organise Ukrainian camps on the territory of Germany was given at the end of April 1915, a separate ULU headquarters (representation) was founded in Berlin, headed by a member of its Presidium, O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskiy, and secretary V. Kozlovskiy, which initiated the establishment of educational

¹⁴ O. Terletskyy, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

work among prisoners in Germany. The Berlin ULU headquarters energetically began its activities since the ULU Presidium managed to attract to the Ukrainian cause some influential German political and military figures, who were aware of the need to conduct Ukrainian propaganda in the camps.

Along with the responsibility for the ULU work in the camps, the “Intermediary Organisation” took upon itself the financing of this activity, secretly receiving the corresponding funds from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ accounts. From the very beginning of cooperation, the ULU Presidium assured that the expenses for cultural and educational work among the captured Ukrainians should be returned to Germany as a public debt after the uprising of the independent Ukrainian state. During the second half of 1915–1917, as much as 631,000 German marks were received from the “Intermediary Organisation” by the ULU treasury, and in total the ULU spent 743,294.56 German marks on these needs (the Union also received profits from its own enterprises)¹⁵.

Considerable sums were, in particular, spent on the purchase of three printing presses and the necessary equipment for setting up camp printing houses, which enabled not only to publish magazines in the camps, but also to teach all the volunteering prisoners to learn basic practical printing skills. In each camp, bookbinding workshops and artistic craft workshops (wood carving, embroidery, pottery, etc.) were established. This money was also used to purchase photographic equipment and special devices for the camp photographic workshops of all Ukrainian camps (Rastatt, Wetzlar and Salzwedel), where the prisoners also had the opportunity to master this skill. The ULU independently took care of the arrival of books to the camp libraries, of school textbooks and devices, geographical maps, transparencies, theatrical costumes and decorations, musical instruments. Another significant item of expenditure is the salaries for professional teachers and employees of the ULU Educational Departments, who “were paid so that they, living near the camp in the city – often with their families – could devote all their time to camp work”¹⁶.

The success of this undertaking was also caused by the fact that the Head of the Department for Prisoners of the Royal Prussian War Ministry (*Königlich Preußische Kriegsministerium*), Colonel Emil Friedrich, immediately “understood the full scope of the

¹⁵ O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskyy, *op. cit.*, pp. 226–227, 230–233.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 228.

German-Ukrainian political concept for the development of German policy in the East in the future, as well as the high ideological and the moral value [...] of cultural and national awareness of Ukrainian prisoners”¹⁷. Based on this, E. Friedrich and his subordinates (Captain W. von Lubbers) always “knew how to reconcile the prescriptions of military law regarding prisoners with the requirements of Ukrainian propaganda”, and made sure that in three Ukrainian camps large lecture halls with stages for the camp theaters were constructed as well as “churches were built, premises for schools, [...] editorial rooms, reading rooms, clubs, halls for *Sich* (Paramilitary organisations of Ukrainian prisoners of war in the camps – *authors*) exercises, etc., were arranged in the barracks”¹⁸. Their actions also simplified the process of sending the ULU literature and periodicals to prisoners who were outside the camps as a part of working teams: all packages with literature intended to be sent were stamped by the Prussian War Ministry, which made their shipment free of charge¹⁹.

With the beginning of its activities, the Berlin ULU headquarters faced an urgent need to attract intelligent Ukrainians to work in the camps. They were to lead the cultural and educational work among the prisoners. The Royal Prussian War Ministry once again came to the aid of the ULU, whose actions involved 29 civilians to cooperate with the Union (in fact, in summer 1916, 23 people worked in German camps). Regarding their professions, the group included 11 high school and five public teachers, two lawyers, two university students, three people with secondary education, a carver, an employee of the Ukrainian library, an opera singer and a publicist. From this group, 11 people were from Galicia, 10 – from Bukovyna, and 8 – from Trans-Dnieper Ukraine. In addition, under the ULU instructions, about 30 members of the Social and Educational Circle of the Freistadt camp (Austria-Hungary)²⁰ left Germany for Ukrainian POW camps, being accompanied by Volodymyr Levytskyi, Vasyl Simovych, Evgen Turula, Mykola Chaikivskyi, Osyp Bezpalko, Vasyl Pachovsky.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 215.

