

**Revolutionising of Jewish and Ukrainian prisoners of war
in Freistadt Camp, Austria-Hungary (1915-1917):
social dimension**

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Abstract

The article analyses the process of revolutionisation of captured Ukrainians and Jews, which was started by the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine after first successes of Ukrainian propaganda in the Freistadt Prisoners of War camp. The Ukrainisation of the camp's inhabitants and their public awareness initiated complex processes of differentiation among the campers, as a result of which they might be divided into three numerically unequal groups – at the very beginning just a few supported the Ukrainian national liberation slogans, the Black Hundred minority of prisoners stood for “Faith,

Tsar and Fatherland”, the third largest group of captives, without having their own worldview, initially followed the Black Hundreds and “Lesser Russians”.

The Black Hundreds made every effort to prevent or at least slow down the process of national and social awakening of the captured Ukrainians and Jews in Freistadt, using also the arrival of A. V. Romanova, the Sister of Mercy. There is every reason to believe that the main tasks of her mission to the camp were propaganda and mobilisation aimed at the Black Hundreds and “Lesser Russians”, and provocation and dissociation concerning members of Ukrainian and Jewish camp organisations. So, it is not surprising, that some members of the camp community used rather radical and even insulting remarks about her. It is obvious that the captives should not have “moved on to personalities”, but the “sister” did everything she could to set a conscious part of the camp community against herself.

Further development of national-patriotic activities led to gradual destruction of the Black Hundred ideology in the minds of prisoners, destroying at the same time “Lesser Russian” ideas in the worldview of Ukrainians. Ukrainian and Jewish activists of the camp managed to develop national cultural and educational centres and attract the majority of the campers to participate in them. Hidden opponents of the Ukrainian and Jewish national ideas no longer dared to oppose them openly, and the camp was more and more gaining its national character, having turned into the centre of Ukrainian life in Austria-Hungary.

Such a high level of self-organisation of captive Ukrainians and Jews caused the Austro-Hungarian authorities to intensify the process of revolutionising the camp, using somewhat unusual (for captivity conditions) forms. It concerned celebration of the 1 of May, when symbols of red colours and appropriate slogans were used, which was strictly prohibited for the subjects of the Austrian emperor during the war. However, all the conditions were created for the prisoners of war to celebrate this holiday, expecting that sooner or later they would return home and spread the patterns of social activities they have experienced.

Key words: captured Ukrainians and Jews, Black Hundreds, public awareness, Freistadt camp, Austria-Hungary.

1. Introduction. Historiography of the problem

Historiography of the problem of the Jewish national organization’s establishment and its activities in the Freistadt POW camp for Ukrainian soldiers has already been analysed in details (Sribnyak et al., 2021). Therefore, it is worth mentioning only main papers by Ukrainian researchers, demonstrating a gradual increase of historical knowledge on the topic (Sribnyak 1999, 2001, 2017, 2021; Kryvosheyeva 2004). Austrian scholars also made a significant contribution to this process, referring to the ma-

terials of the Austrian State Archives (*Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv*), which deposited documents of the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of War (*Kaiserliche und Königliche Kriegsministeriums, 1914-1919*) - (Rappersberger 1988; Fellner 1989: 3-32).

Despite, however, the introduction of a large number of archival documents into scientific circulation, the need to enrich the source base concerning the problem of cooperation between Ukrainian and Jewish organisations in the Freistadt POW camp remains topical. Studying materials stored in the Library and Archives of Canada (The Andry Zhuk Collection) is of particular importance. Valuable source information can also be found in the "Union for the Liberation of Ukraine" collection, which contains memoirs by former members of this Ukrainian organisation who were most actively involved in the development of cultural, national and socio-political work in the Freistadt camp (Danylenko 1979; Dubrivnyy 1979; Simovych 1979). It should be emphasized on the expediency of using as a source the memories by O. Varava, the prisoner of war, who remained for a long time in the Freistadt camp (Kobets' 1959: 349-370).

While preparing this survey, the authors were to consider what kind of the creative method should be applied by a war historian, as the history of captivity is an integral part of all wars. There is probably no unequivocal answer to this question, although there is every reason to believe that no research technique is universal and any method does not cover all the multidimensionality and complexity of war and captivity as historical phenomena. At the same time, it can be argued that the scientific elaboration of the problem of keeping prisoners of different nationalities in the POW camps of Austria-Hungary highlights the need for an in-depth interpretation of the empirical material.

In the context of this point of view, it seems appropriate to use the instruments of the narrative methodology, which provides a description of the social phenomenon (in this case: solidarity in the struggle of the two oppressed nations in the Russian Empire - Ukrainian and Jewish - against Russian chauvinism, the struggle which unfolded in conditions of camp isolation and led to their revolutionising). The

application of this method required consistency in the presentation of events, ordering and openness of the final result.

The narrative in a broad sense is both a method and a central characteristic of the object of study, including cultural, interpretational and identity-focused aspects. It should also be emphasized that the historical narrative is characterised primarily by its concentration on micro-processes, event orientation, temporality, linear dependence of depicted phenomena and processes.

The methods used by the present authors include military anthropology, focused on the study of worldviews, sign systems and fundamental forms of human behaviour, mostly hidden and not clearly articulated. Such concealment requires its decoding, penetration into the hidden layers of consciousness of both prisoners and certain national groups in their environment. While using methodology of social determinism it became possible to analyse general psychological state of the prisoners in camp isolation.

