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TOWARDS THE INDEPENDENCE OF UKRAINE

Luschnat-Ziegler Marian: *Die ukrainische Revolution und die Deutschen 1917–1918*. 2021.

The First World War and revolutionary events in Europe incurred the collapse of multiethnic European monarchies – Russia and Austria-Hungary – leading to the emergence of independent nation states in their territories. After the First World War, Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians gained their independence. Other nations living on the fringes of the Russian empire were much less successful in building autonomy, including the Ukrainians. Political centres aimed at creating Ukrainian statehood on the basis of a natural nationalistic process were established on both sides of the Russian-German front, in two cities with different state traditions. After the wars between the Grand Duchy of Moscow and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which took place in the middle of the 17th century, Kyiv fell under the rule of the Russian tsars (1686). As a consequence of the partition of the First Polish Republic in 1772, Lviv became part of Austria as the capital of Galicia and Lodomeria. In the nineteenth century, during a period of intensifying national processes, Russia and Austria (followed by Austria-Hungary) pursued different nationalistic and educational policies, with different political and legal cultures. The inhabitants of Galicia had

constant contact with German culture and language; many men served in the imperial and royal army. On the other hand, the affiliation of Transnistria Ukraine with Russia meant that the inhabitants of these areas, including the Ukrainian population, fell under the influence of Russian culture, and considered the Germans as foreigners. Church institutions played a different role in the nationalistic process: the Greek Catholic Church in Galicia tried to integrate the Ukrainian population around the Ukrainian national idea, whereas in the Romanov state, the Orthodox Church in Ukrainian lands subjugated to Russia formed the backbone of the monarchy. It upheld the idea of Western Russianism, according to which Ukraine formed the western part of Russia, and that Orthodox Malorussians (as the Ukrainians were referred to in Russia at that time) were an ethnographic part of the Russian nation, which was also considered to be formed by Greater Russians (Russians) and Belarusians. Despite the Ukrainian nation being defined as such by the Russian state, in the territories belonging to Russia in Transnistria, it was not possible to suppress the nationalistic processes leading to the development of a Ukrainian national identity. During the First World War, especially in the chaos of the revolutionary changes taking place in the Russian state, the Ukrainian national movement (which had been developing there since the 17th century) reached the next stage. Ukrainian socialists took the floor, who had first aimed to create political autonomy and then a Ukrainian state in close federation with Russia. But after the Bolsheviks broke up the Legislative Assembly of Russia on 18 January 1918, they openly strove to sever ties with it completely and declare the independence of the Ukrainian People's Republic established in November 1917. This happened on 22 January 1918 in Kiev. From that moment on, Ukrainian politicians began to look for political support among Russia's opponents, so they naturally turned to the governments of the central states – Germany and Austria-Hungary.

Mutual Ukrainian-German relations during the Ukrainian revolution are presented in the monograph *Die ukrainische Revolution und die Deutschen 1917–1918*, published by Verlag Herder-Institut in 2021. Its author is Marian Luschnat-Ziegler, a graduate of the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, specialising in the modern history of Central and Eastern Europe, and the history of Ukraine in the 20th century in particular. The publication is based on a doctoral thesis defended at the University of Hamburg. The author, familiar with both Ukrainian and Russian, con-

ducted an extensive investigation not only in German, but also Ukrainian, collections during a several-month stay at the National University of the Kiev-Mohyla Academy. The chronological framework of the work is set between the February Revolution of 1917 and the withdrawal of the Germans from Ukrainian lands in December 1918, which marked the end of a certain stage in Ukrainian-German relations. An important internal turning point exposed in the discussion of the issues throughout all the chapters is Pavlo Skoropadskyi's coup in April 1918, the liquidation of the Ukrainian People's Republic (Ukrain's'ka Narodna Respublika¹, UNR) structures in favour of building a state based on more conservative policies and principles clearly oriented towards Germany. In his research, the author concentrated on finding answers to several important questions: did a shift really occur in the political orientation of Ukrainians from Dnieper Ukraine to Germany? What determined whether attitudes towards the Germans were positive or negative? What role did the Germans play in building a Ukrainian statehood – i.e., the Ukrainian People's Republic and the Ukrainian State (Ukrain's'ka Deržava², UD)?

