

Piotr Bednarz

(Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1438-1591>










e-mail: piotr.bednarz@mail.umcs.pl

The Ukrainian Question in the Swiss Press 1914–1918

Kwestia ukraińska w prasie szwajcarskiej 1914–1918

ABSTRACT

A significant area of interest of the Swiss press during the First World War was the issue of the right to self-determination of nations, in particular small or emerging ones. This subject became part of Switzerland's image policy attaching great importance to liberation ideals. One of the nations that were in the field of interest of the Swiss in this context was the Ukrainians. Relatively scant knowledge on them, and frequent cases of confusing them with representatives of the neighboring nations required the introduction of the issue of Ukrainian identity to the readers, which was the main reason for press publications concerning the Ruthenians (Rusins) in the first months of the war. The changing geopolitical situation, the shifting front lines and the defining of their

PUBLICATION INFO					
			UMCS UNIWERSYTET MARIA CURIE-SKŁODOWSKIEJ	e-ISSN: 2449-8467 ISSN: 2082-6060	
THE AUTHOR'S ADDRESS: Piotr Bednarz, the Institute of History of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, 4A Maria Curie-Skłodowska Square, Lublin 20-031, Poland					
SOURCE OF FUNDING: Statutory Research of the Institute of History of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin					
SUBMITTED: 2022.06.18	ACCEPTED: 2022.09.29	PUBLISHED ONLINE: 2022.12.14			
WEBSITE OF THE JOURNAL: https://journals.umcs.pl/rh		EDITORIAL COMMITTEE E-mail: reshistorica@umcs.pl		 	
 DIRECTORY OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS			 EUROPEAN REFERENCE INDEX FOR THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES		

own political expectations by the Ukrainians over the next years accordingly changed the Swiss perspective. The most important stages in the presentation of the Ukrainian question in the Swiss press during the war were: the capture of Galicia by the Russians in September 1914, the Austro-German offensive in the summer of 1915, the conceptualization of Ukraine's political future throughout 1916, as well as the Brest negotiations and involvement of Ukraine in the German plan of „Mitteleuropa”. The fall of the idea of Ukraine's independence prevented the verification of Swiss opinions about this nation and its state-building capacities.

Key words: Ukraine, World War I, Swiss press

STRESZCZENIE

Istotną płaszczyzną zainteresowania szwajcarskiej prasy w dobie I wojny światowej była kwestia prawa do samostanowienia narodów, w szczególności małych lub dopiero kształtujących się. Tematyka ta wpisywała się w helwecką politykę wizerunkową, przykładającą dużą wagę do ideałów wolnościowych. Jednym z narodów znajdujących się w polu zainteresowania Szwajcarów w tym kontekście byli Ukraińcy. Stosunkowo niewielka wiedza na ich temat, częste mylenie ich z przedstawicielami sąsiednich narodów wymagało przybliżenia zagadnienia odrębności Ukraińców czytelnikom, co było główną płaszczyzną publikacji prasowych dotyczących Rusinów w pierwszych miesiącach wojny. Zmieniająca się sytuacja geopolityczna, przesuwany się front oraz definiowanie własnych oczekiwań politycznych przez Ukraińców na przestrzeni kolejnych lat zmieniło optykę Helwetów. Najważniejszymi etapami rozwoju kwestii ukraińskiej na łamach prasy szwajcarskiej w dobie wojny były: zajęcie Galicji przez Rosjan we wrześniu 1914 r., austro-niemiecka ofensywa z lata 1915 r., konceptualizacja przyszłości politycznej Ukrainy na przestrzeni 1916 r. oraz rokowania brzeskie i zaangażowanie Ukrainy do niemieckiego planu „Mitteleuropa”. Upadek idei niepodległości Ukrainy nie pozwolił na weryfikację helweckich sądów odnośnie tego narodu i jego zdolności państwowotwórczych.

Słowa kluczowe: Ukraina, I wojna światowa, prasa szwajcarska

The issue of independence aspirations of the European nations that were under foreign domination in 1914 was one of the essential problems occupying the concerns of the public opinion in Switzerland. This stemmed from its relatively new state ideology amounting to emphasizing in the political discourse of the Swiss such values as liberalism, personal and political freedom, tolerance, and solidarism¹. It should be remembered that the Swiss state, established barely over 60 years earlier, conducted such a policy not so much for international reasons but rather

¹ This does not mean, however, that there were no political trends in the country that broke with the generally promoted ideology. The best-known were the so-called Helvetists, Swiss nationalists, who not only did not challenge the war but even expected it, hoping for the inevitable collapse of the then federalist state structures and the establishment of a new, monolithic society. These were, however, exceptions that did not essentially impact the whole of Switzerland's political life. A. Clavier, *Les Helvétistes. Intellectuels et politique en Suisse romande au début du siècle*, Lausanne 1993, s. 290–295.

because of the necessity of consolidating the society around its shared ideas that were to be national and statewide. The linguistic and religious divisions prevailing in Switzerland, very different political and social structures of individual cantons as well as a frequent lack of historical community were the elements that strongly impeded the consolidation of the state, which, however, was necessary in the face of socio-economic changes of the industrialization age. Hence came the two revisions of the Constitution in 1866 and 1874, clearly strengthening the federal authorities, which enabled them to not only modernize the economy but also influence the society on the ideological plane, regardless of cantonal particularisms². As a result, the Swiss generation of the second half of the 19th century developed a specific system of values, whose first serious test was the years of the First World War.

„Liberation of the oppressed nations” – the banner so popular among the European societies could not therefore meet without response in Switzerland. It was understood there even in more absolute terms since, being outside of the war, the Swiss did not have to conform to recommendations from Petersburg, Berlin or Vienna. Hence also came the popularity of the independence ideas of very different nationalities, not always well identified or properly located in the political-national space of the then Europe. One such nation was the Ukrainians. The goal of the present article is to try to point out the crucial moments, in which Swiss public opinion discussed the future of the Ukrainians at the time of the war and the resulting assessments. It is not an exhaustive analysis of the problem, which would require an extensive study. The paper will discuss only the most important aspects of the Ukrainian question present in Swiss newspapers and magazines, which distinctly evolved with time and with the development of the military and political situation.

As an introduction it should be observed that in the conditions of the beginning of the world war the Swiss public opinion displayed a wide-ranging polarity, which made the local elites realize that not only was the process of society's consolidation far from over but, apparently, it even was entirely inhibited. From the outset of the global conflict the Swiss conducted a special kind of propaganda civil war. Not only was Swiss society unable to maintain neutral judgments, but also the authorities of that country could not effectively control the opinions expressed by various circles although appropriate steps for this purpose were taken³.

² H. Nabholtz et al., *Geschichte der Schweiz*, Band 2, Zürich 1938, s. 552–561.

³ Por. E. Bonjour, *Geschichte der schweizerischen Neutralität*, Basel 1965, s. 577–579; H. Florkowska-Frančić, *Między Lozanną Fryburgiem i Vevey. Z dziejów polskich organizacji w Szwajcarii w latach 1914–1917*, Kraków 1997, s. 39–42.

The division of sympathies with the warring parties coincided – with few exceptions – with the linguistic division. In very general terms, the French-speaking Switzerland supported the ideals for which the Third Republic of France allegedly fought, i.e. liberty and fraternity. In that part of the country, Germany was regarded as an uncivilized, barbarian state posing a threat to European culture. The German-speaking Swiss, in turn, pointed to the economic benefits that might be gained from cooperation with the Second Reich, and often proved to their Francophone fellow citizens that their assessment of France was too idealistic⁴. Paradoxically, this had a very advantageous impact on the discussion over the nations striving for freedom. They had an almost guaranteed space in the press on one or the other side of the propaganda barricade, depending on the current situation on the frontline and political reality.

Noteworthy is also the fact that although the Swiss periodicals were highly varied at many levels, almost all titles followed a clear propaganda line, usually imbued with independence slogans, particularly in reference to the right of nations to self-determination. This was practiced both by the German-speaking newspapers and those from the Geneva Lake area regardless of whether their orientation was conservative-liberal, radical or socialist. There were certainly departures from this rule caused by overt Germanophilism or by following the example of French propaganda, which took Russian interests into consideration, but in principle there was consent as to the idea of taking account of independence aspirations of the nations that strove for political autonomy. Different were only the preferred ways to achieve independence: pro-German or Ententophile; sometimes, albeit decidedly less often, some concepts were developed based on the neutrality of the soon-to-emerge new states, which coincided with the opinions on the war expressed by some circles advocating the unity of the Swiss based on non-involvement in the propaganda of none of the warring parties⁵. Beneficiaries of such a liberation outlook of Swiss society on the reality were comparatively many. They included both the nations that lost their independence in the course of history (the Poles, Hungarians or Czechs) as well as nationalities that only then strove to gain independence. The latter were even more numerous if one took into account the total number of articles published in the Swiss papers.

⁴ T. Kästli, *Die Schweiz. Eine Republik in Europa. Geschichte des Nationalstaats seit 1798*, Zürich 1998, s. 412.

