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**RIGHTS AND PERSPECTIVES OF THE CZECHS IN UKRAINE
DURING THE UKRAINIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE (1917 – 1921)**

Abstract. *The purpose of the research is the need to carry out a thorough analysis on the legal status of the Czech ethnic minority in Ukraine and the Czech military during the Ukrainian War of Independence and its impact on their public, socio-economic and cultural educational life. The research methodology is based on the following principles: objectivity, historicism, consistency, problematic. There have been applied the methods of analysis and synthesis, problem chronological, comparative. The scientific novelty consists in the study and comparison of the legal position of the Czechs in Ukraine on the eve and during the Ukrainian War of Independence of 1917 – 1921. Due to the introduction of archival materials into scientific circulation, it was possible to find out the impact of the frequent change of governments in Ukraine on the situation of the Czech minority. The Conclusions. At the end of World War I, the Czech element in Ukraine has been very significant. The Czechs received equal rights along with other ethnic groups of Ukraine due to the revolution, which broke out in 1917. However, there were not established any political parties by them. The Czech minority received legal protection and the right to develop its own cultural heritage, despite the Ukrainization, which was initiated by the Ukrainian Central Council (UCC). The importance of the law “On National Personal Autonomy” from a legal and social standpoint cannot be overstated. This law guaranteed the Czechs of Ukraine such prospects that their compatriots in Austria-Hungary did not have. Significant financial support was provided by P. Skoropadskyi’s Hetmanate to the fields of education and culture. The restoration of the laws of the UCC by the Directorate of the Ukrainian People’s Republic could have contributed to the further favourable position of the Czechs, but the gradual loss of Ukrainian statehood did not allow the ideals of the Ukrainian Revolution regarding freedom and equality of all peoples and the norms of the law “On National Personal Autonomy” to be implemented. In 1920 – 1921 the position of the Czechs in Ukraine was under difficult conditions. Due to the lack of legal guarantees, social protection and the policy of war communism implemented by the Soviet government, the majority of the Czech population of Ukraine left its territory.*

Key words: *ethnic minorities, the Czechs, Ukrainian War of Independence, rights, Ukrainian Central Council, Hetmanate, Directorate of Ukraine.*

ПРАВА І ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ ЧЕХІВ В УКРАЇНІ В ПЕРІОД УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ РЕВОЛЮЦІЇ (1917 – 1921)

Анотація. *Мета дослідження* полягає в необхідності здійснити комплексне дослідження правового становища чеської етнічної меншини України та чеських військових у добу Української революції та його впливу на їхнє громадське, соціально-економічне і культурно-освітнє життя. **Методологія дослідження** включає такі принципи: об'єктивності, історизму, послідовності, проблемності. У роботі використано методи: аналізу і синтезу, проблемно-хронологічний, порівняльний. **Наукова новизна** полягає у дослідженні та порівнянні правового становища чехів України напередодні та протягом Української революції 1917 – 1921 рр. Завдяки введенню до наукового обігу архівних матеріалів вдалося з'ясувати вплив на становище чеської меншини часту зміну урядів в Україні. **Висновки.** Наприкінці Першої світової війни чеський елемент в Україні був дуже значним. З початком революції 1917 р. чехам хоча й надали рівні права з іншими етносами України, проте вони так і не створили власних політичних партій. Чеська меншина отримала юридичний захист та право розвивати власні духовні надбання, незважаючи на українізацію, розпочату Українською Центральною Радою (УЦР). Немоżliво переоцінити юридичне та суспільне значення закону “Про національно-персональну автономію”, адже він гарантував чехам України такі перспективи, яких не мали їхні співвітчизники в Австро-Угорщині. Освіта та культура користувалася чималою фінансовою підтримкою гетьманату П. Скоропадського. Відродження законів УЦР Директорією УНР могло б посприяти подальшому поліпшенню становища чехів, але поступова втрата української державності не дозволила втілити у життя ідеали Української революції щодо свободи та рівності усіх народів і норми закону “Про національно-персональну автономію”. Становище чехів України у 1920 – 1921 рр. було складним. Відсутність юридичних гарантій, соціального захисту та політика воєнного комунізму, яку реалізовувала радянська влада, стали причинами для більшості чеського населення України щоб покинути її територію.

Ключові слова: етнічні меншини, чехи, Українська революція, права, Українська Центральна Рада, гетьманат, Директорія.

The Problem Statement. The Ukrainian territory has always been multi-ethnic. Due to the development of a democratic system in Ukraine and European integration, it is essential to study the national characteristics of the nations living on its territory. All linguistic, cultural and mental differences are important for a peaceful coexistence of the ethnic minorities. Ethnic features should not become a barrier to coexistence among the nations, but on the contrary, complement each other and enrich the cultural heritage of Ukraine.

