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**DEPUTIES OF THE UKRAINIAN DUMMA COMMUNITY AND STATE DUMA OF RUSSIA, THEIR ACTIVITIES IN THE AUTONOMISTS' UNION**

**Abstract.** *The purpose of the research is to determine the issues and areas of the Ukrainian Duma community's deputies activity in the Autonomists' Union – an organization of peoples in the Russian Empire, which emerged during the revolution of 1905 and sought decentralization of the Russian Empire under the conditions of the national autonomy and autonomism. To find out the reasons and principles of Russia's transformation from an empire to a union of nations with broad autonomous powers. The research methodology is based on the principles of historicism and objectivity. The logic of the presentation of the material is based on the problem historical principle, which made it possible to reveal in a chronological order the main directions of the Ukrainian Duma community's deputies activity and the State Duma of Russia in the Autonomists' Union. The scientific novelty of the research consists in understanding of historical experience of solving the national issue in a multinational state. There has been made an attempt to do an in-depth analysis of Ukrainian deputies-citizens' activities of the First State Duma of Russia and their activities in the Autonomists' Union. Chief focus was on the coherence of actions in terms of resolving the autonomous rights of the Ukrainian and the Polish*

deputies. **The Conclusion.** The Russian Empire was a “prison of nations”, where the majority of its population did not have any elementary rights and national freedoms. In the article there have been analysed the main stages of the Autonomists’ Union in Russia and the Ukrainian deputies participation, the members of the Ukrainian Duma community and the State Duma in the direction of solving the national issue. The study of the citizens’ deputies participation in the Autonomists’ Union remain suite promising direction of research, because the available materials provide information about the activities of the organization, mainly I. Shrah, and occasionally V. Shemet.

**Key words:** duma, declaration, community, faction, magazine, deputy, autonomy, national issue.

## ДЕПУТАТИ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ ДУМСЬКОЇ ГРОМАДИ І ДЕРЖАВНОЇ ДУМИ РОСІЇ ТА ЇХ ДІЯЛЬНІСТЬ У СОЮЗІ АВТОНОМІСТІВ

**Анотація. Мета дослідження** – встановлення проблем і напрямів діяльності депутатів української думської громади у Союзі Автономістів – організації народів у Російській імперії, яка виникла під час революції 1905 р. і добивалася децентралізації Російської імперії на умовах національної автономії та автономізму. З’ясувати підстави та засади трансформації Росії від імперії до спілки народів з широкими автономними повноваженнями. **Методологія дослідження** – базується на принципах історизму та об’єктивності. В основу логіки викладу матеріалу покладено проблемно-історичний принцип, що дає змогу в хронологічній послідовності розкрити основні напрями діяльності депутатів української думської громади І Державної Думи Росії у Союзі автономістів. **Наукова новизна** дослідження полягає в осмисленні історичного досвіду розв’язання національного питання у багатонаціональній державі. Здійснена спроба поглибленого аналізу діяльності українських депутатів-громадівців І Державної Думи Росії та їх діяльність у Союзі автономістів. Акцентовано увагу на узгодженості дій у плані вирішення автономних прав українських та польських депутатів. **Висновки.** Російська імперія була “в’язницею народів”, де більшість з її населення не мали елементарних прав та національних свобод. У статті проаналізовано основні етапи діяльності Союзу Автономістів Росії та участь у ньому українських депутатів, членів Української думської громади І Державної Думи у напрямі розв’язання національного питання. Перспективним напрямом дослідження залишається вивчення участі депутатів-громадівців у Союзі Автономістів, позаяк наявні матеріали дають інформацію про діяльність в організації, головно І. Шрага, та епізодично В. Шемета.

**Ключові слова:** дума, декларація, громада, фракція, часопис, депутат, автономія, національне питання.

**The Problem Statement.** The strong urge for freedom, generated by the revolutionary events that began in Russia in January of 1905, found quite favourable ground in Ukraine. The empire, which at that time included our territories, at the beginning of the 20th century outgrew itself and ceased to be national. The imperial government had to change from a government of the national policy to a government of the people. Despite the presence of urgent problems in this direction of a social life, tsarism was in no hurry to make even minimal changes in terms of expanding the rights of the national minorities. The emergence of the Autonomists’ Union and the Ukrainian Duma community’s deputies activities in it were aimed at fighting for broad national self-governing rights.

