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**Parliamentary activity of Mykola Vasyľko at the turn of the 19th–20th
centuries (based on materials from the «Ruslan» newspaper)**

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Abstract: *This article analyzes the parliamentary activity of Mykola Vasyľko – one of the leading figures of the Ukrainian political movement in Bukovyna at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The main objective of the study is to identify the nature, content, and significance of his participation in the political process of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as well as the specific features of media coverage of his activities in the newspaper «Ruslan». Based on the analysis of parliamentary speeches, publications, and legislative initiatives, the article identifies the principal directions of Vasyľko's political engagement: the struggle for equal national representation, resistance to Romanianization, defense of Ukrainian educational rights, criticism of the discriminatory electoral system, and attempts to consolidate the Ukrainian parliamentary community.*

The results of the study demonstrate that Mykola Vasyľko played a crucial role in shaping modern Ukrainian parliamentarism within the multiethnic framework of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Through the lens of «Ruslan», the article explores

not only his rhetoric and political strategies but also the internal conflicts within the Ukrainian parliamentary faction, which significantly influenced the effectiveness of their struggle for national rights. The study also outlines prospects for further research related to the analysis of Ukrainian press strategies in the context of electoral competition and multiethnic parliamentary dynamics.

Keywords: *Mykola Vasyľko, Viennese Parliament, «Ruslan» newspaper, Halychyna, Bukovyna, Austro-Hungary, Jews, national question.*

**Парламентська діяльність Миколи Василька на межі XIX–XX ст.
(за матеріалами часопису "Руслан")**

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Анотація. *У статті проаналізовано парламентську діяльність Миколи Василька – одного з провідних представників українського політичного руху Буковини на межі XIX–XX ст. Основною метою дослідження є з'ясування характеру, змісту та значення його участі в політичному процесі Австро-Угорщини, а також особливостей медійного висвітлення цієї діяльності в українському національно-демократичному часописі «Руслан». На основі текстів промов, публікацій і депутатських ініціатив встановлено основні напрямки політичної активності Василька: боротьба за рівноправне національне представництво, протидія румунізації, захист освітніх прав українців, критика дискримінаційної виборчої системи та спроби консолідації українського парламентського середовища.*

Результати дослідження засвідчують, що Микола Василько відіграв ключову роль у формуванні модерного українського парламентаризму в умовах

імперської багатонаціональності. Через призму «Руслана» розкрито не лише його риторичну й політичну стратегію, але й конфлікти всередині українського представництва, що суттєво впливали на ефективність боротьби за національні права. Стаття також окреслює перспективи подальших досліджень, пов'язаних із вивченням інформаційних стратегій української преси в умовах виборчої конкуренції та багатонаціонального парламентського середовища.

Ключові слова: Микола Василько, Віденський парламент, часопис «Руслан», Галичина, Буковина, Австро-Угорщина, євреї, національне питання.

Problem statement. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the Ukrainian national movement within the Austro-Hungarian Empire entered a phase of active political articulation, manifested not only in public life but also in the engagement of Ukrainian representatives in the central parliamentary institutions. One of the key figures of this period was Mykola Vasyľko – a Bukovynian nobleman, socio-political activist, and deputy of the Cisleithanian Reichsrat, who emerged as a leading advocate for the interests of the Ukrainian population of Bukovyna at the imperial level. His parliamentary activity was characterized by consistency, strategic flexibility, and a profound awareness of the importance of national representation within the multiethnic political landscape of the Austro-Hungarian state.

In his speeches, Vasyľko addressed a wide range of issues: from the protection of Ukrainian cultural and educational rights and resistance to administrative discrimination – to the critique of Romanianization in Bukovyna, ethno-political imbalance in Halychyna, and the injustices of the electoral system. A significant part of his parliamentary initiatives and public statements was recorded and interpreted in the Galician press, particularly in the «Ruslan» newspaper, which played a crucial role in shaping public opinion. Analyzing the materials of this publication provides a deeper reconstruction of Mykola Vasyľko's political stance – as a figure who

sought to harmonize the interests of the Ukrainian community with the principles of parliamentary legitimacy, legal equality, and national self-determination. The focus of this study is on the mechanisms of Ukrainian political representation, the ideological transformation of Vasyľko himself, and the reaction of the Ukrainian press to his activities in the Reichsrat.

