

## SOCIAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY

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### **THE STRUGGLE AGAINST TSARISM: THE “TARAS FRATERNITY” AND THE “KAGAALI” MOVEMENT**

The research is devoted to the coverage of the problem of the national liberation struggle of Ukrainians and Finns in the period of the active tsarists' policy of Russification in national regions of the Russian Empire by the example of two underground organizations – the “Taras Fraternity” and the “Kagaali” movement. Also, the essence of their ideological platforms was determined. The research has studied the contribution of the leaders of these organizations to the process of politicizing the national liberation struggle of Ukrainians and Finns on the eve of the first Russian revolution (1905-1907). The author offers a comparative analysis of the activities of the “Taras Fraternity” in Naddnipryanshchyna and the “Kagaali” movement in the Grand Duchy of Finland. For the first time in Ukraine, an essential definition was made not only of the ideological platform of the organizations studied but also of their practical application against the tsarism.

**Keywords:** the “Taras Fraternity”, nationalism, the “Kagaali”, Russification, Russian Empire.

The relevance of the stated theme is in building historical parallels between Ukraine and Finland on the example of national underground organizations that sought to gain independence from the Russian Empire. During this period of history, national liberation wars took place in Europe and the rest of the world. Meanwhile, in the Grand Duchy of Finland it was almost not felt: a peaceful life continued, industry developed, the social and political activity of the intelligentsia grew; in Naddnipryanshchyna the peasantry was practically divorced from the realities of political life, the intelligentsia was predominantly engaged in cultural activities, and the upper strata supported the existing royal order. It is important to note that this study should help to understand the problem of the historical path of two distant and at the same time close to each other countries, which were once parts of the multinational Russian Empire.

Studying the publications of Finnish and Ukrainian researchers of this period in history helps to clarify the degree of study of this problem. Among the most notable are the works of M. Klinge, T. Vihavainen, T. Polvinen, A. Saltovskiy, S. Naumov and P. Mirchuk. The Russian expert on our topics I. Novikova in her work demonstrates how the unseasoned royal policy managed to turn loyal Finnish subjects into their worst enemies. In turn, O. Jussila, S. Hentilä and J. Nevakivi focused on the political transformation of the national movement of the Finnish people, which was directly promoted by the counter-reforms of the last emperor from the Romanov's house. The Ukrainian component of this problem was studied most fruitfully by F. Turchenko, having comprehensively analyzed the figure of the founding father of Ukrainian nationalism, Mykola Mikhnovskiy, and his influence on the then political situation over Dnipro land.

The purpose of the article is to carry out a comparative analysis of ideological platforms, political goals and practical steps to achieve them by the participants of the “Taras Fraternity” and the “Kagaali”-movement.

At the end of the 19th century in the Russian Empire began to occur dramatic changes in the accession of the new emperor from the Romanov dynasty. With the death of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, the imperial throne was taken by his son, the conservative Alexander III; begins the curtailment of liberal reforms, which took the place of the Russification policy. On the national regions of the Romanov state, these changes gave impetus to the intelligentsia for the practical implementation of their own ideological developments: in Naddnipryanshchyna, a radical-minded student creates the first independent organization – the “Taras Fraternity”; in the Grand Duchy of Finland, the oppositions Svecomans and the nationalists Young Finns do not agree with the new policy in the general movement “Kagaali”.

The growth of the national consciousness of the Naddnipyrianshchyna in the 1890s. It led to a significant distinction among the intelligentsia. If the older generation preferred cultural and educational affairs in the solution of the “Ukrainian question” (demands for moderate reforms that would abolish national and cultural restrictions for Ukrainians in the Russian Empire), then the young people, passionate about revolutionary ideas, sought to achieve national liberation through struggle<sup>1</sup>. Understanding that a compromise between “fathers and sons” will not be reached, in the summer of 1891 at the tomb of Taras Shevchenko near the city of Kaniv, students Mykhailo Bazkevich, Mykola Bayzdrenko and Ivan Lypa, and functionary Vitalii Borovyk founded the secret political society called the “Taras Fraternity”<sup>2</sup>. By the end of the same year, writer Borys Hrinchenko, poet Mykhailo Kotsyubynskyi, lawyer Mykola Mikhnovskyi and others joined the ranks of the underground organization. The organization was financed by donations from philanthropists, in particular, the sugar producer Vasyl Symyrenko; the largest centers of the organization were created in Kyiv, Odesa, Chernihiv, Poltava, and Kharkiv<sup>3</sup>.

