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The Struggle against tsarism: the “Brotherhood of Taras” and the “Kagaali” – movement

Walka z caratem: „Bractwo Tarasowców” i ruch „Kagaali”

Praca poświęcona jest problemowi walki narodowowyzwoleńczej Ukraińców i Finów w okresie intensyfikacji polityki rusyfikacji peryferii Imperium Rosyjskiego na przykładzie dwóch organizacji podziemnych – Bractwa Tarasowców i ruchu „Kagaali”. Zdefiniowano istotę ich platform ideologicznych. Badany jest wkład przywódców tych organizacji w proces upolitycznienia narodowej walki wyzwolenczej narodów ukraińskiego i fińskiego w przededniu pierwszej rewolucji rosyjskiej (1905–1907).

Słowa kluczowe

„Bractwo Tarasowców”, nacjonalizm, „Kagaali”, rusyfikacja, Imperium Rosyjskie

The formulation of the problem. The relevance of the stated theme is in building historical parallels between Ukraine and Finland on the example of national underground organizations that sought to gain independence from the Russian Empire. During this period of history, national liberation wars took place in Europe and the rest of the world. Meanwhile, in the Grand Duchy of Finland it was almost not felt: a peaceful life continued, industry developed, the social and political activity of the intelligentsia grew; in Naddnipryanshchyna the peasantry was practically divorced from the realities of political life, the intelligentsia was predominantly engaged in cultural activities, and the upper strata supported the existing royal order. It is important to note that this study should help to understand the problem of the historical path of two distant and at the same time close to each other countries, which were once parts of the multinational Russian Empire.

Analysis of recent research. Studying the publications of Finnish and Ukrainian researchers of this period in history helps to clarify the degree of study of this

problem. Among the most notable are the works of M. Klinge¹, T. Vihavainen², T. Polvinen³, A. Saltovskiy⁴, S. Naumov⁵ and P. Mirchuk⁶. The Russian expert on our topics I. Novikova⁷ in her work demonstrates how the unseasoned royal policy managed to turn loyal Finnish subjects into their worst enemies. In turn, O. Jussila, S. Hentilä and J. Nevakivi⁸ focused on the political transformation of the national movement of the Finnish people, which was directly promoted by the counter-reforms of the last emperor from the Romanov's house. The Ukrainian component of this problem was studied most fruitfully by F. Turchenko⁹, having comprehensively analyzed the figure of the founding father of Ukrainian nationalism, Mykola Mikhnovskiy, and his influence on the then political situation over Dnipro land.

The purpose of the article is to carry out a comparative analysis of ideological platforms, political goals and practical steps to achieve them by the participants of the “Brotherhood of Taras” and the “Kagaali” – movement.

The presentation of the main material. At the end of the 19th century in the Russian Empire began to occur dramatic changes in the accession of the new emperor from the Romanov dynasty. With the death of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, the imperial throne was taken by his son, the conservative Alexander III; begins the curtailment of liberal reforms, which took the place of the Russification policy. On the national regions of the Romanov state, these changes gave impetus to the intelligentsia for the practical implementation of their own ideological developments: in Naddnipryanshchyna, a radical-minded student creates the first independent organization — the “Brotherhood of Taras”; in the Grand Duchy of Finland, the oppositions Svecomans and the nationalists Young Finns do not agree with the new policy⁶ so they united in common “Kagaali”-movement.

The growth of the national consciousness of the Naddnipryanshchyna in the 1890s led to a significant distinction among the intelligentsia. If the older generation preferred cultural and educational affairs in the solution of the “Ukrainian question” (demands for moderate reforms that would abolish national and cultural restrictions for Ukrainians in the Russian Empire), then the young people,

¹ M. Klinge, *Keisarin Suomi*, Espoo, Schildt 1997, ss. 616.

² T. Vihavainen, *The end of loyalty. Crisis in Finnish-Russian relations in early 20th century*, „Ethnic History of European Nations” 2018, vol. 55, s. 14–16.

³ T. Polvinen, *Valtakunta ja rajamaa. N.I. Bobrikov Suomen kenraalikuvernöörinä 1898–1904*, Wsoy, Porvoo 1984, ss. 450.

⁴ O. Saltovskiy, *Koncepciyi ukrayinskoyi derzhavnosti v istoriyi vitchyznyanoyi politychnoyi dumky (vid vytkov do pochatku XX storichchya)*, Parapan, Kiev 2002, ss. 396.