2. Presentation of the research problem

2.1. Ukrainian community of the camp in its struggle against the Russian Black Hundreds

In October 1914, the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (ULU) began preparations for the Ukrainianisation of the camp of prisoners of war in Freistadt (*K.u.k. Kriegsgefangenen-lager in Freistadt, Oberösterreich*), which primarily concerned the improvement of food and living conditions of the campers. Equally important was regulation of a number of organisational and financial aspects, viz. the official consent of the Austria-Hungarian Ministry of War to carry out national educational and political activities by ULU, as well as the removal prisoners of other nationalities from captivity (first of all Russians, in particular those having clearly chauvinistic beliefs – the Black Hundreds).

The process of Ukrainisation of the camp began in November 1914, when the Union received the official permission from Austrian military authorities. After that, Mykhailo Havrylko, the ULU representative, was delegated to the camp, whose activities led to creation of the first grouping of Ukrainian prisoners of war, aimed at

separation of Ukraine from Russia. However, the rising of pro-independence slogans by the members of this grouping caused a resistance of those prisoners having in their minds remnants of Russian patriotic stereotypes and frantic agitation of the Black Hundreds against the Ukrainian liberation idea in the camp. Under the influence of this, most of the prisoners considered the ULU representatives to be “Austrians”, “aliens”, and even “spies” acting against tsarist Russia and treated them with great distrust.

Adherents of the Russian monarchical idea and Slavic “unity” had the whole arsenal of methods to intimidate Ukrainians in the camps, including threats of physical violence and beatings Ukrainian activists; throwing stones at the windows of barracks where Ukrainian studies and lectures took place; destruction of Ukrainian-language printed materials and camp publications; obstacles to holding national events by singing “God Save the King”. They also threatened to insert the numbers and names of Ukrainian activists into the “Black Book” with its subsequent transfer to the Russian counterintelligence (which could cause harm to their relatives); to damage the equipment at schools and other Ukrainian institutions, to give up any humanitarian aid in case of its Ukrainian origin; to avoid attendance of Ukrainian schools and participation in any national and organisational work in the camps. Besides, the Black Hundreds used other methods of intimidation in the camps, including toss of threatening letters to Ukrainian barracks.

These actions deterred campers from participation in the social and national life of the camp, and eventually forced the ULU to temporarily give up proclaiming independence slogans among the captured Ukrainians. At the same time, the officials of the ULU decided to intensify cultural and educational work among the campers, and in mid-December 1914 sent Dr Vasyl Simovich to Freistadt, and in some time – Mykola Golubets and Osyp Bezpalko. At the same time, in a similar way did the “Black Hundred”, which used a duty option in its subversive activities, viz. the wearing of a special badge (armband) by German language students and their exemption from compulsory labour in the camp. This circumstance gave rise to many conflicts, as a number of prisoners, together with the elders of the barracks, actively resisted

the students of this course: “they did not give bread, lunch, snatched books from their hands, tore and threw them into antics” (Simovych 1979: 87).

However, it did not stop the work, proving the futility of all attempts by the “Black Hundred” to disrupt educational work in the camp. Meanwhile, at this time the ULU Education Department absolutely changed the focus of its work, concentrating on discussions of pure social issues and explaining the expediency of removing Black Hundreds from the camp as soon as possible and replacing the elders of the barracks by pro-Ukrainian people. Eventually, during spring and summer of 1915, the camp got rid of the fiercest Black Hundreds (who were moved to multinational prisoner-of-war camps for the Russian army soldiers), however a significant number of them remained in the camp. The latter made every effort to fight against Ukrainianness, although they should have avoided open demonstrations against Ukrainians, as would have been punished by being transferred to another camp.

All this time, Ukrainian activists had to take into account one more circumstance that complicated national and organisational and public work in the camp, as noted in his letter to the ULU Presidium of 15 September 1915, the Head of the camp education department Roman Dombchevsky. In the mentioned letter, he pointed out that “even now we have a significant number of Jewish prisoners, who in every way have different privileges, exploit others, hinder our work, especially in the field of music, are openly hostile to those co-prisoners who are beginning to become conscious Ukrainians. Those Jews dare make insulting expressions [statements] against Ukraine. They do all this because they have shoulders backing them” (CDAVO f: 52verso). While mentioning “shoulders” R. Dombchevsky obviously meant that they were supported and patronised in the appointment to various camp positions by the Jews from among the employees of the Austrian commandant’s office of the camp.

Due to successful Ukrainian action in Freistadt, the wave of anti-Ukrainian hysteria in the camp gradually began to fade, which enabled to found the “Club for Studying Social Issues” (“Social Club”) – (CDAVO b: 4) in late March, causing significant expansion of those sympathising the Ukrainian cause. And as soon as in August 1915, it became possible to form a “Social and Educational Circle” (SEC) from among the Ukrainian prisoners, whose members, together with ULU representatives,

resumed their political work among the prisoners “in the Ukrainian, patriotic, anti-Russian spirit” (LaAC). To this end, at the meetings of its members, socio-political problems were discussed, after which Ukrainian activists raised the issues in barracks, discussing them in the presence of a wider circle of prisoners.

Thus, in particular, on 7 November 1915, at the SEC regular meeting, the issue of “What the democratic state should be, for which we have to fight” was debated. In his presentation, prisoner Pochepaylo noted that “in order to be a democratic state, it is necessary first all to get rid of the tsar and all his ministers. It is necessary to seek all political rights [...] so that the state is ruled by the people”. Members of the SEC Education Department Jacko Ostapchuk and Osyp Okhrymovych took part in the discussion. The first stressed that Ukrainians “must seek autonomy wherever we are, either in Russia or in Austria”, and O. Okhrymovych concluded: “if we want to live our own lives, we must seek political and national rights” (CDAVO a: 22).