Participants of the “Taras Fraternity” laid out their political platform in the so-called “declaration” or “Profession de foi of young the Ukrainians”<sup>4</sup>. “...Ukraine under the Russian occupation! And after the law of human psychology, she raises her national flag. But we, as children of Ukraine, as sons of our people, are nationalists and all we care about is to give our people national freedom. Soon, Ukraine will extract this will, the content of the national flag will change itself, because humanity is coming in and life-long ideals alternate...” – the “Taras Fraternity” document said<sup>5</sup>. A characteristic feature of this society was clandestine openly anti-government activities. Having declared its goal of fighting for “an independent sovereign and all-united Ukraine from river San across the Kuban, from the Carpathians to the Caucasus”, the “Taras Fraternity” had to carry out a number of open political acts to witness their challenge to tsarism.

As the brotherhood member Yurii Kollard recalls, at first it was planned to require the authorities to introduce the use of the Ukrainian language in the school and institutions in Naddnipyrianshchyna; in the future, in the event of refusal, to proceed to more radical actions: subversive activities in the army, the commission of attacks on officials, the destruction of the monuments of the tsarist regime<sup>6</sup>. In parallel with this, there was an active propaganda of the separatism ideas among students, peasants and workers of the Naddnipyrianshchyna<sup>7</sup>. During the 1892-1897 brotherhood activists illegally imported radical literature from Lviv and Chernivtsi, distributing it among the conscious youth of provincial cities. In early 1898, the Russian authorities succeeded in exposing the organization: one of the members of the Kyiv organization reported to the gendarmes on “the growth of radicalism, and the intention to kill the royal family”<sup>8</sup>. Arrests, courts, prisons began, but it was not possible to prove the guilt of the brothers.

The “Taras Fraternity” was destroyed, but his ideas substantially replenished the political thought of Naddnipyrianshchyna, becoming in the future support in the struggle against the Bolsheviks. But however, the organization remained “a voice calls out in the wilderness”. Many Ukrainians have not yet understood that they are about to become an independent nation whose freedom will need to be defended with arms in their hands<sup>9</sup>.

At the same time, tsarism, which fought the national liberation movements on the Russian Empire national regions, decided to change its attitude towards its loyal subjects of the Grand Duchy of Finland. The new Governor-General Nikolai Bobrikov in early 1899 began to Russify Finland, caused great resistance from its inhabitants<sup>10</sup>. The first came under

<sup>1</sup> Ковальов, Д. В. (2018). Шлях революціонерів-самостійників: Конрад-Віктор Зілліакус і Микола Міхновський *Ethnic History of European Nations*, 55, 54.

<sup>2</sup> Наумов, С. (1999). Братство Тарасівців. *Ukrainian historic journal*, 5, 37.

<sup>3</sup> Турченко, Ф. (2006). *Микола Міхновський: життя і слово*. Київ: Генеза, 45.

<sup>4</sup> Мірчук, П. (1999). Відродження великої ідеї. Київ: Українська видавнича спілка, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Правда (місячник політики, науки і письменництва) (1893). *Profession de foi молодих українців*, I, XVII.

<sup>6</sup> Коллард, Ю. (1972). *Спогади юнацьких днів (1897-1906)*. Торонто: Срібна сурьма, 29.

<sup>7</sup> Ковальов, Д.В. (2018). Шлях революціонерів-самостійників: Конрад-Віктор Зілліакус і Микола Міхновський. *Ethnic History of European Nations*, 55, 55.

<sup>8</sup> Салтовський, О. (2002). *Концепції української державності в історії вітчизняної політичної думки (від витоків до початку ХХ сторіччя)*. Київ: Парапан, 269.

<sup>9</sup> Коллард, Ю. (1972). *Спогади юнацьких днів (1897-1906)*. Торонто: Срібна сурьма, 31.

<sup>10</sup> Vihavainen, T. (2018) The end of loyalty. Crisis in Finnish-Russian relations in early 20th century. *Ethnic History of European Nations*, 55, 15.

the tough hand of the tsar's governor, figures of the Finnish national liberation movement and the opposition beet deputies.

