

THE NATIONALITIES FACTOR IN THE ACTIVITIES OF INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES IN SWITZERLAND DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Alfred Erich Senn

Abstract

In the course of the First World War, 'the nationalities question' exploded in Eastern Europe. By the fall of 1918, the Eastern Europe of the three empires had collapsed, and national states were rising. During the war, the nationalities question as perceived in Switzerland, a neutral country, had developed from an initial concern about the loyalty of the minorities in the borderlands of the three East European empires into a battle royal for recognition as individual states. The article focuses on the activities of the German ambassador in Bern who was the most active force in the development, and he gave special support for the nationalities on Russia's western border. Poland's future quickly became the major issue but this threatened Germany's own ambitions in Eastern Europe. The Lithuanians and the Ukrainians particularly opposed Polish dreams of establishing a large state. The Germans, however, considered the future of Ukraine to lie mostly in the hands of the Austrian Empire, and therefore Lithuania appeared to be the more promising force to limit any new Polish state.

Key words: First World War, intelligence, Switzerland, Polish Question, national minorities.

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Anotacija

Per Pirmąjį pasaulinį karą Rytų Europoje smarkiai suaktualėjo „nacionalinis klausimas“. Iki 1918 m. pabaigos žlugo trys Rytų Europos imperijos ir susikūrė nacionalinės valstybės. Karo metais neutralioje Šveicarijoje nacionalinio klausimo suvokimas kito nuo susirūpinimo tautinių mažumų lojalumu trijų Rytų Europos imperijų pasienio teritorijose iki aštrių nesutarimų dėl paskirų valstybių pripažinimo. Aktyviausia šių pokyčių jėga buvo Vokietijos pasiuntinys Berne, ypatingą paramą teikęs tautoms, kurios gyveno Rusijos vakariniuose pasieniuose. Svarbiausiu klausimu netrukus tapo Lenkijos ateitis, tačiau tai grėsė pačios Vokietijos ambicijoms Rytų Europoje. Lietuviai ir ukrainiečiai ypač oponavo lenkų svajonėms kurti didelę valstybę. Tačiau vokiečiai suvokė, kad Ukrainos ateitis daugiausia priklauso nuo Austrijos-Vengrijos, todėl Lietuva jiems atrodė perspektyviausia jėga bet kokiai naujai Lenkijos valstybei apriboti.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: Pirmasis pasaulinis karas, žvalgyba, Šveicarija, Lenkijos klausimas, tautinės mažumos.

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How should I define the First World War in time? The beginning is obvious, but when did it end? Western accounts of the war tend to focus on the German/French/British conflict, which, after the American entry into the war in 1917, ended with Germany's surrender in November 1918, with the 'big' issues, including Germany's frontiers, settled by the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. In these accounts, Russia and Austria-Hungary tend to be what we might call sideshows. In Eastern Europe, however, the game changed radically in 1917–1918 as a result of the Russian revolutions of 1917, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, and the stream of declarations of independence in 1918. The Paris Peace Conference claimed the authority to establish new frontiers in Eastern Europe, but only the Treaty of Riga in March 1921 drew a line between Poland and Soviet Russia. Of course the Lithuanians worked at keeping the Vilnius question alive for quite a time longer.

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In the course of the war, whatever dates one chooses, perspectives on 'the national question' changed drastically. When hostilities started in 1914, concerns about the political ambitions of nationalities within the borders of the multinational empires seemed to offer no threat. Each state had its problems, but in 1914 none of the leaders of the three East European empires thought that in just four to five years they would be living among imperial ashes in a world that required new maps. The intelligence agents of the governments of 1914 naturally enough reflected the prejudices and leanings of their masters, and under the circumstances, at the outbreak of war, their first considerations ran along lines of determining the loyalty that minority nationalities might display toward resident or invading armies, under whose rule they had to live.

Questions of this kind abounded in the lands between Berlin and Moscow. France and England had little concern about their national minorities. Germany seemed secure; the Entente powers considered the Jews basically pro-German. Austria-Hungary, a state built on minorities, looked at its groups as perhaps building blocks for growth, or at least *fortwursteln*. Russia seemed the most vulnerable, especially with regard to 'the Polish Question'. Russian leaders, however, refused to admit that they had problems that warranted international attention, and here lies the heart of my topic: the development of 'the Polish Question'.

I

I consider 'the Polish Question', the problem of the future of the lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Rzeczpospolita, to have gone through distinct periods of development in the course of the war. In brief, I would distinguish perhaps four:

1. The first, 1914–1915, a relatively quiet beginning as the powers slowly realised that this would not be a short war. In Switzerland, national groups from this region

first concentrated on war relief. At this time, Russia seemed to dominate and even control the Polish Question.

2. The second, 1915–1916, resulting from the German advance through Poland and Lithuania and the development of broader activity in Switzerland. Russia's position weakened significantly. Germany's proclamation of an independent Polish state, November 1916, was the turning point for our considerations here. The Germans now had the initiative, but other nationalities, particularly Lithuanians and Ukrainians, were becoming more active, calling for limiting any future Polish state.

3. The third, 1916–1918, from the German proclamation of an independent Polish state through the revolutions in Russia, culminating in the Bolshevik seizure of power and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Activity in Switzerland intensified, but because broader forces were now active, more significant developments were taking place in the war zones.

4. The fourth, 1918–1921, from the armistice in the West to the signing of the Treaty of Riga, marked by the emergence of a number of new states in Eastern Europe while at the same time some efforts to create new states failed. Activities in Switzerland continued but the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, in particular, drained the Swiss arena of much of the significance and attention that it had drawn earlier.

I have chosen to concentrate on the first two periods, from the outbreak of war in August 1914 through the German military success in 1915 to the German proclamation of the reestablishment of the Polish state in November 1916, although I have to consider some later events. My emphasis is on the idea of dividing the region into national territories rather than on the development of politics in each national region. On the Swiss stage, these periods were the more significant for the development of the Polish Question, which in this period came to include recognition of the existence of Lithuania.

Why Switzerland? In the centre of the war in Western Europe, surrounded by warring powers, Switzerland was a natural arena of action, even for the powers lying further to the East, such as the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary and Imperial Russia. Intrigue and plots abounded. The republic's established role as a neutral in European conflicts, avoiding direct conflict while providing haven for émigrés and refugees, offered a wealth of random information just waiting for agents to pick up and perhaps to play with.

We find an interesting account of intelligence work in Switzerland in a report written in 1920 by the former Russian military attaché in Switzerland Major General Sergei Aleksandrovich Golovan'. Recounting how important his work had been during the war, he made several points about the usefulness of being in Switzerland:

Switzerland's position in the centre of the major European states always provided enormous advantages in the sense of conveniently observing all events occurring in these countries.

That is why, with the first establishment of the duties of Russian Military Agents abroad, the post of Military Agent was established in Switzerland, and our General Staff always gave great attention to this post.