⁵ The best-known in this context is the speech by the future literary Nobel Prize winner, Carl Spitteler, titled „Unser Schweizer Standtpunkt“, which he delivered on 14 Dec. 1914 in Zurich. *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/007184/2013-01-10/> [dostęp: 5 VI 2022].

With regard to the Russian conditions only, they were the Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians, Finns, and the Baltic nations. This list can, incidentally, be made even longer. The Ukrainians thus were not a particularly exceptional subject both in respect of the number of publications and their thoroughness. They (Ukrainians) had, however, this quality important for the Swiss: they represented a population group that aimed at gaining their national consciousness based on not yet entirely defined values, consequently, in a sense, they followed the path taken by the Swiss a generation earlier. The denominational and linguistic diversity as well as somewhat different political tendencies and state-building ideas manifested in Ukraine were an incredibly attractive subject matter to the Swiss. In this respect the question of Ukraine's independence was even more interesting than the Polish aspirations which, regardless of few exceptions, were generally considered as the re-establishment of political independence of a well-formed and monolithic nation. This was also the case with the Serbians. It appears that the ethnic Polish-Russian borderland and the Balkans are two most essential areas in this context that were in the sphere of Swiss interests.

The fundamental problem that can be discerned in the press publications on the Ukrainians is a relatively weak knowledge of the national realities in the territories of Western Russia, especially in the first years of the war. To an average Swiss citizen, quite often to the author of an article, a comparatively clear picture was that of only the area of the former Congress Kingdom of Poland, but not even of all its parts. In particular, the Podlasie and Lublin Regions, where the influences of the Polish and Ruthenian elements were intermingled, caused certain interpretive problems. The main difficulty consisted in the incompatibility of the widespread way of attributing nationality through the prism of religious denomination. While the Roman-Catholic and Mosaic population as well as Orthodox believers – largely tsarist officials⁶ – were generally classified as the Polish, Jewish and Russian national groups respectively, doubts arose when analyzing the Greek-Catholic community. The population inhabiting the annexed lands was no less a problem to the Swiss at the level of defining its nationality. Even though the Union of Brest was a milestone towards the forming of Ukrainian national identity⁷, the Union's liquidation by the Russian authorities and the forty-year-long period of „converting” Greek Catholics to the Orthodox faith, and then

⁶ K. Latawiec, *W służbie imperium... Struktura społeczno-zawodowa ludności rosyjskiej na terenie guberni lubelskiej w latach 1864–1915*, Lublin 2007.

⁷ Por. M. Łesiów, *Unia Brzeska a rozwój kultury i świadomości narodowej Ukraińców, w: Unia brzeska z perspektywy czterech stuleci*, red. J.S. Gajek, S. Nabywaniec, Lublin 1998.

the toleration ukase of 1905, resulted in the situation where the Ukrainian community did not appear to be entirely comprehensible to the Swiss in terms of religious denomination. Hence in the dissertations on the situation of the Ukrainians, or more precisely, the population inhabiting the territories of Western Russia, there are found different national and denominational terms that are very often overinterpretations, misunderstandings, or outright distortions of reality: „Orthodox Poles”, „Catholic Ruthenians (Rusins)” or „Polish Uniates” or even Poles of the Byzantine rite – these are the terms applied interchangeably to the Ukrainians (sic!)⁸. Not infrequently such terms were a certain universal formula covering basically all national and religious groups in Western Ukraine⁹. This led straight to misunderstandings, which were immediately identified by the Polish and Ukrainian émigré circles in Switzerland, and over which disputes and discussions repeatedly erupted. To the Swiss themselves, it was a minor issue, however. What was important was that they were dealing with the population resisting Russification and seeking their own road to political independence, no matter what it was called. Significant in this context is the summing up of the national situation in Russia’s western frontiers, which we find in one of the first articles on the subject after the breakout of the war, published in the Germanophile „Berner Tagblatt”:

The Poles and Finns, Ukrainians and Ruthenians, Jews and all of them, whatever their name is, stood up unanimously against their mutual enemy – the fatherland¹⁰.

The issue of identification of the Ukrainians somewhat improved only in 1915 after Russians were partly driven out from Galicia and after the capture of the Lublin Region, where the Ukrainian problem was also present. The new occupation authorities devoted considerable attention to national issues, and the information coming from Austrian sources was somewhat more detailed and accurate, and first of all more reliable, than the information gained from the Russians, who spread propaganda that not only denied the Ukrainians’ right to self-determination but also most

⁸ One of the most interesting expressions in this sense appeared in the „Berner Tagblatt”. Referring to the religion of the Ukrainians, this paper used the term „polnische russisch-katholische Kirche” (Polish Russian-Catholic Church). *Feldbrief aus Russland*, „Berner Tagblatt” [dalej: „BT”] 5 X 1914, Morgenblatt, s. 3.

⁹ An example of the use of such a universal term is the short article informing about the establishment in Russia of the Committee for Liberation of Ukraine, which would issue a proclamation to „the Ukrainians and Ruthenians”. *An die Ukrainer und Rhtutenen*, „Der Bund” [dalej: „DB”] 28 VIII 1914, Abendblatt, s. 1.

¹⁰ *Russlands innere Feinde*, „BT”, 24 VIII 1914, Morgenblatt, s. 5

often passed over their separate identity. However, even the Austrian occupation authorities frequently demonstrated a lack of understanding for the position of the Ukrainians, although this was not, after all, a new national element to them. Interesting are the expressions that we may find in the reports by the Austro-Hungarian district headquarters, which contain added phrases like „as in Eastern Galicia” used to describe the language and cultural identity of the Ukrainians¹¹. Hence also resulted the custom of treating the „Ruthenian” or „Ukrainian” population by Swiss newspapers as a certain whole, which, incidentally, was comparatively little known.

Sometimes, however, it was necessary to distinguish between the nations of Western Russia in order to discuss some detailed problem, and then the Swiss usually referred to the information obtained from émigré centers, particularly from the Ukrainian Bureau in Lausanne and from the Central Polish Agency operating in the same city. It should be first all noted that the Swiss fairly frequently confused the Ukrainians with Belarusians, and, moreover, they often failed to see the historical and civilizational difference between Ukraine and Russia. The Belarusians were often described as a „Ruthenian” population (population ruthenne/ruthenische Bevölkerung), who the Russians had compelled to convert to the Orthodox faith. Their national and religious emancipation would lead to the crystallization of the Ukrainian nation (nation ukrainienne/ukrainische Nation), which evidently falsified the realities of the Russian-Belarusian-Ukrainian borderland. There were sometimes attempts to prove that the Belarusians shared their descent with the Poles and are, as it were, a different version of the latter, developed in the course of history from the Slavic tribe of Krivichi, thus dissociating them from the Ukrainians¹².

Interesting in this context is the study by Leon Wasilewski, published in Vienna in 1915, which soon became if not a Bible, then at least a kind of reference book for Swiss journalists examining the problem of national relations in the territories in question¹³. But even the author of this booklet, otherwise not without certain tendentious Polish interpretations¹⁴, was unable to fully clarify the complexities arisen as a result of the then emerging Belarusian and Ukrainian nations (worth noting is here one of the expressions that he uses: „*die Weissrussen und eigentlich Weissruthenen*”

¹¹ Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Generalne Gubernatorstwo Wojskowe w Polsce – Militär General Gouvernement in Polen, sygn. 2008, s. 218.

¹² *Lituanie, Ukraine et Pologne*, „Gazette de Lausanne” [dalej: „GdL”] 16 I 1918, s. 1–2.

¹³ L. Wasilewski, *Die nationalen und kulturellen Verhältnisse im Sogenannten Westrussland*, Wien 1915.

¹⁴ Por. B. Stoczewska, *Litwa, Białoruś, Ukraina w myśli politycznej Leona Wasilewskiego*, Kraków 1998.

– White Russians, or actually Belarusians)¹⁵. Cases of confusing Ukrainians with Russians or Belarusians were as a matter of fact fairly common. Not infrequently they resulted in riots by Ukrainians, who bridled at being called Russians or even Ruthenians. An illustration can be the article by the president of the Ukrainian parliamentary deputation in Vienna – Dr K. Levytsky, published in the most important daily of the French Switzerland, which was indisputably „Journal de Genève”. The author attacks in it the custom of describing Ukrainians as Ruthenians and argues that the Ukrainians have nothing in common with Russia as such, the names in question having been imposed by the Russians as an element of Russification¹⁶. Worth noting is the fact that this far-reaching observation breaks off with the tradition of Kievan Rus’, which appears to be dictated more by the need to dissociate oneself from „Ruthenianness” than by sticking to the historical facts. In a similar tone is another anonymous article penned, as the editors term it, by „a Ruthenian, a Russian subject”, published at the same time by the second most important press organ in this part of Switzerland, in „Gazette de Lausanne” issued in neighboring Lausanne. Its author argues that the Ukrainian language is entirely distinct from Russian, and it does not even resemble any Russian dialect, whereas it is similar to Croatian and Serbian. To substantiate this opinion, the author refers to the authority of Slavacists and even to the opinion of the Tsarist Academy in Petersburg¹⁷. Far more examples could be given showing difficulties in defining who the Ukrainians in principle are, how they should be placed in the national mosaic of Western Russia, and finally, what actually follows from that. Note, however, that the problem of correct identification of this nationality group in the space of Swiss public opinion existed in principle until 1918 although texts sometimes appeared that sought to explain this issue already at the beginning of the war. One of the more interesting is the article published already in December 1914, with a very telling title „The Forgotten Ukrainian People”¹⁸.