Review of recent research and publications. Parliamentary activity of M. Vasyľko has not yet become the subject of a separate scholarly investigation. Some aspects of his political activities are highlighted in the works of O. Dobrzanskyi [3–5], A. Klish [31], M. Nykyforak [14]. Certain aspects of the outlined issue have been addressed in the works of I. Zuliak and S. Pryidun [10], I. Krykhovetskyi [11], R. Lekhniuk [12–13], and L. Snitsarchuk [22]. These studies primarily focus on the parliamentary activity of Ukrainian deputies or the functioning of the newspaper «Ruslan».

However, the parliamentary activity of Mykola Vasyľko and its coverage in «Ruslan» has not yet become the subject of a separate in-depth study.

Identification of previously unresolved aspects of the general problem. Despite the existence of comprehensive research on the history of Ukrainian parliamentarism within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the parliamentary activity of Mykola Vasyľko has not yet been the subject of a dedicated and holistic analysis with a specific focus on the media coverage of his political engagement. While the works of scholars such as O. Dobrzanskyi, A. Klish, I. Zuliak and S. Pryidun, I. Krykhovetskyi, R. Lekhniuk, L. Snitsarchuk and M. Nykyforak explore various aspects of Ukrainian deputies' participation in the Reichsrat and regional diets, they provide only limited insight into Vasyľko's role as a public political figure shaped by the particularities of the Bukovynian context, as well as his influence on the development of interregional Ukrainian political representation.

Moreover, the correlation between Vasyľko's parliamentary rhetoric and the journalistic commentary in the Ukrainian press – especially in the «Ruslan»

newspaper – remains insufficiently studied. This publication not only reflected but also shaped public perceptions of Ukrainian political discourse. The issue of his ideological transformation – from a representative of the Russophile camp to a prominent voice of the populist (narodovets) faction – also remains largely unexplored.

Therefore, the relevance of this study lies in addressing these gaps through a comprehensive analysis of Mykola Vasyľko's parliamentary activity, taking into account its media coverage, the broader political context, and the role of national rhetoric as a key factor in the formation of modern Ukrainian political representation during a period of crisis in imperial multiethnicity.

Methodological framework of the study. The methodological framework of this article is grounded in an interdisciplinary approach that integrates tools from political history, the history of ideas, and media history. The research is based on the principles of historicism and scholarly objectivity, taking into account the specific nature of the source base – particularly the publicistic materials of the national-democratic newspaper «Ruslan», which not only reflected but also shaped public and political perceptions of parliamentary activity.

The core methods employed include: **content analysis** of press materials, which enabled the identification of thematic focuses, rhetorical devices, and the tone of coverage related to Mykola Vasyľko's activities; **comparative-analytical method**, used to juxtapose Vasyľko's position with that of other members of the Ukrainian parliamentary faction and their opponents; **biographical approach**, which made it possible to trace the transformation of Vasyľko's political views in relation to shifting political contexts; **discourse analysis**, aimed at reconstructing the content of public speeches, interpellations, and rhetorical strategies as instruments for legitimizing Ukrainian national demands within the multiethnic parliamentary environment of Austria-Hungary.

The integrated application of these methods allowed not only for the delineation of the main vectors of Vasyľko's political activity, but also for identifying the structural constraints faced by Ukrainian parliamentary representation and the role of publicistic discourse in shaping the political image of the deputy.

Presentation of the main research material. Mykola Vasyľko, also known by his noble title Ritter von Wassilko, originated from a distinguished boyar family of Bukovyna with deep roots in the Ruthenian tradition, although the family had undergone partial Romanianization over time. He was born on March 21, 1868, in Slobozia-Komariwka (modern-day Chernivtsi region) into the family of Nicolae von Wassilko and Baroness Aglaia von Petrino-Armiz. His early education took place at the prestigious Theresianum in Vienna, where he was shaped as a figure of European stature with early exposure to the aristocratic and political circles of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He later completed his legal studies at Chernivtsi University, where the foundations of his future public career were laid.