¹⁸ O. Terletsyy, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

¹⁹ Library and Archives Canada, the Andry Zhuk Collection [hereinafter: LAC AZC], MG 30, C 167, vol. XV, file 4.

²⁰ Centralnyy derzhavnyy arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnya Ukrainy (Central State Archive of Higher Authorities and Administration of Ukraine) [hereinafter: CDAVO Ukrainy], fund 4406, description 1, case 32, sheet 4.

All these people were part of the ULU Educational Departments, which were entrusted with carrying out all the educational work in the camps (during 1915, three camps were Ukrainianised in Germany: in Rastatt, Wetzlar and Salzwedel, where there were above 60 thousand prisoners)²¹. The Head of every Educational Department was appointed by the Berlin ULU headquarters. Later, some captured Ukrainian officers (including Vasyl Bayliv, Grygorij Syrotenko, Mykola Shapoval, Dmytro Horbenko, P. Parkhomenko, Kalyuzhnyi, Maksymovych, Panasyuk, Radchenko, Rozhko, Suhak)²² joined the Educational Departments. Their activities combined with the work of civilian members of the departments had positive consequences for all the cultural, educational and organisational ULU activities in the camps.

It is natural that there were occasional misunderstandings and conflicts, which became particularly evident in the situation of an actual split among the members of the ULU Educational Department in Rastatt, which ultimately forced O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskiyi to resort to its division and transfer some of its employees to other camps and subsequently remove the Head of this department, O. Bezpalko, from the camp. The Berlin ULU headquarters considered the willingness of some members of the Educational Departments to meet the German authorities' demands in the implementation of various actions of purely military purpose and the participation of prisoners in them to be insidious and likely to create further grounds for accusing the Union of its "self-sellout" to the Germans.

The attempts of some employees of the Educational Departments to obtain additional remuneration from German institutions could also complicate the ULU work in the camps, and it was precisely this problem that the Berlin ULU headquarters faced in the summer of 1916, when some (unnamed) employee of the ULU Educational Department bypassed the ULU headquarters and obtained from the Prussian War Ministry of Germany the personal "reductions and assistance". In this situation, the ULU, wanted all members of the Educational Departments to sign a declaration that "they undertake not to apply the Military Ministry in any matter, private or public" without coordination with ULU headquarters and

²¹ *Zvidomlennya z politychnoyi diyalnosti...*, p. 6.

²² LAC AZC, MG 30, C 167, vol. XV, file 15.

the Educational Departments. If, after signing such a document, a member of the Educational Department ignored this prohibition, then the ULU received the formal right to ask the latter “to leave the work organised and conducted by the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine in the camps”²³.

The ULU leadership, and in particular O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskiy, fundamentally refused to receive money directly from the Prussian War Ministry, believing that in this way they could cast a shadow over the entire Ukrainian cause. Meanwhile, in 1916, the unnamed members of Educational Departments appealed to Captain Lubbers and General Friedrich for financial aid and received it (150 German marks one-time). O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskiy considered this practice inadmissible because the Educational Department members received a regular salary from the ULU for their work in the camps²⁴, therefore he insisted that such a member of the Educational Department should leave the Department and report to the Prussian War Ministry as a private person with a proposal to conduct work in the camps, but outside the ULU framework²⁵.

