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**THE “FORGOTTEN” REGION IN THE “FORGOTTEN WAR”:
RIGHT-BANK CHERKASY REGION IN 1914 – 1917**

Abstract. *The purpose of this article is to reconstruct the everyday life of the urban population of Right-Bank Cherkasy region during World War I, with an emphasis on identifying general Ukrainian trends characteristic of that period, as well as specific local features determined by the socio-economic and geographical characteristics of the region. The methodology of the research is based on an interdisciplinary approach that combines historiographical analysis, everyday history, and regional context. In the study historical and comparative, statistical, and typological methods have been used. The scientific novelty consists in the fact that it is the first comprehensive study of the region’s cities history in the context of World War I. Conclusions. The analysis of Right-Bank Cherkasy region population’s everyday life during World War I (1914 – 1917) shows how even a rear region far from the front became an integral part of the global conflict, while retaining its local specificity. At the beginning of the war, there were mass patriotic actions, mobilization, and volunteer activity in the cities*

and towns. Over time, enthusiasm gave way to panic, apathy, distrust of the authorities and the official press, and growing corruption. Mobilization caused labour shortage, which led to the involvement of marginalized groups in the workforce, including foreign prisoners of war, prisoners, and even arrested illegal prostitutes, while the wives of conscripted men went to work en masse. Food shortages, inflation, and interethnic tensions deepened the material and moral psychological crisis. Military priorities and a new economic situation caused by the war made it impossible to implement important infrastructure projects, in particular the construction of a sewage system in Cherkasy and the launch of tram service in Uman. All this testifies to profound social transformations which, despite the region's "obscurity" in historiography, reflected nationwide processes and were precursors to the revolutionary events of 1917.

Key words: Right-Bank Cherkasy Region, World War I, cities, everyday life, Cherkasy, Uman.

“ЗАБУТИЙ” РЕГІОН У “ЗАБУТІЙ ВІЙНІ”: ПРАВОБЕРЕЖНА ЧЕРКАЩИНА В 1914 – 1917 рр.

Анотація. Метою статті є реконструкція повсякденного життя міського населення Правобережної Черкащини в період Першої світової війни, з акцентом на виявлення загальноукраїнських тенденцій, характерних для тієї доби, а також специфічних локальних рис, зумовлених соціально-економічними та географічними особливостями регіону. **Методологія** базується на міждисциплінарному підході, що поєднує історіографічний аналіз, повсякденну історію та регіональний контекст. У дослідженні використано історико-порівняльний, статистичний, типологічний методи. **Наукова новизна** полягає у тому, що це перше комплексне дослідження історії міст регіону в контексті Першої світової війни. **Висновки.** Аналіз повсякденного життя населення Правобережної Черкащини в роки Першої світової війни (1914 – 1917 рр.) показує, як навіть віддалений від фронту тиловий регіон став невід’ємною частиною глобального конфлікту, зберігаючи при цьому локальну специфіку. На початку війни в містах спостерігалися масові патріотичні акції, проводили мобілізованих і волонтерська активність. Згодом ентузіазм змінився панікою, апатією, недовірою до влади і офіційної преси та зростанням корупції. Мобілізація спричинила дефіцит робочої сили, через що до праці залучали маргіналізовані групи – іноземних військовополонених, ув’язнених і навіть, арештованих нелегальних повій, а дружини призваних чоловіків масово виходили на роботу. Порушення продовольчого балансу, інфляція та міжсетнічна напруга поглиблювали матеріальну та водночас морально-психологічну кризу. Військові пріоритети та нова, породжена війною, економічна кон’юнктура унеможливили реалізацію важливих інфраструктурних проєктів, зокрема будівництва каналізації у Черкасах і запуску трамвайного руху в Умані. Усе це свідчить про глибокі соціальні трансформації, які, попри “забутість” регіону в історіографії, стали відображенням загальноукраїнських процесів і передумовами революційних подій 1917 р.

Ключові слова: Правобережна Черкащина, Перша світова війна, міста, повсякденність, Черкаси, Умань.

Problem Statement. Conceptualizing World War I as a temporal and spatial abstraction enables us to interpret it as a large-scale historical event that covers a certain period and geographical space, realized through specific local contexts. Thus, any location, such as Right-Bank Cherkasy region, is an organic part of this abstraction, since it not only reflects the general features of the war era, but also makes a unique contribution to its understanding. (The term “Right Bank Cherkasy region”, despite its retrospective nature, is quite justified in the research context, as it refers to the counties of Kyiv province that covered the territory of modern Cherkasy region: Zvenyhorod, Kaniv, Uman, Cherkasy and Chyhyryn and were located on the right bank of the Dnieper – Aut.).