It was also important that daily courses of “social” sciences were held for all comers in the camp, which included lectures on the history of culture, sociology, political economy, state law, national studies and history of Ukraine, which were intended for more educated prisoners gathering from 100 to 300 people (LaAC). Finally, the prisoners could learn the basics of public life at *viches* (general meetings of all prisoners), which were regularly convened to discuss recent political and military events, as well as issues related to the everyday life of the campers. *Viches*, chaired by members of the SEC Education Department, gathered up to several hundred prisoners and were an effective and efficient means of national-patriotic and public education of Ukrainian prisoners (Rozvaha 1917: 4). An effective means for social development and national awareness of prisoners was the “Rozvaha” camp magazine published since June 1915.

Thanks to these activities, by the end of the year a small group of Ukrainians showed their willingness to secretly leave for Ukraine in order to undermine the rear of the tsarist army by carrying out revolutionary propaganda. According to archival documents, some of them were transported to Ukraine, where they carried out special and propaganda tasks of the Austro-Hungarian General Staff. However, to determine whether their shadow activities were effective is a rather problematic task,

though in any case it can be argued that the returnees have contributed into the revolutionising of Ukrainian society and future overthrow of the Russian tsarism.

It should be mentioned that the Ukrainianisation of the camp and carrying out the large-scale cultural, national and socio-political activities there, was used not only by the captured Ukrainians, but also by the Jews who came from Ukrainian lands. Having suffered in a similar way mainly from the Russian Black Hundreds and remembering or sometimes even surviving the recent Jewish pogroms during the First Russian Revolution, the captured Jews in Freistadt found it useful for themselves to remain in the POW camp for Ukrainians, where they were given every opportunity for national and public self-realisation (Sribnyak 2021; Sribnyak et al., 2021).

While, however, promoting the Ukrainian and Jewish national movements in the Freistadt camp and even using them to their advantage, Austro-Hungarian authorities retained freedom of manoeuvre at the foreign political stage, hoping to conclude (under favourable circumstances) a separate peace agreement with tsarist Russia. To this end, the Austro-Hungarian military department tried to distance itself as much as possible from the ULU and the political component in its activities. Moreover, in some of the “sensitive” issues for the Russians, official Vienna resorted to various curtsseys in front of Russian authorities, following sometimes in the footsteps of their chauvinistic-great-power policy.

Among such irritating moments in bilateral Austrian-Russian relations (apart from the military component, as the two countries pursued active hostilities against each other) was the Austrian veiled support of the development of Ukrainian and Jewish national-liberation idea in the Freistadt camp. And although the Austrians were aware that this information was no longer a secret to Russian intelligence, they tried to limit the possible negative publicity in Russian government about the national separation of Ukrainian prisoners of war from the tsarist army, because under some circumstances it could significantly complicate official Vienna’s achievement of signing a truce with St. Petersburg. As a result, the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Ministry tried not to send unnecessary “negative signals” to the Russian ruling establishment, sometimes making a beautiful face in a bad game.

2.2. Ukrainian and Jewish camp organisations facing the Russian Sister of Mercy's visit

Duality and inconsistency of Austrian authorities became especially evident during a visit to the Freistadt camp made by Alexandra V. Romanova (in archival documents her initials are erroneously given as "V. K."), the Sister of Mercy of the Red Cross Petrograd Community of St. George. Her arrival at the camp became an effective catalyst for the Black Hundreds' activities, which decided to use this situation in their actions against Ukrainians. The very preparation for her arrival in Freistadt met all the worst expectations of the campers, but strict demands of the commandant's office made Ukrainian and Jewish national organisations agree with the decision concerning a "passive" attitude to her visit. The Austrians also demanded that organised Ukrainians and Jews in no way demonstrate the Freistadt's national character (either Ukrainian or Jewish), to the eminent visitor. Realizing that A. Romanova's visit was caused not so much by intentions to help the prisoners as by the desire of the Russians to find out their moods and real attitude to the tsarist government, put the heads of Ukrainian and Jewish organisations in a rather difficult situation (CDAVO d: 5).

This was also stated in the undated "Protest" (apparently, it was written ex post facto), signed by members of the Ukrainian political organisation board (including its chairman Ivan Lazko). It said that before her arrival in Freistadt, "the officials instructed to hide everything that testifies to the nature of the work done here". The commandant's office instructed to treat the Sister as loyally as possible, moreover, a few days before her arrival "all prisoners were taken to trainings and ordered to greet her with cheers when the Sister would enter the barracks". And although members of the Ukrainian organisation had another opinion on how to meet her, they were "completely paralysed" by the commandant office's orders (CDAVO f: 295; CDAVO c: 1).

On 2 January 1916, A. Romanova arrived in Freistadt, where she was present at the consecration of the church in the third section of the camp on the same day. Initially, there was a certain distance between A. Romanova and the Ukrainians, so when talking to prisoners near the church, the Sister received a negative reply to her

question “Aren’t they talking about politics here?” (as the Austrian commandant’s office wanted), although there were about 300 members of the Ukrainian SEC of Freistadt there (CDAVO f: 296).