Equally important for assessing the publications on the Ukrainian question in the Swiss press is the remark that in the first months of the war this question was usually linked with the issue of Polish independence. This stemmed from the fact that the First Commonwealth (Republic) of Poland was as a multicultural and multiethnic country, in which the

¹⁵ L. Wasilewski, *op. cit.*, s. 16.

¹⁶ *L’Ukraine*, „Journal de Genève” [dalej: „JdG”] 28 IV 1915, s. 1.

¹⁷ *Les Russes en Galicie*, „GdL” 13 IV 1915, s. 3.

¹⁸ *Das vergessene Volk der Ukrainer*, „Neue Zürcher Nachrichten” [dalej: „NZN”] 11 XII 1914, s. 1.

Ruthenian element played a significant role. Reconstruction of the Polish state, which had been discussed in Switzerland long before the outbreak of WW1, would also naturally solve the problem of political rights of the Ukrainians, who would find the space of freedom in the bosom of the reborn multicultural Republic of Poland. Hence, probably, resulted the above-mentioned custom of describing them with adjectives referring either to Polishness or to Catholicism. Very characteristic in this respect is the attitude of the Swiss press to the Uniate Metropolitan of Lviv (Lvov), Andrey Sheptytsky (Andrzej Szeptycki). This bishop was, after all, one of the figures most involved in the idea of Ukrainian independence, which did not – at all – prevent Swiss journalists from presenting him as an icon of resistance against Russification and a defender of Catholicism after the occupation of Galicia by the Russians. Obviously, the Uniate Church is also part of Catholicism but from the Swiss perspective it was an almost insignificant nuance, while the persecution of Catholics by Orthodox Russians was almost always interpreted as a battle against Polishness. In the early months of the war Swiss commentators did not see or refused to see the obvious fact that the question of Poland's independence was in opposition to the idea of Ukrainian independence. What appeared far more important at that time was the issue of eliminating the Russian rule rather than asking questions about the political future and – more crucially – about the borders of the newly-established states, Polish and Ukrainian, provided the two nations would live in separate state organisms. The Polish and Ukrainian paths would distinctly diverge in the Swiss press only at the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918. As late as July 1917, when writing about the stay in Sweden of A. Sheptytsky, released by the Russian Provisional Government, and about his journey to Switzerland, the Swiss press reported the enthusiastic welcome given to him in Stockholm not only by Ukrainian émigré circles but also by the local Polish community¹⁹.

It is in order here to note the fact that, from the Swiss perspective, highly important was the aspect of tolerance which supposedly characterized the Poles. It was even a kind of linchpin of the Swiss public opinion, regardless of political, linguistic or religious divisions in society. References to the Reformation, which, unlike in Switzerland, did not cause religious wars in the Commonwealth of Poland, were an almost obligatory theme utilized in discussing Ukrainian freedom aspirations, which were attached to the issue of future Polish independence. It was

¹⁹ *Mgr Szeptycki à Stockholm*, „*Courrier de Genève*” [dalej: „CdG”] 12 VII 1917; *Mgr Szeptycki en Suisse*, „*Tribune de Genève*” 22 VII 1917.

only the reports about Jewish pogroms of the late 1918 that changed this viewpoint²⁰.

Taking the two above-mentioned issues into consideration – the weak knowledge of the Ukrainian question and the usual linking of it with the Polish cause – it should however be said that from the very beginning of the war the idea of emancipation of the Ukrainians from Russian dependence was or tended to be very intense in the Swiss journalism. It encompassed several key issues, usually determined by war events. The distinction of these stages is justified by a periodical increase in the number of publications devoted to these subjects since the Ukrainian question tended to suddenly appear and just as quickly disappear from the Swiss newspapers. This was certainly connected with a number of other, possibly more vital or interesting problems produced by the war at a given stage. Specific revivals of the Ukrainian question, regardless of being stimulated by the Ukrainian Bureau (and which was also, incidentally, done by the agencies of other nationalities operating in Switzerland for their own propaganda), resulted most often from some events of vital importance to the Swiss that drew a response in the press.

The first distinct period of interest in the Ukrainian question fell in September 1914. This was obviously connected with the Russian offensive against Galicia. Its capture by the Russians opened a discussion on the status of the Ukrainian population and the acts of the Russian administration towards them²¹. Initially, the Swiss dailies focused only on strategic issues, but even in such publications there appeared information concerning the policies of Russians towards Ukrainians. Very soon the press notes the implementation of policies aimed at denationalizing the „Rusins“ (Ruthenians), or, strictly speaking, to restore their Russian-ness taken away – as the new authorities justified – through Latinization conducted under the Polish and Austrian banner. There were thus reports about bringing lawyers from Moscow to Lviv, about establishing rail links with Russia, and there was information about Galicia being flooded with all kinds of occasional publications and papers intended for Ukrainians,

²⁰ The issue of pogroms in the Congress Kingdom of Poland was also raised at the beginning of the war by Geneva's „Le Nouveliste“, reporting about the negative attitude of the local Polish community, and first of all Russians, towards Jews. It stemmed from the alleged sympathy of Jews towards Germans, and for that reason they were treated as a potential threat. *Pogroms en Pologne*, „Le Nouveliste“ [dalej: „LN“] 13 XI 1914, s. 1; *Massacres des Juifs en Russie*, „LN“ 10 X 1914, s. 1; *Pogroms en Russie*, „LN“ 7 XII 1914, s. 1.

²¹ This subject was begun by publications in the German-speaking press drawing attention to the deterioration of the status of Ukrainians in Galicia, inter alia: *Vom Kriegsschauplatz In Galizien*, „Nationalzeitung“ 30 VIII 1914, Erste Ausgabe, s. 1; *Galizien in Wien und in Russland*, „Basler Nachrichten“ [dalej: „BN“] 3 XI 1914.

which had been prepared in Moscow, and about starting courses of Russian language²². Especially „*Courrier de Genève*” devoted considerable attention to the problem²³. This stemmed from the fact that the newspaper represented the voice of French-speaking Catholics in Geneva and felt particularly obliged to protect Catholic values in the generally Protestant environment of this opinion-forming center in Western Switzerland. The promotion of the Orthodox faith in Galicia²⁴ was not, in any case, an unknown subject there and required some kind of response. It should however be observed that it was in the German-speaking part of the country that the interest in Ukrainian matters was somewhat higher, at least more was written on the subject. This appeared to stem mainly from the need to reproach the Russians for their contempt for the idea of self-determination of nations, disregard for the Hague Conventions, which demanded that the occupier maintained the existing legal status of the taken territories until the conclusion of peace, and the like problems. Hence the local periodicals willingly referred to the situation of the prosecuted Ukrainians and sometimes gave accounts of their steps in defense of their national identity. This subject appeared in Germanophone Switzerland already at the end of the first month of the war²⁵.

Worth noting is the fact that not all Galician territories occupied by Russia generated interest of the Swiss public opinion in the Ukrainian question. The most conspicuous is the case of Lviv. It appears that from the Russian point of view the capture of Galicia’s capital was not so much of national as rather of political significance. The press certainly noticed comparatively quickly the Russification measures taken by Governor General of Galicia and Bukovina G. Bobrinsky, but his activity towards Lviv at this level was explained by more practical reasons rather than by the desire to immediately unify Galicia’s capital with the rest of the country²⁶. Interestingly, the then reports from that city contain almost no passages referring the Ukrainians whereas there are many sections that

²² The problem of threat to the Ukrainian national identity in Galicia under the impact of Russification is also highlighted by H. Wereszycki, *Pod berłem Habsburgów*, Kraków 1986, s. 216.

²³ *La victoire de Lemberg*, „CdG” 6 IX 1914, s. 1; *Effet de la prise de Lemberg*, „CdG” 24 IX 1914, s. 1; *En Galicie*, „CdG” 25 XI 1914, s. 1.

²⁴ Por. W. Osadczy, *Święta Rus’. Rozwój i oddziaływanie idei prawosławia w Galicji*, Lublin 2007.

²⁵ *An die Ukrainer und Ruthenen*, „DB” 28 VIII 1914, Abendblatt, s. 1; *Russlands innere Feinde*, „Berner Tagblatt” 24 VIII 1914, Morgenblatt, s. 5–6.

²⁶ The activity of the Russian Governor General G. Bobrinsky in Lviv is described by A. Achmatowicz, *Polityka Rosji w kwestii polskiej w pierwszym roku Wielkiej Wojny 1914–1915*, Warszawa 2003, s. 379–391.

describe the Jewish population, the Poles, and even point to the German traces in the city's culture.