In his letter to the ULU Educational Departments of October 13, 1916, O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskiy insisted that for this money, the ULU “cannot assume any responsibility towards Ukrainian citizens” since the ULU does not receive any monetary “aid” from the Prussian War Ministry and its relations with the Ministry are limited to giving permission to visit POW camps and conducting “propaganda of those national-political postulates that the Union put forward in its program”. The Ministry provides the ULU with necessary assistance, and in particular facilitates transportation of prisoners from one camp to another, settles formalities during the movement of members of the Educational Departments from Austria-Hungary to Germany, etc., yet the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine did not have any “financial relations” with the Prussian War Ministry and continues not to have them²⁶.

²³ CDAVO Ukrainy, fund 4406, description 1, case 84, sheet 130.

²⁴ The members of the Educational Department of the ULU in Rastatt received, in particular, a fixed salary for their work in the camp – from 350 to 550 German marks. See: CDAVO Ukrainy, fund 4406, description 1, case 89, sheet 2 return; and case 88, sheets 6–77.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, case 84, sheets 150–152.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, sheets 152–153.

Such warnings of the Head of the Berlin headquarters were shared by most of the employees of the ULU Educational Departments in Germany, although there were also shameful cases when one of them (perhaps it was Omelyan Bachynskyi, more detailed information is missing – *authors*) wrote a “denunciation” of the ULU to the Prussian War Ministry, which, as a matter of fact, was rejected by the latter because of its groundlessness²⁷.

There was another danger: namely some of the Educational Departments members resorted to seeking and recruiting volunteers for German military service from among captured Ukrainians, with the hope of bringing Russia’s military defeat closer. One of these cases was mentioned in a letter of May 25, 1917, to the Presidiums of General Foremen of the Ukrainian camps (signed by Vsevolod Kozlovskyi), where an “unfortunate incident” was reported with an unnamed member of the ULU Educational Department (it might be Mykhailo Parashchuk – *authors*). The latter suggested during his stay in Berlin that there would be volunteers among captured Ukrainians willing to take part in the “submarine expedition in the Black Sea”. Considering the spread of such information, the Prussian War Ministry asked the ULU headquarters for an explanation regarding the possibility of authorisation of one of the Educational Department members to negotiate and search for those volunteers (from among the prisoners) to undertake such an expedition²⁸.

In this regard, the ULU leadership appealed to the Presidiums of the General Foremen of Ukrainian camps with a request to avoid discussing matters of a political nature and participation of prisoners in them, on the grounds that “the Union of Liberation of Ukraine and General Councils and Elders (elected representatives of prisoners of Ukrainian camps) are jointly responsible for the work in the camps and for its national-Ukrainian political character”. In the ULU opinion, Ukrainian activists and members of the Educational Departments should not “express their personal ideas, and even more so – make any promises”, directing all interested persons to the ULU headquarters²⁹.

At the same time, the ULU agreed to the inclusion of volunteers from among captured Ukrainians – members of paramilitary

²⁷ *Ibidem*, case 39, sheet 49.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, case 34, sheet 25.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, sheet 26.

camp organizations – into the German army. They were engaged in arranging effective control on the Volhynia lands occupied by the German army, serving in military command posts, and also made every possible effort to organise Ukrainian schooling. Ultimately, German authorities were convinced of the expediency of enlisting Ukrainians in the military service (although their use in military operations against the Russians was still a long time ahead). It was important that the volunteers acquired military training and knowledge needed for the development (in the future) of the armed forces of independent Ukraine, actively participating in the formation of the 1st Ukrainian division of the ‘Bluecoats’ in February–March 1918. Besides, German authorities used volunteers in another way (without the ULU sanction), secretly transporting them across the front line with the aim of undermining the will of the Russian army to revolutionise the Ukrainians living on the front-line territories³⁰.

After the February Revolution in Russia, the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine turned from a “political representation” of Ukrainians from Trans-Dnieper Ukraine abroad into an “educational organisation for prisoners and displaced persons and voluntary representation of the interests of these war victims and occupied territories in front of the Central Powers”³¹. Considering “its national mandate” to have been fulfilled, the ULU declared that all its further activities would be subjected to the “will of national representation in Ukraine”, while continuing to carry out “certain events started by it abroad” until “the national representation in Ukraine finds it necessary for the Union to stop one or other of its functions”³².