**The Analysis of the Recent Research.** The activities of the Ukrainian deputies issue in the First State Duma of the Russian Empire was studied in national and world history in detail. Although there remains a number of problems to which researchers, due to various reasons, do not pay much attention. One of them was the activity of citizens’ deputies in the Autonomists’ Union, who sought to solve the national issue in the then Russian Empire not only for themselves but also for other peoples enslaved by tsarism. Therefore, according to the authors, there should be paid much attention to the above-mentioned issue.

In the 19th century the national issue appeared in the work, written by Taras Shevchenko, standing out in the call to build one's "house" in which "one's own truth, and strength, and will". Instead, Kobzar's followers did not continue the work started by him, immersing themselves in all-Russian movements, socialist and populist, for the social problems solution, hoping that the national issue would be solved automatically the very next day after the social revolution.

It was M. Mikhnovskiy, who in his work "Independent Ukraine", taking into account the centuries-old tradition of the Ukrainian statehood, argues for the "historical right" of Ukraine to independent existence and wrote out the first priority requirement on the way to this – "to return the rights specified in the Pereiaslav Agreement of 1654 with the introduction of those rights throughout the territory of residence of the Ukrainian people in the Russian Empire" (Shevchuk, 1999, pp. 176–177).

But after 1903, the Ukrainian movement moved away from the struggle for its statehood and, first of all, focused on demands for autonomy from Russia.

The majority of the materials related to the activities of the Ukrainian Duma community's deputies in the Union of Autonomists were analysed in the works of the head of the Ukrainian Duma community, an active member of the Union of Autonomists I. Shrah (Shrah, 1906, p. 66).

Modern researchers mention the above-mentioned issue only in the context of highlighting other issues: Donik O., Opria B., Fedkov O., (Donik, Opria, Fedkov, 2021), Kolesnyk V., Cheberiyako O. (Kolesnyk, Cheberiyako, 2022), Shandra V., (Shandra, 2017), Shandra V., (Shandra, 2022), Shliakhov O., (Shliakhov, 2021). In particular, Demchenko T., (Demchenko, 2012), Strel'skiy H., (Strel'skiy, 1996. p. 257) turned to this problem studying I. Shrah's biography. Baran S. analysed the activity of the Ukrainians in the Autonomists' Union studying the prominent Polish figure – J. Baudouin de Courtenay (Baran, 1999, p. 303).

Modern Russian researchers Borzova E. (Borzova, 2011), Timiryayev D. (Timiryayev, 2019) while researching the activities of the Polish deputies in the First State Duma of Russia and the Autonomists' Union, also mention the Ukrainian representatives in this organization, but characterize their point of view of the mentality of typical imperialists. According to the authors, the above-mentioned issue should be paid much attention due to the significance of the national issue, which is becoming more acute in modern globalized world.

**The Purpose of the Research.** To analyse the Ukrainian Duma community deputies' contribution to the activities of the Autonomists' Union and their contribution to solving the national issue within the framework of the Russian Empire in general and Ukraine in particular. To elucidate interaction of the Ukrainian deputies with the representatives of the democratic movements of other peoples of the empire.

**The Research Results.** The revolution that began in 1905 encouraged the Ukrainians to fight not only for the solution of the socio-economic, but also the national issues. This issue was especially relevant among the representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia and Zemstvo officials. On April 21, 1905, Congress of Zemstv from different regions of Ukraine was held in Kyiv, the document adopted by the Congress stated that the solution of the national issue "will solve many issues of state life and will affect well-being of all of Russia seriously". It was further emphasized that "the right and just solution of the national issue in the Russian Empire will be when the state system principles will be developed at the upcoming constituent assembly, which will allow taking into account the national interests of various peoples, including the Ukrainian one, in the autonomous seyms, and state-wide issues will be concentrated in the competence the All-Russian Parliament. It is noteworthy that the

autonomy of the Ukrainian or other people must be fixed by a special statute, supported by the entire population of this autonomous unit and approved by the basic laws of the country. All residents of this territory, regardless of nationality or gender, should enjoy equal rights guaranteed by the basic laws of the country” (Chykalenko, 1955, p. 375).