Conversely, letters from the Galician provinces are full of alarming reports on radical, immediate and often brutal measures taken by the Russians against the Ukrainian population who refused to adopt Russian culture. Descriptions of crimes against the civil population were a constant element of publications from Galicia in the first months of the war. They came not only from the mouths of the victims but sometimes the testimonies of Russians taken prisoner were also published. An illustration can be one of the articles published in „Der Bund“ already at the outset of the war²⁷. We can find in it an opinion about the Cossacks presented by a mobilized Petersburg lawyer, who was captured by the Austrians. He spoke very unfavorably about them, believing that their units had no actual combat value in the conditions of the then war and were only a relic of the past. As an educated person, he associated the Cossacks more with a repressive formation used against the civilians, including Russians, before the war. He thus confirmed another account on the subject, which the same periodical published already at the beginning of the war. Not without some malicious reflections did one of correspondents wrote at that time that the legendary terrible Cossack charges in reality turned out to be a threat only to the civil population. Burnt villages and other evidence of the barbaric conduct of the war by the Russians could not change the general inefficiency of the Russian army in confrontation with the Austrian Royal and Imperial Army units²⁸. Even if we allow for the fact that German-speaking papers tended to show Russians as a threat to the population, yet in the face of no resolute denials from the French-speaking press, and taking the number of similar accounts into consideration, it should be assumed that the range of Russian war crimes perpetrated on the Ukrainian population must have been very large.

Among the articles devoted to the Ukrainian question in the first months of the war, also worth noting is a rather specific group of publications that can be described as tourism- or, more broadly, culture-related ones. These are the descriptions of the territories inhabited by the Ruthenian (Rusins). They did not present only landscapes or material culture but also customs and – comparatively less often – the political views of the population. Sometimes the articles contained amazingly detailed references to the Lemkos and even Boykos, who were distinguished from the rest of the Ukrainian population. This type of publications appears to be motivated by two issues. First, we are dealing here with the natural need

²⁷ *Im Gebiet der Karpatenkämpfe*, „DB“ IX 1914, Abendblatt, s. 2.

²⁸ *Die ersten Kämpfe in Galizien und Polen*, „DB“ 3 IX 1914, Morgenblatt, s. 1.

to acquaint the reader with the geography of the areas through which the front moved. In particular, problems of military nature required such comments. Frequently, the mountainous, marshy and generally hard-to-reach areas determined the conduct of military operations, which had to be explained to the reader. For example, the presentation of the Austro-Hungarian offensive in Galicia, which could be carried out only through the Solska Forest and Janowskie Forest or by circumventing the Roztocze Region from north-west in the vicinity of Kraśnik. The former would be a highly risky operation, and the correspondents usually tried to explain why. Hence there were these types of descriptions of the areas on the national Polish-Ukrainian borderland. An equally significant reason why so much was written in the first months of the war about village communities was the fact that the Swiss as a nation of generally peasant culture were very much interested in such local subjects, customs, folklore and daily life. This is clearly evident in the publications not only from the territories inhabited by the Ukrainians, but also typically Polish areas, e.g., in reports on Russo-German fighting near Łowicz.

Out of numerous issues that were part of the panorama of the areas inhabited by the Ukrainians, which can be found in the Swiss newspapers in that period, one appears to be invariably present. This is the widespread espionage for the Russians carried out by the clergy and Ruthenian population. Most probably, the Orthodox faith followers were meant because, as has been said earlier, at this stage the correspondents seldom distinguished between the Uniates and the Orthodox, and the Russians from the Ukrainians. Sometimes even the eyewitnesses, Galician inhabitants, whose accounts were published by the Swiss press, were unable to ascertain to which national and religious group belonged the captured and hanged Russian spies²⁹. Considering the role played by the Uniate clergy in forming the national consciousness of the Ukrainians³⁰, it should be assumed that it was the Orthodox clergymen that were most often the case because the motivation for conducting subversive activities by that social group was very frequent. This manifested itself in different ways, depending on the capabilities of agents and the needs of their handlers. The enemy was therefore informed about the location or march of Austro-Hungarian units through the villages that made up a parish,

²⁹ *Zu Russen in Galizien*, „NZN” 29 IX 1914, s. 2.

³⁰ The role of the Uniate clergy in developing the national consciousness in the Ukrainians was immense. Regardless of cases of collaboration with the Russians, this was nevertheless an independent-minded circle. Por. B. Wójtowicz-Huber, „*Ojcowie narodu*”. *Duchowieństwo greckokatolickie w ruchu narodowym Rusinów galicyjskich (1867–1918)*, Warszawa 2008.

information was passed down about their numbers, armament, etc., parish buildings or even Orthodox churches were used to hide fugitives or war materials, defeated Russian units were given provisions, and offered support to break through the front line. Sometimes the reports described rather detailed though radical ways of informing the enemy (e.g., a house fire at night in the village was supposed to signal the presence of Austro-Hungarian units). However, the most „arrogant” (because overt) action undertaken by Orthodox priests was the agitation conducted at sermons³¹. Russia’s liberation mission and its protection over the Slavs must have been spoken of relatively often because this element constantly recurred in the accounts by the correspondents. As a matter of fact, it frequently brought about expected results. Information reports about sabotage actions by the Ruthenians in Eastern Galicia were not exceptional³².

The second moment in which the Ukrainian cause became the focus of interest of the Swiss public was the spring and summer offensive of 1915. Characteristic of this period is the fact that the Ukrainian problem was considered more from the strategic rather than liberation angle. In other words, the Swiss were first of all interested in the problem of how the attitude of the Ukrainian or Ruthenian population would influence the ongoing offensive and whether one could expect some kind of political acts of Austro-Hungary towards the Ukrainians that would facilitate the involvement of the latter in the war with Russia rather than whether and why the Ukrainians deserved independence and who they really were, which was characteristic of the period of Russian occupation of Galicia. Hence, in the local press, there appeared numerous publications of military nature, which, provided by war correspondents, were, in addition, more reliable than the official Austrian communiqués, much less the Russian ones.

Characteristic in this respect are the series of reports by Hermann Alfred Tanner published in „Basler Nachrichten”. The first article in the series was about the fall of the Przemyśl fortress³³. The interest in this subject matter among the Swiss readers resulted in the publication of a whole series of his war reports from Galicia. A total of 14 articles of the series „Bei den Oesterreichern in Westgalizien und Südpolen”, published until the end of May 1915, an eighteen-part cycle „Bei der deutschen Südarmerie in den Karpathen”, which appeared in June, 13 articles of the series „Am Stryj” in late June and early July, eight installments „Mit der

³¹ *Der Beginn des neuen Ringens in Galizien*, „DB” 13 X 1914, Abendblatt, s. 2.

³² It should however be remembered that a large part of the accused had nothing to do with espionage, having become scapegoats to explain Austrian defeats.

³³ H. A. Tanner, *Przemysl gefallen*, „BN” 31 III 1915, Beigabe zum nr 164, s. 1.

Armee Böhm-Ermolli nach Lemberg", published from 25 July to 4 August, and finally „Die Russen auf dem Rückzuge in Ostgalizien" published in the supplements to three July issues. Although Tanner was an outstanding correspondent, he was not the only one who significantly influenced the picture of the Ukrainian territories captured by Austria and the national conditions pervading there. It would be in order to mention the names of such correspondents as M. Degen, R. Brandt, W. Bonfels, L. Adelt, K. Egli, Riggenbach, K. Anderieth, or, above all, A. Zimmermann, not counting several other German-speaking authors who signed their reports with pennames, whose identity could not be established (e.g., W.E.S. or E.L.). Sometimes Swiss periodicals employed the services of Allied correspondents, out of whom the following should be mentioned: S. Washburn, G. Fortescue, V. Nemirovich-Danchenko, or E. Privat (although he reported the events several days before the Gorlice offensive).

Military analyses were obviously multi-vectoral, nevertheless, three problems could be pointed out that seem to be dominant in such publications during the period in question. One of them is the question of protecting Hungary against the threat of Russian invasion. The siege of the Przemyśl fortress, and then its fall made the Austrian decision-makers realize that to base the security of a considerable portion of the country on one, purely military, point is insufficient. Even though the stronghold was recaptured in early June, it became clear that the security of the eastern frontier of the monarchy should be linked not only with military installations but also, or perhaps above all, with the potential resistance of the civilian population, who should demonstrate hostility to the Russians and have an enthusiastic or at least positive attitude to the monarchy. It is in this context that the Ukrainian question was most often debated. It was certainly impossible to pass over the Austrian policy of antagonizing different social groups, and exploitation of conflicts for the Empire's own goals. The Galician tradition in this matter was very long and covered both Western Galicia and its eastern part where, apart from the social conflict, there was additionally a national one. Hence in such publications we very often find discussions on the need to change this form of conduct towards the subjects, demands for establishing some kind of *modus vivendi* acceptable to all parties, or reflection on the reorganization of Galician autonomy and for taking into greater account the Ukrainian aspirations in the political life of this Austrian province.

