Section:
HISTORY AND MODERNITY

«THE NOVEMBER BREAKDOWN» («NOVEMBER ACTION») 1918: A REVOLUTION OR A MILITARY COUP?

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Abstract. The purpose of the study is to analyze peculiarities of the historical event «The November Breakdown» («November Action») – the national democratic revolution in the Western Ukrainian lands – not as a revolution in its classical version, but a military coup with the elements of the national liberation struggle of Western Ukrainians in the autumn of 1918. On the basis of the historical and political analysis of the historiographical heritage concerning the preconditions and creation of the Western Ukrainian People’s Republic, the events of October 31 – November 1, 1918, are described as discrepancies and generalizations of their direct participants; the research also clarifies the factors of political and ideological «explanations» of the revolutionary «November Breakdown» in historiography of the Ukrainian diaspora of the 20th Century. The Soviet and contemporary Ukrainian historiography statements about the «revolutionary nature» of the events in Eastern Halychyna in 1918, and hence the November 1918 national democratic revolution, are still debatable. Halychyna Ukrainians made a legal proclamation of the Ukrainian state within the framework of the Austrian-Hungarian state, they were waiting for a peaceful transfer of power in Eastern Halychyna, and the armed uprising of October 31 – November 1, 1918, became a military coup in the geopolitical realities of the rising tension in the Polish-Ukrainian relations. Therefore, on November 1, the Austro-Hungarian government authorized an act of transfer of the state power in Eastern Halychyna to the Ukrainian National Council, and on November 13, 1918, the Council proclaimed Western Ukrainian People’s Republic. The origins of the myth about the «revolutionary character», or «revolution» in Eastern Halychyna in 1918, are rooted in attempts to «inject» the non-existent in reality class struggle of the region population into the broader context of the Bolshevik and socialist revolution. During the Khrushchev Thaw, in 1957 this myth underwent certain modification in the famous article of historian O.Karpenko, and later on, in 1993, this myth transformation turned into a «national-democratic revolution» in Western Ukrainian lands. In fact, the memoirs of the participants and creators of the «November Action», the external sources, as well as the mass media of that, do not interpret the events under study just as “a revolution”, but only as “a coup”, “disarmament”, etc., which testifies to the militaristic nature of events.

Keywords: revolution, military coup, Eastern Halychyna, Habsburg Monarchy, Western Ukrainian People’s Republic.
1. **INTRODUCTION**

Besides the obvious tectonic shifts happening in the study of the "Ukrainian question" in history and political science and them being represented by several generations of contemporary Ukrainian and foreign researchers, the marked by the "spirit of the time" interpretation of the important nation-building events continues to dominate; it includes the events of the Ukrainian revolution of 1914–1923.

In 1996 Yaroslav Hrytsak conceptualized one of these shift, stating that "The November Action" of 1918 will eventually become one of the legends in the Ukrainian political ideology of the XX century." [2, p. 136]. He was surely right, as it was certainly a historical and ideological idea of this kind that already prevailed in the minds of historians at that time as an example of *revolution*. This approach was introduced in our historiography by Olexandr Karpenko, and it was undoubtedly an extraordinary and courageous step: in 1957 he decided to raise the question of the "nature of the revolutionary movement in Eastern Galicia in 1918," and in 1992 he conceptualized his idea as "the November national-democratic revolution in the western Ukrainian lands in 1918" [7, p. 13, 43]. The emphasis on the idea of revolution, moreover, in the national-democratic form, at the time of the independence restoration in the 1990s, proved the viability of the concept of ruptures/transformations of the historical time. After all, Ivan Lysyak-Rudnytsky wrote about "the all-Ukrainian significance of the Galician breakdown of 1918-19" [11, p. 53], alluding to something else - "the only example of the Ukrainian state order in recent history" [11, p. 56], but in no way was he calling these processes a revolution or revolutionary ones (these names were reserved only for the events in the Dnieper region). Apparently, Serhiy Plokhiy, a talented modern popularizer of the history of Ukraine, followed the same fashion, though more discreetly: "On November 1, 1918, Ukrainians attacked first." [19, p. 279].

