

УДК (UDC) 94 (4) «1914/19»

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.33782/eminak2022.3\(39\).593](https://doi.org/10.33782/eminak2022.3(39).593)

## METHODS OF STRUGGLE OF THE RUSSIAN BLACK HUNDREDS AGAINST UKRAINIANS IN THE PRISONER-OF-WAR CAMPS IN AUSTRIA-HUNGARY AND GERMANY (1914-1917)

*Ihor Sribnyak*<sup>1</sup>, *Natalia Yakovenko*<sup>2</sup>, *Viktor Matviyenko*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University (Kyiv, Ukraine)

e-mail: [i.sribniak@kubg.edu.ua](mailto:i.sribniak@kubg.edu.ua); ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9750-4958>

<sup>2</sup> Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Kyiv, Ukraine)

e-mail: [zaliznaledi@ukr.net](mailto:zaliznaledi@ukr.net); ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3493-5950>

<sup>3</sup> Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Kyiv, Ukraine)

e-mail: [vikmaryuniv@ukr.net](mailto:vikmaryuniv@ukr.net); ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0012-5175>

### ABSTRACT

The *article is aimed* at analyzing forms and methods of struggle of the Russian Black Hundreds against Ukrainian activists of the tsarist army in the prisoner-of-war camps on the territory of Austria-Hungary and Germany (Freistadt, Rastatt, Wetzlar, Salzwedel), being ukrainized at the end of 1914-1915, which was accompanied by the removal of ethnic Russians from those camps.

*The research novelty* of the article lies in the objective evidence of those factors that initially made it almost impossible to carry out cultural and educational work among captured Ukrainians, as well as the reconstruction of the process of gradual overcoming by the camp residents of their non-acceptance of national liberation slogans and the idea of Ukrainian independence.

*Conclusions:* It is proved that despite various methods of intimidation (physical violence against Ukrainian activists, destruction of books and magazines, boycott of schools, anonymous leaflets of threatening content, writing down registration numbers of prisoners, etc.), the Black Hundreds did not succeed in preventing the activities of cultural and educational circles created in the camps by the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (ULU). In a short time, the majority of camp residents joined Ukrainian organizations in the camps, which enabled to minimize the influence of anti-Ukrainian forces. So Ukrainians managed to overcome their centuries-old fear of tsarist despotism, which constrained their ideas and actions with the threat of inevitable punishment. Their desire to gain as much knowledge as possible in conditions of captivity, their readiness to acquire new skills and abilities that they might need during civilian life – suppressed all frightening efforts of the Black Hundreds. It became possible to achieve because of the involvement of captured Ukrainian officers into national organizational activities. Thanks to this, thousands of Ukrainians devoted to the cause of national liberation were brought up in the camps, ready for the armed defense of Ukraine against the Bolshevik invasion.

*Keywords:* captured Ukrainians, prisoner-of-war camps, Union for the Liberation of Ukraine, Black Hundreds, Germany

## ІНСТРУМЕНТАРІЙ ТА МЕТОДИ БОРОТЬБИ РОСІЙСЬКИХ ЧОРНОСОТЕНЦІВ З УКРАЇНСТВОМ У ТАБОРАХ ПОЛОНЕНИХ ЦАРСЬКОЇ АРМІЇ В АВСТРО-УГОРЩИНІ ТА НІМЕЧЧИНІ (1914-1917 РР.)

*Ігор Срібняк<sup>1</sup>, Наталя Яковенко<sup>2</sup>, Віктор Матвієнко<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Київський університет імені Бориса Грінченка (Київ, Україна)  
e-mail: i.sribniak@kubg.edu.ua; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9750-4958>

<sup>2</sup> Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка (Київ, Україна)  
e-mail: zaliznaledi@ukr.net; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3493-5950>

<sup>3</sup> Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка (Київ, Україна)  
e-mail: vikmaryuniv@ukr.net; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0012-5175>

### АНОТАЦІЯ

**Метою статті** є аналіз форм і методів боротьби російських чорносотенців з українськими активістами у таборах полонених царської армії на теренах Австро-Угорщини та Німеччини (Фрайштадт, Раштат, Вецляр, Зальцведель), які у кінці 1914-1915 рр. були українізовані, що супроводжувалося усуненням з них етнічних росіян.

**Наукова новизна** статті полягає в об'єктивному встановленні тих чинників, які спочатку майже повністю унеможливлювали проведення культурно-освітньої роботи у середовищі полонених українців, а також реконструкції процесу поступового подолання таборянами свого неприйняття національно-визвольних гасел та ідеї самостійності України.

**Висновки.** Доведено, що попри різні прийоми залякування (фізичне насильство над українськими активістами, нищення книг і часописів, бойкот шкіл, розклеювання анонімних листівок погрозливого змісту, записування номерів тощо) чорносотенцям не вдалося перешкодити роботі культурно-освітніх гуртків, що були створені у таборах заходами Союзу визволення України. Вже за короткий час більшість таборян долучилася до українських організацій у таборах, що уможливило мінімізувати впливи антиукраїнських сил. Таким чином, українці зуміли подолати у собі віковичний страх перед царською деспотією, який сковував їх думки та дії загрозою невідворотного покарання. Їх бажання засвоїти у полоні якомога більшу суму знань, їх готовність набувати нових навичок та умінь, що могли б знадобитися їм під час цивільного життя – перемогли всі залякування чорної сотні. Досягнути цього стало можливим і завдяки залученню до національно-організаційної роботи полонених офіцерів-українців. Завдяки цьому у таборах були виховані тисячі відданих справі національного визволення українців, готовий до збройного захисту України від більшовицької навали.

**Ключові слова:** полонені українці, табір, Союз визволення України, «чорна сотня», Німеччина

### Introduction

The events of the First World War led to the concentration of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers of the tsarist army in prisoner-of-war camps on the territories of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Such a significant number of captured Ukrainians in the camps enabled the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (ULU) to single out and detach their large part from the Russian imperial influence, and set them up on Ukrainian liberation ideas. The ULU managed to convince influential German and Austro-Hungarian circles of the rationality to carry out a set of political

measures aimed at strengthening national self-consciousness of the Ukrainian people and freeing them from Moscow's subordination. To reach this purpose, the ULU managed to obtain significant funds, first from the governments of Germany and Austria-Hungary, and later from German non-governmental organizations.