With such a positioning, the ULU demonstrated that it was somewhat unprepared for the changes that occurred in Ukraine after the February Revolution. In addition to this, there were no

³⁰ I. Sribnyak, *Na sluzhbi Il-mu Raykhu i Ukrayini: orhanizatsiyno-osvitnya diyalnist voyakiv-ukrayintziv 1-ho Zaporizkoho imeni T. Shevchenka polku na Pidlyashshi (1917 – pochatok 1918 rr.)*, “Hurzhiyivski istorychni chytannya” [Cherkasy] 2017, no. 12, pp. 138–144; idem, *Sproby vykorystannya polonenykh ukrayintziv taboru Rashtat (Nimechchyna) dlya destabilizatsiyi zapillya Rosiys’koyi armiyi v Ukrayini pid chas Pershoji svitovoyi viyny*, “Kyivski istorychni studiyi” 2020, no. 1(10), pp. 26–32; V. Krepel, A. Sarapyna, I. Sribnyak, V. Shatilo, *Die Besonderheiten des Einsatzes der gefangenen ukrainischen Soldaten der zaristischen Armee im Interesse des Deutschen Reichsheeres (Ende 1916 – Anfang 1918)*, “Echa Przeszłości” 2022, vol. XXIII, no. 2, pp. 81–111.

³¹ LAC AZC, MG 30, C 167, vol. XV, file 5.

³² CDAVO Ukrainy, fund 4406, description 1, case 39, sheet 45.

theoreticians among its leading figures capable of inventing a new format for the Union's activity in the changing conditions. Consequently, the ULU failed to set clear political tasks for itself, delegating this right to the Ukrainian Central *Rada* (since its creation in March 1917, the Ukrainian representative body of political, public, cultural, and professional organisations, and, starting from April of that year, the revolutionary parliament of Ukraine – *authors*), with the hope that the latter would take into account the cultural and national achievements of Ukrainian prisoners in the camps. However, this did not happen because the *Rada* leaders (Myhajlo Hrushevskyyi and others) tried to ignore the ULU with its pro-German political orientation so as not to annoy the Russian Provisional Government.

In spring 1917, striving to strengthen its subjectivity, the camps of Ukrainian prisoners in Germany (as well as in Freistadt in Austria-Hungary) saw that the ULU organised a procedure of supportive signing to authorise O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskyyi to represent the interests of the latter in the upcoming Constituent Assembly in Russia. Even though the collection of signatures took place under unfavorable circumstances, it became possible to obtain about 4,000 signatures in the Freistadt camp, and about 16,000 in three camps in Germany, including 39 signatures of captured Ukrainian officers. In total, 19,004 signatures were collected under this “mandate” of O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskyyi³³.

On June 18, 1917, O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskyyi had a “farewell audience” with the Head of “Abteilung U.K.” (“department of Ukrainian prisoners of war”), General E. Friedrich, during which the latter supported the ULU leadership’s request for the priority exchange of captured Ukrainians for captured soldiers of the German army, when it concerned signing of a peace treaty between Germany and the Ukrainian People’s Republic (UPR). The camp in the town of Biała Podlaska, whose advantage was its location on Ukrainian lands, could be used for the preliminary gathering of this category of prisoners. In case of implementation of such a “scenario”, the Ukrainian prisoners transported to Biała Podlaska, would continue to “function in the Ukrainian national spirit”, because during their stay in multinational camps, they were destructively “influenced by Moscow elements, with such means as terror, twisting the facts, etc.”³⁴.

³³ *Ibidem*, sheets 36, 40–41, 56.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, sheets 52–53, 55.