The wording a "revolutionary padolist" [revolutionary November] used by Mykola Lytvyn and Kim Naumenko did not add to the understanding of this problem in their work "History of the Western Ukrainian People's Republic" in 1995 [13, p. 31], they meant "armed uprising on the night of November,1" in the first place [13, p. 34].

Modern academic generalizations are also difficult to understand. In "The Handbook of the Ukrainian History" of 2001, that included information mainly prepared by Lviv researchers, these events were called the "November Uprising of 1918" that is "the Ukrainian national liberation uprising that took place on the night of October 31 to November 1, 1918 in Lviv, and which resulted in the creation of the Western Ukrainian People's Republic" [4, p. 411]. The "Encyclopedia of the History of Ukraine" of 2009, which was authored by Kyiv scholars, calls the events of autumn 1918 the "November National Democratic Revolution in Galicia in 1918", and the slogan "November Action" made a reference to the "revolutionary" articles by Yu. Cherchenko [5, p. 161, 163].

2. **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

It is hardly a place and time to consider the historical preconditions of the autumn of 1918 (Ukrainian Soviet historians, historians of the Ukrainian diaspora, and well-known contemporary researchers, all wrote about it in a different way) [22, p. 45] that led to the events of October 31 - November 1, 1918. Another thing is important here: how did the participants of those events understand these actions? What did they call these events? Were they aware of the importance of what they were doing?

3. **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE, METHODOLOGY AND DATA**

The Mykhailo Hutsuliak, a contemporary of those events, saw them in a different light, he would qualify them as: an "exemplary disarmament and transfer of power into to Ukrainian hands in Lviv”, "November Action in the western lands of Ukraine”, "coup”, "nationwide disruption”, “November
coup”, “Bloodless revolution” “[3, p. 5, 7, 98, 109, 129, 133, 138]. The author asks a natural question: "Was November, 1, 1918, really a nationwide "disruption"?" [3, p. 129]. And yet, brownie points for the interpretation of what actually had happened in Lviv and in the "Galician province" on the night of October 31 - November 1, 1918 did not belong to the author of the work "November 1, 1918, in the Western Lands of Ukraine...", because it appeared only in 1973. We must take a close look at different, second body of memoir sources.

Their charm is that they come directly from the participants of the events in Lviv, so to speak, from the "first echelon", the military themselves. First of all, it is Dmytro Paliyiv, whom M. Hutsulyak calls "the actual structural architect of the November Action" [3, p. 13]: in the memoirs published in 1928 for the first time, this military figure described the period under study as the "November Revolution" [20, p. 20]. However, despite the title of these memoirs, there is a variety of terms used: Ukrainian Sich Riflemen are referred to as a "revolutionary center", Dmytro Vitovsky is called a "revolutionary", but still the "November coup" or "Ukrainian armed action in Eastern Galicia" stand strong [20, p. 23-24, 32-33]. In conclusion, D. Paliyiv speaks of November 1, 1918 as "the first stage-act of an armed coup", followed by the second one – the "consolidation of the gained and the creation of the state" [20, p. 38].

Another direct military participant of the Lviv events, Osyp Kuzma called the November days of 1918 "an act of coup d'etat in Lviv", "coup d'etat", "a great revolutionary affair" [8, p. 5, 56-68, 71] in his thorough study of events (1931). Moreover, O. Kuzma's work contained excerpts from the orders to the district military committees in Eastern Galicia, which prompted "to take power on their own" [8, p. 58]. Summarizing the idea a primarily military nature of the November action, Myron Dolnytskyi wrote in his memoirs, "one can no longer deny that the November Disruption was primarily an outcome of revolutionary action of the military units, it was organized and put into action by the Ukrainian General Military Commissariat in Lviv on the night of October 31 to November 1, 1918.” [21, p. 49].