Prisoner Serhiy Antonenko, who was witnessing her communication with the prisoners, described in his report about her first meeting with Freistadt campers: Ukrainians “behaved decently and none of us said a word about politics, but on the contrary, everyone was happy to meet her in the best way possible”. Meanwhile, the “Sister” treated the captured Ukrainians “very badly”, starting to disgrace the camp priest Petro Kateryniuk only for “not praying in the church for Tsar Nicholas II, [...] reading the word of God in Ukrainian” (obviously, according to A. Romanova, it should have been done only in Russian. But the most amusing moment is her demand concerning glorification of Moscow tsar-autocrat in Austria-Hungary, which was to be done by the camp priest P. Kateryniuk who was a subject of the Austrian Emperor.

Then A. Romanova “began to find out whether there are any Russian soldiers here pursuing politics and intimidated prisoners with all sorts of fears”. According to S. Antonenko, she obviously purposed to cause riots in the camp, so he concluded his report with a wish: “For such sisters not to be sent any more to our camp. I don’t want provocateurs” (CDAVO c: 12, 15-15verso). It should be noted that this final remark by the prisoner is extremely accurate, and fully characterises the purpose of her stay in the Ukrainian camp.

A similar comment on her visit to the camp is given in another report – by “Lazar”, the captive (perhaps it was Lazar Lozovyk), according to which it can also be concluded that the “Sister” was primarily interested in “politics”. While being in one of the barracks, she again asked the prisoners a direct question, “Aren’t they talking about politics here?”, to which heard in response – “But here all are liberating Ukraine” and was shown Ukrainian newspapers and ULU brochures. The “Sister” then asked if the prisoners attended Ukrainian schools and cultural centres, to which the Black Hundred part of the prisoners responded quite appropriately: “Yes, we attend just to hinder them” (Ukrainians).

In a while, prisoner Lazarus joined the conversation, which gained somewhat different nature, as he expressed doubts about whether the Russian tsar really cares about the fate of the prisoners, because the families of prisoners in Russia are dying of hunger without “shelter and asylum” and therefore all her appeals to hold on and remain faithful to the autocrat look as false ones. The “Sister” reacted with giving up further listening to him and called out the Austrian soldier after which Lazarus was arrested (CDAVO c: 10-11verso).

After that, A. Romanova visited another section of the camp and the infirmary. The “Sister’s visit” of the camp was a real test for the Ukrainian activists, whose national feelings were offended by clearly unworthy treatment of them by some Austrian officers and soldiers. Besides, on 3 January 1916, the “Sister” went on the offensive herself – having learnt about carrying out Ukrainian activities in the camp, she “began to threaten those who carried out such work and began to call for patriotism” (CDAVO f: 296).

Similar information about A. Romanova’s exceptionally provocative behaviour can be found in the “Protest” of the Jewish Educational Circle (dated 10 January 1916, signed by its chairman Aron Vaks, addressed to the ULU Education Department), from which it is clear that she deliberately caused indignation among the captives, because the Black Hundred began accusing Ukrainians and Jews of carrying out their national activities, while members of the camp organisations protested against these interrogations of A. Romanova, which had nothing to do with her official mission as a Red Cross representative (CDAVO d: 6).

The Chairman of the Jewish Educational Circle, A. Vaks, also submitted a report on the “Sister’s” visit to barrack No. 18, which shows that some of the prisoners present there (including A. Vaks, D. Brodsky and Boyko)¹ gave her a “cold shower” of awkward questions. Initially, in response to A. Romanova’s words about “severe punishments” in Austria, A. Vaks noted that the people in Russia serve not less sentences, mentioning that fighters against the tsarist regime were serving hard labour in Siberia, and demanded that the ‘Sister’ would address him using *you* rather than

¹ Mere personal surnames without names or their initial are given if not found in the archival documents.

thou. D. Brodsky reminded her of the 9 January 1905 events in St. Petersburg, of bullets and Cossack whips, brutal suppression of riots in Poltava and Kharkiv (CDAVO c: 37-39).

In response, the “Sister” classified such conversations as “politics”, and when she lacked arguments at all, she demanded that A. Vaks be removed from the barrack on the grounds that he was a resident of another barrack. Prior to that, she had instructed a representative of the commandant’s office to write down A. Vaks’s number and promised “troubles” for him with the commandant. Finally, A. Romanova offered prisoners the Russian-language religious literature, which the campers gave up. Completely confused by the “inhospitable” reception, the “Sister” ended the meeting with a stencil phrase – “Remember that you are Russian soldiers and Mother Russia will take care of you”, and wished that the prisoners did not listen to “people with non-Russian soul”. In response, A. Vaks reasonably remarked that “the truth stings her eyes”, and A. Romanova, criticising the “weakness” of some of the prisoners (apparently referring to A. Vaks), called on those “who are stronger” to support weak and unsure (CDAVO c: 39-40).

In the end, A. Romanova decided not to visit those barracks where the majority were Ukrainians (“away from sin!”) (CDAVO c: 43), which motivated members of the Ukrainian organisation to inform anyway the distinguished Russian representative about real political aspirations of the Ukrainians. I. Lazko was the first to speak, after which he was immediately arrested at the request of the “Sister”, and camp officer Plevka failed even to state the reason for his arrest, thus giving impression that Austrian authorities were ready to extradite “whoever chauvinistic Romanova wants”.