The idea of autonomy was urgent not only for Ukraine, but also for other national regions. As one of the leading autonomists of Ukraine at the time, Iliia Shrah, a Chernihiv lawyer and public figure, testified that the mayor of Tyflis and a deputy from Vilna turned to him for the support in order to organize an all-Russian Congress that would resolve the issue of granting the national rights to the peoples of the then Russian Empire.

In order to achieve their goal the autonomy supporters used all legal possibilities under the conditions of the Russian autocracy at that time. I. Shrah, on behalf of the Ukrainian hubernia (province), initiated a resolution, drawing attention of his Russian colleagues to “a successful and just solution of the national issue will largely allow solving most of the other significant problems of state life”, there was a demand for the introduction of political freedoms in the country, the assembly of the Constituent Assembly and the introduction of such a state system “when the national interests of the Ukrainian people, as well as other nationalities, will be taken into account in the autonomous Diet, and all-Russian interests will be concentrated in the national parliament” at the Moscow Congress of Zemstvo officials in April of 1905 (Demchenko, 2012).

The idea of autonomy received more and more support among the national minorities of the empire, this led to the fact that its supporters convened a preparatory congress on November 19–21, 1905 in St. Petersburg, with 115 delegates, who presented 13 peoples of the empire, among them were: the Azerbaijanis, the Armenians, Belarusians, the Georgians, the Jews, the Kyrgyz, the Latvians, the Lithuanians, the Poles, the Tatars, the Estonians, and there were 25 Ukrainians among them (Shrah, 1906, p. 66).

The delegates of the Congress had different visions of solving the autonomous system problem. The representatives of the Cossack lands (Orenburg and the Urals) declared their readiness to join the Union, but set the condition that the word “federalism” should be deleted from the name of the institution – “The Union of Autonomists-Federalists”. Some of them expressed the opinion to omit the word “autonomy” and suggested replacing it with the term “zemstvo self-government”.

But I. Shrah and a member of the Cadet Party of Russia, V. Obninskyi, opposed this vehemently, proving that the majority of the non-state nations representatives would not want to participate in the organization, which would only dream of “zemstvo self-government”, but under the pressure of the majority, the term “federalism” still had to be omitted at the Congress (Shrah, 1906, p. 67).

Then the Poles took the initiative in the work of the assembly. Professor of St. Petersburg University J. Baudouin de Courtenay, who represented the Polish delegation, made a speech. In his opinion, the main task was the “a full return of the Polish autonomy”, only then “it will be possible to grant the same or limited autonomy to some provinces”, including “with a united Ukraine, i.e. Malorus” (Baran, 1999, p. 303).

The resolutions of the Congress defined the principles of the future association. The state system was supposed to ensure freedom and completeness of the national development for each of the peoples; the state power and the organization of people’s rights on the ground provided for the decentralization on a federal basis. In the national structure, norms were to be established that would ensure the inviolability of its national affairs and interests. In

addition, the Congress recognized the system of proportional representation, both in the national Parliament and regional representative bodies.

The Congress elected Committee of 20 people under the chairmanship of Professor J. Baudouin-de-Courtenay in order to carry out further organization of the Union formation. The representative of Ukraine, I. Shrah, was elected as Deputy Chairman of the Committee on the organization of the All-Russian Congress, and later became the Deputy Chairman of the Autonomists' Union (Strelskyi, 1996, p. 257).

The Committee finished its preparatory work even before the Duma was convened; when the members of the Duma gathered, there were at the meetings those people, who were at the origins of the above-mentioned organization.

