

## **Bulgarian topics in the publications of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine during the First World War**

**Inna Manasieva**

**Abstract.** Before the outbreak of the Great War, the problems of nationalities in the Russian Empire, and specifically the Ukrainian question, were unfamiliar to Bulgarian society. It was in the autumn of 1914, with the arrival of representatives of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine, that Bulgarians were first acquainted with the striving of part of the Ukrainians to separate the Ukrainian lands from the Russian Empire and create an independent Ukrainian state.

This organization was created in Lviv (Austro-Hungary), in early August 1914, by Ukrainian political emigrants from the Russian Empire. The task of the Union's emissaries in Bulgaria was to popularize the Ukrainian question through newspaper publications, brochures, etc. In its printed organ, *Vistnyk Soiuzu vyzvolennia Ukrainy* [Herald of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine], the organization's leadership introduced Bulgarian topics in order to illustrate, through the Bulgarian case, Russia's aggressive policy towards other Slavic nations. Bulgaria was cited as an example of the successful national-state development of a rural nation, a kind of development that Ukrainians were striving for themselves at that time. Many of the publications presented the Ukrainian viewpoint on the Bulgarian national question. Two Bulgarian-language brochures, published in Sofia in 1914 and 1915, dealt with the cultural ties and mutual influence existing between the two nations: the texts in question, written by the Ukrainian Lonhyn Tsehelsky, were, *Not a Liberator, but an Oppressor of Nations (How Russia "Liberated" Ukraine)*, and, *Is the Ukrainian Movement a German Intrigue? Response to the Russophiles Y. Romanchuk and Dr. N. Bobchev*.

**Keywords:** The Ukrainian Question, Union for the Liberation of Ukraine, Lev Hankevych, Lonhyn Tsehelsky

Prior to the First World War, the Ukrainian question as a political issue was unfamiliar to the public and to the politicians in government. During the 19th century, there had been intense contacts between the two nations, but the established ties were only in the sphere of culture. The Ukrainian lands in the boundaries of the Russian Empire had been one of the most important centres of the Bulgarian revolutionary emigration. Higher schools in Odessa, Kharkiv,

Kiev and Nikolaev hosted studious Bulgarian youths who were unable to receive an education in their native land. The Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko exerted strong influence on Bulgarian poets during the Bulgarian National Revival. Gogol's novel *Taras Bulba*, translated into Bulgarian before the Liberation, provided Bulgarians with some knowledge of Ukraine. Mykhailo Drahomanov, a well-known Ukrainian politician, historian, literary critic, publicist, folklorist, economist, philosopher, was another Ukrainian who contributed to the cultural development of Bulgaria. His daughter Lydyia married the Bulgarian Ivan Shishmanov, who became one of the best-informed Bulgarian intellectuals on Ukrainian matters. He studied Ukrainian-Bulgarian literary ties and wrote a number of works on Taras Shevchenko. He was also personally acquainted with the leaders of the Ukrainian national movement - the writers and scholars Ivan Franko, Lesia Ukrainka, Volodymyr Hnatiuk.

In the beginning of the 20th century, the Ukrainian idea, as conceived by the Ukrainian national movement striving for separation of the Ukrainian lands from the Russian Empire and the creation of an independent Ukrainian state, was unknown to Bulgarian society. This aspect of the Ukrainian question was put on the Bulgarian agenda at the beginning of the First World War by the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine [Soiuz vyzvolennia Ukrainy, or SVU], an organization established at the very start of the War, on 4 August 1914, in Lviv (Austro-Hungary) by Ukrainian political emigrants from the Russian Empire. The Union's objective, as presented in the document *Our Platform*, published on 2 October 1914, was an independent Ukraine governed by a constitutional monarchy, with a one-chamber parliament, a democratic political order, with protected civil, linguistic, and religious rights and liberties, an independent Ukrainian Church, and an agrarian reform for the benefit of the peasants. The achievement of this goal would be possible in case of the military defeat of Russia. If the Ukrainian lands, once detached from the Russian Empire, were attached to Austria, the SVU was to insist on the creation of a separate autonomous region. To the European states, the Union presented itself as the spokesperson for the interests of the people of the Ukrainian lands within the boundaries of the Russian Empire (Doroshenko 1936, 41-42).