Meanwhile, the history of prisoner-of-war camps filled by Ukrainian soldiers during the First World War, was studied both by direct participants of those events (and in particular by the organizers of cultural and educational work in the Rastatt camp, which enables to interpret results of their research as sources<sup>1</sup>) and by modern Ukrainian<sup>2</sup> and German<sup>3</sup> historians. They accumulated considerable factual material, but none of the authors put the goal of comprehensive disclosure of the specifics of subversive activities by the Russian Black Hundreds in the camps (the largest amount of information concerning this aspect is contained in the monograph by O. Terlets'kyi).

Russian researcher O. Nagornaya also turned to studying the way of life of the tsarist army prisoners in Germany, which resulted in the author's monograph<sup>4</sup>. In fact, the writer did not specially study specifics of the functioning of Ukrainian camps in Germany, although she devoted some of her attention to this aspect in one of the sections of her book («Propaganda among POWs of Polish, Ukrainian and Baltic origin in the prospect of colonization of eastern regions»).

As it should be expected, O. Nagornaya concentrated her attention on the potential danger (imaginary and real) presented by national aspirations of the peoples enslaved by the Russian Empire, 'having branded' the 'separatist' nature of Ukrainian national organizations in the German camps. After all, the author's rhetoric was in fact not different from the accusations brought against the ULU during the First World War by Russian government officials. Omitting a detailed analysis of O. Nagornaya's texts (which was already done as a part of a separate review<sup>5</sup>), it should be noted that they actually lack any substantial information concerning the Russian Black Hundreds' forms and methods of activities in Ukrainian camps.

Meanwhile, this aspect is of great scientific and historical interest, while considering the current realities of Ukrainian-Russian relations, which have become irrevocably confrontational after the unprovoked aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine in February 2022. In this respect, studying of the arsenal of subversive actions by the Russians against Ukrainians is undoubtedly of practical value, enabling to consistently present the anti-Ukrainian policy of Russia in all its guises – imperial, Soviet, Putin-Rashist.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Katerenuk P.* Bericht über die ukrainische Aufklärungsarbeit im Lager Rastatt. Rastatt, 1917. 41 s.; *Терлецький О.* Історія української громади в Раштаті 1915-1918. Київ-Ляйпціг, 1919. Т. 1. 429 с.

<sup>2</sup> *Срібняк І.* Полонені українці в Австро-Угорщині та Німеччині (1914-1920 рр.). Київ, 1999. 296 с.; *Кривошеєва Л.* Національно-просвітня діяльність Союзу визволення України в таборах військовополонених українців (1914-1918 рр.). Дис... канд. іст. наук за спец. 07.00.01 – історія України. Запоріжжя, 2009. 242 с.

<sup>3</sup> *Golczewski F.* Deutsche und Ukrainer 1914-1939. Paderborn, 2010. 1085 s.; *Feik M.* Zur Geschichte des «Ukrainer-/Russenlagers» in Rastatt // Heimatbuch des Landkreises Rastatt. 2013. S. 105-114.

<sup>4</sup> *Нагорная О.С.* Другой военный опыт. Российские военнопленные первой мировой войны в Германии (1914-1922). Москва, 2010. С. 167-172.

<sup>5</sup> *Срібняк І.* «Національний слід» в книзі О.С. Нагорної о військовополонених царської армії в Німеччині (1914-1922 гг.): полемическі записки українського історика // Соціум. Документ. Комунікація: зб. наук. праць. Серія: історичні науки. Переяслав-Хмельницький, 2018. Вип. 6. С. 287-301.

### Discussion and Results

In 1914-1915, the ULU carried out the Ukrainization of four prisoner-of-war camps of the tsarist army (Freistadt in Austria-Hungary; Rastatt, Wetzlar and Salzwedel in Germany), where residents of Ukrainian provinces of the Russian Empire were concentrated. Profound cultural, educational and patriotic activities were started there, aimed at national and political awareness of captured Ukrainian soldiers. These ULU activities initiated complex processes of differentiation in their background, the bulk of prisoners divided into three quantitatively unequal parts – at first, only a few supported Ukrainian slogans of national liberation, the Black Hundreds minority of prisoners (among them the sub-ensigns were particularly active) came out in support of ‘the faith, tsar and fatherland’, the third – the most numerous group of prisoners, having no their own grounded worldview, followed the Black Hundreds and Little Russians at the initial period. Adepts of the Russian monarchical idea and Slavic unity possessed the whole set of techniques to intimidate Ukrainians in the camps, using both active and passive methods.

The first included: beating of Ukrainian activists; throwing stones at the windows of the barracks where lectures were held; destruction or defacement of Ukrainian-language printed products and camp publications; obstacles to holding national events by singing «God Save the King»; fixing and threatening to hand over the names of Ukrainian activists to Russian counter-intelligence after the end of the war (which could harm their relatives); letters with threats thrown into Ukrainian barracks. In addition, the Black Hundreds carried out other anti-Ukrainian actions in the camps, such as: damaging equipment in schools and other Ukrainian institutions, refusing to accept any humanitarian aid if it were of Ukrainian origin, not attending Ukrainian schools and avoiding participation in any national organizational work in the camps.

The first steps of the ULU activities were very difficult in all camps without exception, especially since its representatives (mostly from the Galician intelligentsia and revolutionary émigrés from the sub-Russian Ukraine) had no experience of conducting it. As is often the case, the first experience turned out to be negative – the attempts of the ULU delegates to raise independence slogans in the Freistadt camp (Austria-Hungary) caused resistance from the military, which was explained both by the remnants of stereotypical Russian patriotism in the minds of the captives, and by the Black Hundreds’ frantic agitation in the camp against the Ukrainian liberation idea. Because of this, the majority of prisoners considered the ULU representatives to be ‘Austrians’, ‘strangers’, and even ‘spies’ acting against tsarist Russia and treated them with great distrust.