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As we can see, the uprising on the night of October 31 - November 1, 1918, gave birth to a historiographical and political legend of the state creation of the Western Ukrainians in the XX century. Therefore, how should it be addressed: a revolution, a coup or an uprising?

Historical sources prove that the direct participants of the events of October 31-November 1, 1918 did not struggle with their interpretation; neither did they resort to terminological discussion of a kind; they perceived it as a rather self-evident, accomplished fact. Thus, the military and civilians relied on the main concepts such as "coup", "disarmament" and "seizure of power", all of which, in fact, became the basic markers of a qualitative change in the political situation that made a difference in the lives of Galician Ukrainians at the end of the Great War, creating the necessary preconditions for the imminent independent state establishment. While in the case of Lviv it was rather “disarmament”, the cities and towns nearby perceived the events primarily as the military “takeover of power”. Therefore, the term "coup" seems to be the most appropriate to describe the essence of the events of the late autumn of 1918; there were solitary examples when its contemporaries perceived it in the meaning of revolutionary transformations after some time, and, thus, it conveyed glorification. The interpretation of these events, especially the ones that took place in Lviv, as a Ukrainian military act became the cornerstone; it provided a standpoint for the basic characteristics of the national liberation struggle of Western Ukrainians during the XX century. Moreover, the shift of emphasis to the revolutionary nature of the November Action, its manipulation, politicization and ideologization with the following mythologization, all took place less than half a century later, and it was not by the will of the direct participants of this coup.
Мета дослідження полягає в аналізі особливостей історичного наративу Листопадового зриву (Листопадовий чин) – національно-демократичної революції на західноукраїнських землях – не як революції в її класичному варіанті, а військового перевороту з елементами національно-визвольної боротьби західних українців восени 1918 р. На основі історико-політологічного аналізу історіографічної спадщини передумов і творення Заходньоукраїнської Народної Республіки охарактеризовано події 31 жовтня – 1 листопада 1918 р. як різночитання й узагальнення їх безпосередніх учасників, з'ясовано чинників політичних та ідеологічних «пояснень» революційності «Листопадового зриву» в історіографії української діаспори ХХ ст. Висновки. Твердження радянської та сучасної вітчизняної історіографії про «революційний характер» подій на Східній Галичині 1918 р., а отже Листопадову 1918 р. національно-демократичну революцію – досі дискусійне. Галицькі українці легальним чином проголосили Українську державу в межах Австро-Угорщини, очікували мирної передачі влади на Східній Галичині, а збройне повстання 31 жовтня – 1 листопада 1918 р. в геополітичних реаліях загострення польсько-українських взаємин стало доконаним фактом як військовий переворот. Унаслідок цього 1 листопада відбувся акт передачі державної влади у краї вповноваженим австро-угорського уряду Української Національної Ради, а 13 листопада 1918 р. вона...
проголосила Західноукраїнську Народну Республіку. Витоки міфу про «революційний характер», «революцію» на Східній Галичині 1918 р. слід шукати у спробах «вписати» насправді неіснуючу «класову боротьбу» населення регіону у ширший контекст більшовицької й соціалістичної революції. Модифікація цього міфу відбулася в умовах хрущовської «відлиги» 1957 р. у відомій статті історика О.Карпенка, згодом його трансформація 1993 р. обернулася «національно-демократичною революцією на західноукраїнських землях». Спогади безпосередніх творців Листопадового чину, джерела зовнішнього походження, а також тогочасна преса фактично не містять трактування досліджуваних подій саме як «революції», а лише – як «перевороту», «роззброєння» й т. д., що свідчить про їх мілітарний характер.

Ключові слова: революція, військовий переворот, Східна Галичина, Габсбурзька монархія, Західноукраїнська Народна Республіка.