The Austro-Hungarian and German foreign ministries showed interest in this organization and promised their financial support. Encouraged by this, the leaders of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine undertook a broad range of activities. Thanks to the financial aid it received, the SVU quickly opened offices in the capital cities of many European states: two in Switzerland (Lausanne and Geneva), two in Sweden (both in Stockholm), in Berlin, London, Vienna, Rome, Sofia and Istanbul. The function of these offices was to serve as centres providing information on the activity of the Union and to disseminate approved by the Union materials on the Ukrainian question to the press of the respective countries. With admirable persistence, the Union published its own printed edition, the *Vistnyk Soiuzu vyzvolennia Ukrainy* [Herald of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine]. From October 1914 to November 1918, 226 issues came out, in a print run of 5,000 copies (Pater 2000, 77-78).

One of the most important and urgent tasks facing the SVU was to conduct political and propaganda-related activities both within the countries at war with

Russia and in those maintaining neutrality. In search of international recognition for the SVU as a country at war with Russia, the Union turned to the Balkan states - the Ottoman Empire, Romania, and Bulgaria. Apart from the Black Sea countries' geographical proximity to Ukraine, they were interesting by the fact that they were still maintaining neutrality at the start of the War. The SVU emissaries hoped to find a fertile soil for anti-Russian propaganda here, the cornerstone of which was to raise the Ukrainian question as a major factor of European policy during the War.

An appeal of the SVU to the Bulgarian nation appeared in the very first issue of the *Vistnyk Soiuzu vyzvolennia Ukrainy*. This was the first of a series of appeals to the Balkan nations. Specifically in the one to Bulgaria, the Union called on Bulgarians to stand up against the "Slavic policy" of Russia, a country that had supported Serbia in the Balkan conflicts, thereby enabling it to take away Macedonia from Bulgaria: "Hence, after this, how can the Bulgarian people, in this great moment when the map of Europe is being retailored in the name of the forthcoming development of the independent nations, not stand up against Russia's pan-Slavic lie? Because it is clear that, under the cover of "Slavic unity and fraternity", the northern despot is striving for new territorial gains, wanting to subject all Slavic nations and prepare for them the lot that has befallen the nations which have had the misfortune to find themselves within the Muscovite state". The Appeal, dated 25 August 1914, concludes with the reminder that the Union is closely following the preparation of Bulgarians to go, together with the German nations, Turkey and Romania, "with arms against Russia and its mindless allies". It ends with the words, "At this moment, the Ukrainian people sends you not Slavic, but universally human, warm fraternal greetings" (*Vistnyk*, 5 October 1914, No. 1, 4-5).

At the end of September 1914, the representatives of the SVU Markiiian Melenevskiy and Lev Hankevych came to Bulgaria. Hankevych remained in the country as a permanent representative of the Union. In addition to popularizing the Ukrainian question before the Bulgarian public, his task was to inform the adherents of the SVU in Europe about the situation and moods in Bulgaria. His reports concerning life in Bulgaria came out in the *Vistnyk SVU* until nearly the end of 1916.