Golovan' listed more than a dozen foreign governments that opened military intelligence agencies in the Helvetic Republic during the war while only four discontinued operations after the hostilities had ended in the West. He also made a major point about the willingness of the Swiss to share whatever information they had. The upper class of Swiss seemed especially to enjoy speaking with foreigners.¹

The Swiss proclaimed their neutrality, but some two-thirds of the people spoke German, just one-fifth French, and less than 10 percent Italian. England, France, and Russia tended to view it as leaning toward the German cause. As a British agent put it, 'It would be desirable to warn British subjects coming to Switzerland to be careful not to patronise hotels in the hands of persons of German origin who probably are mostly spies.' Another Englishman declared that 'a German-Swiss is a German first and a Swiss afterwards.' On the other hand, the Germans distrusted the one-third of the population that was not German, and the Austrians considered the French Swiss more pro-Entente than the German-Swiss were pro-German. Linguistic considerations accordingly framed and influenced the work of agents and spies as well as their reporting.²

II

Turning now to foreign intelligence agencies in Switzerland, we find that this is a really mixed bag. There were open, usually military-diplomatic, intelligence agencies that were basically collecting information but, with some risk, might also be involved in provocation.

¹ See СЕНН, А. Э. С. А. Головань: Условия для осведомительной деятельности в Швейцарии и характер работы военной агентуры. *Новый журнал*, 1977, № 127, с. 201–213. For an account of work in Switzerland by German agents, see NICOLAI, W. *The German Secret Service*. London, 1924, pp. 85–109 (Chapter VI. Secret Service in Neutral Lands).

² See SENN, A. E. *Diplomacy and Revolution: The Soviet Mission to Switzerland, 1918*. Notre Dame, IN, 1974, p. 24. For an amusing caricature of a British agent in Zürich during the war, see Tom Stoppard's play *Travesties*, based on the fact that Vladimir Lenin, James Joyce, and Tristan Zara all lived in Zürich in the year 1916. On the reactions of the Swiss to the experiences of the war, see the two informative web pages created to mark the war's centenary: STEPHENS, Th. 1914: how war changed Swiss life, 3.8.2014, URL: <http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/1914--how-war-changed-swiss-life/38367288>; STEPHENS, Th. How propaganda flooded Switzerland during WWI, 8.9.2014, URL: <http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/how-propaganda-flooded-switzerland-during-wwi/40575538>, both accessed on 27 February 2015.

At the same time, one must remember that a foreign ambassador is ultimately his or her own country's major intelligence agent. Then there was the more or less separate secret work by agents and police aimed at controlling and directing behaviour as well as collecting information. In most examples, the documentation of the work of the diplomats and military attachés, for which we might find archives, is more accessible. For the second category, the archive of the Russian police agency in Paris, the *okhranka*, now held by the Hoover Institution in Stanford, California, is indispensable.

A word on the *okhranka* seems in order here. In the 1880s the Imperial Russian government created the *Okhrana* as its security agency, and almost immediately the agency established its Foreign Agency, commonly called the *okhranka*, or 'little *Okhrana*', in the basement of the Russian embassy in Paris, to watch for undesirable activity by the numerous Russians in all of Europe, including Switzerland. For this purpose the *okhranka* employed both Russians and foreign nationals, and it commanded a substantial network of agents in Switzerland even before the war. When the French government finally recognised the Soviet government in 1924, the diplomats and agents of the Old Regime in Russia had to give up the building in which the embassy and the *okhranka* had worked. The last tsarist representative in Paris, V. A. Maklakov, declared that he had burned the *okhranka* archive, but he secretly sold it to the Hoover Institution in Stanford, California, which only in 1957 announced its possession of the collection. Workers at the institution then reorganised the material and opened it to scholars in the early 1960s. It is a fabulous collection of documents.³

Yet another factor contributing to my story here is the crisis of international socialism, as represented by the Second Socialist International. International socialist 'solidarity' against war collapsed. The Second International had called for opposing war, but the German government now won the approval of German socialists for war credits, and most other governments had similar success. Conflicting images arose of 'defeatists' and 'defensists'. As a result, dissidents of various persuasions, internationalist and nationalist, poured into Switzerland in increasing numbers, seeking asylum and provoking intensified intelligence work by the Great Powers.

A radical group in Zürich, known as the *Eintracht Verein (Deutscher Arbeiterbildungsverein Eintracht Zürich)*, issued one of the first major statements against the war, demanding 'No forcible annexation of territory! No war indemnities! National self-determination as the basis for the formation of new states! A United States of Europe!'⁴

³ I used this collection for my book SENN, A. E. *The Russian Revolution in Switzerland, 1914-1917*. Madison, WI, 1972. For a detailed listing of the archive, see Guide to the Okhrana records (Online Archive of California), URL: http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt538nf189/entire_text/. For a detailed account of Russian émigré activity in Switzerland in the 19th century, see SENN, A. E. *The Russian Émigré Press: From Herzen's Kolokol to Lenin's Iskra* (Media Transformations, 2008/4 Special Issue). Kaunas, 2008.

⁴ SENN, A. E. *The Russian Revolution...*, p. 25. The author of this declaration may well have been the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky.

The slogans of 'immediate peace without annexations and without indemnities' and 'national self-determination' did not necessarily fit together, but then slogans are meant to arouse people, rather than to define solutions. For the moment, most intelligence agencies did not seem to treat the socialists seriously; the *okhranka*, however, watched them intensively. And they lie on the edge of our story here.

I have to add another factor to this question. It may seem odd to bring Vladimir Lenin into this discussion, but he had his place in the activities in Switzerland. The anti-war socialists' reorganisation as the Zimmerwald Movement had no direct impact on national questions, but Lenin, the *spiritus movens* of the 'Zimmerwald Left', had already in 1914 advanced the slogan 'the defeat of one's own country', and this caught the attention of western agents.⁵ In view of Lenin's Russian citizenship, westerners considered this a pro-German slogan. An image of Lenin as a German agent developed. As a British agent wrote in November 1918: 'That during the war [the Bolsheviks] have furthered this aim with German assistance, to German advantage, need not be questioned.'⁶ I have no time here to develop this theme, but I do not accept this interpretation.

On the other hand, we have to note that Lenin supported the principle of self-determination, to be sure only as a stage of his grand conception of 'Revolution', just as he opposed pacifism as an act of resistance to war. In a meeting drawing up the agenda for the second meeting of the Zimmerwald movement, this one to be in Kienthal, he proposed the question of national self-determination as a topic for discussion. For his position on the national question he drew opposition from his own supporters on the Polish radical left. Lenin's participation in the intrigues of the nationalities question was minimal, but he built the nationalities question into his program of revolution, and after the Bolshevik revolution this became more important.

In all this activity on national questions, Poland lay in the centre of the conflicting ambitions of its three imperial neighbours: the Russian Empire, the Habsburg Empire, and the German Empire. At the end of the 18th century, the lands of the Polish-Lithuanian state had fallen prey to the ambitions of these empires, and for most of the 19th century 'the Polish Question' was an issue that encouraged the three empires to cooperate. By the beginning of the 20th century, however, their interests and ambitions were coming into conflict. Each thought it needed and deserved a larger share. Lying at the crossroads of imperial ambitions, this region was doomed to feel

⁵ In a speech on 1 August 2014, marking the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, Russian President Vladimir Putin denounced Lenin's slogan without identifying the author: 'But this victory was stolen from our country. It was stolen by those who called for the defeat of their homeland and army, who sowed division inside Russia and sought only power for themselves, betraying the national interests.': URL: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46385>, accessed 27 April 2015.