Another distinct level of interest of the Swiss press at that time, which is connected with military issues and refers to the „Ruthenians", is the question of organizing Ukrainian armed forces operating under the Austrian aegis. The Legion of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen became a just as popular as mysterious theme. Although its existence had been already reported

earlier, yet until May 1915 it was not an especially popular subject. The first victorious battle of this formation near Makówka (29 April – 2 May 1915) changed this state of affairs. In the press increasingly often appeared speculations on the potential number of Ukrainians who might join the ranks of this formation, which would significantly influence the picture of the Eastern front and could consequently redefine the position of the Ukrainians in the Habsburg state. The Sich Riflemen were frequently compared to Piłsudski's legions, and the possibilities were discussed of re-forming the Austrian armed forces into such one-nation formations, potentially far more efficient than the units organized on the existing basis. What is more, it was sometimes reported that in the aftermath of Russian defeats and the revival of the Ukrainian national liberation movement, in some centers there arose groups overtly supporting recruitment to the emerging Ukrainian army, or accounts were given of the precautionary measures taken by the Russian administration in order to prevent the outbreak of an open uprising³⁴. Many such publications became part of a kind of political fiction, rather than being based on reality, but this does not at all change the fact that they were an essential component of the presence of the Ukrainian question in the then Swiss press and they certainly played a role in popularizing it among the Swiss.

Finally, it is in order to mention the interest of the Swiss public opinion in the war-created humanitarian problems that fundamentally influenced the image of the population of Galicia as well as Belarus. The issue was the evacuation by the Russians. Via German periodicals the information about the way it was conducted relatively soon arrived in Switzerland. First reports on the subject were still comparatively cautious. Experience gained from the propaganda in the first months of the war required that the information provided by the interested parties be treated with some reserve. However, already in late September 1915 the Swiss press started to somewhat more boldly publish information, which turned out to be true. The papers described the transportation to Moscow of all material goods, works of art but also of workers from factories which were also disassembled or blown up³⁵. Descriptions of burning homesteads, all kinds of atrocities committed by Cossacks, and the simultaneous humanitarian tragedy experienced by the displaced persons because of the lack of sanitary facilities determined the picture of the evacuation. These reports conveyed a tremendous impression. As late as November they were again referred to, being interpreted as an act hostile to civilization,

³⁴ *Es gärt in der Ukraine*, „NZN” 17 V 1915, s. 2.

³⁵ *L'évacuation des territoires envahis*, „JdG”, 22 VIII 1915, s. 1; *Comment les Russes évacuent les villes*, „Genevois” 11 IX 1915, s. 3.

contrary to the Allied ideology. An open accusation against Russia (not only its authorities but also the public opinion) was leveled by „Journal de Genève” by publishing a shocking article on the subject, titled „The Fate of Russian refugees”³⁶. The newspaper estimated the number of refugees in Kiev alone at 300 thousand. Also „Le Nouveliste”, referring to Russian newspapers, reported that the authorities could not cope with the huge number of refugees. It was estimated that ca. 100 thousand people from the Chełm Guberniya (Province) alone fled deep into Russia, and another 300 thousand from the Kingdom of Poland. On top of that there were also the waves of refugees sweeping through the Belarusian territories, or seeking asylum there: these were from the Baltic countries, mainly from Courland, from where another 100 thousand people allegedly fled³⁷. At the same time „Dziennik Kijowski” reported about the march of as many as 600 thousand people along the Brest–Włodawa–Kobryn road³⁸. This intensified migration of the population with a simultaneous lack of coordinated humanitarian actions caused inevitable difficulties: high prices of groceries, a risk of epidemics, and increased crime were the aspects of Western Russian guberniyas most often reported by the Swiss press. It can be even said that this subject matter became the main topic discussed in the second half of 1915.

The occupation of the Polish, partly of Belarusian and Ukrainian territories by the Austro-German troops and the stabilization of the front in the space of 1916 determined the gradual departure of discussion on the future of these nations from the military onto political level. Although Brusilov’s offensive intensified discussions of military nature for a short time, it appears that throughout 1916, and even until the February Revolution. The Ukrainian question was debated in terms of increasingly novel theoretical conceptions, quite often emerging under the influence of the Swiss conditions, rather than by analyzing the development of events in the front.

It would be fitting to observe that this was the period in which the previously fairly unanimous opinions of the Swiss on the one hand, and the Poles, Ukrainians, and Lithuanians on the other, began to gradually diverge. This became most conspicuous during the Congress of Nationalities held on 27–29 June 1916 in Lausanne’s Casino Montbenon³⁹. It as-

³⁶ *Le sort de fugitifs en Russie*, „JdG” 14 XI 1915, s. 2.

³⁷ *La misère des fugitifs russes*, „LN” 21 VIII 1915, s. 3; Por. M. Korzeniowski, M. Mądzik, D. Tarasiuk, *Tułaczy los. Uchodźcy z Królestwa Polskiego w Rosji w latach I wojny światowej*, Lublin 2007, s. 20–22.

³⁸ *Wędrówka zbiegów*, „Dziennik Kijowski” 1(14) VIII 1915, 209, s. 3.

³⁹ H. Florkowska-Frančić, *op. cit.*, s. 328.

sembled the representatives of the nations oppressed by Russia and it appeared natural that the prominent place during the sessions would be occupied by the Polish delegation. Unfortunately, the Poles almost entirely boycotted the event, which was not altered by the fact that several Polish politicians or journalists interested in the Polish subject arrived in Lausanne. The unwillingness to join in the discussion with other émigré circles was dictated by the fact of lack of a reasonable proposal for the future borders of the restored Republic of Poland and the lack of a definition of its internal socio-national structure, which was incompatible with independence aspirations of the Ukrainians, Lithuanians, or Belarusians⁴⁰. At that time nobody spoke any longer of the linchpin of liberation tendencies, which apparently was the Commonwealth of Poland. Dominant notes were rather pessimistic, indicating the future confrontation between the interested nations⁴¹.

A picture of not only national but also, and perhaps above all, economic conflicts emerge from the then published articles. In the conditions of 1916, it was difficult to imagine that an independent Poland could gain access to the sea, resources of the Silesian coal, and the Ukrainian chernozem. Without these elements the country would be economically inefficient and doomed to collapse. Moreover, it was pointed out that the industrialization of the second half of the 19th century entirely redefined the basis for the economy of the modern state, and that without access to markets and appropriate investment in technologies, agricultural production alone carried out by traditional methods was absolutely insufficient. Hence the question of Poland's borders had to be determined based on an agreement with the Ukrainians and Lithuanians. The latter were crucial from the perspective of the planned connection of the Vistula with the Neman because to regain Gdansk seemed very unlikely.

An interesting aspect of the Ukrainian question that almost suddenly emerged in late spring of 1916 was the German-Austrian rivalry over Eastern Galicia. The underlying reason was economic but, in addition, quite interesting theses were advanced concerning the future of the Ukrainians. Generally speaking, it was an assumption that owing to Germany's military dominance it was that country that took up the proverbial baton in organizing the national, political and economic existence of this

⁴⁰ W. Śladkowski, *Sprawa polska na kongresie narodowości w Lozannie (27–29.6.1916)*, w: *Polska, Niemcy, Europa. Studia z dziejów myśli politycznej i stosunków międzynarodowych*, red. A. Czubiński, Poznań 1977, s. 339–349.

⁴¹ An exception was the report by the Jewish delegate Aberson, who discussed the problem of Polish tolerance enjoyed for centuries by the followers of Mosaic religion. J. Zieliński, *Nasza Szwajcaria. Przewodnik śladami Polaków*, Warszawa 1999, s. 114.

nation. Austria was becoming an unnecessary element on the Galician scene. Especially the „*Berner Tagblatt*“ was influenced by such narrative. In several articles of that time concerning Galicia, the paper frankly observes that at the brink of the war the Austrians alone allegedly showed reserve in assessing the economic and political value of the province⁴². There were even opinions that because of the Polish-Ukrainian problems Vienna would be even willing to get rid of Eastern Galicia in exchange for some kind of compensation with Polish territories captured from the Russians. Similar opinions were also expressed by other periodicals in German Switzerland although they were not prevalent. After the Russian invasion of September 1914, and in the face of the military weakness of Austro-Hungary the narrative entirely changed. This presumably stemmed from the tendencies, signaled by Berlin, towards taking away a part of Galicia from Austro-Hungary and establishing there some kind of a buffer state, even administered by the Ukrainians to some extent, that would be a German provisions base. The involvement of the Austrians in re-capturing the province was interpreted not only as a natural desire for revenge on the Russians but also a demonstration for the German ally and opposition to its tendencies to incorporate Eastern Galicia after the end of the war. The possession of the Galician crude oil, salt mines, coal and agricultural base now turned out to be vital.

The Swiss generally regarded Berlin's claims to Galicia as dangerous not only for Austro-Hungary but also for the Ukrainians and Poles. That is why the papers sometimes suggested the necessity of transforming this province into some kind of federal entity, still under Vienna's supervision. Such a concept was also announced by the Ukrainians, inter alia by Dmytro Dontsov in the article in „*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*“ published in March 1916, which was also referred to in Polish press⁴³. The issue of Mitteleuropa will certainly become a dominant one in the Swiss press over a year later, but its first symptoms could be discerned already in 1916. Debates on the independence of a particular nation from the angle of the state's economic efficiency were quite frequent in Swiss journalism, and analyses of this type covered all Central and Eastern European nations, treating them as a whole, and it is in this sense that some kind of unification of this subject matter in that period can be spoken of.