During the year in which Bulgaria preserved neutrality, these reports were devoted to the country's internal political life. In their first large publications, "Parties in Bulgaria" and "In the Balkans" (*Vistnyk*, 27 October 1914, No. 2, 11-12; 30 November, No. 3-4, 12), etc., L. Hankevych and M. Melenevskiy described Bulgarian society as a community divided into two opposed groups. Under the first group, they classified the supporters of the Liberal Party, the Young Liberals Party and the People's Liberal Party, which formed a governing majority and were clearly inclined to Russophobia. The Stambolovists were the ones who inspired the greatest sympathy in the SVU emissaries. According to the Union's representative in Sofia, a party similarly holding an anti-Russian stance was the Bulgarian Social Democratic Workers' Party (Narrow Socialists), designated as the "red Stambolovists" by the *Vistnyk SVU*. Under the second group, L. Hankevych classified the parties of the "united opposition", which were oriented pro-Russia; they included the People's Party, the Progressive Liberals, the

Radicals, the Democrats, the Agrarians, and the Bulgarian Social Democratic Workers' Party (Broad Socialists). The foreign policy orientations of these two groups in Bulgarian society determined their attitude to the cause advocated by the Union; it was the parties in the first group that sympathized with that cause.

As most of the founders of the Union were socialists, the SVU emissaries (both Melenevskiy and Hankevych were Ukrainian social democrats), upon their arrival in Bulgaria, tried to establish contact precisely with the leaders of the Bulgarian social democrats. Hankevych met with both the "broad" and the "narrow" socialists. He attempted to ascertain whether their stance regarding Bulgaria's neutrality in the war was indeed firm or could be influenced. In 1915, Hankevych regularly sent reports to the leadership of the Union, which were then published in *Vistnyk SVU*. According to him, the sympathy of the "broad Socialists" were on the side of the Entente, while the "narrow" ones "... have gone so far in their neutrality, that they are not at all interested, for instance, in the Ukrainian question, because that is 'nationalism' and not 'neutral'" (*Vistnyk*, June-July 1915, No. 21-22, 15). Unlike the Bulgarian Social Democratic Workers' Party (Broad Socialists), the party organ of the "narrows" did not wish to publish any materials proposed by the SVU, which evidently surprised Hankevych.

After Bulgaria's entry in the War, the reports on the internal political life of the country were discontinued. The SVU leaders felt that Bulgaria's participation in the world conflict on the side of the Central Powers was a serious guarantee the Ukrainian question would meet with the necessary sympathy and support among the Bulgarians. The articles devoted to Bulgaria in the *Vistnyk SVU* changed in content: Hankevych aimed to acquaint the readers of *Vistnyk SVU* with the culture of the country and the moods of Bulgarian society in view of future relations with Ukraine (*Vistnyk*, 19 December 1915, No. 57-58, 2-6; 16 January 1916, No. 65-66, 46; 12 March, No. 81-82, 168-171; 26 March, No. 85-86, 204; 1 October, No. 118). In 1915-1916, the printed organ of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine published several works by Bulgarian authors, translated mostly by Hankevych. These included the short story "Balkan" by Yordan Yovkov, Ivan Shishmanov's articles "Shevchenko's Influence on Bulgarian Poets from the Pre-Liberation Period" and "Shevchenko's Role in the Bulgarian Revival", Stiliyan Chilingirov's poem devoted to Taras Shevchenko (translated into Ukrainian by Ostop Hrytsai). The Union's representative in Sofia made a detailed presentation of a collection of historical and political-economic articles entitled *The Central Powers and Bulgaria*, published in Sofia in 1915. In it, L. Hankevych included an article of his own, entitled "Bulgaria and the Ukrainians", in which he made an overview of the ties between Bulgarians and Ukrainians through the ages as well as of the attitude of the Bulgarian government, of Bulgarian scholars, writers and the press, towards the Ukrainian question since the start of the War. The *Vistnyk SVU* also published in full, translated by Hankevych into Ukrainian, an article "On the Freedom of the Small Nations" by the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Kambana* [Bell] Krastyo Stanchev (*Vistnyk*, 30 April 1916, No. 95-96, 281-282) and one by Professor Todor Panov, entitled "Bulgaria and the Ukrainian Question" (*Vistnyk*, 3 September 1916, No. 114, 571), previously published in Issue 16 of the German journal *Osteuropäische Zukunft*. Stanchev's article aimed to describe Bulgarian public opinion