It is considered that the Ukrainian-Czech relations developed during the period of the end of World War I and the beginning of the struggle of both nations for their own state independence, which was successful for the Czechs, and ended in defeat for the Ukrainians. The ideas that the Ukrainian authorities tried to implement were very progressive and good examples in lawmaking for the imitation during the first half of the 20th century. It was during the Ukrainian War of Independence of 1917 – 1921 that the ethno-national issues, including those about the Czechs, found their legislative consolidation in normative legal acts of the Ukrainian Central Council and the Directorate, which were systematized and affected the provision of self-determination of the Ukrainians and the national minorities directly. The legislative consolidation of the institution of the national personal autonomy is considered to be one of the greatest achievements of the Ukrainian Central Council activity.

The Analysis of Sources and Recent Research. The study of the situation of the Czechs in Ukraine began in the second half of the 20th century. In 1974, Zh. Kovba defended her PhD thesis “The Czech Emigration to Ukraine in the Second Half of the 19th – at the Beginning of the 20th Century” (Kovba, 1998). This study covered only separate pages of

the Czech colonization of the western *hubernia* of the Russian Empire (in particular, Volyn) in the second half of the 19th century and there was not any analysis of the reasons for the colonization and resettlement of the Czechs in Kyiv, Podilia and Volyn *hubernia*.

O. Voinalovych covered the aspect of school education for the national minorities (Voinalovych, 2002). I. Zaslavskiy focused on the history of the Volyn Czechs (Zaslavskiy, 1998), and O. Volovyk – on the history of the Czech minority of Eastern Podillia (Volovyk). Yu. Lutskiy traced the impact on the social structure and interests of the Czech ethnic group in Ukraine of the revolutionary and military events of 1917 – 1918 during the period of activity of the Central Council (Lutskiy, 1999). A. Khorenkov's publication, dedicated to the Czech colonists of Volyn, covered the period of 1862 – 1947 (Khorenkov, 2002). The scientific collection "Great Volyn" is considered to be a particularly valuable contribution to the study on the Volyn Czechs (Chekhy na Volyni, 2001). O. Boriak did the research on the history of the Czechs in Volyn and he introduced a reader to one of the main Czech industries – hop-making (Boriak, 2006).

In 2014, S. Uminskiy defended his candidate's thesis under the title "Establishment and Development of Educational Institutions for Children of the Czech Origin in Right Bank Ukraine (at the end of the 19th – the 30s of the 20th century)" (Uminskiy, 2014). The scholar proved that the process of education at the Czech schools was not hindered and was marked by a high level in 1917 – 1919. Owing to the made efforts by L. Aza, the ethnic directory "The Czechs" was published (Aza, 1996). There is no separate study dedicated to the Czech community of Ukraine during the Ukrainian War of Independence in 1917 – 1921.

The purpose of the research is the need to carry out a comprehensive study of the legal status of the Czech ethnic minority in Ukraine and Czech military during the Ukrainian War of Independence and its impact on their public, socio-economic and cultural educational life.

The Research Results. The settlement of the first Czech colonists on the territory of Volyn dates back to 1859 – 1861. The number of the Czech settlements increased after the adoption of the resolution of the Committee of Ministers "On the Settlement of the Czechs in Volyn" in 1870. After that, there were about 20,000 Czechs, who moved to Volyn until 1914. The Czech Protestants immigrated, as well as the politicians and public figures, who were the opponents of the Habsburg monarchy. They formed fairly compact settlements in Dubno, Lutsk, Rivne, Zhytomyr, Novohrad-Volynskiy, Ovruch poviat (Polishchuk, 2012, p. 124).

According to the data of the Russian Empire census of 1897, the largest number of the Czechs lived in Volyn *hubernia*, in particular in its southern districts – 27,670 people (0,9% of the population of the region), much less in Podilia (886) and Kyiv (3,294), which is explained by the insignificant by the amount of free land suitable for agriculture in the last two provinces. The majority of new arrivals settled in rural areas, receiving benefits from the Russian government. Only 3% of the Volyn Czechs settled in cities and towns, 18% – among the Podilia Czechs, and 33% – among the Kyiv Czechs. At the beginning of the 20th century the resettlement of the Czechs to Ukraine slowed down (Polishchuk, 2012, p. 125).