⁶ GREAT BRITAIN, POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT, FOREIGN OFFICE. Memorandum on Switzerland as a Bolshevik Centre, 2 November 1918, URL: <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7732248>, accessed 10 April 2014. See also SENN, A. E. The Myth of German Money during the First World War. *Soviet Studies*, 1976, vol. XXVIII, no. 1, pp. 83–90.

the destruction brought by war, but in the detritus of conflict the peoples inhabiting it eventually found opportunities for a new existence.

When war began, many observers in Switzerland saw the Polish Question as the major national issue in the conflict. Some even saw the Poles as beneficiaries in this conflict that would obviously ravage their homeland: the Poles could bargain for their loyalty. On 8 August 1914, one week after the outbreak of hostilities, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, considered by many to favour the Central Powers, declared, '*Die Polen sind über Nacht lieb Kind bei allen kriegführenden Nationen geworden.*' Three weeks later, on 26 August it declared that the Poles could be either a '*machtvoller Bundesgenosse*' or a '*furchtbarer Feind*'. On 6 September the *Journal de Genève*, considered a pro-Entente publication, declared that the Poles had '*rien à perdre et tout à gagner*'.

These judgments presumed competition for the loyalty of the Poles, but the Russians refused to participate. At its start, few had anticipated that this would be a long war; at its start most thought it would be over fairly quickly. Therefore statements without any real policy seemed adequate for generating immediate support.

Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, commander-in-chief of the Russian armed forces, made the first major move when he promised the Poles reunification and 'self-government'. The Russian government offered no explanation or definition of this grandiloquent statement – the Poles were simply to bow down – but it was enough to pressure Russia's allies – France and England – to remain quiet on the Polish question in the first stages of the conflict. The French had sacrificed their sympathy for Poland in order to ally with Russia and escape their own isolation after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–1871. The English feared on the one hand that the Germans could exploit the antagonisms between Russians and Poles, and on the other hand that the Germans and Russians might reach a settlement based on continued division of the Poles. In any case, the English had reservations about supporting any Polish cause: at the beginning of the 20th century England had tightened its immigration laws in reaction to the flood of immigrants from this region, and some British officials displayed significant sympathy for Russian complaints about their obstreperous Polish subjects.⁷

The Central Powers, on the other hand, issued vague statements that offered the Poles little. The Austrian authorities spoke of Polish 'independence', but the Austrian military proclaimed that it was advancing into Russian Poland, 'and we will nevermore leave this land'. The German press reported large-scale risings in Poland against Russian rule.⁸

⁷ SENN, A. E. The Entente and the Polish Question 1914–1916. *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, N.F., 1977, Bd. 25, Hf. 1, S. 22–23.

⁸ See the documentation in KUMANIECKI, K. W. *Zbiór najważniejszych dokumentów do powstania państwa polskiego*. Warszawa, Kraków, 1920.

Before the war, few Polish activists had dared to dream publicly about the reconstitution of the Polish state as a result of international conflict. In 1910 the internationally renowned pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski had anticipated that in the coming war, 'From the ashes of burned and devastated cities, villages, houses, and from the dust of this tortured soil will arise the Polish Phoenix!' Speaking in Paris in January 1914, Józef Piłsudski, a Polish socialist, offered a vision in which the Central Powers would defeat Russia and in turn the Western Powers would ultimately triumph; the conflict would result in the reestablishment of the Polish state.⁹ In the fall of 1914, most observers thought mainly about which warring power Poles might choose to support.

In the first months of the war, there was relatively little political activity among the Poles and other nationalities in Switzerland – activities concentrated on organising relief for the regions under destruction – and accordingly not much activity by intelligence agents. But with the German successes in the summer of 1915, the situation changed. The writer Henryk Sienkiewicz, probably the best-known Pole living in Switzerland at this time and deeply involved in organising war relief, welcomed the German occupation of Warsaw simply because it moved the war front further to the East. Previously pro-Russian Polish political figures now began to think that Poland's future lay with the western powers. Roman Dmowski, up to this time a prominent supporter of the Russian alternative, abandoned Moscow, stopping only briefly in Switzerland, on his way to Paris and London. With it now becoming obvious that this would be a prolonged conflict, the diplomats and their agents accordingly had to become more alert and active.

In this new environment, diplomats and agents found it difficult to make their way through the confusion of claims and predictions pouring in on them through their new contacts. They had little background in such subjects (except of course for the *okhranka* agents), and they could not take all statements at face value. They could not even be sure which warring power their agents and informants favoured. As one example, the Austrian ambassador to Switzerland said of Erazmus Piltz, a well-known Pole, whom he considered '*unzweifelbar der spiritus rector und politischer Kopf*' of the pro-Russian émigrés in Switzerland, that he was '*Politiker wie man Morphinist ist*', and the ambassador predicted that however the war came out, Piltz would be on the side of the winner.¹⁰

The Russian government still shied away from any meaningful explanation of Nikolai Nikolaevich's proclamation, and it became more defensive and sensitive on the question of Poland's future, insisting that this was an internal Russian question. This made it all the more difficult for British and French officials to defend their ally and even to interpret the developing situation. They struggled hard to protect Russia's image and to reassure their own governments and publics. When the British consul

⁹ PHILLIPS, Ch. Paderewski. *The Story of a Modern Immortal*. New York, NY, 1934, p. 280; WANDYCYZ, P. S. *The United States and Poland*. Cambridge, MA, 1980, p. 101.

¹⁰ Gager to Vienna, 15 June 1915. *Vienna Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*, PA 904/8e/8.

in Warsaw, Montgomery Grover, reported Polish complaints about Russian practices, the British ambassador in Petrograd, Sir George Buchanan, told his home office, 'I am inclined to believe that Grove takes too pessimistic a view of the situation and attaches too much importance to local gossip.' In any case, Buchanan claimed reason to hope that 'their mistrust [...] is likely to prove unfounded.' The Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov had assured him that the government would soon take positive steps.¹¹ Petrograd repeatedly promised action, but it offered nothing substantial.