Another circumstance hindering cultural and educational work of the ULU in the camp was the so-called ‘black book’ containing a list of names of all persons who in one way or another sympathized with the Ukrainian cause, so that after returning from captivity, this list composed by the sub-ensigns would be handed over to the tsarist counter-intelligence. The Black Hundreds threatened with physical violence and intimidated those prisoners who entered into conversation with the ULU representatives and took books from them; there were often cases when stones flew into the room during their lectures. Besides, the guard team of the camp, consisting of the Czechs, acted together with the Black Hundreds. All this dissuaded prisoners from participation in the public life of the camp, and eventually forced the ULU to temporarily abandon the proclamation of independence slogans among the prisoners.

In view of this, the ULU leadership decided to brisk up cultural and educational work among the prisoners and already in mid-December 1914 sent Dr. V. Simovych to Freistadt with the task of organizing its systematic implementation in the camp. The captives met V. Simovych rather unfavorably which, in his opinion, could be explained, by the fact that the heads of the barracks were carrying on «quiet» anti-Ukrainian agitation in the camp, and the Austrian commandant's office avoided taking decisive measures against them. Regulating of work among the prisoners was also hindered by the undernourishment of soldiers and discrimination of Ukrainians (they were doing all hard work in the camp and outside it). Because of that, the majority of prisoners considered V. Simovych to be a «paid Austrian agent» who, for money, is trying to drag them over to Austria's side. The very term «Ukraine» seemed at least strange and incomprehensible to the prisoners, and this circumstance also had a negative impact on the state of educational work in the camp<sup>6</sup>.

V. Simovych managed to convince the commandant of the camp in the expediency of increasing the time for the ULU employees to stay in the camp to seven hours, which gave a possibility to organize evening «publicly accessible» readings for all prisoners in the second half of December. Because of the lack of a proper room, the first readings were held in the barracks, and as V. Simovych recalled, at first they were accompanied by «...shouts, whistles, and even sneers, demonstrations by the "heads" in the barracks», chants of «God Save the King», which obviously made this work extremely difficult. V. Simovych took measures to organize German language course in the camp, which was due to a large number of people who wanted to learn German. Already from the end of January, O. Bezpalko began systematic lectures on this course, and all its participants received a special award and were released by the commandant's office from mandatory work in the camp. This situation gave rise to many conflicts, because a certain number of prisoners, together with barrack «heads», resorted to active opposition to the students of the course: «they did not give bread, lunch, ripped books from their hands, dug them up and threw them to the exits»<sup>7</sup>.

It became clear that the active and almost undisguised demolition work of the Black Hundreds required active opposition, in particular, it was necessary to remove this category of persons from the camp. It would seem that supporters of the Russian idea should gladly leave the Ukrainian camp and join their like-minded Black Hundreds in other places. In fact, the Black Hundreds did not want to move from Freistadt at all, considering their «higher task» to continue poisoning the consciousness of Ukrainians by upholding the false values of the 'Russki mir'. Because of their active opposition, the preparation of the Black Hundreds for leaving the camp was absolutely paralysed and the embodiment of Ukrainian ideas again found itself in a deep crisis in early May 1915.

The point is, that in January 1915, 1270 people were added to the lists of those who had to be removed from the camp, but it was not possible to carry out this action in time due to a sudden outbreak of a typhus epidemic in the Freistadt camp. In May, the commandant's office again returned to this matter, but soon it appeared that these lists were outdated and needed to be revised. Compilation of new lists by V. Simovych was not beyond attention of the Black Hundreds, who extremely

---

<sup>6</sup> Сімович В. Початки національно-просвітньої праці серед полонених українців в таборі Фрайштадт // Союз визволення України у Відні (1914-1918). Нью-Йорк, 1979. С. 85.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. С. 87.

intensified their undermining work in the camp. A boycott of reading rooms was announced, and everyone visiting them was threatened with punishment in Russia. At the same time, stones were thrown at the windows of Ukrainian institutions. It resulted in numerical decrease of visitors of the reading rooms from 1 000 to 30, and a part of the captured Ukrainians appealed to V. Simovych with a request to leave the camp. Only the energetic actions of the camp commandant and the active pastoral activity of Fr. O. Hnidyi slowly calmed down the inhabitants of the camp and enabled carrying out cultural and educational work, which by the end of May had almost completely returned to its normal course<sup>8</sup>.

Thus, despite all the obstacles, thanks to the efforts of the members of the «ULU Educational Department» of Freistadt and the Ukrainian active of the camp, it was possible to develop national cultural and educational centers and involve the vast majority of campers in their participation. The concealed opponents of the Ukrainian idea no longer dared to oppose it openly, and the camp acquired more and more national significance thanks to the activities of «Rozvaha» camp newspaper, the theater, school, Ukrainian societies and other institutions. Opposition against the Black Hundreds in Freistadt ended in favor of Ukrainianism, after which the camp in Freistadt became one of the centers of Ukrainian life in Austria-Hungary, which spread its influence (through the workers' groups that left it for various Austrian areas) far beyond the camp.

While carrying out the Ukrainization of the camps in Germany, the ULU had already applied methods and working techniques developed in Freistadt, but here too it was not without active opposition from the Black Hundreds and Little Russians. In the Rastatt camp, the ULU delegates were recognized as 'German agents', and their activities in the camp were called propaganda aimed at weakening Russia, and the distribution of Ukrainian books was an undesirable business. The sub-ensigns, who occupied a privileged position in the camp (by the decision of the German commandant's office, they were released from all kinds of work and made "heads" in the blocks and barracks), and together with them, the vast majority of prisoners began to give up interviews with members of the delegation because they communicated with them in Ukrainian. The Black Hundreds began to intimidate people, spreading various rumors about future punishments for Ukrainians; they wrote down the numbers of those prisoners who cooperated with the ULU delegation in order to later hand them over to the Russian authorities; some of the prisoners were even threatened with death. The sub-ensigns took Ukrainian books from the prisoners and destroyed them, sent fabricated denunciations of supporters of Ukrainianism to the German commandant's office.<sup>9</sup>

The Black Hundreds used any occasion to intimidate the prisoners. They even used the visit of the official of the German Ministry of War, Captain Walter von Lubbers to the camp with the purpose of inspection at the end of May 1915, to spread rumors as if the Germans were soon planning to send Ukrainians to the front against Russia. This led to another wave of anti-Ukrainian demonstrations – from some blocks all Ukrainian books had to be taken away in order to save them from destruction. The result of the frantic pressure of the Black Hundreds was that several conscious

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. C. 88.