Starting from August 1914, Right-Bank Cherkasy region, although located more than 300 km from the main hostilities in Galicia and Western Volyn, played a significant role in the logistics of the Russian Imperial Army. The region was involved in supporting the war

economy actively, accepting refugees and providing medical care to wounded soldiers. That is why, the war had a particularly significant impact on the lives of urban population: in cities its consequences were more noticeable, concentrated and socially tangible. According to the classical approach, the level of tension of the “rear front” was determined by the ability of society to ensure economic and psychological stability in the face of growing antagonism between the two fundamental challenges of wartime – the need to satisfy external (military support) and internal (civilian) needs simultaneously. We will analyze this issue through the prism of everyday life.

Review of Recent Research and Publications. The basis of the source database is made up of unpublished documents of the Central State Historical Archive (Kyiv), the State Archive of Kyiv Region, the State Archive of Cherkasy Region, as well as materials from the daily newspapers of Right-Bank Ukraine of the period under analysis – “Golos Umani”, “Kiev”, “Kievlianin”, “Kievskaya Mysl”, “Provintsialny Golos”, “Yugo-Zapadny Krai” and “Yuzhnaya Kopeika”.

In modern historiography, the concept of the “forgotten war” concerning the global conflict of 1914 – 1918 is used in various contexts. For example, in the United States, this “forgetfulness” is explained by the fact that World War I was displaced from collective memory by the events of World War II, which had a much larger scale and consequences for American society, in particular in terms of losses on the battlefield (Keene, 2016; Kelly, 2021). In Europe, in this context, they talk about the Eastern Front, which is not so deeply rooted in European historical consciousness, as it is overshadowed by the subsequent experience of World War II and the policy of historical heritage in the region (Cornwall, 2023; Zalewska, & Kiarszys, 2021).

In the Ukrainian scientific discourse, World War I has remained a “forgotten” issue for a long time, which is due to the predominant focus of researchers on the events of the revolution of 1917 – 1921, as well as the influence of Soviet historiography, which either silenced or ideologically distorted the history of the so-called “First Imperialist War”. Only since the beginning of the 21st century there has been a gradual growth of interest in this period, which was reflected, in particular, in the publication of a thorough monograph by Oleksandr Reient and Oleksandr Serdiuk “World War I and Ukraine” (Reient, & Serdiuk, 2004), and also in the research by Oksana Vilshanska on the everyday life of the Ukrainian population during the war (Vilshanska, 2004). Despite the overall positive dynamics in the development of Ukrainian historiography of World War I, in the regional context it is of a distinctly uneven nature. In particular, Right-Bank Cherkasy region still remains understudied and, in fact, “forgotten” in historical studies on the local dimension of the Great War. This situation is obviously due to a number of factors – primarily the geographical distance of the region from the front line, as well as the absence of large urban centres, which usually served as centres of intense political and social life, which traditionally is in the focus of researchers. That is why, the analysis of the historiography of the issue concerns exclusively general studies. In the context of our study, a representative manifestation of the Soviet approach to covering the events of World War I is the multi-volume general publication “History of Towns and Villages of the Ukrainian SSR”, one of the volumes of which focuses on Cherkasy region (Tronko, 1972). The war is mentioned superficially in this study, with an emphasis on the “growth of the revolutionary consciousness of the working people” and preparation for future socialist transformations. This approach effectively devalued the social and everyday aspects of the life of the region’s population during the war years, replacing them with class rhetoric and ideological clichés.

In modern Ukrainian historiography, the chief focus is on the study of the leading centres of the region – Uman and Cherkasy. The emphasis on the development of Uman on the eve of World War I is especially noticeable. Thus, in particular, in his study Serhiy Vasiliev characterized the city as “one of the most developed socio-economic centres of Kyiv province” (Vasiliev, 2011, p. 43). Such an evaluation is important for our research, as it enables us to better understand how the war affected the urban infrastructure and social space of Uman. In the research by Tetiana Kuznets (Kuznets, 2022), using the example of the history of Uman Meyendorff family, the mobilization of local student youth into the ranks of the Russian army in 1914 is mentioned, which gives an idea of the initial moods and reaction of the local population to the war outbreak. The everyday life of the inhabitants of Cherkasy and Cherkasy region in general during World War I is indirectly reflected in the collective monograph “Cherkashchyna: History of Land and its Population” (Masnenko, & Polishchuk, 2017), and also in the studies by Vasyl Melnychenko (Melnychenko, 2002; Melnychenko, 2023). They focus on the analysis of mobilization processes, the activities of local charitable organizations, and problems with providing the population with food. World War I is mentioned in local history studies on the history of Zvenyhorodka (Biletskyi, 2003) and Kaniv briefly (Burenko, 2018).