At home, the British Foreign Office turned a deaf ear to Polish entreaties. In February 1915, when August Zaleski came to London as a representative of the 'Supreme National Committee', NKN, which sympathised with Austria, Sir Eric Drummond, later Secretary General of the League of Nations, declared that the Poles were 'not likely to have any reliable sources of information or to be able to judge them very accurately'.¹² The noted British historian of Russia Bernard Pares argued that while Russian rule in Poland may have been oppressive, Russian inefficiency had blunted its policies, and Russian rule in Warsaw had left only pleasant memories. German occupation, he declared, 'would bring into the streets a sort of fictitious Poland, pro-German, but really almost entirely Jewish'.¹³ When the writer Joseph Conrad, himself of Polish origin, submitted a memorandum to the British Foreign Office questioning when the Grand Duke's grand statement 'was ever meant to have any authority' and urging an Anglo-French protectorate of Poland, minutes on the Foreign Office copy dismissed his ideas as impractical, hopeless and impossible.¹⁴

The French ambassador in Petrograd, Maurice Paléologue, seemed rather more sensitive to Polish complaints than his English colleague was. For this he drew warnings: as Sazonov at one point said to him, 'Be careful! Poland is a very dangerous quarter for an ambassador of France!' Duly cautioned, the ambassador felt it necessary to insist that the Poles accept the tsarist leadership of the Slavic world. As he put it, 'Alas! Will the Poles ever learn the discipline in the common cause?'¹⁵

German military successes, however, forced reexamination of the situation. Emblematic of this new stage was the furore raised in the Parisian press in January-February 1916 by a francophone Swiss, Edmond Privat, later President of the World Esperanto Society. (Ludwik Zamenhof, the creator of Esperanto, was by birth Jewish, born

¹¹ See Buchanan's letter to London, 28 April 1915. *The National Archives (Public Record Office)*, Kew (hereinafter *PRO*), FO, 371/2445/155.

¹² Buchanan's memorandum, 31 March 1915. *Ibid.*

¹³ Memorandum dated August 1915. *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Conrad's memorandum, 15 August 1916. *PRO*, FO 371/2747/3766. In 1915 Conrad had refused an invitation from Paderewski to join a 'Polish Relief Committee' because the membership would include 'Russian names': *Archiwum polityczne Ignacego Paderewskiego*. Oprac. W. STANKIEWICZ, A. PIBER; zespół red. H. JANOWSKA et al. T. I: 1890-1918. Wrocław, 1973, s. 67.

¹⁵ PALÉOLOGUE, M. *An Ambassador's Memoirs*. 3 Vols. London, 1923-1925: Vol. 1, pp. 81-84, 164-165, 213-214; Vol. 2, pp. 254-255, 297-298, 318.

in Białystok, Congress Poland, and his wife was from Kaunas in Lithuania.) Privat had travelled through Poland and Galicia in the spring of 1915 as a correspondent of the Parisian newspaper *Le Temps*, and at the end of the year he published his thoughts as a book: *La Pologne sous la rafale*. As he saw it, Poland's fate was 'no longer a Russian question'; it was now a question for all Europe.¹⁶

In January 1916, now living in Paris, he launched a campaign of newspaper articles, some written with a pseudonym, calling for the French government to show more initiative in the Polish question. A few French journalists, including Georges Bienaimé of *La Victoire*, took up the cause, but conservative journals refused to participate and even condemned Privat's efforts. In rejecting an essay proffered by Privat, *Le Figaro* declared that the Polish Question should not be discussed publicly. As the *Depeche de Toulouse* of 16 July 1916, put it, '*La censure n'aime pas qu'on parle de la Pologne.*'

Privat's efforts naturally attracted the attention of the French government. On 21 February, having summoned Privat to the Quai d'Orsay, Philippe Berthelot called the idea of Polish independence 'an unrealisable thing', a 'Utopia'. Privat complained that one could freely discuss the Polish Question in Russia, but not in France. In *La Victoire* of 25 February, Bienaimé declared, '*Aujourd'hui la Pologne tient quelque chose de l'Allemagne; mais de la Russie elle n'a encore que des promesses.*' The French government pressured Privat to return to his native Switzerland, and in the *Journal de Genève* of 23 March, Privat urged the Entente to declare its support of Polish independence lest the Poles by necessity accept German offers. With time, Privat became more and more sympathetic to the German orientation for Poland's future.¹⁷

Despite their best efforts, tsarist agents in Western Europe recognised that Russian control of the Polish Question was weakening. An Okhrana report originating in Paris in February 1916 declared that Poles could at this point be divided into three camps: 1. Those advocating independence in some form associated with the Habsburg monarchy; 2. Russophiles, once numerous, but now a diminishing group looking for support from the western powers; and 3. Those against either of these orientations. Poles in the third category did not really believe in independence, 'but they consider this slogan tactically necessary.' The report made no effort to compare the groups, although its comment that the number of Russophiles was 'diminishing' is significant.¹⁸

The 'third camp' mentioned in the Okhrana report was presumably the group gathering around ideas that the Polish historian Jan Kucharczyński had raised in an article in the

¹⁶ See ŚLADKOWSKI, W. *Opinia Publiczna we Francji wobec sprawy Polskiej w latach 1914–1918*, Wrocław, 1976.

¹⁷ Privat discussed this experience in detail (in Esperanto) in his memoir PRIVAT, Edmond. *Aventuroj de pioniro* (Stafeto, Beletraj kajeroj, 17). La Laguna, 1962; see also *Revue Neuchâteloise*, 1968, 11 année, n° 43/44, p. 38–39. Privat published an account of his travels through German-occupied Europe in *Tribune de Genève*, beginning with 16 December 1916. See also HEATH, R. E.; SENN, A. E. Edmond Privat and the Commission of the East. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 1975, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 9–16.

¹⁸ Okhrana report, no. 153, 23 January (5 February) 1916. *Okhrana Archive*, XIX, f. 11.

Journal de Genève of 22 January 1915, entitled 'La Pologne et la Guerre', that had argued that an independent Poland would significantly strengthen European stability and peace. Kucharzewski subsequently organised a society with the same name, *Pologne et la Guerre*, that advocated Polish independence as a viable state not depending on one or another of the belligerents. The society embarked on an ambitious publications program and opened a public reading room. However vague its program, it seemed to grow with the confusing developments in the Polish Question over the subsequent two to three years. At the same time, Polish activists recognised the usefulness of communicating with all warring powers. As one activist declared in regard to the small pro-German Polish group in Rapperswil, 'That sector has to be occupied by someone.'¹⁹

In all this, the level of intrigue in Switzerland rose sharply. As the Poles began to draw more attention, competing forces became more active. 'Nationality perspectives' became more important for the foreign intelligence agents in Switzerland. The Russian agent Major General Golovan' later spoke of the Lithuanians and the Ukrainians in Switzerland as being among the first to push their national interests, but he himself came to Switzerland only in 1915 during the formation of this new stage in the development of national questions.

III

Other than representatives of the three empires, there were at least five nationalities involved in the future of this region: Poles, Lithuanians, Jews, Ukrainians and Belarusians. Of them, the Poles of course received the most attention; Belarusians received the least. Although Ukrainians and Jews received considerable attention, their major activities were not centred in Switzerland. The Lithuanians, on the other hand, were relatively unknown in 1914, but they developed a much stronger identity, based to no small degree on the activity that they quickly now developed in Switzerland.