<sup>9</sup> The Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine (CTA SBP&GU). Found 4406. List 1. File 27. Pp. 4-9.

Ukrainians, in order to get rid of the hostile environment, voluntarily left the camp for agricultural work.

At this stage, the opponents of the Ukrainian cause managed to prevent any intentions that could potentially limit the influence of the Black Hundreds. This was evidenced by the complete failure of the attempt to concentrate all supporters of the Ukrainian cause (or, at least, those who were indifferent) in one block, in order to carry out work among them on a larger scale. The redistribution of the prisoners in the barracks was done without taking into account the ties that united individual prisoners, as a result of which it led to unfortunate consequences. There were real attacks on supporters of Ukrainianism, two blocs decided to give up participation in any educational courses, and the seventh bloc firmly stated to the German authorities that they did not want to see members of the delegation, insisting otherwise on moving to another camp<sup>10</sup>.

The non-acceptance of national slogans by the captives was also due to their fear of the military power of Russia at that time and their negative attitude towards the Germans, on whose lands this Ukrainian propaganda was conducted. In this situation, the ULU representatives in the camp were forced to temporarily refrain from proclaiming political and national slogans, as a result of which the Black Hundreds no longer had grounds to express their protests. But the struggle against them continued – first of all, by removing anti-Ukrainian prisoners from the camp, which made it possible to activate the process of national awareness of the prisoners in the Rastatt camp. The consequence of it was the emergence and quantitative growth of the Ukrainian camp organization, called «Independent Ukraine»<sup>11</sup>.

In another German camp Wetzlar, Ukrainian work in the camp (including artistic work) was seriously hindered by «enemy elements, who from time to time emerged from the circles and with their intransigence and secret agitation brought troubles and various unpleasant confusions»<sup>12</sup>. Thus, in particular, one of the prisoners (K. Knysh) even resorted to collecting signatures for the removal from the camp of the Head of the ULU Educational Department, Roman Smal-Stotskyi, for which he was punished by being taken under fourteen-day arrest. The Black Hundreds used every opportunity to harm the Ukrainian cause. Even the collection of donations for Sich riflemen in pre-Christmas days in 1915, initiated by P. Karmanskyi and M. Mitievskyi, was presented by the Little Russians in such a way that allegedly «these victims will be returned (used – *authors*) to «shells», and we have elderly fathers, mothers, and children, we are poor anyway!...»<sup>13</sup>.

Active anti-Ukrainian agitation was conducted in Wetzlar later as well, which was obvious, in particular, in the attempts of individuals from among the prisoners to obtain permission to honor the Russian autocrat Nicholau II on St. Nicholas day (December 6, 1915). It was accompanied by Black Hundreds' agitations like: «Don't forget, comrades, that we are [...] soldiers of the Russian army! And we must adhere to military discipline and obey the superiors (unter-officers), of whom there is more

---

<sup>10</sup> Терлецький О. Історія української громади в Раштаті 1915-1918. Київ-Ляйпциг, 1919. Т. 1. С. 67-68.

<sup>11</sup> For more details, see: *Sribnjak I.* Enzyklopädie der Kriegsgefangenschaft: Das ukrainische Rastatt. Zur Gründung und Tätigkeit der Gemeinschaft «Die Unabhängige Ukraine», 1915-1918. München-Paris, 2020. 338 s.

<sup>12</sup> CTA SBP&GU. Found 4382. List 1. File 1. P. 19.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. P. 19back.

than one among us!». The goal of these «hurray-patriotic cheers» was to remind the captives of all the «charms» of Russian discipline of the rod in the army, and in addition, Ukrainian activists were threatened with severe punishment after returning home for participating in Ukrainian work, even of a completely apolitical nature<sup>14</sup>.

Russian chauvinists, who still remained in the camp, skillfully masking their real attitude to the Ukrainian cause, prepared and held another anti-Ukrainian «demonstration». Trying to prevent further progress of national cultural and educational work in the camp, radical elements from among them resorted to «the most uncivilized, disgusting, shameful method (which only Russia can use during pogroms of Jews and freedom fighters)», and conspired to disrupt the performance and intimidate Ukrainian activists. This plan was kept a secret, and was implemented only on February 12, 1916 – during the vaudeville performance «Disaster is not a disaster for everyone, but a good luck for others». During the very last part, in the hall «some commotion emerged, and then in an instant, shouts of “Down with Ukraine!”, “God Save the Tsar!”, “Beat the Ukrainians!”» were heard.

Everyone was seized with a terrible panic, none of the audience could imagine such a development of events, they did not know where to run, besides, the theater was full of people. Then a strong jam began, a fight broke out in the back rows. The arrival of the guards in the hall only increased the scuffle, because they began to shout that they would shoot. «With great tension, people fell right over their heads, who got where [...]. They rushed to the stage to the artists in a terrible row. They broke the scenery, gutted electric bulbs, trampled on musical instruments and dragged some of the actors out into the yard. And in the hall they still pulled out “God Save the Tsar” and shouted “Down with Ukraine!”». The next day, after the investigation, some of the prisoners were taken out of the camp; the rest acknowledged their guilt and remained in Wetzlar. This anti-Ukrainian demonstration was the last convulsion of the Black Hundreds, who no longer dared to speak openly against Ukrainianism after that<sup>15</sup>.

In the Salzwedel camp, which was created at the latest – in the fall of 1915 – the «National-Enlightenment Circle» was at the origins of national-educational and cultural-educational work, where 10 conscientious Ukrainians initially gathered. With the assistance of the camp commandant’s office and the ULU Educational Department, the circle began its work on November 11, 1915, under extremely unfavorable conditions. Almost all prisoners (at that time there were about 10000 people in the camp, mainly from the Ukrainian provinces of the Russian Empire) considered themselves to be «loyal defenders of the tsar and Fatherland». The general population of prisoners, with a few exceptions, met with hostility all the attempts of members of the «National-Enlightenment Circle» to instill in them a national-state understanding of Ukrainian problems<sup>16</sup>.

The vast majority of the campers did not understand, «why are we the only ones ‘the khokhols’ who were taken (to this camp – *authors*) and are being taught to sense? Aren’t other people just like us? Perhaps there is something uncertain here, when

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Pp. 19-19back.