Marian Luschnat-Ziegler set himself the objective of analyzing the stance of the Ukrainian revolutionary milieu towards Germany and the Germans in the years 1917–1918. It was an eventful period featuring the pan-Russian revolution, the Bolshevik coup in Russia as well as the Ukrainian revolution and attempts to build an independent Ukrainian state, to name but a few. In terms of the attitude towards the Germans, the author made a detailed analysis of the three driving forces behind the Ukrainian revolution: political activists associated with Ukrainian political parties, the Ukrainian peasants and Ukrainian military. Each of these topics is discussed in a separate chapter of the monograph. The first chapter is devoted to the role of Ukrainian political parties in the Ukrainian national movement during 1914–1917, an analysis of the Central Council's attitude towards Germany, as well as Ukrainian-German relations during the Brest peace talks conducted by representatives of the central states and the Bolshevik government of Soviet Russia. In this part of the work, the author examines the position taken by members of Ukrainian parties and the political elite against the coup d'état of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskyi,

¹ Українська Народна Республіка.

² Українська Держава.

supported by Germany. The second part concerns the attitude of Ukrainian peasants – the most numerous social class in Ukraine – towards the Germans. The author's focus on this milieu and his analysis of attitudes towards the Germans seem to be entirely justified. Before the war, the peasant population was conservative in political outlook, supported the Russian monarchy during its existence, but quickly became politically active in the period of the Russian and Ukrainian revolution, demanding the implementation of radical agrarian postulates involving large-scale handouts of land from agricultural property confiscated from landowners. Encouraged by the Russian and Ukrainian socialists and revolutionaries, they turned against the landowners, in whose defense the German military often had to intervene. However, the rural population was troubled the most by the German occupation due to the requisition of food, fuel, etc. The resentment towards the Germans was exacerbated by anti-German propaganda from the beginning of Russia's military operations on behalf of the Russian civil and military administrations and the Orthodox Church. Soldiers fighting the Germans were recruited from this social group, so their relatives had no reason to suddenly shift to a pro-German stance. It should also be remembered that some of the inhabitants of Ukrainian villages in 1915, fearing the advancing German army, were forced to leave their place of residence. As war refugees, they spent the war years in the depths of Russia. A sense of grievance and fear of the Germans were still feelings that were very much alive in this community.

While analyzing the attitudes of Ukrainian peasants towards the Germans, Marian Luschnat-Ziegler focuses primarily on social changes, growing social aspirations, and this group's situation in the context of the German occupation. He distinguishes several stages of mutual relations, characterized by gradual increasing resentment of the local peasant population towards the German army and administration. The researcher points out the peasants' passivity and indifference towards the Germans in the first weeks of the German occupation of Dnieper Ukraine in the early spring of 1918. Resistance against the German army was undertaken by individual partisan units, mainly on the left bank of the Dnieper. Only the Cossacks – and even then rather sporadically – decided to fight the Bolshevik troops alongside the Germans. This forced neutrality shifted along with Pavlo Skoropadskyi's German-backed coup at the end of April 1918, when the organs of the Ukrainian People's Republic were liquidated and the

foundations were laid for the construction of a new state structure under the banner of the Ukrainian State. The clearly negative shift in the peasants' attitude towards the Germans during this period was due to the fact that, by supporting the Hetmanate, the latter had inhibited the Ukrainian revolution, threatening the realization of the peasants' dream of receiving land as a result of radical agricultural reform. The Skoropadskyi government's return to pre-revolutionary, conservative values evoked anarchic sentiments, leading to a peasant uprising and many armed protests, mainly in central Ukraine, from June to August 1918. German troops fought against anarchy and defended land property. However, the analyzed material led Marian Luschnat-Ziegler to the conclusion (which he considers to be one of the most important in his work) that the peasants treated the Germans as a transitional invader and did not direct their ideological and strategic goals against them. The author believes that the attitude of Ukrainian peasants towards the Germans depended on the stage of the Ukrainian revolution's development.

The third chapter examines the attitude of the Ukrainian militia towards the Germans. The former were recruited either from officers and soldiers who had previously served in the Russian army (and who had fought against the German and Austro-Hungarian army), or from volunteers joining the Ukrainian army directly. They were responsible for building the structures of the Ukrainian army and fighting for the independence and borders of Ukraine – primarily with the Russian Bolsheviks. Marian Luschnat-Ziegler discusses the issues of the formation and campaigns of the Ukrainian armed forces in the spring of 1918, focusing primarily on issues such as the plans of Minister of Military Affairs Oleksandr Zhukovskiy, obtaining consent from Germany to recruit for the Ukrainian army among Russian prisoners of war in German captivity. The author also examines the stance taken by soldiers and officers serving under the banner of the Ukrainian People's Republic towards the Germans until the Skoropadskyi coup, and discusses the fighting between the Sich Riflemen and the Bolsheviks in defense of the Ukrainian Central Council, as well as the fields of cooperation and the area of conflict between the German military administration and the Ukrainian army in the battles with the Bolsheviks. Marian Luschnat-Ziegler is of the opinion that Minister of Military Affairs Oleksandr Zhukovskiy, took a firm anti-German stance, demanding full control over the emerging Ukrainian army and its activities, which was blocked by the German command.