The purpose of the article is to reconstruct the everyday life of the urban population of Right-Bank Cherkasy region during the World War I, with an emphasis on identifying all-Ukrainian trends characteristic of that era, as well as specific local features determined by the socio-economic and geographical features of the region.

Research Results. In 1914, Right Bank Cherkasy region covered the territory of five counties with a total area of 18.2 thousand km² (Kyeviskyi gubernskiyi statisticheskyi komitet, 1914, p. 39), which was only slightly inferior to the size of modern Cherkasy region – 20.9 thousand km². (Vermenych, 2013). The total urban population was 148 thousand people. It was distributed among the towns as follows: Zvenyhorodka – 27 thousand, Kaniv – 13.2 thousand, Uman – 44.4 thousand, Cherkasy – 42.8 thousand, Chyhyryn – 20.5 thousand (Tsentral’nyi statisticheskii komitet M.V.D., 1915, p. 37).

Like other Ukrainian cities, the outbreak of war on August 1, 1914, changed the rhythm of everyday life. Advertisements were posted on the city streets of Right-Bank Cherkasy region demanding that conscripts report to military mobilization centres – the so-called “military presences”. The city was quickly filled with mobilized people from the towns and surrounding villages. It is known that in Cherkasy, the city government held a series of solemn prayers and patriotic events, which included calls for self-sacrifice in the “name of the tsar and the fatherland”. The local leader of the Cadet Party, Ivan Zvinsky, for his part, organized meetings with young people and delivered emotional speeches about the “sacred duty” of citizens, with calls to take up arms to defend the Russian Empire (Melnychenko, 2023, p. 188). The same war narratives were disseminated through the press. Although the propaganda machine was activated almost immediately after the declaration of war, a significant part of the population apparently did not accept its messages as convincing or logically based. The slogans disseminated at that time remained largely abstract and far from the real experiences of the majority of the population. That is why, the patriotic enthusiasm that the crowds on the streets of the region could outwardly demonstrate was more an emotional, even shock reaction to the very fact of the war outbreak than the result of a conscious acceptance of ideological rhetoric.

The ambivalence of the townspeople’s mood (a combination of enthusiasm and fear) was accompanied by the same ambiguity of the mobilization process. On the one hand, the

press testified to its success. In particular, the issue of the newspaper “Kievlianin” dated August 7, 1914 noted that in Zvenyhorodka the mobilization took place “in a perfect order”: numerous conscripts arrived in the town, from where they went to the front in an organized manner, singing patriotic songs and appealing to the mayor with a request to take care of their families. The city mayor, on the other hand, initiated a large-scale demonstration of several thousand people to provide a moral support to the mobilized (Zvenigorodka, 1914, p. 3). The so-called “spirit of 1914” also affected representatives of the upper social strata. With the outbreak of the war, Yuriy Meyendorff, the head of Uman district zemstvo, who was simultaneously receiving secondary education and, therefore, had the right to a deferment from military service, voluntarily mobilized into the army (Kuznets, 2022, p. 34).

On the other hand, as the war dragged on, fewer and fewer people wanted to go to the front. Archival materials indicate widespread corruption in the “military presences”, whose employees made significant profits from the growing number of people trying to evade mobilization. One of these officials, in 1914 – 1916, using his official position, managed to earn tens of thousands of rubles and build two stone houses in Uman (Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine, Kyiv, f. 274, d. 4, c. 6240, p. 55). The mood of both mobilized and potential conscripts deteriorated significantly under the influence of alarming news from the front. In particular, in the summer of 1915, after the defeat of the Russian army as a result of the Horlytsky breakthrough carried out by the Austro-German troops, Uman resident Leon Morgulis, known for his palmistry sessions, began to agitate soldiers and officers to surrender in order “to end the war more quickly” (CSHAUK, f. 274, d. 1, c. 3570, p. 4). Given his field of activity, such behaviour could have been a manifestation of pacifism, a deliberate provocation, or a commercial venture that went beyond the limits of what was permissible and was duly “evaluated” by local law enforcement in the form of an arrest.