<sup>15</sup> For more details, see: *Срібняк М.* Створення та діяльність Музично-драматичного товариства імені М. Лисенка в таборі Вецляр (Німеччина) у 1915-1916 рр. // Дриновски Сборник. Харьков-София, 2015. Т. VIII. С. 315-321.

<sup>16</sup> Вільне Слово (Зальцведель). 1917. 24 січня. Ч. 7 (66). С. 8.

they want only some stupid 'khokhols' to be enlightened». At that time, the illiterate, grey mass of the camp did not want any changes, even in the organization of literacy schools; many saw an 'Austro-German intrigue', because lectures were held in Ukrainian. It is obvious that such moods made it impossible to carry out cultural and educational work in any form, so a Ukrainian activist (who covered his real name under the pseudonym 'Yakymets') tried to stir up all the camp residents with the following call: «To know ourselves, our past, our strength and meaning is our first and foremost duty»<sup>17</sup>.

Recalling later this first and the most difficult period of the circle's activities, Ukrainian activist P. Pavlenko mentioned in the camp magazine in November 1917: «People are dark, maimed, deceived, knowing nothing about the Ukrainian cause, did not understand who was their friend and who was their enemy, and therefore those people who brought them the word of truth and science, sacrificing their own happiness and health, they took as their enemies»<sup>18</sup>. The captives considered them to be 'German agents' and in every possible way hindered cultural and educational work of the «National-Enlightenment Circle» and the ULU Educational Department, which at different times included such well-known Ukrainian scholars and cultural figures as R. Smal-Stotskyi, Z. Kuzelya, Ye. Turula, B. Lepkiy, V. Simovych, V. Levytskyi, O. Semeniv, P. Bendzia, I. Moroz, P. Chykalenko and others.<sup>19</sup>

The fact that German military authorities, striving to ensure maintenance of order in the barracks, decided to use unter-officers of the tsarist army for this purpose, appointing them as superiors over the rest of prisoners, significantly complicated the conduct of national organizational work<sup>20</sup>. This category of the Russian military, in its vast majority, continued to believe in the greatness of the Russian tsar, and did everything possible and impossible to intimidate that part of the prisoners who aspired to education. But those Ukrainian activists who did not hide their views, were daily exposed to potential danger of collective aggression from the irreconcilable Black Hundreds, found themselves in especially unbearable conditions.

From March 2, 1916, the Ukrainian active part of the camp (school students, members of the national and dramatic art sections, as well as camp teachers) were given the opportunity to take walks outside the camp without an escort. This facilitation of the regime of detention gave this category of prisoners mental comfort and, even if it was a short moral rest, they were able to distract themselves from the sad daily life of the camp for at least a few hours. With this, they caused fierce anger among the enemies of Ukrainianism – «the Black Hundreds[...] with violent envy, shouts and dog barking accompanied the walkers from the camp and teased them at the turn from the camp». But all the attempts of the 'Moskals' to prevent the walks of the activists in such a way were vain, because the Ukrainians received a powerful supply of positive energy from the contemplation of nature and the outskirts of the city. While commenting on the actions of the Black Hundreds, the camp magazine ironically noted in this connection: «The dog lies, the wind blows...»<sup>21</sup>.

---

<sup>17</sup> До товаришів // Вільне Слово (Зальцведель). 1916. 1 березня. Ч. 1. С. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Павленко П. Огляд діяльності «Видавничого товариства імени П. Куліша» // Вільне Слово (Зальцведель). 1917. 10 лютого. Ч. 12 (71). С. 1-2.

<sup>19</sup> Павленко П. Від редакції // Вільне Слово (Зальцведель). 1917. 14 листопада. Ч. 91 (150). С. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Порядок по баракам // Вільне Слово (Зальцведель). 1916. 15 березня. Ч. 2. С. 7.

<sup>21</sup> Вільне Слово (Зальцведель). 1916. 10 квітня. Ч. 4. С. 7.

From September, general meetings ('viches') were regularly held in the camp, where general political issues and various aspects of domestic camp life were discussed. Having no opportunity to speak openly against the national liberation slogans that were proclaimed in public, the Little Russians and the remnants of the Black Hundreds resorted to passive forms of expressing their dissatisfaction. Brief information about one of these 'viches' (September 21) was published in the columns of the camp magazine, which, in particular, informed about the arrival of two Ukrainian officers to Salzwedel (a few days later they were included into the main Council of the Ukrainian organization of prisoners).

After that, O. Terletskyi, a member of the ULU Educational Department, was speaking, and in his speech he mentioned the monument to B. Khmelnytskyi in Kyiv and the inscription on it «To Bohdan Khmelnytskyi – united indivisible Russia». In the speaker's opinion, this inscription was completely inappropriate, because Hetman was fighting for freedom of the Ukrainian people, but at these words, «some of the 'loyal' listeners began to cough». The remark that he fought for national statehood was also accompanied by a cough. In the end, after several deliberate coughs, the Little Russians left the 'viche', having no desire to listen to criticism of the Russian autocrat tsar<sup>22</sup>.

When studying archival documents, one sometimes gets the impression that the Black Hundreds acted according to the principle «the worse – the better», in other words, the only sense of their meagre and vile existence in the camp was to hinder the Ukrainian cause. To do it, all means were acceptable, even when it concerned the normal functioning of the usual camp buffets (teahouses). An illustration of such shameful behavior of the Black Hundreds is, in particular, an announcement in one of the issues of 'Vilne Slovo', which informed that from April 1, 1916, access to the 'Teahouse' will be prohibited to non-shareholders, because there were «people who came to the Teahouse in order to do some damage: break a spoon, break a glass, damage a table and other things»<sup>23</sup>. Unfortunately, there is no information, whether such a restriction was really introduced for the hidden enemies of the Ukrainian cause, or whether such an announcement pursued the goal of warning them about the possibility of such an event, but whatever it was, 'Teahouse' continued its work successfully.

And it could not be harmed by stubborn ignoring of 'Teahouse' by a part of prisoners, who considered coming to it almost a betrayal of «the tsar and the Fatherland», accusing Ukrainian activists that while drinking tea, they «disgrace us and our family». Arguing against them, the magazine reported on the flagrant cases of loss of human dignity by some of the enemies of Ukraine, who went so far as to take bones out of the dust-bin near the kitchen and gnaw them like dogs<sup>24</sup>.