Meanwhile, a significant number of Ukrainian activists conducting national educational work among the local Ukrainian population were already concentrated in Biała Podlaska. Yet the transfer of Ukrainian prisoners should not have led to the conclusion of cultural and educational work in Ukrainian camps, because the camp leadership had agreed that in this case they would continue their activities and “would be the last to leave the camps, fulfilling their public duty towards our compatriots, scattered across mixed camps, to the end”. Their task was to remain the organisation of educational courses and raise the awareness of the newly arrived compatriots in the most important national and political issues of the newly formed UPR³⁵.

On June 19, 1917, on the eve of his departure for Stockholm, O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskiy addressed (in writing) the General Foremen of three POW camps of captured Ukrainians (and to the members of the above-mentioned camp Sich organisations in the town of Biała Podlaska) with advice to continue following the direction of work that he “had been protecting facing the [Prussian] War Ministry until now, that is, not purely party work, but nationwide work”. This was done because, from time to time, information was received by the ULU and the German authorities that “first and foremost, extreme socialist agitation is being conducted in the camps, while national awareness is completely in the background”. In view of this, O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskiy appealed to all Ukrainian activists in the camps to forget for the time being about their party affiliation and “in the interest of the common cause to conduct joint activities in such a way as not to provide materials to the enemies of the Ukrainian cause that the camps are centres of internationalism”. Under no circumstances should party organisations (social sections, etc.) in the camps gain any visible influence, and the rights of their members should remain the same as those of other camp societies³⁶.

According to O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskiy, in the future the General Foremen of the camps should consider that although the Prussian War Ministry tolerated the “republican” principles of existence of the camp communities, this fact did not mean that its employees shared democratic or socialist ideals. Most of all, they could tolerate them, while having conservative views on power, authority, and discipline. In view of this, it was very important to consider these

³⁵ *Ibidem*, sheet 51.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, sheets 49–50.

worldview differences so that “a careless action, an inappropriate decision does not lead to the destruction” of national foundations of the life of Ukrainian camps³⁷.

On the same day (June 19), O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskiy left for Stockholm with all the originals of these documents (notebooks, protocols, authorisation by captured Ukrainians from German camps), and he never returned to his duties as the Head of the Berlin ULU headquarters. He was accompanied by Marian Melenevskiy, who represented the interests of four thousand captured Ukrainians from Austria-Hungary who signed the Memorial to the “Revolutionary Government of Russia”. They stayed in the capital of Sweden for quite a long time, waiting for permission to cross Russia’s borders, yet the Provisional Government did not allow them to arrive in the Russian capital without reaction to all appeals of the prisoners’ representatives³⁸.

In this situation, O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskiy “decided to transfer these demands, removing this mission from himself to the Ukrainian Central *Rada* in full faith that the Ukrainian Central *Rada* will bring it to attention of the revolutionary democracy of Russia and defend their implementation with all its strength and authority”. All signed letters, petitions, and mandate were transferred by him to the Nobel Library of the Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm for safekeeping³⁹. Nevertheless, subsequent events in Russia and Ukraine illustrated the groundlessness of hopes for the Russian democracy’s ability to adhere to democratic principles when it came to the state-national self-determination of Ukraine.

After Ukraine’s gaining independence and the arrival of its authorised Embassies to the Central Powers, the ULU limited its work to “cultural assistance to prisoners, evicted people and the population of the Ukrainian lands occupied by the Central Powers”⁴⁰, which was done in the hope that the custody of the captives would soon be transferred to Ukrainian diplomacy. But such self-removal of the ULU from the general conduct of cultural and educational work in the camps was not understood by the delegates of the Congress of the ULU Men of Trust, which took place in Berlin on January 18–21, 1918, with the participation of the

³⁷ *Ibidem*, sheet 50.

³⁸ CDAVO Ukrainy, fund 1115, description 1, case 2, sheets 120–121.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, sheets 123–124.

⁴⁰ A. Zhuk, *Rozvyazannye Soyuza vyzvolennyya Ukrainy*, “Vistnyk polityky, literatury y zhyttya” [Viden] 1918, no. 26(209), p. 393.