Obviously, this also indicated that the unsuccessful summer campaign of the Russian army in 1915, presented by official propaganda as “The Great Retreat”, through informal channels of communication formed an alternative image of war in the public consciousness – different from the official one significantly. The growing distrust of the population towards the newspapers of that time was both cause and consequence. Back on February 12, 1915, Agatangel Krymsky, while in Zvenyhorodka, wrote in a letter to Volodymyr Vernadsky that the press of that time was unrecognizable – “it lied to itself” (Vernadskyi, 2012, p. 319). In the autumn of the same year, the logical consequence of these processes was panic among the townspeople of the region, which, despite the stabilization achieved by the Russian troops at the front, was affected by the chain reaction of fear of occupation that had begun in Podillia and Volyn. A typical response to this illusory threat was the hasty departure of residents to the eastern provinces of the empire (Gerasymov, & Romanyuk, 2024, p. 140). This was reported, in particular, by the Uman correspondent of the newspaper “Kievlianin” (Uman, 1915, p. 3).

In the first months of the war, the illusions about its quick end, which, in fact, were the basis of the initial optimism, began to disappear in society. The protracted nature of the military conflict with unprecedented human losses forced both the authorities and the public to respond quickly to the medical needs of the army. In 1914, a network of hospitals and infirmaries for wounded soldiers and officers was deployed in all towns of the region. In Cherkasy, about ten infirmaries operated. These institutions were maintained at the expense of military departments and charitable contributions, and were located mainly in the vacated premises of educational institutions. Senior students of the Cherkasy gymnasium for men formed a medical unit of 70 people, who helped transport the wounded from the station

and provided assistance to doctors. Volunteer activity was widespread – committees and societies were established to help the wounded and civilians (Melnychenko, 2023, p. 190). It is noteworthy that the desire to help wounded servicemen sometimes prevailed even over personal aversion to war. A striking example is Uman resident Nadiya Surovtseva, who, despite her own pacifist beliefs and sympathy for Austria-Hungary, immediately after the arrival of the first echelons of wounded soldiers in the city, enrolled in a course for nurses of mercy. For the 18-year-old girl, political views lost meaning when she first saw the physical and mental torment of crippled soldiers, especially those who suffered severe psychological trauma in the war (Kryvosheia, 2014, p. 118).

In 1915, a new socially vulnerable category of the population appeared in the towns of the region – refugees, who needed both material and moral support. The problem of their resettlement and food provision became of a paramount importance. In Kaniv, Cherkasy, Zvenyhorodka and Uman, hospitals and free canteens were established for refugees. Since state resources were not enough to fully meet the needs of refugees, significant support was provided to them by public charitable organizations (Melnychenko, 2023, p. 191).

Mass mobilization gradually depleted the region's labour resources. Under the conditions of conscription of men of working professions to the war, the authorities had to look for alternative labour force. One of such sources was prisoners of war, mostly from Austria-Hungary. They, for example, worked at the Cherkasy brick factory. Some of them were paid more than 50 kopecks per day (State archive of Cherkasy region, f. 8, d.1, c. 708, p. 155) – quite a good amount according to the standards of the time. It is also known that in 1916 prisoners of war were actively involved in defense work in the region – in particular, in the construction of trenches and dugouts (Tronko, 1972, c. 100). This was done on the orders of the Russian military command, which, in the context of the summer offensive campaign, set certain strategic goals in the rear area. It is significant that in the same year Uman district police chief instructed his subordinates to send detained prostitutes to similar jobs. Apparently, in this way they fought two problems at once – the shortage of workers and the spread of illegal prostitution (Borba s taynoy prostitutsiey i... okopy, 1916, p. 4).

The shortage of male labour caused by mobilization directly affected another important microsocial problem – the temporary absence or loss of a breadwinner in a family. This microsocial problem, in turn, led to an increase in social and family demand for female labour. Responding to new needs, in April of 1916, the Cherkasy City Duma decided to establish three kindergartens in the city and its suburbs to care for 500 children whose mothers were forced to provide for their families on their own (g. Cherkassy, 1916a, p. 4).