⁵ S. Naumov, *Bratstvo Tarasivtsiv*, „Ukrayinskyj istorychnyj zhurnal” 1999, nr 55, s. 36–44.

⁶ P. Mirchuk, *Vidrodzhennya velykoyi ideyi*, K.: Ukrayinska vydavnycha spilka, 1999, [w:] http://chtyvo.org.ua/authors/Mirchuk/Vidrodzhennia_velykoi_idei/

⁷ I. Novikova, *The Provisional Government and Finland: Russian Democracy and Finnish Nationalism in Search of Peaceful Coexistence*, [w:] *Power, 1700–1930*, pod red. J. Burbank, M. von Hagen, A. Remnev, Indiana Univ. Press, 2007, s. 398–421.

⁸ O. Jussila, S. Hentilä, J. Nevakivi, *Suomen poliittinen historia 1809–2009*, WSOY Oppimateriaalit, Helsinki 2009, s. 407.

⁹ F. Turchenko, *Mykola Mikhnovskiy: zhyttya i slovo*, Geneza, Kiev 2006, s. 320.

passionate about revolutionary ideas, sought to achieve national liberation through struggle¹⁰. Understanding that a compromise between “fathers and sons” will not be reached, in the summer of 1891 at the tomb of Taras Shevchenko near the city of Kaniv, students Mykhailo Bazkevich, Mykola Bayzdrenko and Ivan Lypa, and functionary Vitalii Borovyk founded the secret political society called the “Brotherhood of Taras”¹¹. By the end of the same year, writer Borys Hrinchenko, poet Mykhailo Kotsyubynskyi, lawyer Mykola Mikhnovskyi and others joined the ranks of the underground organization. Their group was financed by donations from philanthropists, in particular the sugar producer Vasyl Symyrenko; the largest centers of organization were created in Kyiv, Odessa, Chernihiv, Poltava and Kharkiv¹².

Participants of the “Brotherhood of Taras” laid out their political platform in the so-called “declaration” or “Profession de foi of Young Ukrainians”¹³. “[...] Ukraine under the Russian occupation! And after the law of human psychology, she raises her national flag. But we, as children of Ukraine, as sons of our people, are nationalists and all we care about is to give our people national freedom. Soon, Ukraine will extract this will, the content of the national flag will change itself, because humanity is coming in and life-long ideals alternate...” – the “Brotherhood of Taras” document said¹⁴. A characteristic feature of this society was clandestine openly anti-government activities. Having declared its goal of fighting for “an independent sovereign and all-united Ukraine from river San across the Kuban, from the Carpathians to the Caucasus”, the “Brotherhood of Taras” had to carry out a number of open political acts to witness their challenge to tsarism.

As the brotherhood member Yurii Kollard recalls, at first it was planned to require the authorities to introduce the use of the Ukrainian language in the school and institutions in Naddnipryanshchyna; in the future, in the event of refusal, to proceed to more radical actions: subversive activities in the army, the commission of attacks on officials, the destruction of the monuments of the tsarist regime¹⁵. In parallel with this, there was an active propaganda of the separatism ideas among students, peasants and workers of the Naddnipryanshchyna¹⁶. During the 1892–1897 brotherhood activists illegally imported radical literature from Lviv and Chernivtsi, distributing it among the conscious youth of provincial cities. In early 1898, the Russian authorities succeeded in exposing the organization: one of the members of the Kyiv organization reported to the gendarmes on “the growth of radicalism, and the intention to kill the royal family”¹⁷. Arrests, courts, prisons began, but it was not possible to prove the guilt of the brothers.

¹⁰ D. Kovaliov, *Shlyax revolyucioneriv-samostijnykiv: Konrad-Viktor Zilliakus i Mykola Mikhnovskyj*, “Ethnic History of European Nations” 2018, vol. 55, s. 54.

¹¹ S. Naumov, *op. cit.*, s. 37.

¹² F. Turchenko, *op. cit.*, s. 45.

¹³ P. Mirchuk, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ *Profession de foi molodykh ukrayinciv*, [w:] “Pravda” (*misyachnyk polityky, nauky i pysmenstva*), t. XVII, Lvov 1893, [w:] <https://constituanta.blogspot.com/2011/07/profession-de-foi-1893.html>

¹⁵ Yu. Kollard, *Spogady yunatskykh dniv (1897–1906) (1897–1906)*, Sribna surma, Toronto 1972, s. 29.