Thus, the demands for autonomy in Ukraine and other regions of the empire sounded louder and louder, they were expressed not only by the individual politicians, public figures, but also by the press representatives.

The next stage in the activities of the Ukrainian deputies regarding the autonomous ideas development was the participation in the work of the First State Duma of the Russian Empire, which was convened by the autocracy to reduce the revolutionary movement in the country. Tsarism saw problems in the national issue and was going to implement some changes, but this did not apply to Ukraine, as evidenced by the statement of the Minister of Internal Affairs P. Sviatopolk-Myrskyi: "Finland will be given the national concessions; the Poles will be given the national concessions – this is necessary in order to calm the outskirts of Russia. There is no need to give the Ukrainians anything" (Kuras, 1992, p. 86). The Russian tsarism absolutely ignored the national characteristics of the region, subjecting it to all-round brutal exploitation, thereby turning Ukraine into a colony. Evidence of this can be seen even in V. Lenin, who in his speech in Switzerland in 1914 (not included in the complete collection of works, fifth edition) emphasized that Ukraine "is to Russia what Ireland was to England" (Subtelnyi, 1991, p. 239).

The First State Duma worked from April 27 to July 9, 1906. There were 102 deputies from the Ukrainian hubernias (provinces), who took part in the work of the Duma, 44 of them created a faction – the Ukrainian Duma community at their meeting on May 1 – to solve the urgent issues that arose at that time in Ukrainian society. The Parliamentary faction was organized by deputies, who were members of the URDP: I. Shrah, V. Shemet, P. Chyzhevskyi, M. Onatskyi, they enlisted the help of the conscious Ukrainians – the residents of St. Petersburg, and in November of 1905 they founded a Political Club to help their Motherland. Its members were: O. Lototskyi, O. Rusov, S. Rusova, P. Stebnytskyi, V. Pisnyachevskyi (Lototskyi, 1934, p. 12).

At this meeting, the governing bodies of the community issue was considered, the head of which was elected I. Shrah, Chernihiv deputy. The collegial management body – bureau of the faction consisted of: P. Chyzhevskyi, V. Shemet, H. Zubchenko, M. Onatskyi, I. Tarasenko, S. Taran, A. Hrabovetskyi (Domanitskiy, 1906).

In order to help the Duma community, Professor M. Hrushevskyi came to St. Petersburg from Lviv, who had information about the practical steps of the Ukrainian deputies in the regional seyms of Galicia and Bukovyna, as well as the Austrian Parliament. He became the organizer and ideological inspirer of the magazine "Ukrainskyi Visnyk".

The goal of the magazine was to cover the Ukrainian issue and contacts of the Duma community with Ukraine. The founders of the publication were the members of the St. Petersburg Ukrainian community, the publisher – N. Pototska, the editor – M. Slavynskyi, the

secretary – D. Doroshenko. M. Hrushevskiy prepared main articles, political life was described by O. Lototskyi. Among the contributors to the magazine were: O. Rusov, S. Rusova, V. Domanytskyi, P. Stebnytskyi, D. Doroshenko. The best scholars and writers of Ukraine participated in the preparation of the magazine: B. Hrinchenko, M. Tuhon-Baranovskiy, F. Vovk, S. Yefremov, I. Franko, V. Korolenko. There were, I. Shrah, V. Shemet, H. Zubchenko, P. Chyzhevskiy among the Ukrainian parliamentarians, who collaborated with the weekly magazine.

The convening of the first parliament, on which great hopes were placed, posed an important task to the Ukrainian citizenry – to convey ideas to a wide range of the public and to continue the work that the Ukrainian movement previously carried out in underground activities, to expand national rights and freedoms.

In this way, the main task in the national policy of the Ukrainian Duma community emerged – the acquisition of autonomy for the native region.

On the other hand, in the government declaration made in the Duma by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers I. Horemikin, the national issue (as well as in the throne speech of Nicholas II) was not classified as a priority. However, the government still declared its readiness to reorganize local administration and self-government, taking into account the characteristics of the surrounding areas (*Dumskiy sbornik*, 1906, p. 113).