However, the money earned did not always allow to feed the family properly. Two main problems caused by the war stood in the way: rising prices and commodity shortages. In this context, it is important to consider another specific feature of the region under analysis – its ethnic structure. The majority of the cities of Right-Bank Cherkasy region were characterized by an unusually high representation of the Ukrainians, which, in particular, distinguished it from Volyn and Podillia. According to the 1897 census, the Ukrainians made up two-thirds of the urban population in Kaniv and Chyhyryn, and slightly less than half in Zvenyhorodka and Cherkasy. The only exception was Uman, where the Jewish community was numerically dominant: 57.1% compared to 30.66% of the Ukrainians (Chornyi, 2001, p. 12).

The presented statistical data enable us to better understand the origins of the problem of regulating trade on weekends and holidays, which arose in a number of cities at the beginning of World War I (Gerasymov, 2017, p. 202). The intensification of trade activities during wartime

led to aggravation of relations between the Jewish communities and local authorities. The severity of conflicts depended on a numerical ratio of the Jewish population: if the community did not constitute the majority, its influence on trade was limited, which determined the level of tension in relations with municipalities and the corresponding economic consequences. Both Jews and Orthodox Christians observed a ban on trade on their holidays: the former – on Saturday, the latter – on Sunday. The prerequisites for this arose after the adoption of the government decree “On Normal Rest of Employees in Commercial Establishments” in 1908, drawn up in accordance with Christian canons. However, its implementation depended on the decisions of local authorities. For example, nine days before the war outbreak, Chyhyryn Town Council adopted a mandatory resolution according to which trade in taverns and beer pubs was allowed only on weekdays from 8:00 to 20:00, while on holidays (solemn) and Sundays it was completely prohibited (State Archive of Kyiv Region, f. 9, d. 30, c. 97, p. 2). Despite some attempts by Chyhyryn Jews to make the authorities reverse this decision, it did not have a significant impact on the local economy. In contrast, for example, the situation was different in Lypovets, where the Jewish community, having a larger representation, played a more important role in the commercial life of the town. The decision of the local authorities was even harsher and was probably motivated by anti-Semitic sentiments. It spread to the entire sphere of trade, which ultimately affected not only the Jewish entrepreneurs, but also the very town: residents of surrounding villages stopped coming to Lypovets for the purpose of trade, concluding deals, and receiving services. As a result, economic activity shifted to neighbouring settlements, where similar restrictions were not applied (SAKR, f. 9, d. 30, c. 92, p. 70). Thus, trade issues, like the food problem in general, could take on a distinct interethnic colour.

It should be noted that food problems in the towns of the region were exacerbated by typical reasons at that time: labour mobilization, requisitions, transport disruptions, the influx of refugees, inflation, and poorly organized supply. In 1915, a number of essential goods fell into the category of scarce. In this regard, townspeople rightly had questions that sooner or later had to go beyond the food sphere. For example, in the autumn of that year, the residents of Zvenyhorodka could not understand why there was so little sugar in the town and it cost 22 kopecks per pound, when so many sugar factories operated in the neighbourhood (SAKR, f. 9, d. 31, c. 17, p. 203).

To overcome the food crisis, the townspeople and local authorities used various methods. One of them may be considered a real socio-economic phenomenon of that era. It was about school gardening. It is worth noting that the garden squads established on the initiative of the authorities required minimal funding, since the work was usually organized near the place of residence, and this reduced transportation costs or made them impossible. Children worked in shifts (3–5 hours), which reduced the cost of their food. Both boys and girls were sent to the fields and gardens. One of such sites, for example, was called “Garden of Labour Brigade of the Cherkasy First Higher Primary School in Memory of Great Patriotic War II”. (*One of the contemporary names of World War I in the Russian Empire. – Aut.*). The harvest collected by the schoolchildren was to be given free of charge to the families of front-line soldiers (SAKR, f. 9, d. 32, c. 24, p. 187). It should be noted that during wartime, the educational process in Cherkasy took place in two shifts. This was due to the fact that part of the buildings of city educational institutions was transferred for the needs of the army by the local authorities. This necessitated the rental of additional premises for the accommodation of students in dormitories, as well as for the organization of education in new classrooms (CSHAUK, f. 707, d. 258, c. 9, pp. 391–393).

As in any war, altruism and self-sacrifice of some people coexisted with selfishness, corruption, looting and social indifference of others. This fact was evidenced, in particular, by the unprecedented growth of bank deposits. During only two years of the war, the turnover of funds in one of the financial institutions of Cherkasy increased by 2–2.5 times. It did

not at all indicate an improvement in the well-being of the townspeople: the majority of the deposited amounts were of a dubious origin, often associated with semi-legal or openly criminal schemes (Po nashemu krayu, 1916, p. 4). Such social – and no less importantly, moral – inequality only increased tension in the society and led to destabilization of the rear, which ultimately contributed to the political explosion of 1917.