The general situation in the camps began to change dramatically in spring 1916, when the vast majority of prisoners were assigned to agricultural work. The ULU, through its employees and followers from among the prisoners, intensified Ukrainian propaganda among prisoners of labor teams. In order to improve results of this work, the Union took measures to provide its representatives with a sufficient amount of political literature (mainly anti-Russian pamphlets) and Ukrainian periodicals ('The

<sup>22</sup> Вільне Слово (Зальцведель). 1916. 24 вересня. Ч. 32. С. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Вісті з табору // Вільне Слово (Зальцведель). 1916. 15 березня. Ч. 2. С. 6.

<sup>24</sup> Вільне Слово (Зальцведель). 1916. 1 квітня. Ч. 3. С. 5.

ULU Visnyk' and camp publications). Thanks to active correspondence and sending books, the ULU managed to establish contacts with many «intelligent» prisoners (from among the popular teachers, students, doctors, etc.), and in this way to cover the widest possible circle of Ukrainian prisoners on the territory of Central Powers with their agitation. The purpose of these measures was to morally prepare captured Ukrainians for active participation in the «liberation struggle in the ranks of the voluntary Ukrainian Army on the side of Central Powers, to create among the captives the most active units capable of independent social and cultural activities, [...]to raise general cultural level of the broad mass of captured Ukrainians through teaching them literacy and spreading information on Ukrainian history, geography, literature etc. and other and applied knowledge»<sup>25</sup>.

After overthrow of the tsarist regime in Russia, positive changes in the aforementioned camps became irrevocable. At that time, the Ukrainian liberation idea was gaining stronger positions in the minds of the prisoners, and more and more of them began to openly support the ULU slogans. This was evidenced by «whole piles of business and organizational correspondence of individuals and organizations of prisoners with the Presidium of the ULU, numerous submissions of prisoners to the Union with requests of transfer to the Ukrainian camp (it goes about Freistadt – *authors*), offering their services for national-revolutionary purposed trip to Russia to conduct national-revolutionary propaganda and other numerous appeals to the Ukrainian legion, if such a legion of prisoners was organized, numerous orders for Ukrainian books and newspapers, etc. and even more thanks for the literature, recognition of the Union for its political and cultural activities»<sup>26</sup>.

Thus, thanks to the well-planned national organizational work of the ULU educational departments in the camps, it became possible to break general negative moods of prisoners caused by being in captivity, as well as to cultivate in their minds the idea of political separation from Russia and the appropriateness of emergence of an independent Ukrainian state. To a large extent, it became possible thanks to assistance of the governments of the Central States, whose interest was to weaken the Russian Empire by means of its 'nationalization' (i.e., division along national lines) and 'revolutionization' (artificial introduction of a radical-destructive element such as the Bolshevik-Leninists).

Officers' camps of prisoners from the tsarist army were also an important part of the ULU activities, although the possibility of carrying out national-patriotic work there was extremely difficult due to the casteism and reactionary moods of most of the officers. Before the February Revolution, only some officers (Ukrainians by origin) dared to express their national sentiment, because in this case such dare-devils immediately fell under general moral condemnation of the rest of the Russian officers, whose majority resorted to boycotting Ukrainians, which eventually forced the latter to turn to camp commandants with reports on transfers to other camps. Consequently, Ukrainians were subjected to terrible psychological pressure, which is why there were only isolated cases of open support of the ULU liberation slogans among the tsarist officers until 1917.

But the overthrow of the Russian tsarist regime significantly changed the situation,

---

<sup>25</sup> Library and Archives of Canada (The Andry Zhuk Collection). MG30. C167. Vol. 15. File 4.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.

if only because the officers were no longer bound by the oath to the tsar, in addition, Russia was increasingly sinking into the whirlpool of revolutionary anarchy and disorder, instead, political events in Ukraine (the creation of the Ukrainian Central Rada, broad autonomous rights, the proclamation of the UPR and others) gave Ukrainians in the camps hope for the best. More and more Ukrainian officers began to understand the doom of Russia, and after the Bolshevik coup, the process of national awareness in the officers' camps gained new powerful momentum<sup>27</sup>.

However, the majority of Ukrainian officers continued to hesitate to make their political and national choice, because the process of their Russification, which did not stop for a single minute in the ranks of the tsarist (Russian) army, had been too long. This category of Ukrainians, being influenced by the Black Hundreds, identified themselves as 'Little Russians', and their most radical slogan was autonomy within the framework of the future 'democratic' Russia. This part of the captured officers not only sabotaged the ULU proposals to help Ukraine facing the Bolshevik invasion, but also tried to compromise the members of the Ukrainian camp community, who clearly demonstrated their readiness to be at the disposal of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR)<sup>28</sup>.

### Conclusion

Nevertheless, despite all difficulties the work was going on. Those officers who expressed their desire to join the Ukrainian cause were transferred to already existing Ukrainian camps and included in cultural and educational work with the prisoners. Of great importance was the fact that, in agreement with the commanders of the camps, the ULU appointed senior officers, loyal (or at least neutral) to Ukrainianism, to administrative positions in the Ukrainized camps, as well as the fact that the isolation of Ukrainian officers into special camps made it possible to limit to a large extent influence on them by the Black Hundreds, and carrying out cultural and educational work among them contributed to the awakening of their national feelings, turned 'Little Russians' into Ukrainian patriots who were clearly aware of their tasks in the defense and development of Ukrainian statehood.

Despite great importance of release of Ukrainian officers from the influence of the Black Hundreds and Little Russians, it was the prisoner-of-war camps (the already mentioned Rastatt, Wetzlar and Salzwedel in Germany, as well as Freistadt in Austria-Hungary) that remained in the center of ULU attention, because it was there where numerous Ukrainian camp communities were formed and operated. Thanks to the fact that prisoners sincerely devoted to the Ukrainian cause rallied in their ranks, it became possible to overcome all forms of moral pressure and physical violence of the Black Hundreds in the camp, and moreover – to rebuff them in a proper manner, including force methods as well. Ukrainians managed to overcome their centuries-old fear of tsarist despotism, which constrained their thoughts and actions with threats of

---

<sup>27</sup> For more details, see: *Срібняк І.* Діяльність Союзу визволення України серед полонених офіцерів російської армії в Австро-Угорщині (1914-1918 рр.) // Сурмач (Лондон). 1997. Ч. 1-4. С. 45-53; *Срібняк І.* Український гурток у таборі полонених офіцерів російської армії Терезієнштадт в Австро-Угорщині (1916 – червень 1917 рр.) // Пам'ятки: археографічний щорічник. Київ, 2011. Т. 12. С. 42-45.