The community did not start its work in the First State Duma in an empty place, it already had some improvements on the national issue worked out by the Union of Autonomists. On this issue Ukrainian deputies consulted with Ukrainian deputies of the Austro-Hungarian Parliament, as evidenced by the letter of I. Shrah to the head of the Ukrainian faction of the Austrian Parliament Ye. Olesnytskyi: “I am sure that you, honorable sir, will not object to helping us with your experience; more than ever it is necessary to establish the closest ties between us, because the situation is such that we, above all, will have to unite in the parliamentary struggle; our interests are common both in Austria and in Russia (*Lyst Illi Shraha*, p. 83).

The main efforts of the Duma community were directed to the development of Declaration on the Autonomous Organization of Ukraine. Its creation was a long and painstaking process, primarily on the pages of the magazine “*Ukrainsky Vestnik*”. The most productive work was done by M. Hrushevskiy, who published 10 articles on this topic in the magazine’s columns. The works published in “*The Ukrainian Vestnik*” by famous scholars D. Ovsyanyko-Kulykivskiy, D. Beaudoin-de-Courtenay, and D. Doroshenko were involved in the development of the Declaration. The head of the Ukrainian Community I. Shrah took an active part in its development (Ovsyanyko-Kulykovskiy, 1906, p. 24). Much help for Ukraine to obtain autonomy was provided by the members of the St. Petersburg Political Club, created by the Ukrainians who lived in the capital, in particular, O. Rusov, S. Rusova, V. Domanytskyi, who were regular contributors to “*The Ukrainian Vestnik*”. Mainly, M. Hrushevskiy worked on the creation of the text of the Declaration with the support of community lawyers I. Shrah, A. Viazlov, Ye. Sholp and with the assistance of the above-mentioned St. Petersburg Ukrainians (Domanytskyi, 1906, p. 161).

The authors could not find the text of the Declaration itself, but its description is given in M. Hrushevskiy’s “*Our Demands*”, from which we can see the demands made by the people, among other things, they demanded a solution to the Ukrainian issue in the context of the reconstruction of the entire country on the basis of the equality of peoples and regions, national and territorial autonomy, considering it a constituent part of all-Russian problems. Without dividing nationalities into “mature” and “immature”, the community demanded that

when solving national affairs, it should be based “on the actual state of affairs, on the real needs of the population, and not on historical facts and references”.

It contained progressive, as at that time, demands regarding the federal structure of the Russian Empire and the specific definition of Ukrainian powers in it; presence of a regional governing body; prohibition of centralization in the sphere of church administration, as well as artificial rearrangement of national elements in the army and creation of conditions for military service as close as possible to the soldiers’ homeland; recognition of all the rights of the Ukrainian language while preserving the status of the national language for Russian. The Ukrainian community demanded that this programme be implemented in the state and its constituent parts, “in the interests of successfully solving the great tasks set by the liberation movement of Russia, and the friendly work of its regions and peoples in their implementation, this national and regional programme that we put here as a postulate of Ukrainianness, in an inextricable connection with the reconstruction of the whole of Russia on the basis of national equality and regional autonomy, must be implemented – and implemented immediately” (Hrushevskiy, 1906, p. 273).

The declaration was planned to be announced from the Duma rostrum by the head of the Ukrainian Duma community, I. Shrah, but on July 9, 1906, the First State Duma, after 72 days of its work, was dissolved.

The next stage in the activities of the Union of Autonomists was the meeting of representatives of the peoples of Russia on April 26, 1906. Representatives of the Poles, the Jews, the Germans, and the Ukrainians made suggestions on reorganizing national relations in the empire. On behalf of the Ukrainians, I. Shrah reported, his speech was based on the programme prepared by the organizational department of the Podillia Society “Enlightenment” (Prosvita) for deputies from the territory of Ukraine. The section “Desire for Enlightenment” did not directly demand national-territorial autonomy, but it contained a broad programme of Ukrainization of the region: introduction of the Ukrainian language at schools, colleges and universities; introduction in institutes of Ukrainian history, ethnography and Ukrainian literature (Natsionalna prohrama ukrayintsiv-podolyan, 1906).