Upon returning to Bukovyna, Vasyľko assumed the role of *starosta* in his native village of Lukavtsi and began active participation in the socio-political life of the region. Initially influenced by Old Ruthenian and Russophile ideas, his worldview gradually shifted during the 1890s toward the Ukrainian national camp, largely under the influence of his relative Vasyl Volian. During this transitional period, Vasyľko became one of the founders of the «Narodna Rada» (1893–1895) and initiated the creation of a number of cultural and political organizations, including the Orthodox Ruthenian Reading Society and the Vyzhnytsia-Putyla Council. These early initiatives set the stage for his parliamentary activity, in which he emerged as a committed representative of Bukovynian Ukrainians in the legislative structures of the empire.

On December 10, 1899, Mykola Vasyľko was elected to the Austrian Parliament from a constituency that included Putyla, Vyzhnytsia, Vashkivtsi,

Stanivtsi, Kitsman, and Zastavna. He succeeded his late uncle Vasyl Volian as deputy and thus became the official parliamentary representative of the Ukrainian population of Bukovyna in the Reichsrat.

Following the general elections of December 1900, Vasyľko once again secured a seat in the Viennese Parliament, this time alongside Yerotey Pihulyak, a representative of the populist (narodovets) faction. Despite the ideological rivalry between Ukrainians aligned with Russophile and narodovets camps, Vasyľko succeeded in forming a political alliance with Galician national democrats such as Yulian Romanchuk and Vasyl Yavorskyi. This coalition, institutionalized as the «Ruthenian Club», became a significant interregional platform for advocating Ukrainian national rights within the Cisleithanian parliament.

In the preface to a work dedicated to his own parliamentary career, Mykola Vasyľko emphasized that all of his speeches, legislative initiatives, and parliamentary inquiries should be viewed not merely as expressions of political engagement, but primarily as manifestations of deep emotional and moral impulses rooted in the suffering of his people. In this context, he conceptualized his participation in the parliamentary process as a form of representing national anguish, framing the political tribune as a space through which the collective experience of oppression, discrimination, and the struggle for national recognition could be articulated [32, s. III].

The speech delivered by Mykola Vasyľko on March 1, 1900, in the Austro-Hungarian Reichsrat stands as a significant expression of the political articulation of the Ukrainian national question within the Bukovynian context. In his address, the deputy clearly defined the position of Ukrainians as an autochthonous population of the region, which, under the framework of the empire's multiethnic system, was subjected to systematic neglect by the central authorities. Vasyľko delivered a sharp critique of government policies that disregarded the cultural, linguistic, and political needs of Bukovynian Ukrainians, despite their numerical prominence. In response,

he called for the introduction of autonomous mechanisms for regulating national relations, which would encompass all Slavic peoples of the empire – including Ukrainians as a full-fledged political entity.

A central element of Vasyľko's speech was his historical analysis of the ethno-political dynamics of Bukovyna, particularly regarding the origins of Romanian hegemony. He emphasized that Bukovyna had historically been a Slavic territory, once part of Kyivan Rus and later the Principality of Halychyna, and that the displacement of the Ukrainian element and the imposition of Romanian culture were historically unfounded. Vasyľko drew special attention to the administrative and linguistic policies implemented after 1775, when Bukovyna was annexed by Austria, which artificially created the impression of Romanian demographic dominance. He argued that even the phenomenon of self-identification as "Volokhy" among Orthodox Ukrainian peasants was misinterpreted by the authorities, distorting census results and entrenching misconceptions about the region's ethnic composition. In this way, Vasyľko not only defended Ukrainian national identity but also offered the empire a new perspective – to ground its national policy on historical truth and the actual ethno-linguistic landscape of Bukovyna in the pursuit of more equitable governance [17, c. 1–2].

In his parliamentary address, Mykola Vasyľko drew focused attention to the systemic violations of the economic and social rights of the Ukrainian population, particularly concerning issues related to forestry and land ownership in Halychyna and Bukovyna. He emphasized that Ukrainian peasant communities were subjected to deliberate economic exploitation, especially through the transfer of forest concessions into the hands of speculative capital. This process led to the displacement of local populations from traditional sources of income and severely restricted their access to natural resources.