The proclamation of the Act of 5 November 1916 also directed the interest of Swiss journalists to the independence aspirations of the Ukrainians, although this subject was usually discussed in articles devoted to the Polish question. The Kingdom of Poland, whose establishment was announced

⁴² *Was geschieht nun mit Galizien?*, „*BT*“ 15 VII 1915, *Morgenblatt*, s. 1.

⁴³ *Szwajcarya o Polsce*, „*Wiedeński Kurier Polski*“ 26 III 1916.

in this Act, would not comprise Galicia, and in this context, speculations appeared on what status this province would have and which national element would dominate there: Polish or Ukrainian. The matter was additionally blown up by the proclamation of the act of Galicia's separation⁴⁴. The Swiss press articles published at the time present a picture of an emerging and constantly exacerbating Polish-Ukrainian conflicts. Initially, the Ukrainian Bureau in Lausanne understood the situation in the following way: the Poles would obtain their kingdom, whereas Galicia, separated from Austria (although being formally a part of the state but enjoying complete national freedom) would be the territory for implementing the aspirations of the Ukrainian population⁴⁵. Soon, however, under the influence of information coming from Vienna, this viewpoint changed and the campaign criticizing the separation of Ukraine began. One of the most characteristic actions in this matter was the protests of the Ukrainian members of the Austrian parliament, which was published by Zurich's „Tages Anzeiger“. According to the Ukrainians, this reform was „dangerous to the highest degree“ not only to them but for Austria itself⁴⁶. To the Polish circles, the setting apart of Galicia, regardless of the mass condemnation of this solution as an instrument of taking away this province from the emerging Polish state, meant the broadening of autonomy practically to the level of independence⁴⁷. While somehow, for pragmatic reasons one could think of delaying in time the merger of Galicia with the Kingdom of Poland, by no means could one imagine the cession of this province with the most faithful of the faithful cities: Lviv – to the Ukrainians. This was the main axis of discussion, which, however, did not have any distinct continuation in the face of the soon-to-happen changes on the Russian political scene. The Polish-Ukrainian border problems were resumed to a greater extent only in the spring of 1918.

Another noticeable turning point in debating the Ukrainian cause was the Russian Revolutions in 1917, in particular the February Revolution.

⁴⁴ K.W. Kumaniecki, *Odbudowa państwowości polskiej. Najważniejsze dokumenty*, Warszawa 1924, s. 48–49; H. Batowski, *Rozpad Austro-Węgier 1914–1918*, Kraków 1982, s. 149–151; S. Grodziski, *Franciszek Józef I*, Wrocław 1983, s. 178.

⁴⁵ To popularize the idea of Ukraine's independence in Switzerland, the Bureau issued a special periodical titled „L'Ukraine“, which, with time, was increasingly inclined to the vision of Ukrainian-German cooperation and had an anti-Polish overtone.

⁴⁶ *Protest der Ukrainer gegen die Autonomie Galiziens*, „Tages Anzeiger“ 6 XI 1916, s. 1.

⁴⁷ The situation was described in a similar way by the overwhelming majority of opinion-forming periodicals in Switzerland, inter alia: *Erweiterung der galizischen Selbstständigkeit*, „Der Bund“ 6 XI 1916, s. 1; *Die Autonomie für Galizien*, „BT“ 6 XI 1916, Morgenblatt, s. 1; *Die Erwerbung der Autonomie Galiziens*, „BN“ 5 XI 1916, s. 1; *Vom Tage*, „Vaterland“ 6 XI 1916, s. 1; *Autonomie Polens*, „NZZ“ 5 XI 1916, Sonderausgabe, s. 2.

The French-speaking press and the German-speaking periodicals that had Francophile inclinations responded very favorably to the coup in Petersburg and the overthrow of tsarism. Very soon even enthusiastic opinions appeared, and texts about Russia's moral victory, which was able to dissociate itself from its past and condemn it. This probably stemmed from the fact that the proclamations of the new Russian authorities on the question of independence of Western Russia's nations removed a peculiar thorn, which was the deviation of tsarism from the Entente's official ideological line in the propaganda space from the beginning of the war. After the (February) Revolution special attention was paid to the aspect of the alleged openness of Russia's new, apparently liberal, authorities to national liberation tendencies emerging within the state of the tsars. It was believed that the erasure of the legacy of Russian imperialism would be fundamental and irreversible. The forming of the Central Council of Ukraine on 17 March 1917, its gradual enlargement with representatives of next political groups, the session of the Ukrainian National Congress, and above all the June proclamation of Ukraine's autonomy, which was announced by the First Universal of the Council met with an almost enthusiastic support in Switzerland. Information was therefore published about the formation of Ukrainian authority units, about the manifestoes they addressed to the Russian government, and even about the idea of establishing a special Ministry for Ukraine⁴⁸. It was thought that in the face of unification of almost all Ukrainian political circles the issue of independence of the new nation was settled, and the new authorities in Petersburg would only participate in the final and positive settlement of the matter.

How very erroneous and non-substantiated was this view was shown by the moves of the G. Lvov government. The right of nations to self-determination was obvious to the Swiss, but to Petersburg the territorial integrity of the state was more important. While the Polish cause, well presented in a proper light, required some kind of declaration, the „Ruthenian” population, in the opinion of the Petersburg decision makers, should stay in Russia. Even „free Poland” would have to be bound by some kind of military and political alliance with new Russia; all the more it was difficult for the Russians to accept the loss of „ethnically Russian lands”⁴⁹. The emerging differences between the Ukrainians and

⁴⁸ *Die autonome Ukraine*, „NZZ” 22 V 1917.

⁴⁹ Fears about the sincerity of Russia's new authorities towards nations striving for independence were widespread, even in the Francophile press. One of the most open accusations in this case was leveled by „*Courrier de Genève*”. *En Russie. Encore la proclamation du gouvernement provisoire aux Polonais*, „CdG” 25 IV 1917, s. 1.

the new Russian government did not escape the attention of the Swiss. The Proclamation of the Second Universal of 16 July 1917, speaking of the unity of the Ukrainian People's Republic with Russia, made them clearly realize that the Russian Provisional Government merely stalled for time. Further events only confirmed this, and although information sometimes appeared about the conditions for the separation of Ukraine from Russia, citing Ukrainian politicians working with the new Russian government (e.g., F. Lyzohub)⁵⁰, it was difficult to continue such narrative in the long run.

Not all opinion-forming circles in Switzerland, in any case, yielded to enthusiasm after the outbreak of the February Revolution. There were centers which, from the very beginning, challenged the idea of regulating the future of the Ukrainians on terms of compromise with Russia. In particular, the radical and socialist press showed some mistrust, which increased with time, for it was initially believed that the coup in Russia was a working class one, and the new authorities would seek to end the war and focus attention on democratizing political life and would solve social issues. In this context, hopes were expressed for the liberalization of policies towards the Ukrainians. Expectations of evidence that Russian liberalism was applied not only at the economic and political levels but also at the social and national plane characterized the attitude of this section of the press. Owing to the fact that such evidence was not found, these papers were increasingly inclined if not to condemn Russia, then at least to maintain a far-reaching reserve. Characteristic is the fact that this skepticism of the radicals and socialists relatively soon passed onto the Francophile circles, which resulted in some kind of uniformity of the Swiss general public's opinion on the Ukrainian question. Being unable on the one hand to find some serious positive signs of the solution to the Ukrainian issues, and, on the other hand, not wishing to get rid of their own – note – liberation and liberal ideas, the Swiss in a sense suspended their interest in the Ukrainian cause in the course of 1917. There were sporadic references to this subject matter, mainly in Western Switzerland, where questions were asked rather than attempts were made to answer them in the face of the absence of prospects for a positive solution of the Ukrainian question both at the political level in the context of Russia's future, and in respect of the Polish-Russian relations concerning the future borders between the two states provided these were established⁵¹.

⁵⁰ *Zur Lage in Russland*, „NZZ” 20 VIII 1917.

⁵¹ An illustration could be two rather characteristic publications on the subject: *Le réveil d'une grande nation*, „LN” 9–15 VI 1917, s. 4; *L'Allemagne déçue en Ukraine*, „JdG” 20 X 1917, s. 2.