on the Polish-Ukrainian disputes regarding the creation and structuring of the future Poland and Ukraine; in the article, the author appealed to the Ukrainians and Poles to extend hands of mutual support and expressed his faith in the possibility of a Ukrainian-Polish compromise. In the article by T. Panov (a researcher in the field of Bulgarian folk psychology, who had taught sociology and psychology at the Military School in Sofia), the author explained why the Bulgarians had empathy for the Ukrainian question and wished for the creation of an independent Ukrainian state - they did so "for purely selfish reasons, out of the instinct of self-preservation".

In the context of Ukrainian-Bulgarian relations, Russia and its policy towards the Slavs were frequently occurring topics in the *Vistnyk SVU*. At the end of the 19th century, Bulgarian public opinion was already polarized and society was divided into Russophiles and Russophobes. The Second Slavic Convention, held in Sofia in 1910, vividly demonstrated the growth of anti-Slavophile sentiments in Bulgarian society. Russophobe feelings had increased after the Balkan Wars - a large proportion of Bulgarians felt betrayed by Russia's arbitrage, which had been against the Bulgarian national interests. That is why the publications of the SVU often traced the similarities between the destinies of Ukraine and Bulgaria, countries that had equally suffered from Pan-Slavism, described by the leaders of the Union as a weapon of the Russian Empire's aggressive foreign policy. Comparisons were also made between the condition of Bulgaria during and after the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the condition of the Russian part of Ukraine at the start of the 20th century. The article "A Good Soil" (*Vistnyk*, 6 September 1915, No. 27-28, 1-2) noted: "The cultural forces of the Bulgarian people ... were far weaker than the present-day cultural forces of the Ukrainian people in Russia ... The cities of Bulgaria at that time were far more Turkified than the cities of Ukraine are Russified now - and the same can be said in general about economic and social relations". This was a front-page editorial article. The authors stressed that after a quarter of a century, Bulgaria was standing firmly on its feet, "considering its exclusively rural foundations". This gave the authors reason to conclude that the struggle of Ukrainians, also a rural people, combined with the support of the Central Powers, could lead to the creation of a Ukrainian state, which would deal "a most decisive blow to Russia's pan-Slavic idea".

Greeting the Bulgarians on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Unification of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia, the SVU again pointed to Bulgaria as an example of the national-state development of a rural people, from which Ukrainians should draw a lesson: "The Bulgarians started their contemporary statehood as a nation consisting almost entirely of peasants, they created their own highly patriotic intelligentsia and built a strong national organism. This provides us Ukrainians, who today already have a fully differentiated society, including remnants of the aristocracy, the embryo of a bourgeoisie and quite a numerous intelligentsia, with a guarantee for our secure future. As a model of such a future for Ukraine, Bulgaria is the most attractive of all Slavic states to us" (*Vistnyk*, 26 September 1915, No. 33-34, 1-2).

Taking as an example Bulgaria in the years immediately preceding the First World War, the SVU correspondents condemned Russia's Slavic policy, which

conflicted with the national interests of Bulgarians. They noted that, despite the sympathy of the Bulgarian nation towards its liberators, the Russian Empire had never stopped conducting an anti-Bulgarian policy in the Balkans; as examples of this, they pointed out Russia's support for Serbian propaganda in Macedonia, Russia's mediation in the formation of the Balkan Union of 1912, Russia's protection of the anti-Bulgarian Serbian-Greek Union in 1913. The wounds left by the first national catastrophe were still fresh and painful to the Bulgarians, and the SVU leaders skillfully used this fact for their anti-Russian propaganda: "Among the lesser evils, the most painful is that, in 1913, Slavic Russia allowed non-Slavic states to plunder Bulgaria ... It gave Romania the possibility to attack Bulgaria and take over Dobrudzha ... After the present war broke out, Russia openly declared it was fighting to gain Constantinople, the Dardanelles, and to turn the Black Sea into a Russian sea. The fulfillment of these plans would mean political and national death for the Bulgarians". At the end of the article, the authors concluded that Slavophilism was gradually losing its hold in the Balkans: "The first to dissociate themselves from this distorted movement were the Ukrainians, after them were the Bulgarians, soon the Serbs' turn will come. Whether a menace will exist in the future for the immediate western neighbour of the Slavs will depend foremost on the solution to the Ukrainian question..." (Vistnyk, 14 November 1915, No. 47-48, 4).