¹⁶ D. Kovaliov, *Shlyax revolyucioneriv-samostijnykiv...*, s. 55.

¹⁷ P. Mirchuk, *op. cit.*

The “Brotherhood of Taras” was destroyed, but his ideas substantially replenished the political thought of Naddniprovyanshchyna, becoming in the future a support in the struggle against the Bolsheviks. But however, the organization remained “a voice calls out in the wilderness”. Many Ukrainians have not yet understood that they are about to become an independent nation whose freedom will need to be defended with arms in their hands¹⁸.

At the same time, tsarism, which fought the national liberation movements on the Russian Empire national regions, decided to change its attitude towards its loyal subjects of the Grand Duchy of Finland. The new Governor-General Nikolai Bobrikov in early 1899 began to Russify Finland, caused great resistance from its inhabitants¹⁹. The first came under the tough hand of the tsar’s governor, figures of the Finnish national liberation movement and the opposition beet deputies.

“February manifesto” of Nikolai II, published in February 1899, significantly limited the current constitutional system of Finland and brought its autonomous status closer to other regions of the Russian Empire²⁰. So the understandable answer of the active political minority of the Grand Duchy of Finland was to unite in an underground movement, which was called “Kagaali” (from Hebrew קהל or Qahal – society, assembly)²¹.

It was founded in the autumn of 1901 in the estate of Turholma in the village of Laajasalo on the island of Tullisaari, which was owned General Jacob Julius af Lindfors²². During the first meeting, activists among the Svekomans (Leopold Mechelin, Adolf von Bonsdorff and Wilhelm Zilliacus) and the Young Finns (Eero Erkko, Per Evind Svingufvud, Heikki Renvall) declared their goal of deploying resistance to the Russification by the new governor-general²³; The members of “Kagaali”-movement, despite their status and privileges, called on their fellow citizens to sabotage the initiatives of Nikolai Bobrikov, primarily through propaganda, through the press and public speeches²⁴. At the same time, comparing “Kagaali” with the “Brotherhood of Taras”, we note that some members of the “Kagaali”-movement did not develop any single ideological document that would reveal the essence of their political platform. And this is understandable, because ideological opponents (Svekomans and Young Finns) joined the ranks of the underground organization and were made by the odious Finnish Governor-General as situational allies.

Leopold Mehelin, the first leader of the “Kagaali”-movement, called on the Finns to passively resist the actions of the royal governor. He demanded that the citizens not serve the military garrison stationed in the fortress of Suomenlinna, not buy goods from Russian merchants and sabotage the implementation of

¹⁸ Yu Kollard, *op. cit.*, s. 31.

¹⁹ T. Vihavainen, *op. cit.*, s. 15.

²⁰ D. Kovaliov, *Vplyv polityky rusyfikaciyi na suspilno-politychnu situaciyu u Finlyandiyi*, seria: *Naukovi praci istorychnogo fakultetu Zaporizkogo nacionalnogo universytetu*, 2015, Vyp. 44, t. 2, s. 47.

²¹ D. Kovaliov, *Pidpilna organizaciya “Kagaali”: finlyandskyj opir moskovskomu samoderzhavstvu*, „Borysten” 2017, nr 2(307), s. 25.

²² M. Klinge, *op. cit.*, s. 374.

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ T. Polvinen, *op. cit.*, s. 236.

manifestos about language and mail²⁵. It was the members of the “Kagaali”-movement that belonged to the initiative of collecting signatures to a nationwide petition sent in autumn 1901 to the Russian tsar. The appeal was signed by over 500 thousand partials of the Grand Duke of Finland, so she became known in history as the “Suuri adressi”²⁶.

In 1903, Leopold Mehelin leaves the underground organization he created. The reason for this was the ideological debate about whether to continue non-violent resistance to the actions of the governor-general. The brother of Wilhelm Zilliacus, known for his travels in places of compact residence of Finns in the USA and Canada, the radical nationalist Konrad Viktor Zilliacus called the members of “Kagaali”-movement to go out of the underground and to show more active resistance²⁷. In his numerous articles, he called on young people to kill representatives of the royal power in the Grand Duchy of Finland, and also encouraged the deployment of a revolutionary underground for opposition parties from the central part of the Russian Empire – the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks.