Four Czech *volosts* were created in Volyn, in the places of the greatest concentration of the Czech population: Hlynska (Rivnensky poviat), Dubenska (Dubensky poviat), Lutska (Lutskiy and Rivnenskyi poviats), Kupichevska (Volodymyr-Volynsky poviat). The composition of these *volosts* included not only those settlements where only the Czechs lived but also settlements where the population was mixed, usually the Ukrainian-Czech one (Khorenkov, 2002, p. 7). In general, before World War I, about 50 thousand Czechs lived in the Russian Empire within the state (Lutskiy, 1994, p. 123).

The Czechs had unlimited rights to develop their own industry. The breweries of I. Makhachek and L. Yansa operated in Zhytomyr, and in the village of Kroshnia I. Albrecht. Small breweries Klich in Olshanka and Weber in Vysoko-Cheske were established. The Czechs built brick factories, oil refineries, and mills (Gerasymov, & Romaniuk, 2024, p. 75).

Unlimited rights allowed the Czechs to succeed in farming. On 32,849 hectares of arable land, the Czech farmers mainly grew such grain crops as: rye (21.3%), wheat (18.5%) and oats (18.6%). Then potatoes (10.5%) and legumes. The focus was also on cultivation of barley (7.7%) and hops. Among the cereals, new elite varieties were introduced (Golchevskyi, 2010, pp. 477–478).

Venceslav Shvygovskyi was among the most famous Czech entrepreneurs of Kyiv region. He was also the founder of the newspaper “Chehoslovan” in 1911. Owing to him, the Greter and Kryvanek, Filvert and Dedina, Ungermann and Neyedlyh, Graf and Co., F. Paul machine-building factories emerged in Kyiv, as well as the workshops of the Laurin and Klement automobile firm and other enterprises (Koliukh, 1997, pp. 29–30).

Unlike the Germans, the Czech colonists were not deprived of their landholdings by the Russian authorities at the beginning of 1917. However, they inhabited the infertile territories of Lutskiyi, Volodymyr-Volynskiyi, Novohrad-Volynskiyi, Zhytomyrskiyi and Ovrutskiyi poviat mostly (Shpytalenko, 2003, p. 19).

The “Union of Czechoslovak Societies in Russia” played an important role in the socio-economic life of the Czechs in Ukraine. It became a priority for the Union to strengthen the legal position of the Czechs, who lived on the territory of Russia, and the need to obtain self-government for the Czechs in Volyn was emphasized. The Union’s agitation for the unification of the Czech colonists within land organizations led to the formation of 15 new societies in Ukraine between May and August of 1917. The Union was also involved in solving the economic issues. Due to his assistance, credit bureaus were established, which allowed the Czechs to take loans for the development of economy. The Union worked on the creation of project plans to establish trade relations with the homeland after the war along with the Czech companies (Chyrko, 1995, p. 2015).

The Czechs had the right to lease land, but they were reluctant to use it. By the middle of 1917, the share of leased territories among all Czech land holdings did not exceed 3%. At the same time, there were settlements where farming was done on leased land exclusively, for example in the villages of Hrushvysia and Novynia of Dubensky District (Cherokee, 1995, p. 36).

In Volyn the majority of the Czech colonists understood the threat of the Bolshevik power. Among the Czech villages that did not recognize the self-proclaimed Soviet government in 1919 were the following: Czech Kroshnia and Czech Smihy. The reduction of public, social and cultural rights by the Bolsheviks forced the Czechs to leave their ethnic homeland. Part of the Czech minority remained where the Bolsheviks carried out effective propaganda activities (CSAPAU, f. 1, d. 20, c. 100, pp. 2–6).

At the beginning, the Czechs resisted the Bolsheviks successfully and kept more than forty thousand hectares of land in their ownership in Volyn, of which more than a third was cultivated. The Czechs owned: 16 breweries; 32 dairies; 113 mills; 37 large workshops; 5 sugar mills; 19 brickworks and craft workshops (Chekhy na Volyni, 2001, p. 25).

As a result of the Bolshevik occupation, the number of the Czechs in Ukraine decreased at the beginning of the 1920s. The density of the Czech colonies in Volyn also decreased. In some areas, the percentage of the Czech population reached 4% (Hofman, 1998, p. 76).

Based on the decrees of the Soviet authorities on the national village councils, the Czechs managed to organize 12 village councils in Eastern Volyn (Skotnikova, 2000, pp. 116–117).

It is important that hops played the main role in the prosperity of the Czech farms at the beginning of the 1920s. Before World War I, hop plantations – a strategic crop – grew steadily. The richer a Czech village was, the more land there was given over to hop cultivation (Boriak, 2006, pp. 217–218).

Despite the prosperity of the hop industry, the economic situation of the Czech minority worsened after the Bolsheviks came to power. The Czech group of the CP(b)U, having started its activities with campaigning work, became convinced that in Volyn, Kyiv and Podillia the first priority is still the solution of urgent practical tasks and refocused mainly on the solution of such issues as illegal contributions, requisitions, arrests colonists (Serhiichuk, 1993, pp. 60–61).