Having managed in a short time to acquaint themselves with the moods of Bulgarian society, the ideologues of the Union found a topic on which Bulgarians could be unanimous and that could attract the sympathy of Russophiles and Russophobes alike to the cause advocated by the SVU. They were well aware of events in the recent past and chose to refer the Bulgarian public to the issues of Macedonia and Dobrudzha in order to emphasize the pernicious role played by Russia, and its Balkan right hand Serbia, with regard to Bulgarian national interests. Serbia, of all neighbouring countries, was presented by the Ukrainians as Bulgaria's main enemy. The Bulgarians' pain at the loss of Macedonia after the Inter-ally War was all too fresh; hence, the indignation they felt that, in the dispute over this region, Russia had supported Serbia to the detriment of Bulgaria's national interests. Stirring up public opinion in Bulgaria against participation in the war on the side of Russia, the correspondents of *Vistnyk Soiuzu vyzvolennia Ukrainy* warned that, if the Bulgarians dared to take back Macedonia for themselves, Russia would punish them. It would do all it could to end the political existence of Bulgaria; the fate of Poland would befall Bulgaria as well: the latter would be torn apart by the neighbouring countries (Vistnyk, 30 November 1914, No. 3-4, 14).

The Union's emissaries to Sofia noted that the unsolved Macedonian question and the contradictions between Bulgaria and Serbia arising from the issue were facilitating their task of arousing anti-Russian feelings in Bulgaria. Talking to Bulgarians, they often presented analogies between the persecution of Ukrainians in Galicia by the Russians after the region was taken over and the persecution of Bulgarians in Macedonia by the Serbs. This fact was mentioned several times in their newspaper: "When you relate, for instance, how Russia prohibited the use of the Ukrainian language in schools in Ukraine - a Bulgarian will always interrupt you: yes, yes, the Serbs did the same thing to us in

Macedonia ... Even those who are Russophiles by ideology, and not because they take rubles, agree with us and are indignant at the persecution of the Ukrainian people by the 'brother Slavs'; "The fate of Dobrudzha and Macedonia, which are suffering under foreign rule, makes it easier for Bulgarians to understand the fate of Ukraine and increases their sympathy for us" (Vistnyk, 30 November 1914, No. 3-4, 12; 27 October, No. 2, 11-12). An article initiated by the Union and entitled "Slavic Opinion about the Serbs" came out in October 1914 in the newspaper *Kambana*. Its Ukrainian author L. Tsehelsky discussed the causes of the rift between Bulgaria and Serbia: "We Slavs from the west knew last year that Bulgaria was waging the war and winning, while the Serbs and Greeks were playing at war. Later we learned about the underhanded, treacherous way Bulgaria's former allies had acted, stealing from the country through their treachery ... Serbia is not pursuing a national policy of its own. Serbia is an instrument of Russian policy and has remained such. We Ukrainians cannot respect a state that has become the instrument of a foreign country" (*Kambana*, 23 October 1914, No. 2063).