Divided politically between Zionists and Bundists, the Jews of the Pale of Settlement in Russia tended to see their political future in a different fashion than did the other nationalities. Zionists, planning a Jewish state in the Middle East, eventually focussed on activities in Istanbul, while Bundists, seeing themselves staying in Eastern Europe, opposed the breakup of the region into smaller national states and called for a democratic Russia with no persecution of minority nationalities. Rivalry between these two directions could even produce moments of conflict, as when the Foreign Secre-

¹⁹ KORYBUT-WORONIECKI, H. Stowarzyszenie "La Pologne et la Guerre" w Szwajcarii. *Niepodległość*, 1937, t. 15, z. 3 (41), s. 389-399.

ariat of the Bund, located in Geneva, denounced Zionist 'Palestinophile agitation' as another wartime illusion.²⁰

Western intelligence, which tended to see almost all nationalist movements in the East as German intrigues against Russia, considered the Jews pro-German – this at least in the first years of the war – and therefore not fertile ground for agitation. As I was searching the Internet for information on Jews during the First World War, I came across the announcement of a conference on 'the experiences of Jews in the First World War' to be held at New York University in November 2014. I decided not to speculate in this area.²¹

Ukrainians, on the other hand, displayed more organised activity in Switzerland at the beginning of the war. There were, however, more Ukrainians in the Russian army than in the Austrian army; lines could be confused. The Alliance for the Liberation of the Ukraine helped Lenin smuggle materials into Russia in the first months of the war, and it sent agents around to presumably friendly embassies in Bern. Co-operation with Lenin, however, quickly broke down, and the Alliance itself accepted the leadership of Ukrainian organisations in Vienna. The Austrians, disturbed by the friction between Poles and Ukrainians, urged the Germans to take care of the Ukrainians. The Germans did so without great enthusiasm. As one *Auswärtiges Amt* official put it, a Ukrainian revolution was 'a utopia', because the Ukrainians 'would rise in the event we march in; all elements are lacking for a rising on their own.'²² The German embassy in Bern concentrated on other activities.

Baron Gisbert von Romberg, the German minister in Switzerland from 1912 to 1919, whom a French agent, Charles Lucieto, called 'extremely formidable', 'as clever as he was unscrupulous', was the most active of the foreigners involved in the Polish Question.²³ The French operative obviously disliked Romberg and of course claimed to have outsmarted him, but he expressed amazement at the German's industry and dedication to his work: 'I still cannot understand how such a wretched and despicable creature as was R— was able alone to do the overwhelming amount of work that he managed to accomplish in a day. He had secretaries, of course! Quite a number of them. But whatever his faith in them, never under any conditions would he trust them with anything of a confidential nature. He alone knew the secret code. For fear

²⁰ *Наше слово*, 7.03.1915.

²¹ See Center for Jewish History, 'World War I and the Jews', Conference Schedule, URL: <http://www.cjh.org/thegreatwar/> accessed 16 April 2015.

²² See SENN, A. E. *The Russian Revolution...*, p. 64.

²³ Among the foreign agents operating in Switzerland at this time, we find no one active on the scale of Colonel Akashi Motojiro, the Japanese military attaché in Sweden, who worked to mobilise the nationalities and revolutionary groups of Russia against the tsarist regime in 1904-1905. See AKASHI, M. *Rakka Ryuusui: Colonel Akashi's Report on His Secret Cooperation with the Russian Revolutionary Parties during the Russo-Japanese War: selected chapters* (Studia Historica, 31). Ed. by O. K. FALT, A. KUJALA. Vammala, 1988.

of some indiscretion on the part of his aides, he was forced to decipher and to classify all dispatches himself.²⁴

Lucieto, however, spoke almost exclusively about Romberg's intelligence network in France, and our interest here is Romberg's work concerning Eastern Europe, particularly Poland and Lithuania. Helping the ambassador in this undertaking were his councillor Carl von Schubert and his military attaché Herbert von Bismarck, a nephew of the Iron Chancellor. Bismarck, for whom Lucieto had no respect, ran into trouble in 1918 for involvement in a smuggling operation to Italy.

Romberg became involved in the East European intrigues as individuals made approaches to him. Among the first was Alexander Kesküla, an Estonian who later won some historical note by insisting that he had 'discovered' Lenin. This claim was not true, but I have no time to consider this issue here. Kesküla first came to Romberg in September 1914 and obtained permission to travel from Switzerland through Germany to Sweden. In December 1914, Romberg gave him an initial grant of 10,000 Marks for the development of his plans for national revolution in Russia. In January 1915 the Estonian travelled to Vienna to establish contacts with Ukrainians, and he then discussed with Romberg the thought of a congress 'with the aim of establishing a bloc of nationalities' of Imperial Russia.²⁵ In the course of 1915, however, Kesküla decided to move to Scandinavia, and his cooperation with Romberg tailed off.

By the time of Kesküla's departure, Romberg had established contact with another East European, Volodymyr Stepankiv'skyj, a Ukrainian. Having lived in England before the war, and then spending the first year of the conflict in Austria, Stepankiv'skyj – German records refer to him as 'Stepankowski' – seemed to have contacts in all the major warring camps. He was known for his Ukrainian nationalism and his antipathy to Russia. He was considered a useful source of information but questionable as an agent. As Romberg's councillor, Schubert, put it, 'One could never know what all goes on in a Ukrainian head.' Romberg received instructions from Berlin to respond in 'friendly but negative fashion' to Stepankiv'skyj. (The Austrians also advised treating Stepankiv'skyj 'politely but with a certain reserve'.) On the other hand impressed as he was by Stepankiv'skyj's range of acquaintances, Romberg agreed to pay him 3,000 francs per month.²⁶

Stepankiv'skyj brought Romberg one of his most active collaborators – a Lithuanian named Juozas Gabrys. A participant in revolutionary actions in Russian-dominated Lithuania in 1905, Gabrys had completed the Law Faculty in Odessa in 1907 and then set off for Paris where he studied literature at the Sorbonne for four years.

²⁴ *Modern Spies Tell Their Stories: Personal Narratives of Many Exploits in Secret Service*. Ed. by R. W. ROWAN. New York, 1934, p. 12.

²⁵ SENN, A. E. *The Russian Revolution...*, p. 63; Romberg to Berlin, 25 February 1915. *Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace*, Palo Alto, California, German *Auswärtiges Amt*, Microfilm Collection, T120/4824/L248678-79.

²⁶ SENN, A. E. *The Russian Revolution...*, pp. 64–65.

In 1911 he established a Lithuanian Information Bureau in Paris, and a year later he became Secretary of the 'Union of Oppressed Peoples' and editor of its publication *Annales des nationalités*. In 1915, wanting to establish contacts with the Germans, he moved his operations to Lausanne, Switzerland, where he established himself as undoubtedly the best-known Lithuanian in Western Europe. I will admit to having a personal interest here because my father, then a student of philology at Fribourg University, worked for a while with him in the early postwar years.