Even after the Skoropadskyi coup, the Germans were cautious about the formation of a regular Ukrainian army, allowing cadres to be installed in designated garrisons only. Despite the growing aversion of the military milieu towards the Germans, they did not oppose in any way. The author believes that even the Ukrainian militia who had fought against Germany in the ranks of the Russian army throughout three years of the war responded positively to the expansion of the German occupation in February 1918. Although conflicts grew, Ukrainian voluntary soldiers stood shoulder to shoulder in the field with the German army against Bolshevik troops. Marian Luschnat-Ziegler believes that in 1918 the Ukrainian military gave priority to internal national conflicts and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, without trying to gain control over the German ally.

Summarizing the analysis of the stance taken by the three actors of the Ukrainian revolution towards Germans (political parties, peasants, military), Marian Luschnat-Ziegler points out that the best relations were between the Germans and political party activists and the militia. The peasants remained neutral or hostile, showing no sympathy towards the Germans. The researcher also draws attention to the difficulties in conducting a comparative analysis between these groups. In his opinion, this is due to the fact that all communities could react to the Germans in various ways and changed their attitude depending on the development of events. However, he does see a common denominator, which is the perception of Germany as an external factor, of little importance to the changes taking place in Ukraine. He believes that all three analyzed groups looked at Germany and the Germans through the prism of their own interests and complex conflicts, without treating them as their main opponent.

At first glance, this work is based on a very solid foundation of sources. However, a more detailed analysis brings some disappointment. In the introduction, the author discusses in detail the sources and studies he used. The sources are correctly divided into three types: the first group consists of archival sources (mainly documents), while the second group includes memoirs, diaries and reports, and the third group involves press reports published in Ukraine between 1917–1919. In describing the sources, the author devotes a few pages of the text to the second and third groups, while downplaying the archival sources. From the point of view of a Polish (and probably also a Ukrainian) historian, such an approach to historical research is incomprehensible. For many decades, the history of the

‘Ukrainian revolution’ was not open to free scientific research. Of course, in the interwar period, participants in the events did publish some of their memoirs from the years 1917–1921 outside Ukraine. Later, scientific studies also began to appear among Ukrainian émigré circles. Such work continued after World War II in Western Europe, as well as in Canada and the United States. However, all suffered from a serious drawback: lack of access to most of the documents stored in Soviet archives. However, in the Soviet Union no reliable scientific research was conducted on the matter in hand. Only after the collapse of the Soviet empire and the establishment of an independent Ukraine did historians gain unlimited access to the sources stored in the archives in that country. That is why we are convinced that it is these sources that should be the basis for all research and new findings related to the history of the ‘Ukrainian revolution’.

An analysis of the discussed study reveals that the author conducted research in two Ukrainian archives, which are fundamental from the point of view of the topic in question. These are the Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine (Central’nyj Deržavnyj Archiv Vyščych Orhaniv Vlady ta Upravlinnja Ukraïny³, CDAVOU) and Central State Archives of Public Organizations of Ukraine (Central’nyj Deržavnyj Archiv Hromads’kych Ob’jednan’ Ukraïny⁴, CDAHOU) located in Kiev. Unfortunately, the investigation covered only two or three archival groups in each of these archives. At the CDAVOU, two fonds were analyzed related to Ukrainian offices (Ministry of the Interior of the Ukrainian State⁵ and the Kiev Ukrainian Governorate) and one legacy. Meanwhile, the archive contains numerous basic documents related to the functioning of the UNR and the UD. These are fonds such as: the Council of Ministers of the UD (fond 1064), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the UD (fond 3766), the Ministry of Military Affairs UNR (fond 1076), the Ministry of Military Affairs of the UD (fond 1074), The Main Board of the General Staff of the UD (fond 1077), the Ministry of Agriculture of the UD (fond 1061) or the Diplomatic Representation (Legation) of the Ukrainian State in Germany (fond 3077). It seems that without a broad consideration of the file sources gathered in these and other finds, it would be difficult to

³ Центральний державний архів вищих органів влади та управління України.

⁴ Центральний державний архів громадських об’єднань України.

⁵ Ukraïns’koï Deržavy – Ukraïns’koï Deržavi.

uncover any new findings and, in fact, what already exists in historiography would be duplicated to some extent. Therefore, it can be concluded that the issues raised by the author of the discussed work have not been completely exhausted and that further, more detailed research of the archival materials may yield new facts and findings.