Because one of the Union's aims was to unite Ukrainians from two empires (Austro-Hungary and Russia), they looked for similar strivings among other nations - belligerent or neutral - in order to present them in their newspaper to readers in sympathy with the Ukrainian idea. Thus, an article entitled "The Convulsions of the Russian Offensive and the All-Slavic Foolishness" appeared in *Vistnyk SVU* (Vistnyk, 14 November 1915, No. 47-48, 2-4); it dealt with the treacherous role played by Russia with regard to the Bulgarian cause of national unification and the most important international issue for Bulgarians - the Macedonian question. That article begins by relating how as early as 1878, when signing the San Stefano Peace Treaty, Russia intended to give Macedonia to Bulgaria, but without Salonika. The account continues with how, after the Berlin Treaty, Bulgarians were dreaming of Macedonia, while Russia was secretly fanning their aspirations and inspiring in them hopes that their ideal was achievable: after the death of Alexander II, the next Russian emperors pursued a frankly anti-Bulgarian policy and the Russian ambassadors and consuls in Turkey supported foreign propaganda in Macedonia, raising obstacles to successful reforms in this region. In their address to Bulgarians on the occasion of the Unification, the SVU leaders called upon Bulgarians not to despair at the catastrophic conclusion of the Balkan Wars, at "the amputation of Macedonia and Dobrudzha", but to continue fighting for national unification. The greetings ended with the words, "Long live the united Greater Bulgaria of all Bulgarians!" (Vistnyk, 26 September 1915, No. 33-34, 1-2).

The situation in Macedonia served as the main argument used by the Union's representatives in Bulgaria to shut the mouth of those Russophiles in the country who claimed there was no separate Ukrainian nation, that there were Little Russians who, together with the Great Russians and Belarusians, were part of a single Russian nation. That is why one of the publications in *Vistnyk SVU* quoted the words of the Bulgarian Nikola Stanev, who had written and published in the journal *Chitalishte* [Cultural Club] several articles devoted to the Ukrainian question: "Ask the nation and it will tell you who is what. When the nation suffers and moans, when they are burning its books, when they are

shutting up schools that teach its native language, when they are expulsing its priests, this is the best proof that the nation is aware of its nationality. That is why the efforts of the Russophiles are worthless, because they are trying to convince the Ukrainians what their self-consciousness should be. Macedonians are also suffering greatly from that kind of science. When they say they feel themselves to be Bulgarians, of what importance are the special national theories that they are Serbs, Macedonian Slavs, etc.?" (Vistnyk, 12 September 1915, No. 29-30, 19).

One of the first campaigns the SVU initiated in Bulgaria was to disseminate literature on the Ukrainian question. Two Bulgarian-language brochures came out in Sofia in 1914. The first of these was *An Overview on Ukrainian History* by Mykhailo Hrushevsky (Hrushevsky 1914) (a translation of the same publication had appeared in 1913 in Paris, in the journal *Annales des Nationalités*). The second was *Not a Liberator but an Oppressor of Nations (How Russia "Liberates" Ukraine)*, written by Lonhyn Tsehelsky (Tsehelsky 1914). In the first half of 1915, a brochure written by the German historian, economist and publicist Georg Cleinow was disseminated in Bulgaria. It was entitled *The Ukrainian Problem* (Cleinow 1915). The peak of the Union's advocacy activity in Bulgaria was the publication of a second brochure by L. Tsehelsky, entitled, *Is the Ukrainian Movement a German Intrigue? Response to the Russophiles Y. Romanchuk and Dr. N. Bobchev* (Tsehelsky 1915).

Tsehelsky, an intelligent man with a legal education, had been active in journalism and social and political work before the War. He was the author of many works devoted to the question of Ukrainian independence. His brochure *Rus-Ukraine and Moscow*, devoted to the history of Ukraine and the struggle for its statehood, had come out in 1901. In it, he aimed to separate the history of the Ukrainian people from that of its neighbouring dominant people - the Poles and especially the Russians. After the start of the War, Tsehelsky joined the General Ukrainian Council, an organization created by the Ukrainian parties in Austro-Hungary to represent Galician Ukrainians. The SVU asked Tsehelsky to republish his work; he revised it, changing its title to *Rus-Ukraine but Moscow-Russia*. This book came out in 1916 in Constantinople (Tsehelsky 1916). The work served as a basis for the theoretical principles on which the Union's propaganda leaned during the War.