There were practically no Committees of Poor Peasants (kombeds) in the Czech colonies. The commune did not attract the Czechs in the beginning. The conflicts and armed clashes often occurred between the colonists and the Bolsheviks. The dekulakization of 1920–1921 dealt a devastating blow to the economic situation of the Czech colonies. Redistribution of land in favour of the Ukrainian peasants contributed to additional tension in the international relations (CSAPAU, f. 1, d. 20, c. 321, p. 6).

Next, we will analyse the legal perspectives of the Ukrainian Czechs in their social and political movement. The civil movement of the Czechs was formed on the basis of the liberalization of the Russian imperial government policy in relation to the Czech minority, the strengthening of the Slavophiles influence, the desire of tsarism to create a force in the western region of the empire that would oppose the Poles, as well as the Ukrainians, whose national aspirations were suppressed in every way.

A prominent role in the Czech public life of Ukraine on the eve of the Ukrainian Revolution was played by the People's Czech Council (hereafter PCC) – a free supra-party association of the Czech patriotic forces, whose task was to resist the German influence on the Czech lands. The activities of the foreign department of the PCC were directed, in particular, to communication with Kraiyans* and Kraiyan circles abroad, as well as theoretical and practical solutions to the immigrants issues (Hofman, 1998, pp. 33–34).

In particular, at the beginning of World War I, at a meeting of the public organization of the Czechs of Kyiv – the Jan Amos Komensky Society, a decision was made to convene a large meeting of the Czechs of Volyn, Kyiv, and Podillia poviat to accept a petition to Emperor Nikolai II expressing their support for the war and asking for a transition to the Russian citizenship. At the same time, in August of 1914, the Moscow “Czech Committee” turned to the Russian Ministry for Defense with a project to organize the Czech legions in Russia (Kravchuk, & Kuzminets, 2022, p. 94).

On August 8 of 1914, in Kyiv, at the same meeting of representatives of the Czech communities and the society named after J. A. Komensky, the Czech Committee for Aid to War Victims (CCAWV) was formed, which was headed by an entrepreneur and active public figure Jindrich Jindrishek – the organizer of the anti-Habsburg movement among the Czech national minority of the Russian Empire. On August 9, the Committee addressed the Czechs living in Ukraine with a call to create the Czech military units (CSHAUK, f. 274, d. 1, c. 3260, p. 91).

Such Czech organizations had the support of the imperial authorities. Before the Ukrainian Revolution, the Czech minority cooperated with the Russian government, receiving economic

and political privileges, and actively opposed the German and the Polish resistance to the Russian power during World War I. The social and political movement of the Czechs was national in nature mostly, with the aim of preserving the national and political interests of the minority.

The social and political life of the Czech colonists during the period of change of governments was marked by a low activity during the rule of the Ukrainian People's Republic, but active defense of their rights during the rule of Pavlo Skoropadskyi. An important legal and diplomatic factor in the development of the Czechoslovak-Ukrainian relations was the fact that during World War I, Ukraine played, perhaps, the most significant role in the history of the Czechoslovak national liberation movement. The board of the "Union of Czechoslovak Societies in Russia" had been meeting in Kyiv since 1916. The Congresses of its delegates were held there, the main branch of the Czechoslovak National Council (CSNC) was located there – the highest representative authority of the nation, the foundations of the future Czechoslovak government, as well as the headquarters of the Czechoslovak army and its reserve battalions, which were partially staffed by the Volyn Czechs (Hofman, 1998, pp. 45–46). The Czech legions were also stationed near Kyiv, which inflicted a decisive defeat on the Austrian troops under Zboriv. The day of the Battle of Zboriv (June 17–18, 1917) was considered Army Day in Czechoslovakia (Hofman, 1998, pp. 61–63).

The relocation of the CSNC branch from Petrohrad to Kyiv took place in connection with the rapid spread of the Bolshevik popularity, where, after the proclamation of the Third Universal on November 7, 1917, all power was transferred to the Ukrainian Central Council, which did not limit the rights and freedoms of the Czech minority.