Another manifestation of wartime in the sphere of consumption was the so-called “dry law” introduced by the tsarist authorities – a ban on the sale of alcoholic beverages. In the Russian Empire, the final decisions on restricting the trade in alcohol were entrusted to local authorities. Thus, the responsibility for the implementation of this unpopular measure was actually transferred from the centre to the localities. By the end of 1914, the sale of alcoholic beverages was banned in Cherkasy and Uman (SAKR, f. 9, d. 32, c. 24, p. 259). The effects of the anti-alcohol campaign initiated by St. Petersburg were controversial. On the one hand, the introduction of the so-called “dry law” contributed to a decrease in crime rates, suicides and domestic violence (Gerasyimov, 2017, pp. 230–231). However, on the other hand, there were also negative consequences.

Firstly, the city budget revenues decreased, as a significant portion of revenues came from the tavern tax. Due to the ban on the sale of alcohol, many public catering establishments became unprofitable and were forced to close. For example, in Uman, profitability of restaurants after the ban on the sale of alcoholic beverages decreased tenfold (SAKR, f. 9, d. 31, c. 23, p. 169).

Secondly, the drinking population instinctively sought alternative opportunities to obtain alcoholic beverages. Newspapers of the time repeatedly published cases of the establishment of illegal moonshine brewing places. For example, in March 1916, Uman law enforcement officers discovered a “distillery”, which was regularly moved from one apartment to another, usually in opposite parts of the town, which served as a means of masking illegal activities. The manufactured products were sold at a price of 100 rubles per bucket (g. Uman, 1916, p. 2).

The introduction of “dry law” also caused the emergence of the so-called “vacuum of leisure”: deprived of free access to alcohol, some of the townspeople began to look for alternative forms of spending their free time. This, in turn, contributed to the growth of the popularity of cultural and leisure institutions – theatres, cinemas, libraries. In Cherkasy, as in other regions of Ukraine, there was a real book craze (Gerasyimov, 2017, p. 254). This fact is evidenced by the growth in the number of subscribers to the Cherkasy City Library: if in January 1915 there were 435 subscribers, then in January 1916 there were 553 subscribers (SAKR, f. 9, d. 32, c. 24, p. 343).

The arrival of mobilized soldiers, and later, influx of refugees brought sanitary and hygienic problems to the fore in the cities and towns of Right-Bank Cherkasy region. On August 23, 1914, Kyiv, Podillia, and Volyn Governor-General Fiodor Trepov issued a mandatory decree that obliged owners of residential buildings, as well as administrations of state, zemstvo, city, and public institutions to maintain proper sanitary conditions. In particular, it was forbidden to throw manure, pour sewage, slops and dirty factory water into the streets, ravines, rivers, ditches and other places not intended for this. At the same time, each household had to have special boxes or pits for collecting solid and liquid waste, which had to be cleaned regularly (CSHAUK, f. 442, d. 864, c. 246, p. 45). However, implementation of the authorities’ demands for improving the sanitary situation took place under conditions of limited local resources. Thus, in Uman, the expenses for urban improvement in the budget for 1914 were reduced by 4,237 rubles 37 kopecks. This was the result of an order from the provincial presence, which obliged to double the expenses for maintaining the police – from 8 to 16 thousand rubles (SAKR, f. 9, d. 30, c. 76, p. 12). In addition, the city suffered from the unsatisfactory quality of its water supply. The city’s water supply, built on the eve of the war, was pumped from a polluted swampy area, as a result of which a consumer received a yellowish-brown liquid with a putrid smell. Despite all remarks of the provincial sanitary executive commission, the concessionaires were in no hurry to correct their mistake (Bez zdorovoy vody, 1915, p. 4).

At the end of 1914, a significant congestion of the shopping and market square was recorded in Kaniv due to a shortage of janitors. The archival source we rely on does not explain the reasons for the shortage of municipal workers, but it can be assumed that this was due either to their mobilization into the army or, less likely, to insufficient material incentives for this work. That is why, the square remained uncleaned until it was swept by one of the workers randomly hired by the town authorities. As a way out of the situation, Kaniv town council considered the possibility of an agreement with the local prison department to involve prisoners in performing such work (SAKR, f. 9, d. 31, c. 18, p. 11).