The publication of Tsehelsky's first brochure, *Not a Liberator but an Oppressor of Nations (How Russia "Liberates" Ukraine)*, provoked great interest in the Bulgarian press. The largest Bulgarian information daily newspaper, *Dnevnik* [Diary], devoted two editorial articles to Tsehelsky's work: "The Consequences of the War. The Ukrainian Question" and "The Liberating Mission of Russia. The War of the Small Nations" (*Dnevnik*, 6 November 1914, No. 4380; 4 January 1915, No. 4437). The newspapers *Kambana* and *Ratnik* [Warrior] also came out with reviews of the brochure. Nearly all materials in the Bulgarian press devoted to this work quoted its explanation why the SVU had chosen to side with the Central Powers: "We, who well know the psychology of Russian absolutism, are certain that, after Austria is destroyed, the turn will come of Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Turkey, Greece, Sweden, Norway, etc. And the debacle of Russia and the creation of new states (Ukraine, Poland, Finland) between the Balkans, Europe and Russia would provide, once and for all, a protective wall against the

Russian menace for the smaller nations of Northern and Central Europe and the Balkan peninsula ... The creation of a Ukrainian state would throw Russia away from the Black Sea once and for all, and together with this would dispel the black cloud that has been hanging over the entire Balkans for the last 150 years. Separated from the Black Sea and the Balkans by a strong Ukrainian wall, Russia would stop menacing the existence of the Balkan nations and would lose interest in fomenting intrigue in the Balkans” (Tsehelsky 1914, 21).

The whole chapter “Ukraine and Bulgaria” is devoted to the cultural ties and mutual influence between the two nations (Tsehelsky 1914, 23-26), ties that began with the activity of Cyril and Methodius in Crimea and the “Ukrainian shores of the Black Sea”. Tsehelsky considered Kievan Rus’ to be the first Ukrainian state. That is why he wrote about the Ukrainian prince Svetoslav and his campaign against Bulgaria as the only incident between the two countries that had occurred during the Middle Ages. According to Tsehelsky, the official introduction of Christianity in Ukraine came from Bulgaria, and with it came the ecclesiastic books and the secular alphabet. This enhanced the Bulgarian influence in the country, making it nearly equal to that of Byzantium. In the 13th century, because of the Mongolian invasion into Europe, cultural ties were cut off until the 19th century, with a brief interval in the 15th century, when the Bulgarian Gregory Tsamblak became metropolitan bishop of Kiev. In the 19th century, the roles were reversed and now Ukrainians were able to exert cultural influence on the Bulgarians. As examples of this, the author pointed out Yurii Venelin’s support for the Bulgarian Revival, the influence of Taras Shevchenko and Marko Vovchok on Bulgarian literature and especially on the works of Rayko Zhinzifov, Petko R. Slaveykov, Lyuben Karavelov. Special attention was devoted to Mykhailo Drahomanov’s contribution.

Tsehelsky continued the tradition of SVU publicists who, in striving to influence public opinion in specific states, made comparisons and sought the common features in the historical development of the two nations. In both his works, we find the author tracing historical parallels and similarities between developments in the Ukrainian and Bulgarian lands. According to him, after the medieval period, which was a “golden age” both for the Bulgarian kingdoms and for Kievan Rus’, these lands had been torn apart and had equally suffered in becoming parts of the Ottoman and Russian empires respectively: “The southward invasion of the Muscovites, beyond the Riga-Kursk line, in the 18th century had for some Slavic nations - and great ones at that (the Ukrainians and the Belarusians) - the same leveling effect as the invasion of the Turks into the Balkans in the 15th century” (Tsehelsky 1915, 12). Thus, the author stressed the most important similarity between the two nations - “their common striving for political freedom, for the unification of all compatriots in one state” (Tsehelsky 1914, 28). In the name of this goal, both nations were prepared to make great sacrifices; the Ukrainians were now “groaning” in Siberia, just as the Bulgarians had once been sent to Anatolia as punishment.