The idea of national revival has reached various sections of the population, as evidenced by the following materials. Thus, on April 20, 1906, I. Shrah, among other instructions, received an order from the voters of Chernihiv at a ceremonial send-off – to ensure Ukraine’s national and cultural development (Posol, 1906). Telegrammes with a similar content were also addressed to the head of the Community I. Shrah already during the period of work of the First State Duma. One of them is from Mykolayiv region, in which the voters demanded from the citizen deputies “to stand firm in the struggle for national free life and for the wide development of the native language in courts and schools throughout Ukraine”. The demand for autonomy was joined by the voice of professor D. Bahaliya, who called on the deputies to first of all solve their national problems (Nastav moment velykoyi vahy, 1906). On May 17, 1906, Deputy V. Shemet also received a telegramme from his constituents from Poltava region, which contained the demand “Unyieldingly pursue freedom, nationalization of the land and autonomy of Ukraine” (Nakaz selyan, 1906). By order to the deputy M. Kovalevskiy, the Ukrainians of Kholm region wanted to join their native land. Similar demands were contained in the telegrammes of the students of the Kyiv Theological Academy, the Ukrainian circle from Baku, compatriots from Bukovyna and Galicia, in which it was proposed to direct all efforts to achieve “cultural and political self-determination of the Ukrainian people” (V.P., 1906).

The Union of Autonomists resumed its activities during the work of the First State Duma of the Russian Empire on May 11, 1906, 120 deputies from various regions of the empire

joined its ranks, and R. Lednytskyi, a well-known Polish figure in Moscow, was elected as the head of the Presidium of the Union (he, being a member of the Russian Cadet Party, took an active part in Polish affairs). Ukrainian I. Shrah and Azerbaijani A. Topchibasha were elected vice-chairmen, and Georgian V. Helovani was elected secretary.

As during the work of the preparatory congress on November 15 – 21, 1905, the Poles set the tone for the organization's activities by creating two parliamentary associations, the "Polish Circle" and the "Group of Western Neighborhoods", which included the Poles elected to the Duma from Belarusian and Ukrainian provinces. Polish deputies declared that they would fight for "our rights and general freedom" (Borzova, 2011).

The parliamentary grouping of the members of the Union was "not a party in which they unite on a broad programme covering all political, economic and social issues, but only a "faction", where many of its members remain members of their parties who were elected to the Duma, belong to one or another party, which is most characteristic of their views on general political, economic and social issues" (Shrah, 1906, p. 68).

Working to solve the national issue, the Union of Autonomists initiated a meeting of the political clubs of the First State Duma. One of the meetings took place on July 1, 1906 in the premises of the cadet club. I. Shrah gave a speech, he noted that the liberation movement should give freedom not only to the individual, but also to every nation that participates in the life of the Russian state. Then, the speaker asks the question, how to reconcile the recognition and provision of the rights of individual peoples to live freely with the unity and indivisibility of the Russian state? In his opinion, there is only one way out of this: to seek an autonomous system for oneself, that is, broader self-government and the right to adopt laws for one's region. The only difference is that some want "regional" autonomy, while others want "national and territorial" autonomy, in particular, Siberia, for example, seeks the first, Ukraine the second. If individual peoples become autonomous, then under such circumstances, Russia must transition to a federal system, i. e. turn into a state with a union of individual peoples. The federal system, if it is established properly, will not only not harm the unity of the Russian state, but, on the contrary, will strengthen it. The best example of such a union, according to the speaker, was demonstrated by the German federation, where the state consciousness, under the federal system, was more developed than in Russia at the time.

Next, the speaker explained which cases go to the state seyms and which remain in the hands of the central parliament, listed the provinces where the Ukrainians lived. The number of the Ukrainians – 27 million – greatly surprised those present and most of them did not even know that there was such a large part of Russia inhabited by the Ukrainians, but thought that Ukrainians, like the Jews, were scattered throughout southern Russia.