“February manifesto” of Nickolai II, published in February 1899, significantly limited the current constitutional system of Finland and brought its autonomous status closer to other regions of the Russian Empire<sup>1</sup>. So the understandable answer of the active political minority of the Grand Duchy of Finland was to unite in an underground movement, which was called “Kagaali” (from Hebrew קהל or Qahal – society, assembly)<sup>2</sup>.

It was founded in the autumn of 1901 in the estate of Turholma in the village of Laajasalo on the island of Tullisaari, which was owned General Jacob Julius af Lindfors<sup>3</sup>. During the first meeting, activists among the Svekomans (Leopold Mechelin, Adolf von Bonsdorff and Wilhelm Zilliakus) and the Young Finns (Eero Erkkö, Per Evind Svingufvud, Heikki Renvall) declared their goal of deploying resistance to the Russification by the new governor-general<sup>4</sup>; The members of “Kagaali”, despite their status and privileges, called on their fellow citizens to sabotage the initiatives of Nikolai Bobrikov, primarily through propaganda, through the press and public speeches<sup>5</sup>. At the same time, comparing “Kagaali” with the “Taras Fraternity”, we note that some members of the “Kagaali” movement did not develop any single ideological document that would reveal the essence of their political platform. And this is understandable because ideological opponents (Svekomans and Young Finns) joined the ranks of the underground organization and were made by the odious Finnish governor-general as situational allies.

Leopold Mehelin, the first leader of the “Kagaali” movement, called on the Finns to passively resist the actions of the royal governor. He demanded that the citizens not serve the military garrison stationed in the fortress of Sveaborg, not buy goods from Russian merchants and sabotage the implementation of manifestos about language and mail<sup>6</sup>. It was the members of the “Kagaali” movement that belonged to the initiative of collecting signatures to a nationwide petition sent in autumn 1901 to the king. The appeal was signed by over 500 thousand patriots of the Grand Duke of Finland, so she became known in history as the “Suuri adressi”<sup>7</sup>.

In 1903, Leopold Mehelin leaves the underground organization he created. The reason for this was the ideological debate about whether to continue non-violent resistance to the actions of the governor-general. The brother of Wilhelm Zilliakus, known for his travels in places of compact residence of Finns in the USA and Canada, the radical nationalist Konrad Viktor Zilliakus called the members of “Kagaali” to go out of the underground and to show more active resistance<sup>8</sup>. In his numerous articles, he called on young people to kill representatives of the royal power in the Grand Duchy of Finland, and also encouraged the deployment of a revolutionary underground for opposition parties from the central part of the Russian Empire – the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks.

When at the beginning of 1905 the Romanovs' state suffered a humiliating military defeat against Japan, this caused social unrest throughout the empire<sup>9</sup>. The revolution was also shaken up by Finland: the passive resistance to which Leopold Mehelin was calling should come to naught and open the way to a more active one – through rebellion. After the general strike that took place in the autumn of 1905 in all industrial cities of the Russian Empire, in particular in Helsingfors, Tammerfors and Viborg,

<sup>1</sup> Ковальов, Д. В. (2015) Вплив політики русифікації на суспільно-політичну ситуацію у Фінляндії. *Наукові праці історичного факультету Запорізького національного університету*, 44, 2, 47.

<sup>2</sup> Ковальов, Д. В. (2017). Підпільна організація «Kagaali»: фінляндський опір московському самодержавству. *Borysten*, 2 (307), 25.

<sup>3</sup> Klinge, M. (1997). *Keisarin Suomi*. Espoo: Schildt, 374.

<sup>4</sup> Leino-Kaukiainen, P., Zetterberg, S., Tiitta, A. (1992). “*Rajamaa 1890-1917*”, *Suomi kautta aikojen*. Helsinki: Valitut Palat, 338.

<sup>5</sup> Polvinen, T. (1984). *Valtakunta ja rajamaa. N.I. Bobrikov Suomen kenraalikuvernöörinä 1898-1904*. Porvoo: WSOY, 236.

<sup>6</sup> Novikova, I. (2007). The Provisional Government and Finland: Russian Democracy and Finnish Nationalism in Search of Peaceful Coexistence. *Power, 1700-1930*, 13, 402.