Through his brochure, L. Tsehelsky argued with Russophiles in Bulgaria; he responded to the question as to whether the Ukrainian national idea could be considered a foreign intrigue. For the purpose, he often resorted to comparisons between the Ukrainian and Bulgarian national movements and won-

dered why Bulgarian Russophiles, whose nation had struggled so long for its liberty, were unable to understand the Ukrainian urge for liberation. He posed questions to them and to all Bulgarian patriots: did the Bulgarian liberation movement in the 19th century not have a foundation of its own, and could it be called nothing but “a Russian intrigue” and “the result of Russian rubles”; if all Bulgarian signs on administrative offices in Sofia were changed into Russian-language signs, if teaching in schools had to be only in Russian, if the entire Bulgarian press were stopped, would Bulgarians even then remain enthusiastic about “Russia’s liberating mission among the Slavs”? L. Tsehelsky accused Russophiles in Bulgaria that, because their own “gratitude” to Russia for the liberation of the country made them “dance to Russia’s tune”, they were inclined to think that the Ukrainians were by analogy “in the service of the Germans” (Tsehelsky 1915, 51, 105, 107).

The ultimate goal of Tsehelsky’s two brochures was to prove the advantages that the creation of an independent Ukrainian state would bring for Bulgarians. According to the ideologists of SVU, the balance in the Balkan peninsula and the Black Sea region would be disturbed by the “Russian colossus and his intrigues” (Tsehelsky 1914, 28) and the existence of Ukraine as a barrier against the expansion of Russia into Eastern Europe would be beneficial for the Bulgarian people.

The main emphasis in the publications initiated by the SVU was the image of Russia as an enemy of all Slavdom. The leaders of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine adroitly took advantage of the ambivalent feelings of Bulgarians towards Russia and the evident contradictions between Russophiles and Russophobes in the country. Thus, in Bulgaria specifically, they used the Slavic idea as one of the main elements of their anti-Russian propaganda. In the context of the raging war, Ukrainians were depicted as the saviors of the smaller European nations. And the Bulgarians, a nation that had several times experienced the fickleness of Russian policy towards the Slavs in Europe, could well understand and support the Ukrainian national striving for freedom and an independent state. In the publications of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine, the Russian Empire was presented as a devious, treacherous enemy both of the Ukrainians and the Bulgarians.

In the Union’s publications addressed to sympathizers with its ideas, topics related to Bulgaria appeared mostly in the period 1914-1916. Bulgarian topics in these materials were introduced primarily to illustrate through the Bulgarian example the aggressive foreign policy of Russia towards other Slavic state. Common features in the historical development of the two nations were sought. Bulgaria was given as an example of the successful national and state development of a rural people, from which Ukrainians could draw lessons for the creation of their own state. In the materials addressed to the Bulgarian public, the most frequent themes were related to the unsuccessful Bulgarian attempt at national unification during the Balkan wars. These texts aimed once again to emphasize the role of the Russian Empire in creating conflicts between the Balkan nations; the authors highlighted the Macedonian question, a painful issue for all Bulgarians. The presence and activity of the SVU in Bulgaria in the years of the First World War was limited to the period 1914-1916. During that time, they

popularized the Ukrainian question in Bulgaria and endeavored that Bulgarian society should not perceive the Union as a creation of the foreign ministries of Austro-Hungary and Germany, a “Trojan horse” sent among the Slavic states to impair the authority of Russia.

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**Chief Assist. Prof. Inna Manasieva, PhD**  
Institute for Historical Studies  
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences  
52 Shipchenski Prohod Blvd., Bl. 17  
1113 Sofia, Bulgaria  
Email: [innamanasieva@abv.bg](mailto:innamanasieva@abv.bg)