When at the beginning of 1905 the Romanovs’ state suffered a humiliating military defeat against Japan, this caused social unrest throughout the empire²⁸. The revolution was also shaken up by Finland: the passive resistance to which Leopold Mehelin was calling should come to naught and open the way to a more active one – through rebellion. After the general strike that took place in the autumn of 1905 in all industrial cities of the Russian Empire, in particular in Helsingfors (also Helsinki), Tammerfors (also Tampere) and Viborg (also Viipuri), the “Kagaali”-movement ceased to exist²⁹. The initial period of Russification was completed, the activity of the movement was no longer needed, new organizations focused on active resistance and a long-term goal – gaining state independence for Finland³⁰.

The significance of both organizations lies in the fact that both the “Brotherhood of Taras” in Naddniprovyanshchyna and the “Kagaali” – movement in the Grand Duchy of Finland, despite significant differences in the political, social and economic conditions of that time, were the first to openly challenge tsarism. If, until now, the struggle against the Romanov state was concentrated solely on the plane of controversy, then the activities of the organizations studied demonstrated the desire of an active minority among the intelligentsia to be masters in their own land. As for ideology, the “Brotherhood of Taras” opened the way for modern Ukrainian nationalism, its members were represented by two opposing currents – Svekoman liberals and nationalists Young Finns who, at the first opportunity (the revolution of 1905–1907), broke off their union.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. Analysis of the sources and the study of a wide range of scientific literature leads to a number of conclusions.

²⁵ I. Novikova, *op. cit.*, 402.

²⁶ D. Kovaliov, *Vplyv polityky rusyfikaciyi...*, s. 48.

²⁷ D. Kovaliov, *Shlyax revolyucioneriv-samostijnykiv...*, s. 55.

²⁸ O. Jussila, S. Hentilä, J. Nevakivi, *op. cit.*, 85.

²⁹ I. Novikova, *op. cit.*, s. 407.

³⁰ T. Vihavainen, *op. cit.*, s. 16.

Firstly, it is impossible to carry out a comparative analysis of the ideological platforms of both of the above organizations because of the lack of such among the representatives of the “Kagaali”-movement, who adjusted the fight against tsarism to a specific point. Secondly, the political goal and practical steps to achieve it were also excellent: the “Brotherhood of Taras”, proclaiming “Profession de foi of Young Ukrainians”, put forward a liberating desire for fellow citizens, while members of the “Kagaali” movement sought to stop Russification and eliminate odious Governor-General, not state independence for the Grand Duchy of Finland. Thirdly, Finns have always been in favor of the tsarist regime, even during the reign of Nikolai II, which cannot be said about Ukrainians; it is therefore not surprising that the flames of the revolution of 1905–1907. The Grand Duchy of Finland presented a real unicameral parliament, and Naddnipryanshchyna – a series of political repressions, and a social and economic crisis. We should also emphasize that such different and distant European countries as Ukraine and Finland make our common past similar when both countries were parts of the Russian Empire. The stay of the Grand Duchy of Finland and the Naddnipryanshchyna in the bosom of the Romanov’s state affected the formation of the Ukrainian and Finnish modern nations, to which the organizations – “Kagaali” – movement and “Brotherhood of Taras” – stated in the title of the article were actively involved.

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The Struggle against tsarism: the “Brotherhood of Taras” and the “Kagaali” – movement

The research is devoted to the coverage of the problem of the national liberation struggle of Ukrainians and Finns in the period of the active tsarists' policy of Russification in national regions of the Russian Empire by the example of two underground organizations – the “Brotherhood of Taras” and the “Kagaali”-movement. Also, was determined the essence of their ideological platforms. The research has been studied the contribution of the leaders of these organizations to the process of politicizing the national liberation struggle of Ukrainians and Finns on the eve of the first Russian revolution (1905–1907).

Keywords: the “Brotherhood of Taras”, nationalism, the “Kagaali”, Russification, Russian Empire



Боротьба з царом: “Братство Тарасівців” і рух “Кагаалі”

Робота присвячена висвітленню проблеми національно-визвольної боротьби українців та фінляндців у добу активізації політики русифікації окраїн держави Романових на прикладі діяльності двох підпільних організацій – Братства Тарасівців і руху “Кагаалі”. Визначена сутність їх ідеологічних платформ. Досліджено внесок лідерів вказаних організацій у процес політизації національно-визвольної боротьби українців та фінляндців у переддень першої російської революції (1905–1907).

Ключові слова: “Братство Тарасівців”, націоналізм, „Кагаалі”, русифікація, Російська імперія