The Bolshevik coup revived the Ukrainian question anew although this was not a particularly significant moment in the context of the subject in question. It is worth observing that initially the Swiss did not treat the October Revolution as a fundamental turning point in Russia's socio-political history, it was rather believed that this was another stage of the revolution begun in February. Opinions appeared that the Bolsheviks would be inclined to take the independence tendencies into greater and realistic account than the previous authorities did. Characteristic in this respect is one of the articles published in Berne's leading periodical – „Der Bund“. The text presented the idea of federation of nations, which the Bolsheviks would probably implement unless they decided to directly copy the legal and political models from Switzerland or the United States into the newly-emerged Russia⁵². Similar fascinations with allegedly liberation ideals promoted by the Bolshevik propaganda were observable in Western Switzerland, where socialist ideals were incidentally far more popular than in the German-speaking part of the country. More or less from March 1918, clear symptoms are, however, observable of abandoning the perception of the October Revolution and the situation resultant from it as a beneficial event from the viewpoint of the implementation of the Ukrainians' rights to self-determination (and not only theirs). The decisive moment on this issue was the September publications of the above-mentioned „Der Bund, after which hardly anyone made an effort to present the Bolsheviks as glorifiers of the idea of freedom⁵³. After these publications the interest in the subject of Ukraine's independence in the context of the political concepts and propaganda disseminated by the Bolsheviks entirely died out, and rather passed from the national and political onto the military level. In short, the Swiss were more interested in whether the Bolsheviks would succeed in capturing Ukraine or whether this would be an area defined by the followers of the overthrown Provisional Government, the Whites, or whether it would be under complete control of the Central States, which was also not excluded.

A significant stamp on the perception of the problem of Ukraine was left by the Brest negotiations and the concluded peace treaties: first with Ukraine on 9 February, and subsequently with Russia on 3 March 1918.

⁵² *Selbständige Staaten oder Staatenbund in Rußland*, „DB“ 6 I 1918, s. 1.

⁵³ Interesting in this respect is the series of publications *Russlands politische, soziale und wirtschaftliche Verhältnisse unter dem bolschewistischen Regime*, [teil] I, „DB“ 10 VIII 1918, s. 1; *Russlands politische, soziale und wirtschaftliche Verhältnisse unter dem bolschewistischen Regime*, [Teil] II, „DB“ 11 VIII 1918, Sonderausgabe, s. 1; *Die organisierte Anarchie in Russland*, „DB“ 22 VIII 1918, Erste Ausgabe, s. 1.

The scale of the increased interest in the Ukrainian subject in 1918 can be conveyed by recalling the fact that the number of references to Ukraine in the Swiss press rose more or less tenfold compared to 1917⁵⁴. In that situation it might seem that the range of the discussed topics would be also correspondingly richer. Source materials do not, however, permit such conclusions. Even though there were many publications, they essentially concerned the same two questions: the position of the Ukrainians in the German Mitteleuropa and the issue of Ukraine's war with Soviet Russia and the Poles. On top of that a remark should be added that a considerable portion of the publications was purely informative, consisting of reports by press agencies, and although referring to Ukraine, yet coming from non-Ukrainian centers (Berlin, Warsaw, Vienna).

It should be remembered at this point that the Swiss opinion-forming centers were highly divided over their assessment of the war, its main culprits, as well as the potential ways of ending the conflict. A kind of propaganda war between the Francophile (mainly Francophone) and pro-German or pro-Austrian press organs of German Switzerland lost its intensity with time, and in 1918 both parties were in principle reaching a common position amounting to condemning the idea of war through Germany's victory. The Brest Peace was, however, the practical accomplishment of such an assumption and in this sense it was unfavorably received in Switzerland. Its signatories abandoned, as it were, the values represented by the free world, and thereby in a sense lost their previous supporters in Switzerland. In the case of Ukraine this meant that it took the wrong side of history unlike the Poles, who epitomized in the Swiss eyes the ideal of a nation that, although it strove for independence, was not devoid of universal human values and was not exclusively driven by selfish interests. This is what should explain, first, a kind of pressure exerted upon the Ukrainians to prevent them from yielding to German persuasions, and then the long, frequently emotional addresses by politicians, journalists or men of culture and science who commented on the problem of Ukrainian-German cooperation, and finally the expressions of condemnation. In such a situation, this period should, on the one hand, be regarded as the most important, while on the other hand it was relatively monothematic.

An essential question reflected in the publications on Ukraine was the issue of the borders of the new state. The outrage aroused by the incorporation of the Chełm Region into Ukraine, made itself felt also in Switzerland. Numerous speeches by Polish émigré politicians as well as

⁵⁴ Estimated data based on the rates of the service of www.e-newspaperarchives.ch [dostęp: 5 VI 2022] and the author's quantitative studies.

matching comments written by Swiss journalists provoked polemics on the part of the Ukrainian circles, who argued for the rightness of the Brest decisions. In particular, the circles of Geneva's Ukrainians very often expressed their opinions on this matter, usually through the statements by the Director of the local Ukrainian Bureau – V. Stepankovsky, who openly challenged the Polish rights to the Chełm Region⁵⁵. It is worth noting in the margin, as it were, that the issue of the borders again combined the discussion on the future of the Ukrainians with the question of Polish independence, and the two levels were no longer generally separated until November 1918.

Despite this negative perception of Ukraine's involvement in the German project of Mitteleuropa, for which the Brest Peace was a *sine qua non* condition, some Swiss circles tried, however, to continue the subject of bringing the Ukrainian independence movement closer to the Entente. This was the case especially in French Switzerland. This is where the idea of the establishment of a federal state emerged, which was the second leitmotif of the local public opinion regarding the Ukrainian question. Such a state would include the Poles, Lithuanians, Belarusians and Ukrainians. It was pointed out that it should be established in the nationally mixed territories and separate Poland from Russia, and the latter political entities could have a national character. The new state would on the one hand be a guarantor of the free national development of its citizens via the federation formula, and, other hand, it would be a kind of a bilateral buffer zone preventing Polish-Russian territorial conflicts. It was thus a kind of attempt to implant Swiss solutions into the Central European conditions. Obviously, it was not received with understanding on the part of the *émigré* elites of the interested nations, and very soon it was fundamentally criticized. Typical in this respect is the article by the Lithuanian writer A. Viscont, who writes outright that out of the nations who used to live within the Commonwealth of Poland, only the Poles did not get rid of „intransigent annexionism”⁵⁶. Similar opinions were also expressed by Ukrainians, sometimes giving, in addition, interesting examples of statements by Polish politicians associated with the Polish National Committee in Paris. Without going deeper into details of this dispute, we should note that, in principle, it monopolized the publications related to the Ukrainian question throughout the spring of 1918, besides, of course, the issue of the Brest Peace itself. The dispute was conducted mainly in Geneva's and Lausanne's newspapers: „Journal de Genève”, „Genevois”

⁵⁵ *Ukraine et Pologne*, „GdL” 26 II 1918, s. 1–2.

⁵⁶ *Les peuples de l'ancienne Pologne-Lituanie*, „CdG” 30 III 1918, s. 5.

and „Gazette de Lausanne”, although German-speaking newspapers also participated in it⁵⁷.

Eventually, the final note of the Ukrainian subject in the Swiss press during the war was November 1918 and the erupting Polish-Ukrainian fights for the shape of the borders of the two countries. Although from the Polish or Ukrainian viewpoint it was a highly vital moment at the level of the development of state independence, the Swiss did not devote so much attention to it. There were certainly reports on the outbreak of open fights, speculations about the potential directions of the development of the situation from the political and military perspective as well as information items concerning the Polish-Ukrainian questions imported from Vienna or Warsaw. Nevertheless, their relatively small number and informational rather than analytical nature do not permit the attribution of any special role to this stage in the sense of popularizing the subject in question in Swiss society. In view of the fact that it was keenly interested in nationality issues during the whole war, this conclusion can be somewhat surprising. It should however be remembered that it was the moment of the ending of the world war, which in itself posed very important questions about the future of Europe, including Switzerland, and that is why the public opinion focused their attention on Paris rather than on Central and Eastern Europe. It is also in order to add that the turn of autumn and winter of 1918 was the period in which similar problems were decided in other parts of Europe, which also had its impact on the scope of the presence of the Polish-Ukrainian subject.

It should be also observed that in the context of respect for the rights of nations to their own identity with reference to the areas of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland in the circumstances of the time, a new problem arose, which was the Jewish question. It concerned both the Polish- and Ukrainian-controlled territories. However, both parties showed a tendency towards using this issue for their own, including propaganda, ends. This is best illustrated by the events in Lviv, where there was a pogrom of the Jews, which started discussions on who was responsible for it and what the scale of events was⁵⁸. In Switzerland they were publicized mainly through the Jewish Press Office in Zurich, which was biased against the Poles. In November, the Council of Jewish Students in Switzerland launched an anti-Polish press campaign, spreading information that the

⁵⁷ P. Bednarz, *Die in der Schweizer Presse im zeitlichen Umfeld des Friedens von Brest-Litowsk verbreitete Idee eines Bundeslandes in Osteuropa*, „*Studia Białorutenistyczne*” 2017, 11, s. 71–79.

⁵⁸ Por. M. Klimecki, Z. Karpus, *Walki o Lwów w listopadzie 1918 r. i wojna polsko-Ukrainian-ska: bezpieczeństwo ludności polskiej, żydowskiej i Ukrainianskiej w stolicy Galicji*, Toruń 2020.

pogroms allegedly covered as many as 34 localities⁵⁹. The Polish circles tried in turn to rectify the picture, presenting also the true background of the events, which was the activity of the Ukrainians. Before leaving Lviv they reportedly released criminals from prisons and encouraged them to destabilize the city taken over by the Poles. The convicts were reputedly joined in by Austrian deserters. This case monopolized news reports from Galicia and continued until February of next year, basically eliminating other themes of the Polish-Ukrainian reality.