Vasyľko forcefully advocated for the necessity of state intervention to halt these destructive practices and to protect Ukrainian rural communities from

economic marginalization. His rhetoric included a clear call for the development of legal and administrative mechanisms aimed at ensuring the fair distribution of resources and securing effective representation of Ukrainian interests in matters of land and forest ownership. Thus, his speech aligned with the broader discourse of social justice within the multiethnic imperial framework and reflected the efforts of Ukrainian parliamentarians to integrate socioeconomic concerns into the official political agenda of the Austro-Hungarian state [18, c. 2].

Mykola Vasyľko provided a detailed account of the socio-economic challenges facing the peasantry of Bukovyna, placing particular emphasis on the adverse effects of international trade agreements. He pointed out that tariff restrictions imposed along the borders with Romania and Russia had effectively isolated Bukovyna economically. As a result, local residents were compelled to purchase basic goods – especially bread – at inflated prices, while opportunities for exporting their own produce were significantly constrained. This asymmetry contributed to growing social tensions and the impoverishment of the rural population, which became increasingly vulnerable to usury and speculative trade. Merchants exploited the situation by supplying low-quality goods at unjustifiably high prices.

A central focus of Vasyľko's speech was the urgent need for a fundamental transformation of the credit system. He emphasized that most Bukovynian peasants lacked access to affordable financial resources and were therefore forced into exploitative loans with excessively high interest rates, which further deepened their economic dependency and social marginalization. Vasyľko unequivocally stated that, without systemic state support – particularly through the introduction of preferential credit mechanisms and the restructuring of financial institutions—peasants would be unable to maintain ownership of their land. These elements of his speech amounted to a forceful appeal to the government to develop and implement a comprehensive policy aimed at protecting small-scale rural economies as a

foundation for regional stability and the preservation of the traditional social structure of the Ukrainian village [19, c. 1–2].

In his speech, Vasyenko addressed the issue of discriminatory personnel policies within the Bukovinian Orthodox Metropolis, emphasizing the systematic exclusion of the Ukrainian element from ecclesiastical and educational structures. The deputy convincingly argued that in the decades following the death of Metropolitan Hakman, the leadership of the metropolis remained in the hands of Romanian hierarchs, which led to a broader process of assimilation. This was particularly evident in the near-total disappearance of Ukrainian seminarians from the theological seminary and the acute shortage of Ukrainian-speaking clergy. Vasyenko framed this not merely as an internal church matter, but as a manifestation of a wider policy of Romanianization that eroded the religious identity of the Ukrainian population.

He also drew attention to the lack of access Ukrainians had to key administrative and academic positions, particularly in the context of the German-language university in Chernivtsi. Here, he outlined a paradoxical situation: on one hand, Ukrainians welcomed the opportunity to obtain higher education in German as a means of social advancement; on the other, they remained effectively excluded from real mechanisms of power and institutional influence [20, c. 2].

He emphasized the unjust representation of national groups in the Bukovinian Regional Diet, where Romanians, despite being numerically inferior, held more seats than the significantly more numerous Ukrainians. Vasyenko openly challenged the positions of the Romanian parliamentary faction, drawing attention to targeted media campaigns aimed at discrediting the Slavic population of Bukovyna. He exposed the content of anti-Ukrainian publications in the press that portrayed themselves as official. In this context, the deputy treated the parliamentary tribune as a space of political responsibility, stressing that his speeches were not driven by confrontation, but by the pursuit of justice and regional stability.

His address raised the issue of political accountability among the Romanian elites, who, instead of engaging in constructive dialogue, resorted to inciting the population, publicly insulting religious and state authorities, and promoting ideas aligned with a foreign political orientation toward the Romanian Kingdom. Vasyľko firmly rejected allegations of Russophilism or disloyalty to Austria, instead asserting the Ukrainians' right to be recognized as full-fledged political subjects within the imperial parliament [21, c. 2].

During the parliamentary debates in the Reichsrat regarding the agrarian strikes of 1902, which had engulfed large areas of Eastern Halychyna, Mykola Vasyľko delivered a conceptually significant and socially charged speech. In this address, he offered a systemic critique of the socio-economic conditions and the broader political architecture of Halychyna within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. A central target of his criticism was the model of Galician autonomy, which he described as a mechanism of political dominance by the Polish nobility that effectively nullified the principles of representative self-government. Vasyľko rhetorically characterized Halychyna as a "state within a state," where legal structures functioned in a selective and repressive manner, and Austrian constitutionalism lost its universal legitimacy.