Heads of national educational work in the camps – Bogdan Lepkyi and E. Turula (Wetzlar); Zenon Kuzelya and Roman Smal-Stotskyi (Salzwedel); Mykolayevych and V. Simovych (Rastatt).

The delegates of the Congress stated that since the departure of O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskiy to Stockholm “in fact, there was no work in certain camps”, and in addition, the camp communities found themselves “in a very difficult situation due to the lack of appropriate authority and appropriate patronage facing the German authorities”. As a result, cultural and educational work in the camps was “greatly diminished”. Despite this, according to the delegates of the Congress, the leadership of the camps should be further led by the ULU⁴¹.

In order to increase influence of the Union on the camp communities, the ULU Men of Trust proposed to transfer the overall management of their work to the ULU Secretary, V. Kozlovskiy, to whom R. Smal-Stotskyi would be delegated (as “referent of the camps”). The latter’s functions would then include monitoring work in the camps, checking camp protocols, preparing general resolutions and checking their implementation, correspondence with camp communities and touring the camps⁴².

The Congress also spoke in favor of restoring the Educational Departments of the camps “as a separate corporation of civilian teachers who, remaining outside the community, do not have rights to lead the work, but discuss among themselves matters that concern the camp work”. According to the participants of the Congress, it seemed appropriate to appoint the Men of Trust from among civilians (not camp residents), who would “represent the ULU interests facing German authorities”. The latter could also perform the functions of a referent to communicate with camp commanders (if the camp community authorised them to do so)⁴³.

Finally, when coming to these and other decisions, those present at the Congress proceeded from the already valid order of the Prussian Ministry of War to leave the guidance over the work in the camps for the ULU as well as the special clarification that the camp officers would remain “only mediators between the communities and the German authorities for successful management and assistance of work”⁴⁴.

⁴¹ CDAVO Ukrainy, fund 4405, description 1, case 206, sheet 1.

⁴² *Ibidem*, sheet 1v–2.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, sheet 2v.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, sheet 3.

However, the real state of affairs at the end of March 1918 forced the ULU leadership to start preparations for the self-dissolution of the organisation, for which Andrij Zhuk and V. Kozlovskyi developed “the ULU Liquidation Plan” for a three-month period, proposing not to stop publishing and educational activities of the Union until the end of June 1918. They were to be carried out under personal supervision of the ULU liquidators (A. Zhuk, Volodymyr Doroshenko, O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskiy and V. Kozlovskyi) together with the representatives of camp communities of prisoners (I. Moroz and H. Petrenko)⁴⁵.

All cultural and educational organisations and their property in the camps, created as a result of the ULU activities and the captives’ labour at the expense of the ULU (libraries, theaters, printing houses, school institutions, etc.), were to be transferred to the Ukrainian lands occupied by the Central Powers (to the Kholm region, Pidliashshia and Volhynia) and left at the disposal of local authorities and cooperative organisations for their appropriate use. “Camp museums, collections of photographs and publications, and in general all items of museum value from the camps and the Union offices in Vienna and Berlin, as well as several copies of the Union publications” were to be transferred “to the ownership of the Ukrainian National Museum in Kyiv with the obligation to arrange a separate Department of Prisoners of War named after the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine”⁴⁶.

The archives of the camp organisations and the archive of the Union were to be left with the ULU liquidators, with their further transfer for temporary storage to the Ukrainian Museum named after Metropolitan Andrej Sheptytskyi in Lviv or to one of the public institutions in Germany (determined by the liquidators). The plan also suggested convening an “inter-camp conference” where all existing camp prisoner organisations would be represented to develop “a single-purpose plan for carrying out work in the camps during the liquidation period and the method of liquidation of camp organisations and their property”⁴⁷.