Unexpectedly, in the spring of 1916, Cherkasy got a chance to build a sewage system, which would improve the sanitary condition of the city significantly. In February of that year, the military authorities demanded that the garbage dumps be moved away from the nearby sanitary and medical town. In response, the city council instructed the mayor to appeal to the government with a request to allocate 150 thousand rubles from the state treasury for the construction of a sewage system. Unexpectedly for many, this request was granted. The sewerage project was prepared by Professor Dmytro Ruzsky, and the city authorities undertook to complete the construction by October 1, 1916. If successful, Cherkasy would become the second city in Right-Bank Ukraine, after Kyiv, with its own city sewerage system. However, the implementation of this plan was prevented by the military: in April, the commander-in-chief of the armies of the Southwestern Front refused to confirm the funding due to a shortage of manpower and materials, as well as doubts about meeting the construction deadlines (SAKR, f. 9, d. 30, c. 76, pp. 148, 44). This case illustrates the complexity of the rear functioning in wartime, when even the most necessary sanitary initiatives of local authorities could be neglected or blocked due to the priority of military needs and decisions of the military command.

The beginning of the war was marked by a major epidemiological threat to the region. In the summer and autumn of 1914, the cholera pathogen spread from Podillia to Uman district, causing mass illnesses among the local population (Likvidatsiya holernoy epidemii, 1914, p. 2). The inhabitants of Uman were seriously concerned about the invasion of rodents and sick dogs arriving from the neighboring Podillia province. These animals posed a real threat to life and health, as they were carriers of dangerous infectious diseases – plague, typhus and rabies. The mass reproduction of mice and rats was probably explained by the presence of significant grain reserves intended for the needs of the Russian army, while their appearance in cities was due to the intensive movement of troops and refugees, which disrupted the natural balance and drove them out of the fields. In turn, the increase in the number of dogs in urban spaces was associated with the arrival of peasants who accompanied their animals when taking products to markets, where the demand for provisions increased sharply at the beginning of the war (Nashestvie myishey, 1914, p. 2). Given the chronic lack of funding and the mobilization of some medical and sanitary personnel, Uman authorities had limited opportunities to counter these challenges effectively. In October 1915, the situation even reached a critical point, when the town faced the risk of a sharp deterioration in medical services due to the possible termination of night medical duty (Po provintsii, 1915, p. 4).

Overall, the problems of urban infrastructure during World War I were not limited to financial and skilled shortages. They were broader and included organizational difficulties, repressive measures against subjects of enemy states, and the consequences of socio-economic destabilization under wartime conditions.

Sequestration – the temporary seizure, freezing, or confiscation of property, funds, or resources by decision of the authorities and, at the same time, a popular tool of political or administrative pressure at the time – often had a destructive effect on the development of public order. In Zvenyhorodka, this process led to a peculiar situation. On March 11, 1915, at a meeting of the town council, the decision was made to punish the concessionaire of the local

power plant, Fedir Vysotsky, for unauthorized laying of an electric cable. An aggravating circumstance was not only his Austrian citizenship, but also the fact that his son had served in the Austro-Hungarian army. The service became the basis for unanimous support for the decision to sequester the enterprise and submit a corresponding petition to Kyiv Military District. Although the military authorities granted this request soon, in May it became clear that there was practically nothing to transfer to the town – the entrepreneur turned out to be a chronic debtor (SAKR, f. 9, d. 31, c. 17, p. 68). Therefore, on the eve of the sequestration, all the power plant equipment – engines, dynamo-machines and other technical means – was first taken out of the town, and later, due to debt obligations, officially written off and sold at public auction (SAKR, f. 9, d. 31, c. 97, p. 34).

We may say that World War I began at an extremely unfortunate moment for Uman, since it thereby destroyed the previously established local authorities' strategy for the development of urban development. On July 6, 1914, in accordance with the previously reached agreement with the concessionaires, the town conducted tests of the newly built power plant. However, this meant only partial fulfillment of the agreement terms (*Elektricheskoe osveschenie*, 1914, p. 3) – after the completion of electrification, it was planned to launch tram traffic in the town no later than the end of 1914 (*Doklad po voprosu ob ustroystve elektricheskogo osvescheniya i tramvaya*, 1914, pp. 2–3) – an extremely important issue in the context of the rapid pre-war development of Uman. It is worth noting that by the set deadline, construction work in the town was almost completed: tracks were laid, an engine was installed at the central station, etc. The only thing missing were wires and rolling stock, which remained at the factory in the Belgian city of Charleroi after the war outbreak. Due to impossibility of obtaining carriages from the manufacturer, an alternative was considered – to deliver them from Yelyzavethrad, Katerynoslav, Kyiv or Kremenchuk. Therefore, it was initially decided to postpone the opening of the tramway until the spring of 1915 (Uman, 1914, p. 4). However, due to the failure to implement this alternative scheme, “The Electricity Society” appealed to the city authorities with a request to postpone the launch of the tram service until the end of hostilities. The city council refused to grant this request categorically (*Hodataystvo o sekvestre elektricheskogo predpriyatiya*, 1916, p. 5), thereby laying the groundwork for the legal conflict that erupted in 1915.