In the second part of his speech, Vasyľko shifted focus to the social roots of the strike wave, emphasizing its deeply economic causes – extreme poverty, chronic landlessness, food insecurity, and the structural marginalization of the Ukrainian peasantry. He firmly rejected the official narrative that framed the strikes as a result of political conspiracy or radical agitation, instead highlighting their spontaneous nature as a response to long-standing neglect by the authorities. Vasyľko also delivered a strong rebuttal to a speech by Polish deputy Głombiński, viewing it as a deliberate attempt to politically discredit the Ukrainian people on the international stage. In the conclusion of his address, he issued a direct appeal to the central government, warning that continued neglect of the Ukrainian question amid a crisis

could lead to destabilization that no repressive measures would be able to contain. Thus, Vasyľko's speech represented not only a defense of Ukrainian social interests but also an attempt at conceptually reimagining the place of the Ukrainian nation within the imperial political landscape [8, c. 1; 27–30].

In his parliamentary speeches addressing the 1902 agrarian strikes, Mykola Vasyľko consistently rejected the official interpretation that these protests were politically orchestrated. In his view, the strike actions undertaken by the Ukrainian peasantry in Eastern Halychyna were a direct consequence of prolonged socio-economic degradation, manifesting in chronic landlessness, hunger, legal discrimination, and the systemic marginalization of Ukrainians within the Austro-Hungarian administrative structure. Vasyľko challenged assumptions of centralized coordination behind the strikes, emphasizing the lack of institutional capacity and financial resources within the Ukrainian political movement to organize such large-scale actions. He classified the strikes as spontaneous manifestations of social protest driven by urgent economic necessity and stressed that support for the movement should not be seen as an act of radicalism, but rather as a deliberate expression of political responsibility toward the nation's future.

Vasyľko devoted particular attention to critiquing the government's stance—especially the rhetoric of the Prime Minister, who, according to the deputy, recognized the legitimacy of Ukrainian demands only on the condition of complete loyalty to a political course dictated by the Polish aristocracy. Such a framework, Vasyľko argued, contradicted the constitutional foundations of a rule-of-law state and amounted to political coercion. He underscored that Ukrainians were excluded from real levers of power and had not resorted to violence; therefore, the demand for unconditional obedience was essentially ultimative and capitulatory. In the final part of his speech, Vasyľko issued a clear warning regarding the potential for social upheaval should the Ukrainian national question continue to be ignored, stressing

that further delays in addressing it posed a tangible threat to the stability of state authority in the region [24–25].

Specifically, he was deliberately excluded from participation in any of the standing committees, an act that provoked a localized parliamentary crisis. However, this tactic ultimately failed – Ukrainian narodovtsi, despite ideological differences, supported Vasyľko, which led to his definitive break with the Russophile faction and transition into the national-democratic (narodovets) camp. From that point on, Vasyľko established a close political partnership with Yerotey Pihulyak and became actively involved in interregional cooperation with Galician representatives in the imperial parliament.

During the drafting of new electoral legislation in the Austro-Hungarian Parliament between 1905 and 1907, the Ukrainian representatives unanimously endorsed the candidacy of Mykola Vasyľko, recognizing him as a competent jurist, an experienced parliamentarian, and an effective diplomat. Owing to his deep understanding of legislative procedures and his aptitude for interethnic dialogue, Vasyľko played a leading role in articulating the position of the Ukrainian delegation. As before, he maintained an active political stance, consistently defending the rights of the Ukrainian population of Bukovyna and Halychyna within the context of electoral reform, advocating for proportional representation and the elimination of structural discrimination in the imperial electoral system.

During parliamentary debates on the reform of the Austro-Hungarian electoral system, Vasyľko, speaking on behalf of the Ukrainian population of Bukovyna and Halychyna, expressed conditional support for the government's draft proposal, while emphasizing the need for a just and equitable distribution of parliamentary mandates among national groups. In his speech, he highlighted the deep disproportionality embedded in the existing system: one deputy elected by the Polish electorate represented approximately 50,000 voters, whereas a Ukrainian deputy had to represent over 110,000. This, he argued, created a glaring case of political inequality

and systemic devaluation of Ukrainian parliamentary representation. Vasyľko warned that if the principle of proportionality continued to be disregarded, Ukrainians would be compelled to extend their political struggle not only against Polish national factions but also against the imperial center, which tolerated and upheld the prevailing injustice. Meanwhile, Polish parliamentarians insisted on expanding Halychyna's parliamentary quota to 114 mandates – a move that transparently served the interests of the Polish political elite [7, c. 2–3].