On July 1, 1918, the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine was dissolved pursuant to the decision of its members regarding the

⁴⁵ LAC AZC, MG 30, C 167, vol. XV, file 5.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

implementation of its “programmatic goal – the state independence of Ukraine”. This was done “in awareness of an honestly fulfilled national duty and in conviction that the results of its work in the balance of national political and cultural acquisitions of the Ukrainian nation during the time of its revival to independent state life will take their place of honor”, that the cause of the Union will be continued by state and by private institutions of Ukraine in “changed circumstances and in other organisational forms”. All camp prisoner organisations which were organisationally combined with the ULU were also subject to liquidation, and their functions were to be taken over by special liquidation committees. The publishing houses of the Union were to become the property of publishing organisations from among the members and employees of the Union in the event that such organisations appear and are able to take over these publishing houses⁴⁸.

But even after the legal liquidation of the Union as a political organisation, its members continued to work in the camps of Ukrainian prisoners in Austria-Hungary for some time (in particular, they ran a publishing business), receiving subsidies from the Austrian authorities for this. Because of many Ukrainian prisoners in German camps, the “Committee of Cultural Aid for Ukrainian Prisoners of War” was created on August 1, 1918, which included V. Kozlovskiy, V. Levitskiy, V. Simovych, R. Smal-Stotskiy and B. Lepkiy. The task of the committee was to conduct educational activities in the camps, and each of its members was assigned one of the Ukrainian camps. Thus, the cultural and educational work of the former ULU members continued after the end of the war, although it never reached the scale of the Union’s activities of 1915–1917, and moreover, it was completely curtailed by the end of 1918.

Thus, the ULU ceased to exist, but even three years later some of its former members and employees tried to get additional explanations from the “chief liquidator Andrii Zhuk” concerning the liquidation of the Union. Omitting the veiled reproaches contained in the unsigned and undated open letter titled “Call of the initiative group...” to A. Zhuk, it seems important to assess the activities and achievements of this organisation, which “for the purpose of [...] national awareness” of prisoners from Great Ukraine “issued [periodicals] and books, acquired printing houses, collected libraries,

⁴⁸ A. Zhuk, *op. cit.*, p. 393.

founded theaters, regarded them in different aspects and was generally engaged in the organisation of the material and financial basis of its work”⁴⁹.

During the four years of its activities, the ULU equipped “four libraries, which contained extremely valuable publications that have long since become bibliographic rarities. Further, ‘the Union’ had four printing houses and a lot of good paper, it had four theaters with beautiful decorations and expensive costumes, it had four orchestras, four teahouses with dishes in such a quantity that about 5.000 people visited them, one club for senior officers [...], four cinemas, four photographic studios [...]”⁵⁰.

This list alone testifies to the importance of the achievements of the Union because they were used by thousands of captured Ukrainians, having the opportunity to regain in this way their own national soul, which was taken from them during centuries of Moscow rule. Convincing evidence of the unconditional benefit of the ULU activities included also the “whole heaps of business and organizational correspondence of individual persons and organizations of prisoners with the Presidium of the Union of Ukraine, numerous applications of prisoners to the Union with requests for transfer to a Ukrainian camp, offering their services of a trip to Russia with propaganda and national-revolutionary goals and other numerous statements inviting to join the Ukrainian legion, if such a legion of prisoners was organized, numerous orders for Ukrainian books and newspapers, etc. and also numerous thanks for the literature of recognition of the Union for its political and cultural activities”⁵¹.

While assessing its over two-year activities among the captured Ukrainians, in one of its resolutions the ULU outlined its own achievements in the field of cultural and educational work, noting that “camp Ukrainian schools, courses for the illiterate, various special courses, theaters, libraries, museums, gymnastic societies, church fraternities, political parties, camp magazines published by the prisoners themselves, and other forms of cultural and national activities covered tens of thousands of prisoners with their influence”. This enabled to bring up “whole ranks of nationally conscious citizens for Ukraine at a time when in the Native Land

⁴⁹ CDAVO Ukrainy, fund 4405, description 1, case 201, sheet 7.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵¹ LAC AZC, MG 30, C 167, vol. XV, file 4.

of prisoners the Ukrainian language was banned and when all manifestations of Ukrainian national life were persecuted with the greatest cruelty by the pre-revolutionary government of Russia”⁵².