On the basis of historical data, the speaker proved that autonomy for Ukraine is not only necessary, but also necessary. The ideas of people's rights among the Ukrainian people did not disappear even under the worst conditions of their lives, starting from the period when, in 1654, B. Khmelnytskyi was convinced that he had harnessed the "freedom-loving people to the Moscow kolymaga" (Pisnyachevskyi, 1906). And so, at the beginning of the century, the Ukrainian people sent their deputies in the first Duma many orders, among which the issue of autonomy occupied a prominent place, and that is why many Ukrainian deputies won the elections under this slogan.

Concluding his speech, the speaker noted that the cause of Ukraine's autonomy is not something from a book, it has deep foundations in the history of the Ukrainian people. In his opinion, the right of our people to political autonomy should be derived not from historical

grounds, but from socio-economic modern circumstances. Dispelling the fears of those who saw some danger in autonomy, I. Shrah declared at the end of his speech: “That unity is not strong and strong, which rests on bayonets and machine guns. A clear future awaits not a centralized Russia, but one in which every nationality will be given the right to satisfy its needs, in which the interests of every nation will be ensured. Russia will not be happy when, as Pushkin said: “The Slavic rivers merge into the Russian sea”, but when, as Shevchenko said, when all Slavs living in Russia “will become native brothers” (Pisnyachevskyi, 1906).

After the speech, a debate began, during which representatives of all nationalities represented in the Duma spoke, Russian and Ukrainian social democrats were the most active. The Russian deputy I. Bych was the first to speak, who initially agreed with the speaker that different sections of the population have their own understanding of the word “autonomy”. Completely agreeing with the words of I. Shrah that the Ukrainians do not have their own “masters”, he noted that there is a bourgeoisie and a proletariat on the territory of Ukraine: the bourgeoisie understands the term “autonomy” to ensure the national rights of the Ukrainian people, and the proletariat to the economic development of the country. After mentioning the Union of Autonomists and the “Polish circle”, he ended with the Constituent Assembly, which, in his opinion, can grant autonomy to Ukraine. I. Shrah noted in response that the Union of Autonomists unites people regardless of one or another party, where everyone has the right to their own understanding of the term “autonomy”, but this issue will arise in the Duma, all its members must unanimously vote for it. As for I. Bych’s idea that only the Constituent Assembly will grant autonomy, the head of the Ukrainian Duma faction noted that even if we adhere to this opinion, the current work in the Duma in this direction will not only not harm the case, but on the contrary will make it easier for future assemblies. In other words, all opportunities must be used to achieve the goal.

Further, deputy V. Shemet developed the ideas of the head of the community, noting that, in his opinion, there is no reason in the words of I. Bych, who argued that it is inappropriate to put the question of autonomy on the agenda. If the issue in the Duma is not initiated by the Ukrainians, but by deputies from other nations, then the community must be involved in this (Pisnyachevskyi, 1906).

V. Shemet was very active in the activities of the Union of Autonomists, he advocated radical independent ideas, which were interpreted as utopian in autonomist circles. This is confirmed by L. Zhebunev’s letter to I. Shrah “We ask you to get to know Shemet better. He is a very handsome man, and the most sincere Ukrainian, but he is a little worried about the “independence of Ukraine” and because of this, his attempt must be stopped another time...” (State Archive of Chernihiv Region – SACHR, f. 1081, d. 1, c. 58, p. 10).

The Russian member of the Social-Democratic Party H. Kuzmin said that this Duma cannot give real autonomy, because it is cadet-bourgeois and because of this, it will try to pass even such bills as on freedom of the press and assembly against the interests of the people. H. Kuzmin declared all the autonomists to be people who want to break the state into separate pieces so that it would be easier to stop their liberation movement. Based on this, the speaker concludes – “now we are not ready for autonomy” and, first of all, it is necessary to exterminate those who wring strength from the working people (Pisnyachevskyi, 1906). This performance broke the applause of only a part of the ignorant workers of St. Petersburg.