Investigations of sources were also conducted in the manuscript collections and in the press collections of the National Library of Ukraine. However, it is somewhat surprising that none were carried out in the German archives. Perhaps the sources stored there have already been exploited by researchers and the conclusions drawn from them are present in the works used by the author.

The collection of press titles published in Ukraine between 1917–1919 that the author drew from is much better in terms of source selection. The bibliography lists twenty journals that form the basis for the source analysis. The list of recollections, diaries and reports is also very good indeed. The author managed to access most of such sources published both by Ukrainian émigré circles and those published today in Ukraine. At the same time, the author rightly noticed that some scientific studies, written by direct participants in the described events (and published shortly afterwards), are recollections rather than scientific studies (e.g., texts by Dmytro Doroshenko, Pavlo Chrystiuk or Isaak Mazepa). The author was also happy to use the full range of memoirs printed in individual volumes of the journal *Za Deržavnist* – one should agree with the author when he wrote in the introduction that the value of the materials contained in this journal cannot be overestimated.

The list of the collections of published documents used in the discussed study looks decent. However, in our opinion, at least two publications that would have been relevant to the topic were missing. The first is a two-volume collection of documents (over 1,200 pages in total) devoted to the functioning of the Ukrainian state, published in Kiev in 2015 *Ukraïns'ka Deržava. Dokumenty i materialy*.⁶ The second is a collection of documents devoted to Ukrainian diplomatic representations in Germany, between 1918–1922.⁷ In defense of the author, it should be noted that the authors of this review, who have been dealing with issues related to the history of

⁶ Verstjuk et al. (ed.): *Ukraïns'ka Deržava*.

⁷ Danilenko / Kryvec' (ed.): *Ukraïns'ki dyplomatyčni*, pp. 592.

Ukraine and Belarus for many years, are well aware of the limitations in access to scientific publications published in Ukraine. Often, such publications are issued in small numbers, do not always find their way to libraries (even Ukrainian, let alone ones abroad), and cannot be purchased outside of Ukraine. In this situation, foreign researchers have access only to publications available on the book market during their stay in Ukraine and which they managed to purchase. Actually, from the inception of the independent Ukrainian state, only foreign scientists who regularly visited this country and enriched their private library through individual purchases have access to a relatively complete database of scientific publications published in Ukraine on a given subject.

Despite the above reservations, one might assert that the source base used by the author of this discussed work is quite rich. Of course, many Ukrainian studies were missing from it, but this is understandable in the context of restricted access. However, since the author used syntheses of Ukrainian military history, mentioning a lack of monographic studies, it should be noted that such studies do exist. For the topic at hand, at least two important scientific publications are important: *Armija Ukraïns'koï Narodnoï Respubliky 1917–1918* and *Ukraïns'ki Zbrojni Syly berezen' 1917 r. – lystopad 1918 r.* In addition, one ought to mention the study directly related to the subject of the discussed work, yet not included by the author: a book by Oleksij Kurajev (*Polityka Nimeččyny i Avstro-Uhorščyny v Peršij svitovij vijni*). From the point of view of Polish historians, the work by Włodzimierz Mędrzecki (*Niemiecka interwencja militarna na Ukrainie w 1918 roku*), which was disregarded by the author, is also relevant.⁸

Summing up, it can be concluded that the indicated bibliographic flaws do not significantly affect the value of the book. Marian Luschnat-Ziegler has contributed a very interesting and well-written work to German historiography. The subject of the study is important and will undoubtedly help the reader to understand many complicated aspects of the history of Eastern Europe, the history of the Ukrainian revolution and activities aimed at gaining state independence, including the role of the German factor therein. Luschnat-Ziegler broached a fascinating, yet complex and multi-layered problem in his book. The issue of the relationship between

⁸ Holubko: *Armija Ukraïns'koï Narodnoï Respubliky*; Tynčenko: *Ukraïns'ki Zbrojni Syly*; Kurajev: *Polityka Nimeččyny*; Mędrzecki: *Niemiecka interwencja*.

the German state and the Ukrainian statehood emerging in 1917–1918 is highly significant and doubtlessly influenced German-Ukrainian relations in subsequent years too. While this issue has to some extent been tackled in works by Ukrainian academics, it is poorly represented in German historiography. The discussed monograph does not provide an exhaustive exploration of this topic that requires further in-depth research. In particular, more extensive and thorough inquiries in Ukrainian archives are necessary. However, Marian Luschnat-Ziegler's study is conceptually correct and does offer some interesting interpretations, which should be assessed positively in the current state of research. In this way, German historiography has acquired an innovative and well-written work, which will undoubtedly help the reader to understand many complex aspects of the history of Eastern Europe that still influence how the region functions to this day.

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