Prisoners Kornyatovsky and Faktorovich were also arrested (although they should be released near the guard room), while the Black Hundreds provocatively announced the future hanging of the arrested. During the “Sister’s” visit of the 1st section of the camp, the Austrians ordered that each prisoner stayed in his barrack, but if members of Ukrainian and Jewish organisations tried to enter the barrack, guards Fischer and Berger beat Ukrainians in the face and Jews were forbidden to enter (CDAVO f: 295-296 CDAVO d: 6-7).

In the end, activists of Ukrainian and Jewish organisations managed to demonstrate to A. Romanova their real attitude to her and her mission, having arranged a “warm farewell” for her. On 3 January 1916, at the entrance gate of the camp, as she boarded the carriage, slogans of “Down with autocracy!”, “Long live political freedom!” were shouted, stilled by the shouts of “Hurray!” (CDAVO c: 13-13verso). Just afterwards, according to Oleksa Loshachenko’s report, prisoner Schreyer struck in the face Pocherpailo, who had shouted the slogan. It seems a bit strange, but in this case the commandant’s office reacted properly, although not harshly enough – Schreyer was deprived of food for one day and had to work for 10 days without payment.

Summing up A. Romanova’s visit to Freistadt, it should be noted that it did not and could not lead to changes for the better for the prisoners of this camp, because in addition to a standard set of identical phrases concerning the need to follow and keep faith in the tsar, the eminent envoy brought only Russian-language religious literature. There are enough grounds to claim that A. Romanova surveyed the political views of the members of Ukrainian and Jewish camp communities, probably having received relevant instructions from the Russian secret service (although the latter statement cannot be proved with archival sources by the authors).

2.3. Temporary activation and further extinction of Black Hundred influence in the camp

A. Romanova’s stay in the camp exacerbated the situation, after her departure there were a number of local clashes in Freistadt between adherents of the Black Hundreds and Ukrainian and Jewish activists, and some of them resulted in fighting. An attempt made by the members of Jewish educational group to organise a meeting in the Tea Room was disrupted by the Black Hundreds. The worst thing was that representatives of the Austrian camp administration actually sided with the latter, which became most evident on 5 January 1916, when Lieutenant Vlakh in his address to the prisoners expressed his regret that Ukrainians and Jews dared express their protest to A. Romanova. In his opinion, it was absolutely “tactless”, because she is

a “martyr who, for the sake of relief of her imprisoned compatriots’ life, resorted to a difficult detour of the camps” (CDAVO d: 8-9).

These statements were retold by the elders of the barracks to the captives, which further intensified the Black Hundreds’ aggression against Ukrainians and Jews, “having despised” the eminent envoy – while even Austrian officers treated her with respect. Some of the most primitive prisoners, instigated by the Black Hundreds, was spreading the call for “Beating the Liberators!” and when meeting with Ukrainians and Jews, threatened them with reprisals, and sometimes moved from threats to actions (CDAVO d: 9-10).

This was done, in particular, by the Black Hundred member, Fischel Rozinker (Rozecker), who on 4 January 1916 physically insulted a member of the Jewish organisation, Lazar Lozovyk. The latter, having entered the Tea Room, was “careless” to comment on unfriendly shouting by the crowd of prisoners addressed to Romanova, mentioning that everyone has the right to speak freely and no one has reason to forbid him or her to do it. In response, prisoner F. Rozinker unexpectedly hit the victim on the head with his hand, and grabbing a glass from the table, tried to go on beating L. Lozovyk (it was stopped by the prisoners standing nearby) (CDAVO d: 2).

The latter filed a complaint against F. Rozinker to the camp commandant’s office, and on 6 January 1916, at a battalion inspection, he directly addressed the camp officer, Lieutenant Vlakh, believing that Austrian authorities would fairly deal with F. Rozinker’s actions. But the latter “played to the fore” and in his turn appealed (through an interpreter) to Vlakh, explaining his actions as follows: “Because I am a Russian soldier, and Lazar Lozovyk, who accused me, offended the Russian Sister of Mercy in my presence” (CDAVO d: 13, 14).

The dirty insult of A. Romanova (whether it took place in fact) impressed the monarchical “loyal” feelings of Lieutenant Vlakh so much, that he suddenly hit L. Lozovyk in the face with all his might, shouting out obscenities and dirty curse words at the latter. He even gave up listening to any of Lozovyk’s explanations, and intended to go on beating the prisoner, but at the last moment ordered the Austrian soldier to take L. Lozovyk out of the barrack.

Paradoxically, Vlakh, an officer of the Austro-Hungarian army, behaved in the camp like a real Russian “*derzhymorda* (assassin)”, bowing so lowly in front of A. Romanova as if he was not an Austrian but a tsarist Black Hundred officer. He obviously had instructions from the commandant to avoid any excesses during A. Romanova’s visit to the Freistadt camp, especially since she came here as a Sister of Mercy and the International Red Cross representative, and therefore had a special “immunity” status. Some of her actions in the camp had, however, a distinctly pro-Russian connotation, aimed at mobilisation of the Black Hundred element and the camp “swamp” (“Lesser Russians”) under “United and Indivisible Russia” slogans. This Austrian officer should not have tolerated in any way, unless assumed that he was a hidden Russian “agent of influence” in this Austrian camp.

Basing on such a behaviour of the Austrian officer, the head of the Jewish educational group A. Vaks drew the attention of the ULU Education Department members to the “threatening” situation in which the national educational work in the camp may appear because of Black Hundreds’ attacks who feel their impunity due to “really Solomonic justice”, dispensed by Lieutenant Vlakh in Freistadt. Instead of promoting this work, which from the very beginning was aimed at national and political upbringing of prisoners, named and unnamed Austrian officials created a “favourable atmosphere” for the Black Hundred rampage. A. Vaks expressed his protest concerning results of the constructive work of national organisations in the camp which were consistently destroyed, and they themselves were put in “almost impossible conditions” (CDAVO d: 4, 10-11).