The Czechs in Ukraine understood that the February Revolution could expand their prospects for development significantly, therefore, after the first news about this event, they declared their support for the revolution. Different political groups began to compete in expressing respect for the new government in Petrograd. And after the Ukrainian Central Council was recognized by the Russian Provisional Government as a regional authority in Ukraine, the Czechs signed an agreement on the status of the Czechoslovak military formations in Russia with the authorities not only in Petrograd, but also in Kyiv. Tomas Masaryk (the first President of Czechoslovakia in 1918 – 1935) signed an agreement with the Secretary (Minister) for International Affairs of the Ukrainian People's Republic Oleksandr Shulhin (period in office – December of 1917 – January of 1918) on the conditions for the deployment and supply of the Czechoslovak troops. The right of self-determination of all peoples, as one of the components of their political ideology, was demanded by the Czech leaders as the main (Venherska, 2018, pp. 54–55).

During its activity, the Ukrainian Central Rada defended the idea of equality of all nations firmly and proved it by adopting the law "On National Personal Autonomy" on January 22, 1918. This law became the seventh chapter of the Constitution of the Ukrainian People's Republic of April 29 of 1918 on the "National Unions". The Czechs received the right to independent development of their national life within the territory of the Ukrainian People's Republic through the authorities of their National Union.

In order to form their own National Union, the Czech minority had to send to the General Court a statement signed by more than 10,000 citizens of the Ukrainian People's Republic, who have reached the age of 20 about their affiliation to the Czech nationality. There were no gender and religious restrictions. The General Court had to consider publicly such a statement within 6 months and notify the Council of People's Ministers with a resolution

(Konstytutsiia, 1918). A list was formed of the members of the National Union – the national cadastre. Also, every Czech had the right to request their exclusion from this cadastre.

If the Czech minority had formed its own National Union, it would have received the right to legislate within its own national and personal autonomy. It would be a legal and effective representative authority of the Czech nation in Ukraine. The Law “On National Personal Autonomy” provided for state financing of the activities of the National Unions. The Union had the right to tax its members on state-wide terms, as well as to make loans under its own responsibility.

The authorities of the Czech National Union would have state status. The highest representative power would belong to the National Assembly, and the executive power would belong to the National Council. The resolution of disputes between the National Union and the authorities of the Ukrainian People’s Republic was entrusted to the Administrative Court (Konstytutsiia, 1918).

In 1917, at the beginning of the revolutionary events, the political views of the Czech community were divided into two parts. The minority supported the Czech national democratic movement. The majority sympathized with the views of “fans of the Russian reaction in Kyiv”, i.e. the board of the “Union of Czechoslovak Societies in Russia”. But gradually the Union lost popularity in 1918 – 1919. The Board and all its initiatives, with the beginning of the revolution in Ukraine, lost support from both countrymen and government departments. In such a situation, they were before the third Congress of the Union of the Czech-Slovak Societies, which was held from April 23 to May 1 at Kyiv St. Volodymyr University and Commercial Institute.

The initiative in the work of the congress was taken by the Czech military and prisoners of war (from which the Czechoslovak corps was formed). The delegation of colonists was in minority – 55 members. The delegates from prisoners of war represented 335 associations in which 22,890 the Czechs and the Slovaks were enrolled. There were 20 societies representing the colonists (Venherska, 2018, p. 59).

At the end of December of 1917, an agreement was concluded between the CSNC and the government of the Ukrainian People’s Republic, according to which the Czechoslovak army, which had previously been part of the Russian army, was subordinated to the Ukrainian army. Such agreements were dictated by the fact that the Central Council declared a course for the continuation of the war with Austria-Hungary. Undoubtedly, such determination allowed the Czechs and the Slovaks to resume their struggle against the Habsburg dynasty. The agreement also considered the option of “withdrawal of the Ukrainian People’s Republic from the position of a belligerent party with the Central Powers”. Under such circumstances, the Czechoslovak army was given the right to leave the borders of Ukraine unimpeded (Venherska, 2018, p. 60).

The activities of the Czech societies were suspended until October after the departure of the Czech corps from the territory of Ukraine in March of 1918. The number of the Czechs and the Slovaks decreased significantly. Some of the soldiers returned home to Volyn. The Czech political figures also left for the Czech Republic in March, and only those of them who did not approve of the course of the CSNC or were in conflict with its active members remained in Kyiv. Vaclav Vondrak, the most famous of the Volyn Czechs, who was arrested soon after, also remained. Venceslav Shvigovsky, the editor of the only Czech newspaper published in Ukraine – the “Cechoslovan” was also in Kyiv. He had quite friendly relations with the Ukrainians (Lutskyi, 1999, pp. 275–277).