None of these three activists – Keskūla, Gabrys, or Stepankivs'kyj – could find a comfortable place in their native lands after war's end. All three were handicapped by stories of their wartime activities, by stories of having been German agents. Gabrys, to be sure, had the support of the Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party's leaders, a number of whom had been students at the Catholic university in Fribourg during and immediately after the war. Although he pictured himself as having stood alone 'in defence of the nation', he found only conflict with a number of other prominent Lithuanian political leaders. He left three major memoirs behind him, all reflecting the bitterness he felt toward his Lithuanian rivals: a somewhat less than honest French memoir published in 1920; a much shorter Lithuanian memoir published that same year, much more polemical; and a longer memoir devoted just to his activities during the First World War, written in the 1930s and published almost 60 years after his death. As examples of flourishes in his later memoir, one can point to his assertions that the Germans offered him the post of chairman of the Lithuania Taryba, and Lenin offered to make him 'governor' of Lithuania.²⁷

The fate of Gabrys' rich archive is unknown to me: in 1957 I visited his widow in Vevey, Switzerland, and she showed me a substantial collection of papers into which I could not dig. (But she gave me some rare publications.) Later Albertas Gerutis, formerly a Lithuanian diplomat in Switzerland, told me of travelling to Gabrys' former residence near Vevey after his widow's death and finding Swiss authorities preparing to destroy the library and archive. (As I recall Gerutis' account, neither Gabrys nor his widow had designated what was to be done with the library and archives.) Gerutis persuaded the Swiss to allow him to take what he could gather. I do not know the further history of this archive apart from the publication of the memoir by Egzodo Archyvas in Kaunas.

Although Gabrys declared that he knew Romberg from the German's days working in the German embassy in St Petersburg before the war, there is no indication in

²⁷ GABRYS, J. *Vers L'Indépendance Lituanienne: Faits, impressions, souvenirs 1907-1920*. Lausanne [1920]; GABRYS, J. *Kodėl aš nerėmiau laikinosios Lietuvos valdžios? s.l.*, 1920; and GABRYS-PARŠAITIS, J. *Tautos sargyboj*. Vilnius, 2007. For a German translation of the later memoir: *Auf Wache für die Nation. Erinnerungen. Der Weltkriegsagent Juozas Gabrys berichtet (1911-1918)*. Hrsg. von E. DEMM, Ch. NIKOLAJEW, unter Mitwirkung von N. CHAMBA. Frankfurt a. M., 2013. For the 'job offers', see GABRYS-PARŠAITIS, J. *Tautos sargyboj...*, p. 319, 324. On Gabrys' career, see also EIDINTAS, A. *Slaptasis lietuvių diplomatats*. Vilnius, 1992; also EIDINTAS, A. *Antanas Smetona ir jo aplinka*, Vilnius, 2012, p. 101-106.

Romberg's reports to Berlin that he had met Gabrys before.²⁸ Romberg's clearly indicated that Stepankivs'kyj had introduced the Lithuanian to him. Romberg, moreover, did not immediately accept Gabrys. Kesküla spoke strongly against him, calling him a 'worthless person, without backbone' and declaring, 'He lies.' If Romberg wanted Lithuanians, Kesküla was ready to suggest others to him.²⁹

Romberg, however, after some reflection chose to work with Gabrys, matching his own goals with the Lithuanian's broad vision of Eastern Europe.

Gabrys later pictured the German ambassador as sympathetic to the aspirations of the nationalities of East Central Europe, the oppressed nationalities of Russia; he recognised that Germany could not annex the territory of the former Rzeczpospolita, and therefore supported the independence of sympathetic 'Randstaaten' such as Poland and Lithuania.³⁰ Romberg's vision, on the other hand, presumably adhered to the ideas of German Chancellor Theodor Bethmann-Hollweg, as enunciated in the fall of 1914:

Russia must be thrust back as far as possible from Germany's eastern frontier and her domination over the non-Russian vassal peoples broken.

We must create a central European economic association through common customs treaties, to include France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Austria-Hungary, Poland 'sic', and perhaps Italy, Sweden and Norway. This association will not have any common constitutional supreme authority and all its members will be normally equal, but in practice will be under German leadership and must stabilise Germany's economic dominance over Mitteleuropa.³¹

In October 1915, despite Kesküla's criticisms, Romberg, as a first trial with Gabrys, arranged permission for the Lithuanian to travel to Stockholm – to be sure in Kesküla's company. Gabrys' purpose was to meet with Martynas Yčas, a Lithuanian who was a member of the Duma, the Russian national legislature. Upon his return to Switzerland, Gabrys informed Romberg that Yčas favoured Lithuanian independence, and Romberg apparently felt reassured that he could work with Gabrys and the Lithuanians.

Before travelling, Gabrys took the precaution of telling Romberg to refer to him by the code name Garliava. On occasion he called himself the Comte de Garliava; Garliava is a suburb of Kaunas. ('Gabrys' was itself a pseudonym for Juozas Paršaitis.) The Germans rendered it as 'Garlawa', but French intelligence quickly established his true identity. On the other hand, Gabrys maintained connections with the French throughout his cooperation with Romberg. In 1917, under the pseudonym 'Camille

²⁸ See GABRYS-PARŠAITIS, J. *Tautos sargyboj...*, p. 132; SENN, A. E. *The Russian Revolution...*, p. 68.

²⁹ SENN, A. E. *The Russian Revolution...*, p. 70.

³⁰ GABRYS-PARŠAITIS, J. *Tautos sargyboj...*, p. 132.

³¹ As published in FISCHER, F. *Germany's Aims in the First World War*. New York, NY, 1967, pp. 103–105.

Rivas', he was publishing works critical of the German occupation of Lithuania. By that time the Germans had given him a new code name, 'Käufer', but his connections with various intelligence circles were a well-known fact.

In the spring and summer of 1916, two major events in Russia's nationalities question unfolded in Switzerland, and Gabrys played a role in both. A parliamentary delegation from Russia that included the Constitutional Democrat Pavel Miliukov travelled through Western Europe, and Miliukov made a personal side trip to Switzerland. On the other hand, a conference of minority nationalities, held in Lausanne, was essentially captured by a German-sponsored League of Alien Peoples of Russia and converted into an anti-Russian demonstration. In the long run, neither of these events had a great impact on the evolution of national questions in Eastern Europe, but in the summer of 1916 they loomed as potentially important events.

Miliukov, as a leader in the Russian Duma, had been critical of the Russian war effort, suspicious of stories of a cabal at the Russian court suspected of seeking a separate peace with Germany, and, most important for our purposes, opposed to thoughts of national entities breaking off from the Russian state. He supported Russia's borders of 1914 and added to that a demand that Russia acquire Istanbul. Travelling with Miliukov were two Poles and a Lithuanian – Count Zygmunt Wielopolski, F. F. Raczkowski, and Martynas Yčas – and he was suspicious of the underlying sentiments of all three.³²

Stopping first in England, Miliukov had extensive discussions on 'the Polish question'. In speaking with British Foreign Minister Sir Edward Grey, he himself asked, 'What do you think of the Polish question?' When Grey responded, 'This is Russia's affair. We naturally would like her to give the Poles autonomy, but we cannot interfere' Miliukov then asserted, 'For us, too, the Polish question is a domestic question [...] We are against mentioning the internal constitution of Poland in any international act.'³³

At the end of May, Miliukov and Yčas came to Switzerland, which Miliukov called the 'classic land of all kinds of emigrations and nationalist propagandas'. Yčas took part in a Lithuanian conference that included participants from occupied Lithuania – permitted by the Reichswehr only under pressure from Berlin, but as urged by Romberg in Switzerland. When Yčas rejoined Miliukov, Gabrys accompanied him. According to Gabrys' account of their conversation, he challenged Miliukov, saying that Russia's ignoring Lithuania 'was pushing us to the German side'. To this Miliukov reportedly replied, 'I know that you are flirting with the Germans but be careful you don't burn your fingers.' Gabrys claimed to have responded that if the Germans recognised Lithuanian independence, he would accept the pain. The two separated

³² SENN, A. E. *The Russian Revolution...*, pp. 167–175. For Yčas' views of this voyage, see YČAS, M. [his son]. *Iš Aġaro krašto: [Martynas Yčas] 1881–1941*. Kaunas, 2009.