At that time, such demagogic shouts were heard not only at meetings, but also from the pages of periodicals, evoking sympathy among inexperienced members of the Duma, although it is difficult to say exactly how the speaker understood the “destruction” of the

exploitative capitalists by revolutionary means, because at that time it was difficult to establish a socialist order in Russia, given the current situation, it is unlikely that even the Constituent Assembly would be able to.

I. Bych continued to convince those present that only the Constituent Assembly could resolve the issue of autonomy, due to the fact that the Duma is bourgeois. However, the question arises, will there not be any bourgeoisie in the Constituent Assembly, convened even on the second day after the dissolution of the Duma – neither big nor small, but only the proletariat, or the majority of it?

The fact that the social democrats of other oppressed peoples did not support the platform of the Russian social democrats regarding the Duma testified to the falsity of such a position. In addition, not only social democrats, but also representatives of other Russian parties and groups opposed the autonomy proposed by the Union of Autonomists, seeing in it a veiled desire for the revival of Poland within the boundaries of 1772 (Timiryayev, 2019).

It should be noted that I. Shrah clearly distinguished two points of view of the Russians on the issue of Ukraine's autonomy. Firstly, the position of the outright chauvinists. Naturally, starting any discussion with them "would be strange". Secondly, the position of "Miliukov, Korolenko, Ikonnikov, who are ready to recognize the autonomy of everyone except the Ukrainians", outraged him (SACHR, f.1081, d. 1, c. 34, p. 11).

At the end of the debate, a resolution supported by a slight majority of those present was adopted that autonomy should not be rushed, but should wait until the opening of the Constituent Assembly.

The Union of Autonomists intended to prepare a law on languages that would regulate the use of national languages in the empire, entrusting the development of the project to St. Petersburg Ukrainians O. Lototskyi, O. Rusov, and P. Stebnytskyi.

However, their activities encountered resistance from representatives of Russia in the Union of Autonomists, where their position regarding national languages in general, and Ukrainian in particular, was illustrated by the words of the famous imperial publicist A. Budilovich – "In the regions of Malorosiya, some separatists assign such a role to the Malorosiya dialect, which is known in poetry especially on the works of T. Shevchenko, and at schools he received some development in Galicia and Bukovyna, however, in a very corrupted, half-Polish form, being called the Ukrainian language there" (Timiryayev, 2019). The very idea of the functioning of the languages of national minorities, in parallel with Russian, was perceived among the Great Russian deputies as the destruction of the unified linguistic and cultural space of the empire.

In the second half of May, an agrarian commission was created, which was supposed to cover land issues in accordance with local needs, but due to the premature dissolution of the First State Duma, it did not bring the expected results.

Instead, on July 8, 1906, after 72 days of work, the First State Duma of the Russian Empire, accused of supporting unrest, instead of pacifying the revolutionary-minded people, was dissolved by the Tsar's decree of Nicholas II, thus eliminating the activities of the Union of Autonomists.

**The Conclusion.** Therefore, the short-term existence of the Union of Autonomists did not give an opportunity to develop its activities. The fact of the existence of the Union, and participation of the Ukrainians in it, was of great importance, first of all – fundamental, allowing for the first time widely and publicly, for the whole world, to put the issue of state decentralization on the agenda. The creation of this organization testified that the

state-liberation idea was deeply rooted in the minds of the peoples of the Russian Empire, primarily the Ukrainians, and as the subsequent events of the development of the Union of Autonomists showed, they were used by national liberation movement. The ideas of the Union: the resolution of inter-ethnic relations in a multinational state, the presence of its regional governing body, the distribution of powers between the centre and the periphery. They were developed in the Declaration on Autonomy, adopted by the Ukrainian Duma community, in the Universals of the Central Rada and the Declaration on the Sovereignty of Ukraine on July 16, 1990. The theoretical assets of the documents listed above were reflected in the Act of Proclamation of Independence of Ukraine.

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