The Czech politicians had reason to fear the consequences of the Brest Peace Treaty for the Czech community in Ukraine. The first repressions against the Czechs began in March. The Czech political activists, among whom there were many entrepreneurs, found themselves outside the law. For example, V. Shvets, the owner of shops on Khreschatyk, was deprived of his property. His complaint was not only not considered, but also caused the businessman himself to be accused of Bolshevism. V. Shvets managed to avoid imprisonment. Dr. Vaclav Vondrak, a leading figure of the Czech socio-political movement in Ukraine, was imprisoned for two months. The reason for his arrest was his active participation in the organization of the Czech army of former prisoners of war. The Czech officials were lucky that Kyiv was subject to the German, not Austrian, administration. The Germans were not very willing to hand over the former inhabitants of the Czech lands to the Austrian police (Hrytsenko, 1993, pp. 82–84).

The possibility of establishing the Czechoslovak consulate in Kyiv was considered by the Czech officials in the second half of October of 1918 (Yakubova, 2006, p. 85). In 1918 – 1919, new military units were established, which consisted of the Czechs in Ukraine. They campaigned for the formation of the Czech military units with the aim of overthrowing the Hetmanate of Pavlo Skoropadsky. There was formed a secret Czech group “Union for Liberation of Russia” in Room 24 of the Hotel “Prague” on November 1 of 1918. Subsequently, the members of the group came to the conclusion that it was better to create the Czech military unit in Ukraine to help the Entente, and not the Russians (Khorenkov, 2002, pp. 7–8).

In general, it was in the ethnic structure of Volyn that the Czech ethnic group was formed, which was active in a political activity. The Czech political movement was supported by the governments of the Ukrainian People’s Republic at the legislative level, which became the basis for the formation of future international relations between Ukraine and the Czech Republic (Pohuliaiev et al, 2024, p. 423).

The power of the Bolsheviks complicated the social movement of the Czech minority in Ukraine. In the Czech villages, there were traditional organizations that were very religious and functioned exclusively within the territorial boundaries of a single settlement and did not have any centralized management. After 1919, the Czechs were forced to publish their own magazines and other literature at the expense of the Czech societies, which became very few. The “Czechoslovak People’s Association” and “Czech Mother School” carried on their activities (Kovba, 1998, p. 55). The main idea of public organizations was to maintain economic and cultural connections of the representatives of the Czech ethnic minority. Such organizations were recognized by the Soviet leadership as hostile, consisting of the Kurkul-clerical element and illegal (Stadnyk, & Kuzminets, 2023, p. 242).

Despite everything, the Czech ethnic minority fought for its rights. On August 1 of 1921, on the initiative of the Czechoslovak branch of the Volyn Provincial Committee, the First Congress of the Czech Colonists of Volyn was convened. The Congress was held in the Peasant House in Zhytomyr. The delegates were representatives from villages (1 delegate from 200 residents) and members of the Committee of the Poor.

The majority of the Czech colonists of Ukraine did not recognize the new Bolshevik government as legal. This is proved by the reports of the Central Committee of the Czech Communist Group. For example, in the message dated June 24 of 1919, it is stated that the “Czech Smikhy” colony is completely opposed to the Soviet government. It is also stated that most of the “bourgeois elements” who did not leave for the Czech Republic remained in Kroshnia and Zhytomyr (CSAPAU, f. 1, d. 20, c. 100, pp. 2–6).

The Czech education achieved significant development on the territory of the region, but the policy of Russification did not bypass it either. This process intensified especially actively at the beginning of the 90s of the 19th century and continued with varying intensity until the beginning of World War I (Polishchuk, 2012, p. 270). On the eve of the revolution in Ukraine, the cultural and educational development and religious life of the Czechs in Ukraine were decisive factors in preserving their the national identity.

However, the process of religious self-determination of the Czech colonists was complex and ambiguous. It was explained by the hopes of the Czechs to obtain the right to freedom of religion from Russia and the desire of the then government to use the Czech emigration to fight against Catholicism in Ukraine by creating a separate Hussite church. Based on practical considerations, some Czechs had a rather favourable attitude towards Orthodoxy and were ready to accept it (Mokrytskyi, 1998, pp. 120–121). At the beginning of the 20th century out of 27,670 Czech colonists in Volyn 18,323 were Orthodox, 7,916 were Catholics, and 1,424 were Protestants (Tsynkalovskyi, 1984, p. 561).

On October 15 of 1913, a meeting of superiors of the Czech parishes and the Czech priests was held in Pochayiv to discuss issues of the church and religious life of the Czech parishes in Volyn, under the Chairmanship of Volyn Diocesan Missionary Archimandrite Mytrofan. In the “Decree of the abbots of the Czech parishes and priests of Czechs – on issues of the church-parochial life of the Czech parishes in Volyn” it was stated that “...in parishes with an exclusively Czech population, the church services should be conducted in the Czech language, while not avoiding the Church Slavonic language, singing songs in discretion of the abbot. In parishes, where the population is mixed, to serve in Church Slavonic, some exclamations, prayers and chants, at the discretion of the superior, to be performed in Czech; The Gospel must be read in two languages: Church Slavonic and Czech. Try to practice joint singing at religious gatherings in schools and homes in Czech, and in church in Church Slavonic, the content of the songs at the discretion of the abbots” (Postanovlenie, 1913, pp. 874–875).