³³ Дневник П. Н. Милукова. С предисловием Я. Берзина. *Красный архив*, 1932, т. V–VI (LIV–LV), с. 42, 45.

without any common understanding.³⁴ At this point, the early days of June, Miliukov left Switzerland for Italy, and he returned to Russia at the beginning of July. In the fall he visited England on a personal mission, giving lectures, but in November he was again in Switzerland. As he described his purpose this time, he was not investigating nationality problems: 'I wanted to gather data, from sources unavailable in Russia, on secret contacts between German and Russian circles.'³⁵

In their confrontation in June, Miliukov had surprised Gabrys by asking about a conference involving the 'League of Alien Peoples of Russia'. The Lithuanian had not expected him to know anything about this, but such activities could hardly be kept secret in wartime Switzerland. Gossip and spies could break through all barriers.

The 'nationalities' conference, which opened in Lausanne on 27 June 1916, involved two groups: the official sponsor, the Council of Nationalities, originally established in Paris before the war but then moved to Lausanne when Gabrys moved to Switzerland; the other, the League of Alien Peoples of Russia, *Fremdvölkerliga*, that had just sprung into existence with the secret support of the German government. Its leader, Baron Friedrich von der Ropp, with Gabrys' endorsement, called himself a landowner from Lithuania.³⁶

The League's most successful action was to dominate the so-called Third Conference of Nationalities, sponsored by the Conference of Nationalities. Gabrys essentially controlled the conference itself. He had no official role in the work of the intruding *Fremdvölkerliga*, but from his position on the podium as a prominent member of the meeting's sponsors, he controlled access to the rostrum. One speaker after another vigorously denounced the Russian authorities, while an occasional voice criticised the British or even the Germans. (The German authorities protested vigorously through their 'channels'.) The meeting culminated with an anti-Russian speech by Michal Lempicki, a Polish deputy in the Russian Duma. Von der Ropp, in the ensuing acclamation, called out, 'Let Poland, which is the key to the future, go ahead and we will follow!' As von der Ropp then reported to Berlin, 'Stormy jubilation filled the hall, the delegates of the non-Russian peoples fell into each other's arms and kissed. All present stood under the charm of this singular fraternisation and unity of the non-Russian peoples.'³⁷ Von der Ropp described the congress to Romberg as a major propaganda success, 'a strong demonstration against Russia' in 'fanatically French oriented Lausanne'. Gabrys had controlled the conference's French chairman, Paul Otlet, 'extremely skilfully'.³⁸

³⁴ GABRYS-PARŠAITIS, J. *Tautos sargyboj...*, p. 171-172.

³⁵ SENN, A. E. *The Russian Revolution...*, p. 175.

³⁶ See ZETTERBERG, S. *Die Liga der Fremdvölker Russlands, 1916-1918*. Helsinki, 1978; GABRYS-PARŠAITIS, J. *Tautos sargyboj...*, p. 173-190.

³⁷ SENN, A. E. *The Russian Revolution...*, p. 185. From his position on the rostrum, Gabrys also had to take care that the nationalities' representatives did not turn on each other.

³⁸ Romberg used the same tone in reporting home to Berlin. On socialist reactions to the gathering, see SENN, A. E. *The Russian Revolution...*, pp. 186-188.

Meeting separately, the League composed an open letter to Woodrow Wilson, the President of the United States, recounting the complaints of a number of nationalities of the Russian Empire and pleading 'Save us from destruction!' Although Gabrys claimed that this appeal influenced American President Woodrow Wilson,³⁹ it had no noticeable impact in the United States. In his celebrated 14 points, enunciated in January 1918, Wilson spoke only of an independent Poland:

13. An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenants.⁴⁰

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There was no significant follow-up to the conference as such. The *Fremdvölkerliga* withdrew from public action; its headquarters retreated to Berlin. Gabrys, on the other hand, profited substantially, receiving money to prepare the conference protocols for publication. His activity, however, drew some warnings from Berlin. Organisers of the League complained that he pushed Lithuania forward too much. Gabrys drew considerable criticism also for his map of Eastern European nationalities, which pictured a large Lithuania.⁴¹ In a letter to Schubert, even von der Ropp complained about Gabrys' enthusiasms: 'Please tell Gabrys that my heart beats for Lithuania, but that it would be politically unwise to put Lithuania in the foreground.' The German organisers of the *Fremdvölkerliga* complained that Gabrys was demanding too much money: his bills were too high and the figures added up wrong in his favour.⁴²

A somewhat more productive endeavour involved the publication of a French translation of a book entitled *Kennen Sie Russland?* apparently written by von der Ropp. Gabrys' 'translation' of the book (Gabrys spoke little German), subsidised by Romberg, came out in 1917 as *La Russie et les peuples allogènes*, with the author listed as 'Inorodetz', the Russian word for *allogène*. Von der Ropp enthusiastically endorsed the 'publication ('better than the German original') and the two men continued to cooperate in Baltic affairs into the postwar period.⁴³

³⁹ GABRYS-PARŠAITIS, J. *Tautos sargyboj...*, p. 193.

⁴⁰ Official American commentators (Cobb and Lippmann) specified that this state was to exclude 'territory in which Lithuanians or Ukrainians predominate', but they spoke of statehood only for Poland. See the commentary on the 14 points written by Wilson's advisors: The Special Representative (House) to the Secretary of State, 29.10.1918. In UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE. *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States: 1918*. Supplement 1: *The World War*. Vol. I. Washington, DC, 1933, p. 412.

⁴¹ GABRYS, J. *Carte Ethnographique de L'Europe*. Échelle moyenne 1:5.000.000. Berne, 1918.

⁴² SENN, A. E. *The Russian Revolution...*, p. 188.

⁴³ INORODETZ. *La Russie et les peuples allogènes*. Berne, 1917. For a more detailed account of Gabrys' and von der Ropp's interaction, see SENN, A. E. Garlawa: A Study in Émigré Intrigue. *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 1967, vol. XLV, no. 105, pp. 411–424.

Concluding Remarks

By the fall of 1916, Russia had obviously lost its position in the development of Polish events. As discussions of a Polish state intensified, a Russian police report of 26 October declared that among émigrés there was no more discussion of the question of Polish autonomy, that almost all Polish groups now spoke of independence, although some spoke of 'self-sufficiency' rather than 'independence', and that Russian prestige as a defender of Polish interests had seriously declined.⁴⁴

In the winter of 1916–1917, perspectives on nationality questions in Eastern Europe changed drastically. The collapse of the tsarist regime in February/March 1917 opened up the possibility of greater activity in the homeland. The Bolshevik revolution of October/November brought up entirely new conceptions of state formations. The two other empires seemed still powerful but they were suffering strains that culminated in the collapse of both in November 1918.