Conclusions

The creation of an effective system of communication between the camp communities of Ukrainian prisoners and the commandant offices of the camps was a joint merit of the ULU and German military factors. In each of them, the so-called “Ukrainian bureaucratic departments” led by German officers were formed and became subject to both camp commandants and Colonel E. Friedrich from the Prussian War Ministry. They were in direct contact with the Heads of the Ukrainian camp communities, seeing them daily for joint meetings, where the entire complex of camp problems was discussed. Close cooperation between the ULU Educational Departments and the German commandant offices of the Ukrainian camps was reached in solving many problems of the camp communities.

This aspect is of the greatest interest since four groups of people, completely different in their worldview and beliefs, established close contact and cooperation with each other: these were Galicians, Ukrainian emigrants from Trans-Dnieper Ukraine, prisoners of war from the Ukrainian provinces of the Russian Empire, and representatives of the German military authorities. A special role in this rapprochement was played by Galician Ukrainians, who had European mentality and education, and who, at the same time, were closely related to the general population of prisoners in a national sense. They presented a kind of a bridge which united aspirations and goals of Germans and Ukrainians, the factor that levelled the difference in the outlook between the mass of prisoners and the German military administration. This fact can be considered one of the greatest achievements of Galicians during their cultural and educational work in the camps for Ukrainian prisoners of war in Germany and Austria-Hungary.

It is also worth mentioning that educational and organisational work was carried out among the prisoners independently of the German administration of the camps. And although the views of

⁵² *Revolutsiya v Rosiyi i Soyuz vyzvolennya Ukrayiny*, “Hromadska dumka” [Wetzlar] 1917, no. 31(78), p. 1.

the Prussian War Ministry differed from those of the ULU Educational Departments regarding the conduct of work in the camps, all disagreements were reconciled by the efforts of O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskiy. This “non-interference” into the educational work in the camps by the German authorities was extremely important for many prisoners who had the opportunity to see themselves the purely national content of the cultural and educational work in the camps.

The ULU Educational Departments enjoyed a rather wide autonomy in their work: the Berlin ULU headquarters in the person of O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskiy only exercised general control over their activities. From time to time, he visited the camps with inspections, giving instructions and making some appointments that he thought would contribute to the success of the work. The departure of O. Skoropys-Yoltukhovskiy in June 1917 to Stockholm led to almost full independence of the ULU Educational Departments in the camps, which had already taken over the main part of the cultural and educational work among the prisoners at that time. In addition to conducting all kinds of lectures and courses, they gathered prisoners into Ukrainian communities, engaged in matters affecting the way of life and daily life of the captives, and were mediators between camp commandants and camp residents.

There is every reason to assert that thanks to the free development of Ukrainian life and freedom of speech in the camps (as far as it was possible in wartime conditions), an intensive exchange of ideas took place between the prisoners, which, to a large extent, resulted in the development of their worldview and the spread of the Ukrainian national liberation idea among them. The consequences of these changes in the consciousness of the captives included the establishment of their own elected institutions of prisoners in the camps, namely general councils (“camp parliaments”) and general foremen (“camp governments”) from among the prisoners themselves, who took over not only the functions of Educational Departments, but also the general leadership of Ukrainian communities.

Thus, the ULU activities in the camps of captured Ukrainians from the Russian army in Germany and Austria-Hungary had a positive impact both in terms of education and national upbringing of Ukrainian soldiers. The Union managed to concentrate the prisoners of Ukrainian nationality in certain camps and start extensive

cultural, educational and national educational work among them, the main goal of which was to prepare nationally conscious citizens for the future Ukrainian state.

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