It follows from the foregoing observations on the presence of the Ukrainian question in the Swiss press in the days of the First World War that these subjects changed rather quickly. In the course of barely four years the Swiss viewpoint on the Ukrainian question underwent a considerable evolution. From an almost total ignorance of the problem at the beginning of the war and the linking of the future of the Ukrainians with the Polish question, to the Swiss public becoming aware of the existence of a separate nationality at the time of the Austro-German offensive in 1915, to attempts to cope with the Ukrainian political concepts in 1916, imputation to the Ukrainians of the federalist vision of the state after the February Revolution in Russia, to finally condemning their collaboration with the Central Powers at the time of the Brest Peace. This is certainly some kind of generalization because not all newspapers evolved towards this direction. In particular, the Germanophile press presented the 1918 events in a somewhat different light, but in principle it is in this way that the Swiss public opinion at large perceived the Ukrainian question at the time of the war. Although a detailed analysis of particular stages requires further study, there is no doubt that it was one of more dynamically developing issues regarding the rights of a nation to self-determination that the Swiss journalism pursued in that period.

Another conclusion concerning the whole of these issues is that the Swiss public opinion assumed too naively that the political-system foundations upon which the Swiss established their political life could be easily transplanted into Central and Eastern Europe. The principle of solidarism and respect for national, religious and language identity proved unacceptable in the conditions of the Ukrainian-Polish-Belarusian-Lithuanian borderlands. This had to lead to the self-reflection of the Swiss opinion-forming circles and redefinition of the role and scope of the propaganda policy practiced by Switzerland during the post-war period. The promotion of independence for the „new nations” in Europe, so popular in this country at the time of the First World War, had to give

⁵⁹ *Les pogroms en Pologne*, „GdL” 23 XI 1918, s. 2; *Les prétendus pogroms en Pologne*, „GdL” 28 XI 1918, s. 1.

in to somewhat different narrative amounting to the idea of „Sonderfall Schweiz” i.e., the emphasis on the uniqueness of the Swiss as a tolerant nation and capitalizing on this in the international space. The participation of the Swiss in the work of the League of Nations agencies supervising the observance of respect for the rights of national minorities, including in the territories inhabited by the Poles⁶⁰, was one of the elements of practical implementation of such an image policy. Obviously, it was not only the Ukrainian question that contributed to this, there being far more similar issues.

Finally, it should be noted that in the face of the failure of the idea of establishing an independent Ukrainian state after the First World War the issues of the policy towards national minorities practiced by the Ukrainians and those of Ukraine’s borders ceased to be relevant. The alarming symptoms noticed in Switzerland at these levels during the Brest negotiations and at the end of 1918 and beginning of 1919 were never verified while the Ukrainians themselves, being a nation without a state, could count on the sympathy of Swiss society. How much this picture changed during the Second World War and to what extent this change determined the perception of the Ukrainians by Swiss public opinion in the subsequent decades remains an open research problem.

REFERENCES (BIBLIOGRAFIA)

Archival sources (Źródła archiwalne)

Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych:

Generalne Gubernatorstwo Wojskowe w Polsce – Militär General Gouvernement in Polen, sygn. 2008.

Printed sources (Źródła drukowane)

Burckhardt C.J., *Moja misja w Gdańsku*, Warszawa 1970.

Kumaniecki K.W., *Odbudowa państwowości polskiej. Najważniejsze dokumenty*, Warszawa 1924.

Wasilewski L., *Die nationalen und kulturellen Verhältnisse im Sogenannten Westrussland*, Wien 1915.

Press (Prasa)

„Basler Nachrichten” 1914–1916.

„Berner Tagblatt” 1914–1916.

„Courrier de Genève” 1914, 1917–1918.

„Der Bund” 1914, 1916, 1918.

⁶⁰ Felix L. Calonder as the Charman of the Upper Silesian Mixed Commission – P. Stauffer, *Polacy Żydzi Szwajcarzy*, Warszawa 2008, s. 18–93; Carl Jacob Burckhardt as the League of Nations High Commissioner in Gdansk, C.J. Burckhardt, *Moja misja w Gdańsku*, Warszawa 1970.

- „Dziennik Kijowski” 1915.
„Gazette de Lausanne” 1915, 1918.
„Genevois” 1915.
„Journal de Genève” 1915, 1917.
„La Nation” 1917.
„Le Nouveliste” 1914–1915.
„Nationalzeitung” 1914.
„Neue Zürcher Nachrichten” 1914–1915.
„Neue Zürcher Zeitung” 1916–1917.
„Tages Anzeiger” 1916.
„Tribune de Genève” 1917.
„Vaterland” 1916.
„Wiedeński Kurier Polski” 1916.

Studies (Opracowania)

- Achmatowicz A., *Polityka Rosji w kwestii polskiej w pierwszym roku Wielkiej Wojny 1914–1915*, Warszawa 2003.
- Batowski H., *Rozpad Austro-Węgier 1914–1918*, Kraków 1982.
- Bednarz P., *Die in der Schweizer Presse im zeitlichen Umfeld des Friedens von Brest-Litowsk verbreitete Idee eines Bundeslandes in Osteuropa*, „Studia Białorusinistyczne” 2017, 11.
- Bonjour E., *Geschichte der schweizerischen Neutralität*, Basel 1965.
- Clavien A., *Les Helvétistes. Intellectuels et politique en Suisse romande au début du siècle*, Lausanne 1993.
- Florkowska-Frančić H., *Między Lozanną Fryburgiem i Vevey. Z dziejów polskich organizacji w Szwajcarii w latach 1914–1917*, Kraków 1997.
- Grodziski S., *Franciszek Józef I*, Wrocław 1983.
- Kästli T., *Die Schweiz. Eine Republik in Europa. Geschichte des Nationalstaats seit 1798*, Zürich 1998.
- Klimecki M., Karpus Z., *Walki o Lwów w listopadzie 1918 r. i wojna polsko-ukraińska: bezpieczeństwo ludności polskiej, żydowskiej i ukraińskiej w stolicy Galicji*, Toruń 2020.
- Korzeniowski M., Mądzik M., Tarasiuk D., *Tułaczy los. Uchodźcy z Królestwa Polskiego w Rosji w latach I wojny światowej*, Lublin 2007.
- Latawiec K., *W służbie imperium... Struktura społeczno-zawodowa ludności rosyjskiej na terenie guberni lubelskiej w latach 1864–1915*, Lublin 2007.
- Łesiów M., *Unia Brzeska a rozwój kultury i świadomości narodowej Ukraińców*, w: *Unia brzeska z perspektywy czterech stuleci*, red. J.S. Gajek, S. Nabywaniec, Lublin 1998.
- Nabholtz H., Muralt L. v., Feller R., Bonjour E., *Geschichte der Schweiz*, Band 2, Zürich 1938.
- Osadczy W., *Święta Ruś. Rozwój i oddziaływanie idei prawosławia w Galicji*, Lublin 2007.
- Stauffer P., *Polacy Żydzi Szwajcarzy*, Warszawa 2008.
- Stoczewska B., *Litwa, Białoruś, Ukraina w myśli politycznej Leona Wasilewskiego*, Kraków 1998.
- Śladkowski W., *Sprawa polska na kongresie narodowości w Lozannie (27–29.6.1916)*, w: *Polska, Niemcy, Europa. Studia z dziejów myśli politycznej i stosunków międzynarodowych*, red. A. Czubiński, Poznań 1977.
- Wereszycki H., *Pod berłem Habsburgów*, Kraków 1986.
- Wójtowicz-Huber B., *„Ojcowie narodu”. Duchowieństwo greckokatolickie w ruchu narodowym Rusinów galicyjskich (1867–1918)*, Warszawa 2008.
- Zieliński J., *Nasza Szwajcaria. Przewodnik śladami Polaków*, Warszawa 1999.

NOTA O AUTORZE

Piotr Bednarz – doktor habilitowany, pracownik Instytutu Historii Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej w Lublinie. Zainteresowania naukowe koncentrują się wokół tematyki szwajcarskiej. W szczególności interesuje się procesem formowania się świadomości narodowej Szwajcarów w kontekście skomplikowanych stosunków etnicznych, religijnych i językowych panujących w Szwajcarii. Drugim polem badawczym są stosunki szwajcarsko-polskie ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem przełomowych momentów w historii obu stuleci: okresu napoleońskiego, pierwszej i drugiej wojny światowej.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Piotr Bednarz – PhD with habilitation, researcher at the Institute of History of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. His scientific interest is focused on Swiss issues. He is particularly interested in the process of forming national consciousness of the Swiss people in the context of the complicated ethnic, linguistic and religious relations of the country. His second area of research is the Swiss-Polish relations in the 19th and 20th centuries, with particular emphasis on the breakthrough moments in the history of both centuries: the Napoleonic Wars, World War I and World War II.