By 1918, 'national perspectives' had completely different profiles among specialists in Switzerland. By the summer and early fall of 1918, the decision of the Swiss to recognise the Soviet government's diplomatic mission in Bern, headed by a Latvian, Jan Berzin, aroused new concerns of social revolutions mixed with national revolutions and deepened French and English suspicions of the government in Bern.⁴⁵

In my opinion, Lenin was considering using the Berzin mission as a possible basis for a new, Third International. When I raised the thought in public, however, I received little support. As I have looked at later research, I still think that the mission, together with the unclear activity of Angelica Balabanova in Switzerland in 1918, was working in this direction. But that too is another story.

In considering how the 'nationality factor' developed in Switzerland in the war years, I conclude with a statement by Major-General Golovan': 'At the present time [1920], almost all Swiss newspapers decidedly support separatist tendencies of the border regions of Russia, and in social thought the idea of a Great Indivisible Russia is beginning to lose its previous meaning.'⁴⁶ In 1914, Russia had seemed to be in charge of the Polish Question, but the tsarist government did not respond to the political ramifications of the war; by 1920–1921, Polish independence was a fact of European politics; Russian control of East Central Europe had crumbled. In the course of the war, East European nationalisms had become a major factor in international politics and diplomacy.

⁴⁴ Okhrana report, 16 October 1916. *Okhrana Archive*, II f, f. 21.

⁴⁵ See SENN, A. E. *Diplomacy and Revolution...*

⁴⁶ СЕНН, А. Э. С. А. Головань..., с. 212.

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NACIONALINIS VEIKSNYS PIRMOJO PASAULINIO KARO
ŽVALGYBŲ VEIKLOJE ŠVEICARIJOJE

Alfred Erich Senn

Santrauka

Šveicarija, per Pirmąjį pasaulinį karą atsidūrusi kariaujančių Vakarų Europos valstybių apsuptyje, buvo natūrali veiksmų arena netgi valstybėms, nutolusioms toliau į rytus nuo jos, tokioms kaip dualistinė Austrijos-Vengrijos monarchija ar Rusijos imperija. Išlaikydama neutralitetą, Šveicarijos respublika išvengė tiesioginio konflikto ir tapo prieglobsčiu politiniams emigrantams ir pabėgėliams, siūlydama įvairialypę informaciją jos tik ir laukusiems skirtingų valstybių žvalgybų agentams, pasirengusiems ta informacija manipuliuoti.

Pirmaisiais karo mėnesiais lenkų ir kitų tautų atstovų, atsidūrusių Šveicarijoje, politinio aktyvumo būta dar menko. Jų veikla tuo metu daugiausia koncentravosi į paramos rinkimą nuo karo nukentėjusiems regionams ir dar menkai teįveiklino žvalgybų agentus. Tačiau Vokietijos kariuomenės prasiveržimas 1915 m. vasarą staiga šią situaciją pakeitė.

Tuomet Šveicarijoje susitelkusiems diplomatams ir žvalgybų agentams darėsi vis sunkiau susivokti ir užimti konkrečią veikimo liniją daugybės reikalavimų ir prognozių, kurias jie gavo per savo naujuosius kontaktus, sraute. Vidurio Rytų Europos mažumų klausimą dalis jų menkai išmanė (išskyrus Rusijos ochrankos agentus), daugeliu atvejų net negalėjo būti įsitikinę, kuriai iš kariaujančių šalių teikia pirmenybę jų agentai ir informatoriai.

Užsienio žvalgybų veikloje, susijusioje su nacionaliniais klausimais, svarbiausią vaidmenį tolydžio pradėjo vaidinti Lenkija. Ji atsidūrė trijų kaimyninių imperijų – Rusijos, Vokietijos ir Habsburgų monarchijos – konfliktuojančių ambicijų centre. Tačiau lenkams sulaukiant vis daugiau dėmesio, aktyvėjo konkuruojančios jėgos, ir „tautybių perspektyvos“ Šveicarijoje susitelkusiems užsienio žvalgybų agentams tapo vis svarbesnės. Be minėtų trijų imperijų atstovų, į regiono ateitį įsitraukė mažiausiai penkios tautybės: lenkai, lietuviai, žydai, ukrainiečiai ir baltarusiai. Iš jų lenkai, žinoma, sulaukė daugiausia dėmesio, o baltarusiai mažiausiai. Ukrainiečiai ir žydai, nors ir sulaukė didelio dėmesio, savo veiklos nekoncentravo Šveicarijoje. Kita vertus, lietuviai, nors 1914-aisiais sąlyginai dar buvo nežinomi, sugebėjo daug stipriau įtvirtinti savo atskirumą. Daugiausia tai buvo paremta veikla, kurią jie greitai išvystė Šveicarijoje. Tai gerai matyti iš Vokietijos pasiuntinio Šveicarijoje (1912–1919) barono Gisbergo von Rombergo, kuris labiausiai iš visų respublikoje rezidavusių diplomatų buvo įsitraukęs į Lenkijos klausimą, aktyvumo. Į Rytų Europos intrigas šis diplomatas įsivėlė per kontaktus, kuriuos su juo bandė užmegzti pavieniai Rusijos imperijos tautų atstovai. Vienas pirmųjų buvo būsimos Estijoje gimęs Alexanderis Keskūla, kurio išvykimo iš Šveicarijos metu 1915 m. vasarą G. von Rombergas užmezgė kontaktą su ukrainiečiu Volodymyru Stepankivskiu. Pastarasis suvedė Vokietijos pasiuntinį su vienu aktyviausių bendradarbių lietuviu Juozu Gabriu, su kuriuo G. von Rombergas nusprendė bendradarbiauti, siekdamas pajungti lietuviškąją Rytų Europos viziją saviems tikslams įgyvendinti. J. Gabrys aktyviai dalyvavo naujai įkurtos Pavergtųjų tautų lygos (*Fremdvölkerliga*), slapta finansuojamos Vokietijos ir vadovaujamos iš Lietuvos save kildinusio barono Friedricho von der Roppo, veikloje.

Iš dalies dėl šios veiklos jau 1916 m. pabaigoje Rusija akivaizdžiai prarado Lenkijos įvykiuose turėtą poziciją, o 1916–1917 m. žiemą tautybių klausimų perspektyvos Rytų Europoje pakito drastiškai. Rusijos carinio režimo žlugimas 1917 m. vasarį (kovą) atvėrė galimybes didesniai Šveicarijoje susitelkusių tautų atstovų aktyvumui gimtinėje, o bolševikų revoliucija atnešė visiškai naujas valstybinių formacijų koncepcijas. Nors 1914 m. Rusija atrodė esanti vadovaujanti galybė sprendžiant Lenkijos klausimą, caro vyriausybė nesugebėjo adekvačiai reaguoti į šiuo klausimu karo sukeltas politines permainas. 1920–1921 m. Lenkijos nepriklausomybė jau buvo Europos politikos faktas, o Rusijos kontrolė Vidurio Rytų Europai buvo prarasta.