We assume that the catalyst for the worsening of relations may have been, to some extent, the exchange crisis that unfolded in the Ukrainian lands at the beginning of the second year of the war. Its essence was the rapid disappearance of small exchange coins from circulation: made of copper, which was scarce at the time, this money had a higher material value than its face value, which made its accumulation a profitable activity. As a result, this caused chaos in the sphere of trade and household services. Uman cabmen, remaining monopolists of passenger transportation due to the lack of a tram, were among those who brilliantly took advantage of the situation. They arbitrarily increased fares, citing a shortage of small coins, and refused to give out change (Uman, 1915, p. 3).

Thus, at the end of 1915, a conflict arose between the Uman City Duma and the local electricity producer due to the failure to fulfill the agreement to launch the tram service by December 1914. In response to a lawsuit, the company threatened to completely cut off the city's electricity supply. The Duma's petition to the head of the Kyiv Military District to sequester the enterprise and transfer its property to the city was rejected due to the lack of evidence of its Austro-Hungarian or German “trace” (*Hodataystvo o sekvestre elektricheskogo predpriyatiya*, 1916, p. 5). At the same time, the Uman authorities decided to finally terminate the agreement with the concessionaires (SAKR, f. 9, d. 33, c. 23, p. 12), which, as it turned out, put an end to the prospect of launching a city tram service.

However, a more typical problem of that time in the energy supply of cities was the economy militarization, which prioritized satisfying the needs of the army. Due to the

use of railway transport for military purposes, city power plants faced an acute shortage of fuel necessary for their operation. For example, on April 27, 1916, this caused another stoppage of electricity production in Cherkasy. The stoppage affected both city residents, who were forced to move through darkened streets, and water consumers, because due to the unsatisfactory sanitary condition of the Dnieper, only the city water supply provided a stable supply of clean water (g. Cherkassy, 1916b, p. 3).

The solution to the fuel crisis of that time was seen in the use of alternative energy sources. In May 1916, the Commissioner for Mineral Fuels sent orders to the regions to replace coal with “any substitutes in accordance with local conditions – firewood, straw, peat, sunflower husks, etc.” (Nedostatok uglya, 1916, p. 3). An interesting coincidence is that it was during those days that the Cherkasy City Duma received a petition from an inventor Yaroslav Kuznetsov requesting permission to build a briquette plant for producing fuel from household and commercial waste. Despite the obvious promise of the project (it was planned to produce 1–1.5 million poods of fuel per year), its implementation required significant investments – about 50 thousand rubles. Therefore, Cherkasy city authorities were forced to state the impossibility of implementing the initiative of the local inventor (SACHR, f. 8, d. 1, c. 509, p. 5).

Conclusions. The analysis of the population’s daily life in Right-Bank Cherkasy region during World War I (1914 – 1917) shows how even a rear region remote from the front became an integral part of the global conflict, while maintaining local specificity. At the beginning of the war, mass patriotic actions, farewells of mobilized people and volunteer activity were observed in the cities. Over time, enthusiasm was replaced by panic, apathy, distrust of the authorities and official press, and the growth of corruption. Mobilization caused a shortage of labour, which led to the recruitment of marginalized groups – foreign prisoners of war, prisoners and even arrested illegal prostitutes, while the wives of conscripted men went out to work en masse. Food shortages, inflation and interethnic tension deepened material and at the same time moral and psychological crisis. Military priorities and a new economic situation caused by the war made it impossible to implement important infrastructure projects, in particular, the construction of a sewage system in Cherkasy and the launch of tram traffic in Uman. All this testifies to deep social transformations, which, despite the “forgetfulness” of the region in historiography, became a reflection of all-Ukrainian processes and prerequisites for the revolutionary events of 1917.

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