It is confirmed by a letter to the commandant’s office of 17 January 1916, signed by several dozen members of the Ukrainian organisation of the camp, in which prisoners inform about spreading of false rumours and gossips by the elders of barracks and Black Hundreds, and in particular that “Austria and Germany cannot help liberate Ukraine, but they can give weapons” so that the prisoners could oppose Moscow government independently. Such groundless allegations made a “terrible impression” on the campers, and all attempts to appease them were unsuccessful for several days (CDAVO c: 5).

The Black Hundred also spread other “news”, as if “Sister” Romanova had managed to achieve permission for prisoners to leave the Freistadt camp, and for them it was necessary to “be registered before departure”, and those who refused to do it, were threatened by the elders of the barracks to inform their names to Russia which demoralised even some of the prisoners loyal to Ukrainian idea. Members of the Ukrainian organisation insisted on termination of such limitless agitation held in one of the camp sections, which corresponded the interests of the commandant’s office of the camp. For this reason, all Black Hundreds agitators should be taken out of the camp, a list of them had been prepared and Ukrainians were ready to submit it to the commandant’s office. As a palliative, according to the members of the Ukrainian organisation’s idea, this category of prisoners could be “interned” in the camp itself, being separated in a large barrack, to limit their influence on the mass of the captives (CDAVO c: 5verso).

Evidently, such a prospect led to immediate retaliation, but the only opportunity for the ULU was to interpellate the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of Defence to remove Lieutenant Vlakh from the Ukrainian camp because of his “Russia-centrism” and deliberate destruction of national work in Freistadt. So far no documents have been found to confirm his recall from the camp, but further development of cultural and educational work in the camp suggests that it happened soon, and the positions in the commandant’s office were occupied by responsible Austrian servicemen who were aware of the importance of strengthening national and especially consistent anti-Russian beliefs in consciousness of Ukrainians and Jews.

The events accompanying A. Romanova’s visit, as well as further activation of the Black Hundred in the camp, prompted SEC to take measures for self-defence and create the “Combat Organisation” in February 1916. Its members were supposed to “resist people who consciously hinder educational work” in the camp, while “resistance, as circumstances will require, may even be physical”, because Ukrainophobes at times “cannot understand any arguments, except physical force”. Defending the need for such measures against the Black Hundreds, the captured Ukrainian Mochulsky argued that it is how they should be fought against, because the latter

“interfere into our work at every step”, and therefore the “Combat Organization” will judge and punish them by beating without witnesses (CDAVO e: 17-17verso).

Ukrainian activist Holobrodsky disagreed with such an approach to the tasks of the “Combat Organization”, because in his opinion, such actions of “militants” “can easily lead to hooliganism, provoking an organised enemy gang with its tactics from the opposite side”, which in turn can lead to “fights and various hostilities between people”, and this will negatively affect the cultural and educational work in the camp. O. Okhrymovych, a member of the ULU Education Department, put an end to this discussion, believing that the Black Hundreds were unworthy of terrorist methods to be used against them, as in most cases this practice did not achieve its goal (CDAVO e: 17verso-18). However, the very existence of such organisation objectively cooled “hot heads” of the Black Hundred mass and forced them to avoid conflicts with Ukrainians.

And during spring 1916 the camp was rapidly changing, as well as most of its inhabitants, who had the opportunity to freely create their own national and public environment. Freistadt had every opportunity for it, having at the disposal of the campers “a barrack-theatre for a thousand spectators, a separate barrack-hall for the *viches*, meetings, sittings; separate small barracks for all kinds of cultural establishments; for a huge book collection with tens of thousands volumes collected through donations held among Galician citizens, for a photo studio, for artistic studio, the editorial office of “Rozvaha” weekly magazine and a printing house [...]. And absolutely different from other camps way of life, internal life, background and work of the prisoners. The population of the Freistadt camp had the opportunity to live a full social and cultural life” (Kobets’ 1959: 350).

2.4. Constructing a new social space for campers after the February Revolution in Russia

In early 1917, the Ukrainian community of prisoners in the Freistadt camp reached the apogee of its development, which required institutional changes in its internal life, and, in particular, a radical reorganisation of all aspects of the Ukrainian camp community on the basis of significant expansion of rights and responsibilities

of prisoners. To discuss and resolve this issue on 28 January, the Ukrainian community convened a general meeting of all members of the camp organisations, which decided to establish the Main Ukrainian Council (MUC), a prisoner-of-command unit (headquarters) to which all Ukrainian camp units would be subjected. The meeting also approved a project to reorganise all camp structures, which were to be transformed from SEC sections into self-governing statutory societies (Orhanizatsiyni formy..., 1917: 124-125).

However, despite these social transformations, there were still a large number of prisoners in the camp who remained deluded by the values of the “Russkiy Mir” (“Russian World”) while remaining loyal to the Russian tsar and, what is worst, ready for brutal violence in defence of their own ignorance and bankrupt Russian great-power imperial ideas. The 1917 February Revolution came as a shock to this category of prisoners, who were finally marginalised due to the loss of the very foundations of their backward worldview. In contrast to it, social activities of Ukrainians and Jews significantly increased, and in spring 1917, almost at every *viche* in the camp its participants approved various memoranda, appeals and statements addressed to the Provisional Government of Russia and the Central Rada of Ukraine.