The Czech education in Ukraine on the eve of the revolution developed unhindered and legally. The national schools network in their settlements was quite dense, there were reading rooms and libraries. At first, the Czechs maintained schools at their own expense and educational process in national languages using foreign books (Volovyk, 1998, pp. 35–36).

The Russian government limited the study of the Czech language gradually, replacing it with the Russian. This process continued until the February Revolution of 1917. Only people of the Orthodox faith of the Russian origin were appointed as teachers. However, this did not prevent the Czechs from having the highest level of literacy among other ethnic minorities and the Ukrainians (Mokrytskyi, 1998, p. 123).

On the eve of the crisis of the Russian autocracy, the Czech publishing house became more active. The newspapers “Ruský Čech” (1906 – 1908, editor V. Vondrak) and later the “Čechoslovan” (1911 – 1914, 1916 – 1918, editors B. Shvigorskyi and V. Horvath) were published in Kyiv, which promoted the liberation programme during the war years Czechia and Slovakia from Austria-Hungary. The “Československý Denník” and the “Československý Voják” were published in Kyiv for a short time. Freedom of speech and press among the Czech minority in Ukraine developed independently of the Russian propaganda, because they did not contradict it (Loiko, 2005, pp. 133–135).

The freedoms proclaimed by the Ukrainian Revolution expanded the rights of the Czech ethnic minority in Ukraine. These rights broadened the prospects of cultural development

and made it possible to de-Russify the national Czech education. It was noted that getting an education in one's native language was the basis of a person's prosperous existence, a necessary condition for his further development at a Congress of representatives of the Czech colonists in Volyn on September 10 of 1917 (Gromov et al, 2018, p. 514).

The legislative support of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR) for the activities of educational institutions for children of the Czech ethnic minority aimed at their unification on the Ukrainian model. Educational regulations determined that children aged 6–10 years old were enrolled in the 1st-4th grades of lower-level primary schools, and 10–14-year-olds were enrolled in the 5th-8th grades of upper-level primary schools. The Czech applicants had free access to secondary and higher educational institutions.

Lower primary schools were maintained by the Czech communities. At the same time, the UPR governments provided a financial support to lower-level primary schools and funded upper-level primary schools and college departments completely. In March of 1917 – June 1919, educational institutions were organized to eliminate illiteracy among the working Czech youth (Uminskyi, 2014, p. 116).

The language aspect played a significant role in the activity of the Czech educational institutions. At primary schools of a lower level, all subjects were taught in the Czech language, while at primary schools of a higher level and the department of colleges, the Czech language was taught only as a subject (Uminskyi, 2014, p. 120).

In 1918, the Czech primary school was established in Kovel, financed by the poviat administration. The school had one class, in which 20 children aged from 10 to 14 studied. The salary of teachers was 350 rubles per month. At the Kroshnia two-class school there were 149 children, of whom 65 were the Czechs aged 7 to 14. The Czech school in Zhytomyr was financed by Zhytomyr poviat administration and received 1,000 rubles per year. The teachers' salary was 150 rubles per month. There was no library, and the building needed repair (CSAPAU, f. 1, d. 20, c. 100, p. 14).

The Ukrainian Central Council initiated Ukrainization, helped the ethnic minorities obtain the legal protection and the right to develop their own cultural assets. Despite the abolition of democratic freedoms by Hetman P. Skoropadskyi, the education and culture of the national minorities of Ukraine continued to exist and enjoyed a considerable financial support. Funds were also allocated for the retraining of teachers with the mandatory requirement of Ukrainian as the language of instruction. The arrival of the Directory and the restoration of the laws of the Ukrainian Central Council could contribute to a further educational growth of minorities, but a gradual loss of the Ukrainian statehood did not allow the ideals of the Ukrainian Revolution to be put into practice regarding the freedom and equality of all peoples. At the legislative level this kind of tolerance became widespread in Western countries only in the 21st century and guaranteed an active social concern for the situation of ethnic minorities, which proves the progressiveness of the Ukrainian Revolution ideals in the first half of the 20th century (Liashko, 2023, p. 108).