<sup>28</sup> For more details, see: *Срібняк І.В.* Табір полонених українських офіцерів у Кляйнмюнхені (Австро-Угорщина) навесні 1918 року // Київські історичні студії. 2015. № 1. С. 21-25.

inevitable punishment. Their desire to get as much knowledge as possible in conditions of captivity, their willingness to acquire new skills and abilities needed in civilian life prevailed all intimidation of the Black Hundreds and Little Russians.

The prisoners were most bothered by the threats of the Black Hundreds to report their numbers and names to Russian counter-intelligence, and this information could have a negative impact on the situation of their relatives at home. For a long time, such threats deterred a significant number of campers from participating in cultural and educational work. Another part of prisoners was bound by the oath of allegiance they had taken to the Russian autocratic emperor, and only his overthrow enabled them to finally breathe a sigh of relief and cast aside all their doubts. But even after the February Revolution in Russia, a relatively small number of prisoners who avoided joining Ukrainian camp organizations, remained in the camps, but at this stage they no longer exerted any influence on the camp population as a whole, actually finding themselves in marginal position.

Thus, in a short time, the majority of prisoners mastered national slogans, and as a rule, this process was accompanied by an implacable opposition against the Black Hundreds. One of the results of this daily struggle was the radicalization of views of a part of the prisoners who, in order to undermine the Russian Empire, expressed their willingness to join the German army and served as personnel of military commandant's offices on the occupied Ukrainian lands. This category of prisoners was one of the first to be sent to Ukraine in spring 1918, taking an active part in creation of units and formations of the UPR Army.

#### REFERENCES

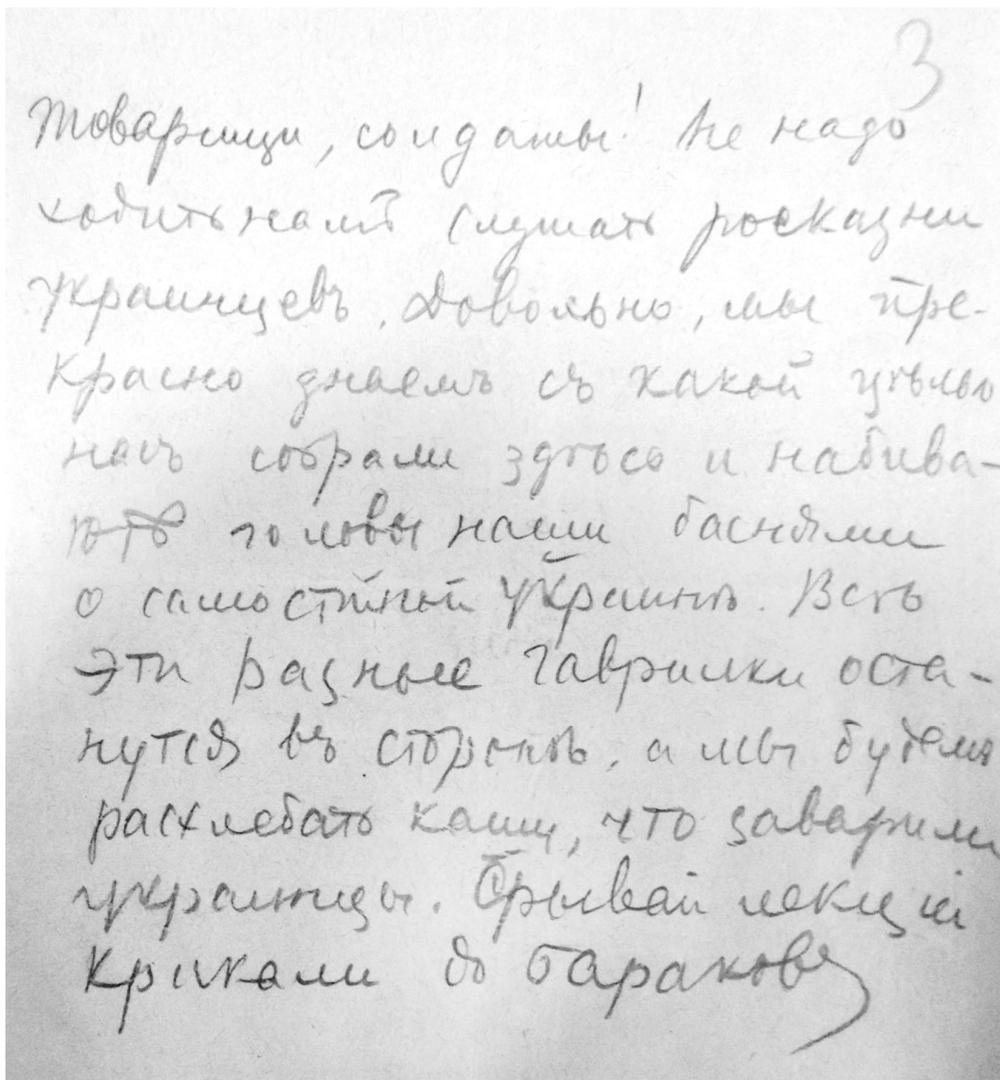
- Feik, M.** (2013). Zur Geschichte des «Ukrainer-Russenlagers» in Rastatt *Heimathbuch des Landkreises Rastatt*, 105-114 [in German].
- Golczewski, F.** (2010). *Deutsche und Ukrainer 1914-1939*. Paderborn [in German].
- Katerenuk, P.** (1917). *Bericht über die ukrainische Aufklärungsarbeit im Lager Rastatt*. Rastatt [in German].
- Kryvosheieva, L.** (2009). *Natsionalno-prosvitnia diialnist Soiuzu vyzvolennia Ukrainy v taborakh viiskovopolononykh ukraintsv (1914-1918 rr.)* [National educational activities of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine in the camps of Ukrainian prisoners of war (1914-1918)]. (*Candidate's thesis*). Zaporizhzhia [in Ukrainian].
- Nagornaya, O.S.** (2010). *Drugoi voennyi opyt. Rossiiskie voennoplennye pervoi mirovoi voiny v Germanii 1914-1922* [Another military experience. Russian prisoners of war of the First World War in Germany (1914-1922)]. Moskva [in Russian].
- Pavlenko, P.** (1917, 14 lystopada). Vid redaktsii [From the editorial office]. *Vilne Slovo*, 91 (150), 1 [in Ukrainian].
- Pavlenko, P.** (1917, 10 liutoho). Ohliad diialnosti «Vydavnychoho tovarystva imeny P.Kulisha» [Overview of the activities of the «P. Kulish Publishing Company»]. *Vilne Slovo*, 12 (71), 1-2 [in Ukrainian].
- Simovych, V.** (1979). Pochatky natsionalno-prosvitnoi pratsi sered polononykh ukraintsv v tabori Fraishtadt [The beginnings of national educational work among captured Ukrainians in the Freistadt camp]. *Soiuz vyzvolennia Ukrainy u Vidni (1914-1918)*, 83-94 [in Ukrainian].
- Sribniak, I.** (1997). Diialnist Soiuzu vyzvolennia Ukrainy sered polononykh ofitseriv rosiiskoi armii v Avstro-Uhorshchyni (1914-1918 rr.) [Activities of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine among captured officers of the Russian army in Austria-Hungary (1914-1918)]. *Surmach*, 1-4, 45-53 [in Ukrainian].
- Sribniak, I.** (1999). *Poloneni ukraintsi v Avstro-Uhorshchyni ta Nimechchyni (1914-1920 rr.)* [Ukrainian prisoners in Austria-Hungary and Germany (1914-1920)]. Kyiv [in Ukrainian].
- Sribniak, I.** (2011). Ukrainskyi hurtok u tabori polononykh ofitseriv rosiiskoi armii Tereziienshtadt v Avstro-Uhorshchyni (1916 – cherven 1917 rr.) [The Ukrainian circle in the Theresienstadt camp of captured officers of the Russian army in Austria-Hungary (1916 – June 1917)]. *Pamiatky:*