Changes in socio-political consciousness of the campers became especially vivid during the celebration of the May Day holiday in the camp, which began in the evening of 30 April 1917. On that day, a meeting was held by the Jewish Social and Educational Circle for all its members in the “Jewish Intellectual Barrack”, and members of Ukrainian camp organisations and the MUC leadership were also invited. As noted in the forenote to the “ULU Visnyk” by prisoner Joseph Kazban (CDAVO g: 2-18), the apartment of this barrack “inside was decorated with large and small red flags and small multi-coloured ones. In the middle, above the red rostrum, hung a portrait of Karl Marx, [...] surrounded by fresh spruce branches and decorated with artificial flowers, with portraits of Engels and Lafargue on the sides”. Below them, the slogan “Workers of the world, unite!” in Yiddish was placed. According to J. Kazban, “everything was so clean in the barrack that it evoked a festive mood” (CDAVO g: 2).

The celebration was started by the orchestra that playing “La Marseillaise”, then “C[omrade] B.” greeted the Ukrainian guests in Ukrainian, expressing hope that

after their return to the renewed Russia, the Jewish people will go along with the Ukrainian people to gain freedom, truth and equality, that both nations will act “together to fight a common enemy – the capitalists and bourgeoisie”. Then another longer speech of political content was given criticising tsarist Russia (in Russian). The orchestra performed “Liberated Russia” composition by Ya. Schreyer after which the “New Time” poem was recited in Yiddish. Another speaker from the Jewish community (“C[omrade] M.”) said that “Russian absolutism oppressed all Russian peoples, most of all us – Jews, we were slaves of slaves for two thousand years, and in Russia we were oppressed as never before, and only now a new star of freedom has shone in front of us”. He stressed that the numerous sacrifices, put on the altar of Jewish liberation were not in vain, and thanks to them “we did not die as a nation, but lived, though oppressed, and now we will live not a slave-like but a free national life!” (CDAVO g: 3-4).

After several more artistic performances (including a Jewish choir with the “Oath” song), the MUC chairman Ivan Moroz took the floor and wished to resolve as soon as possible “all the disputes to which the Russian government managed to incite the Ukrainians on the one hand, and the Jews – on the other, so that all errors would disappear and never be repeated”. This speech by I. Moroz “was taken to heart by the Jewish organisation [...] having expressed its sincere gratitude through its speaker” (CDAVO g: 4-5).

In their turn, to celebrate the holiday of 1 May, all Ukrainian camp societies joined their efforts and organised a festive march of the campers with orchestra and chorus to the “local” of “Ukrainian Tea-Room”, and “in the front, its participants carried both red flags and their yellow-and-blue one”. At the same time, the orchestra was performing “La Marseillaise”, the chorus – “Boldly, comrades, keep up!” song. After the march, I. Moroz delivered a speech of political content, sharply criticising the existing social order in Russia (CDAVO g: 5-6).

The camp chorus performed revolutionary songs in front of the audience, passionate speeches against the Russian autocracy were delivered from the improvised rostrum, and besides, the speakers recited poems by Ivan Franko (“The Stonemasons” and “The Eternal Revolutionary”). In his final speech, I. Moroz called on the

campers to “take home everything they learned here and spread it everywhere”. On this day, everyone should “stand under the red flag together with his national one!”, all should be united by the two slogans “Long live the united workers!” and “Long live free Ukraine!” (CDAVO g: 7-17).

On the occasion of the holiday, the Jewish organisation addressed a greeting (sealed and signed by the board of the Jewish Social and Educational Circle). The mutual invitation to festivities and the cross-participation of representatives of both Ukrainian and Jewish organisations in the celebration of 1 May, testified to the existence of working and friendly relations between the two national communities, which managed to ensure sustainable development of cultural, national and social life in conditions of camp isolation.

It is obvious that celebration of 1 May became possible thanks to the permission and assistance of the camp commandant’s office, and the corresponding sanction of the Austro-Hungarian authorities. But while authorising this and other similar events in the Freistadt camp, official Vienna nurtured its own goals, which in fact continued and added to a separate vector of German foreign policy. The latter was to weaken the Russian Empire by supporting radical revolutionary parties, whose members crossed the front line in various ways to undermine the rear of the Russian army and revolutionise the subjects of the Russian tsar.

At the same time, the Austrian and German general staffs relied heavily on members of the Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party (Bolsheviks) – (RSDLP (b)), whose leader V. Ulyanov-Lenin and a group of like-minded people were transported in an extraterritorial carriage from Switzerland to Petrograd in early April 1917. The coup d’état he organised a few months later effectively destroyed old Russia and postponed for a short time the collapse and fall of imperial institutions in Austria-Hungary and Germany itself.

Jews who belonged to the RSDLP (b) also played a very active role in removing the Provisional Government from power and while being mobilised in the tsar’s army and taken prisoners, they managed (with the assistance of the Austrian and German authorities) to return home and join the struggle against the tsarism. The Ukrainians performed rather an ancillary function, although struggle of the national

“outskirts” against the Russian imperial centre was one of the important factors for the total collapse of Russia as well.

After the Bolsheviks’ coming to power, Austria-Hungary in fact gave up further revolutionising captured Ukrainians and Jews having no need to do it. However, one of its consequences was a significant “leftist shift” of the political views of some Ukrainians and Jews, pushing off their national feelings to the background. It should be mentioned that not all prisoners were ready for conscious perception of radical political and social slogans, and moreover, of the demagogic slogans of the Bolsheviks.