<sup>7</sup> Ковальов, Д. В. (2015) Вплив політики русифікації на суспільно-політичну ситуацію у Фінляндії. *Наукові праці історичного факультету Запорізького національного університету*, 44, 2, 48.

<sup>8</sup> Ковальов, Д. В. (2018). Шлях революціонерів-самостійників: Конрад-Віктор Зіллякус і Микола Міхновський. *Ethnic History of European Nations*, 55, 55.

<sup>9</sup> Jussila, O., Hentilä, S., Nevakivi, J. (2009). *Suomen poliittinen historia 1809-2009*. Helsinki: WSOY Oppimateriaalit, 85.

the organization “Kagaali” ceased to exist<sup>1</sup>. The initial period of Russification was completed, the activity of the movement was no longer needed, new organizations focused on active resistance and a long-term goal – gaining state independence for Finland<sup>2</sup>.

The revolution of 1905 coincided with the rise of the national liberation movement of the Finns, and all Finland joined in a general strike in the Russian Empire. Political parties, which were ex-members of the underground “Kagaali” movement, participated in the process and put forward their reform agenda<sup>3</sup>. Emperor Nikolai II was forced to abolish decrees that restricted Finnish autonomy. In 1906, new electoral legislation was passed that not only gave women the right to vote, but also turned the representative legislative assembly of the Grand Duchy of Finland into a unicameral parliament, now known as Eduskunta. When establishing universal suffrage, the number of voters in the country increased 10 times. However, since the autumn of 1907, the tsarist’s policy in Finland regained the character of gradual Russification and restriction of autonomy, but now instead of passive resistance to the suppression of oppressors became active clergy, seeking to separate their homeland from the Russian Empire.

The significance of both organizations lies in the fact that both the “Taras Fraternity” in Naddnipyryanshchyna and the “Kagaali” movement in the Grand Duchy of Finland, despite significant differences in the political, social and economic conditions of that time, were the first to openly challenge tsarism. If, until now, the struggle against the Romanov state was concentrated solely on the plane of controversy, then the activities of the organizations studied demonstrated the desire of an active minority among the intelligentsia to be masters in their own land. As for ideology, the “Taras Fraternity” opened the way for modern Ukrainian nationalism, its members were represented by two opposing currents – Svekoman liberals and nationalists Young Finns who, at the first opportunity (the revolution of 1905-1907), broke off their union.

Analysis of the sources and the study of a wide range of scientific literature leads to a number of conclusions. First, it is impossible to carry out a comparative analysis of the ideological platforms of both of the above organizations because of the lack of such among the representatives of the “Kagaali” movement, who adjusted the fight against tsarism to a specific point. Secondly, the political goal and practical steps to achieve it were also excellent: the “Taras Fraternity”, proclaiming “Profession de foi of the Ukrainians”, put forward a liberating desire for fellow citizens, while members of the “Kagaali” movement sought to stop Russification and eliminate odious Governor-General, not state independence for the Grand Duchy of Finland. Third, Finns have always been in favor of the tsarist regime, even during the reign of Nikolai II, which cannot be said about Ukrainians; it is therefore not surprising that the flames of the revolution of 1905-1907. The Grand Duchy of Finland presented a real unicameral parliament, and Naddnipyryanshchyna – a series of political repressions, and a social and economic crisis. We should also emphasize that such different and distant European countries as Ukraine and Finland make our common past similar when both countries were parts of the Russian Empire. The stay of the Grand Duchy of Finland and the Naddnipyryanshchyna in the bosom of the Romanov’s state affected the formation of the Ukrainian and Finnish modern nations, to which the organizations – “Kagaali”-movement and “Taras Fraternity” – stated in the title of the article were actively involved.

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<sup>1</sup> Novikova, I. (2007). The Provisional Government and Finland: Russian Democracy and Finnish Nationalism in Search of Peaceful Coexistence. *Power, 1700-1930*, 13, 407.

<sup>2</sup> Vihavainen, T. (2018) The end of loyalty. Crisis in Finnish-Russian relations in early 20th century. *Ethnic History of European Nations*, 55, 16.

<sup>3</sup> Leino-Kaukiainen, P., Zetterberg, S., Tiitta, A. (1992). “*Rajamaa 1890-1917*”, *Suomi kautta aikojen*. Helsinki: Valitut Palat, 339.

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