- arkheohrafichnyi shchorichnyk, 12, 42-45* [in Ukrainian].
- Sribniak, I.V.** (2015). Tabir polonenykh ukrainskykh ofitseriv u Kliainmiunkheni (Avstro-Uhorshchyna) navesni 1918 roku [The camp of captured Ukrainian officers in Kleinmünchen (Austria-Hungary) in the spring of 1918]. *Kyivski istorychni studii, 1, 21-25* [in Ukrainian].
- Sribniak, I.** (2018). Natsionalnyi sled v knige O.S.Nagornoï o voennoplennykh tsarskoi armii v Germanii 1914-1922 gg.: polemicheskie zapiski ukrainskogo istorika [Another military experience. Russian prisoners of war of the First World War in Germany (1914-1922)]. *Sotsium. Dokument. Komunikatsiia. Seriia: istorychni nauky, 6, 287-301* [in Russian].
- Sribnjak, I.** (2020). *Enzyklopädie der Kriegsgefangenschaft: Das ukrainische Rastatt. Zur Gründung und Tätigkeit der Gemeinschaft «Die Unabhängige Ukraine», 1915-1918*. München-Paris [in Ukrainian].
- Sribniak, M.** (2015). Stvorennia ta diialnist Muzychno-dramatychnoho tovarystva imeni M. Lysenka v tabori Vetsliar (Nimechchyna) u 1915-1916 rr. [Creation and activity of the M. Lysenko Music and Drama Society in the Wetzlar camp (Germany) in 1915-1916]. *Drinovski Sbornik, VIII, 315-321* [in Ukrainian].
- Terletsnyi, O.** (1919). *Istoriia ukrainskoi hromady v Rashtati 1915-1918* [History of the Ukrainian community in Rastat 1915-1918]. Kyiv-Liaiptsig, 1 [in Ukrainian].

Надійшла до редакції / Received: 01.06.2022

Схвалено до друку / Accepted: 15.09.2022

## Appendix A



товарищи, солдаты! Не надо  
ходить на эти слушания рассказов  
украинцев, довольно, мы пре-  
красно знаем с какой целью  
наше собрание здесь и надвига-  
ются на нас наши басни  
о самостийной Україні. Все  
эти разные гаврилки оста-  
нутся в стороне, а мы будем  
разлебарать каму, что гаврилки  
украинцы. Брывай и кричи  
криками до бараков

Anti-Ukrainian leaflet containing an appeal to the captives not to participate in cultural and educational work conducted in the Freistadt camp (Austria-Hungary) by Mykhailo Havrylko, the ULU representative. Freistadt, second half of October – December 1914 (original, manuscript, pencil, unsigned). It is kept in: CTA SBP&GU. Found 4404. List 1. File 29. P. 3.

TRANSLATE: "Comrades, soldiers! We should not go to listen to tales of the Ukrainians. It's enough, we are very well aware for what purpose we have been gathered here and why our heads are being stuffed with fables about an independent Ukraine. All these different *gavrilkas* (it is meant one of the organizers of cultural and educational work in the camp – Mykhailo Havrylko – *authors*) will remain aside, and we will disentangle the mess made by the Ukrainians. Wreck the lectures with shouts turning them to the barracks".

## Appendix B



Cartoon generalized image of a captured soldier of the tsarist army with anti-Ukrainian worldview beliefs. Freistadt, undated (original, pencil drawing without authorship). It is kept in: CTA SBP&GU. Found 4404. List 1. File 29. P. 13.

## Appendix C



A cartoon of a prisoner infatuated with socialist ideas (in the lower left corner of the picture there is an inscription – «Thoughts about the revolution»). Freistadt, undated (original, pencil drawing without authorship). It is kept in: СТА SBP&GU. Found 4404. List 1. File 29. P. 14.

## Appendix D



A cartoon of a prisoner, infatuated with Bolshevik ideas (in the upper right corner of the drawing there is an inscription – «Fall here bourgeois»). Freistadt, undated (original, pencil drawing without authorship). It is kept in: CTA SBP&GU. Found 4404. List 1. File 29. P. 15.