3. Conclusions

The process of revolutionising the captured Ukrainians was started by the ULU after the first successes of Ukrainian propaganda in the Freistadt camp and emergence of organised circles of conscious Ukrainians, ready to fight for the Ukrainian national idea in conditions of captivity. It should be noted that at this stage almost everyone of the undereducated mass of soldiers did not at all accept the idea of Ukraine’s independence, and in this situation the discussion of social oppression in Russia was more appealing for the campers. Under this condition, even the Black Hundreds’ appeals concerning loyalty to the Russian tsarist regime were rejected by the prisoners, who clearly understood the injustice of the social system in Russia.

The Ukrainisation of the camp’s inhabitants and their public awareness initiated complex processes of differentiation among the campers, as a result of which they might be divided into three numerically unequal groups; at the very beginning, just a few supported the Ukrainian national liberation slogans, the Black Hundred minority of prisoners (among them the ensigns were especially active) stood for “Faith, Tsar and Fatherland”, the third largest group of captives, having no their own worldview, initially followed the Black Hundreds and “Lesser Russians”.

The Black Hundreds made every effort to prevent or at least slow down the process of national and social awakening of the captured Ukrainians and Jews in Freistadt, using also the arrival of A. Romanova, the Sister of Mercy. The latter, using her status and commitments of Austrian authorities, deliberately provoked the na-

tionally engaged part of the prisoners with her deeply convinced “Russianness” (hardly wonder) and her full inability to understand social and national aspirations of Ukrainians and Jews. There is every reason to believe that the main tasks of her mission to the camp were propaganda and mobilisation aimed at the Black Hundreds and “Lesser Russians”, and provocation and dissociation concerning members of Ukrainian and Jewish camp organisations.

A. Romanova’s address to the prisoners using only *thou* testified to her superior, as well as contemptuous attitude to the organised community of prisoners and enables to conclude about her low level of intelligence and lack of upbringing. And it was unworthy of the Russian aristocrat to try to find out the political moods of the campers and the level of their loyalty to the Russian autocrat while carrying out a humanitarian action of visiting any of prisoner-of-war camps in Austria-Hungary. So, it is not surprising that some members of the camp community used rather radical and even insulting remarks about her. It is obvious that the captives should not have “moved on to personalities”, but the “sister” did everything she could to set a conscious part of the camp community against herself.

In the end, the most important point was that thanks to the principal position of the members of Ukrainian and Jewish organisations, which they consistently defended during the visit of the Russian Red Cross representative to the Freistadt camp, it became possible to unite the part of prisoners (both Jews and Ukrainians) having national and democratic worldview. At the same time, the articulation by A. Vaks and his associates of their critical attitude to the imperial regulations in Russia caused many of those campers (who were not members of Ukrainian and Jewish camp organisations) to think over the real situation of the oppressed by the Russian tsar.

The “inhospitable” reception of A. Romanova by the captured Jews in the camp vividly demonstrated a tendency to politisation of their views, and also caused positive changes in the Jewish-Ukrainian dialogue in Freistadt. It was very important that the leading members of the Jewish national organisation set an example of having no compromise with the Russian tsar, and that only political awareness of the peoples enslaved by the Russian Empire (including Jewish and Ukrainian) could shake the

foundations of Moscow despotism and put an end to centuries-old national oppression of “aliens”.

Further development of national and patriotic activities in the Freistadt camp led to gradual destruction of the Black Hundred ideology in the minds of prisoners, while the decline of “Lesser-Russianness” in the worldview of Ukrainians was going on. In 1916, the ideas of national liberation supported by the ULU and Ukrainian activists, were embracing more and more prisoners, so the scales in the confrontation between the Russian Black Hundred obscurantists and Ukrainians began to lean more obviously towards the latter.

Ukrainian and Jewish activists of the camp managed to develop national cultural and educational centres and involve the overwhelming majority of the campers into participation in them. Hidden opponents of the Ukrainian and Jewish national ideas no longer dared to oppose them openly, and the camp was more and more gaining its national content due to the activities of “Rozvaha” camp magazine, amateur theatre (Ukrainian and Jewish), educational courses and schools, national and public associations and other camp institutions. Thus, the competition of worldviews in Freistadt ended in favour of Ukrainians, after which the camp in Freistadt became one of the centres of Ukrainian life in Austria-Hungary, spreading its standards of civic activism (through workers’ teams leaving it for various Austrian regions) far beyond the camp.

Such a high level of self-organisation of captive Ukrainians and Jews caused the Austro-Hungarian authorities to intensify the process of revolutionising the camp, using somewhat unusual methods (as for captivity conditions). It concerned celebration of 1 May, when symbols of red colours and appropriate slogans were used, which was strictly prohibited to the subjects of the Austrian emperor during the war. However, all the conditions were created for the prisoners of war to celebrate this holiday, expecting that sooner or later they will return home and spread the patterns of social activities they have experienced.

However despite such “selfish” intentions of official Vienna, which hoped to radicalise public sentiments in Russia’s “outskirts” by revolutionising captive Ukrainians and Jews, the latter became enabled to learn at least the basic foundations

of political culture and gain some social experience. When they returned home, the former prisoners took an active part in the social and political life of Ukraine, though the vast majority of Ukrainians realised themselves in national parties, while the Jews – in all-Russian ones, which spread their activities to Ukrainian lands.

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