Due to a favourable development of education when the Ukrainian government was at head, with the coming to power of the Bolsheviks, the Czech minority maintained the highest level of education among the representatives of other peoples of Ukraine in the 1920s and 1930s (Chuan, 2019, p. 107). The Czech education was oppressed when the Bolsheviks came to power. In 1920, there were still 25 Czech schools in Podillia, which is much more than in Volyn, where the Czech population was represented the most. However, there were also learning difficulties: a chronic shortage of textbooks and qualified teachers. The

Czech teachers, who did not satisfy the Bolsheviks ideologically, were subject to repression (Lutskyi, 1994, p. 24).

The reorganization of the national Czech schools by the Bolshevik authorities began in 1920 on the basis of the decrees of the Soviet authorities, but this educational construction was not implemented immediately, because there were neither teachers nor textbooks. The Czech schools were functioning in Kroshnia, Vysoke, Okolky, Ivanovychi, Kruchyntsi, Alinovka, Vilshanka and in Selianshchyna (Lutskyi, 1994, pp. 122–123).

In 1920–1921, the newspapers of the communist direction the “Kronika”, “Volynska Pravda”, “Revoluke” were published in Czech in Volyn. They campaigned against the policies of the Czech President Tomas Masaryk, and the legionnaires of the Czech Corps were presented as deceived and offended. In these publications 80% of the information was devoted to the situation in the Volyn Czech colonies. Emphasis was placed on cases of unfair distribution of land, the refusal of wealthy owners to finance the official Czech school. The national and democratic Czech press was banned by the Soviet legislation (Zaslavskyi, 1998, p. 152).

The Soviet authorities spread a network of cultural and educational institutions, schools, secondary institutions at which teaching was conducted in their native language, the growth of the number of the Czech students in Ukraine created the impression of positive changes in the sphere of cultural and educational life of the minority. However, these achievements were accompanied by the destruction of the national culture, which is closely related to religion, and the elimination of traditional forms of educational institutions. There remained the following important issues on the development of the Czech education in Ukraine, in 1920 – 1921:

- absence of the principle of continuity in the education system of the national minorities;
- a low quality of education;
- an insufficient number of teaching staff and educational literature;
- a low level of the teachers’ professional training and activities of preschool institutions of the national minorities of Ukraine.

The Conclusions. The population of Ukraine has always been characterized by a multi-ethnic composition. The representatives of many other nationalities lived among the Ukrainians. Their legal status was different and depended on the conditions of different periods and the policies that different governments tried to implement. In order to improve the economic situation and reduce the influence of the Poles in Ukraine, the Russian government contributed to the Czech colonists resettlement to our lands, who settled mainly in Volyn poviat at the end of the 19th century. They were exempt from paying taxes when buying real estate. Banks provided them with preferential loans. These and many other political, legal and economic reasons contributed to the growth of the Czech population of the region.

On the eve of the Ukrainian War of Independence, the Czech ethnic minority cooperated with the tsarist government in a political life actively. The regulatory and legal support of the Russian Empire controlled all Czech political organizations in order to oppose the Habsburg policy of Austria-Hungary. In Kyiv, since 1916, the Czechs had the right to organize Congresses of delegates from the Union of Czechoslovak Societies in Russia. A branch of the Czechoslovak National Council was also located in Kyiv – the highest representative authority of the nation, the foundation of the future Czechoslovak government, as well as the headquarters of the Czechoslovak army and its reserve battalions. The Czech element in Ukraine was very significant at the end of World War I.

The Czechs received equal rights with other ethnic groups of Ukraine when the Revolution broke out in 1917. However, there was not formed any political parties by them. The branch of the Czechoslovak People's Council in Kyiv played a leading role in the public life of the Czechs. There was also the Czech division on the territory of Ukraine in 1917 – 1918, which expressed a desire to swear an oath to the Ukrainian Central Council for protection in the fight against the Bolsheviks.

The Czech minority received the legal protection and the right to develop its own cultural heritage, despite the Ukrainization initiated by the Ukrainian Central Council (UCC). The importance of the law “On National Personal Autonomy” from a legal and social standpoint cannot be overstated. This law guaranteed the Czechs of Ukraine such prospects that their compatriots in Austria-Hungary did not have. A significant financial support was provided by P. Skoropadskyi's Hetmanate to the fields of education and culture. The restoration of the laws of the UCC by the Directorate of the Ukrainian People's Republic could have contributed to the further favourable position of the Czechs, but a gradual loss of the Ukrainian statehood did not allow the ideals of the Ukrainian Revolution regarding the freedom and equality of all peoples and the norms of the law “On National Personal Autonomy” to be implemented. In 1920 – 1921 the position of the Czechs in Ukraine was under difficult conditions. Due to the lack of legal guarantees, social protection and the policy of war communism implemented by the Soviet government, the majority of the Czech population of Ukraine left its territory.

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