In his address to the Electoral Commission of the Imperial Council, Mykola Vasyľko firmly denounced the systemic political and administrative discrimination against Ukrainians in Halychyna, which, in his view, had an institutional character and was the direct result of the monopolization of governance structures by the Polish political elite. He emphasized that Ukrainians – despite constituting the demographic majority in many districts – were effectively deprived of representation in both local and regional governing bodies. Among the district governors (*starostas*), vice-regents, and heads of district administrations, there was not a single Ukrainian, which Vasyľko saw as clear evidence of the deliberate exclusion of Ukrainians from decision-making mechanisms. According to the deputy, this practice not only undermined the principles of political parity but also directly contributed to the worsening socio-economic conditions of the Ukrainian population.

Vasyľko specifically criticized Prince Hohenlohe's proposal to allocate only 27 parliamentary mandates to Ukrainians, which he regarded as incompatible with both demographic realities and the principles of electoral fairness. He argued that in practice, Ukrainians would be able to secure no more than 18–19 mandates, while Polish parties would enjoy significantly broader representation. Of particular concern was the disparity in voter-to-mandate ratios: roughly 50,000 voters per mandate in Polish constituencies, compared to over 110,000 in Ukrainian ones. Vasyľko interpreted this as a deliberate mechanism to entrench the political

hegemony of the Polish elite. He also highlighted the complete absence of mandates for Ukrainians in urban constituencies, attributing this to the dominance of Polish political forces in municipal self-governance. As for the claim that low literacy rates among Ukrainians justified limited representation, Vasyľko refuted it by stressing that educational inequality was not a natural condition, but rather the outcome of deliberate policies implemented by Polish educational institutions.

As an alternative, Vasyľko proposed several constructive amendments to the electoral law: the abolition of the proportional system, which he argued only institutionalized national inequality; the redrawing of electoral boundaries to reflect the actual ethnic composition of the population; and the allocation of at least 42% of parliamentary mandates to Ukrainians in accordance with their share of Halychyna's population—or, as a compromise, a minimum of 35 mandates. While acknowledging the low likelihood of these proposals being accepted, Vasyľko warned that ignoring them could lead to political destabilization, intensify tensions between Ukrainian and Polish communities, and deepen mistrust toward the central government. Thus, in its original form, the proposed electoral reform was not a vehicle for modernization, but rather a potential catalyst for escalating national conflict in the region [9, c. 2–3].

In his speech on electoral reform in Austria-Hungary, Mykola Vasyľko articulated the clear stance of the Ukrainian parliamentary delegation, emphasizing the systemic injustice of the electoral system that entrenched political inequality and contributed to the social marginalization of the Ukrainian population in Halychyna. Vasyľko argued that the proposed reform, despite its declared goal of democratizing representation, in practice preserved the existing model of political hegemony exercised by the Polish ruling class, thereby limiting the capacity of Ukrainians to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes.

In his address, he stressed that the structural discrimination faced by the Ukrainian electorate was not merely the result of unfavorable provisions in the

electoral law, but also a consequence of a deliberate political strategy aimed at exacerbating interethnic tensions. According to Vasyľko, the authorities deliberately fueled conflicts between Ukrainians and Poles as a means of diverting attention from demands for equitable national representation. In this context, he presented the electoral reform as a missed opportunity to establish a more inclusive and just political framework within the multiethnic empire [16, c. 2].

The parliamentary debates on this issue clearly demonstrated the limited influence available to Ukrainian deputies and the government's lack of political will to reconsider the principles of national representation. Aware of the complexity of the situation, Mykola Vasyľko advocated for the redrawing of electoral district boundaries and an increase in the quota of mandates for Ukrainians. However, he was ultimately compelled to accept a compromise solution – 28 mandates – which left Ukrainians in a position of political minority.

The provision introduced for consolidating small rural communities into electoral districts had adverse effects for Ukrainian voters in the countryside, further diminishing their electoral weight. Although the discussions surrounding these provisions—especially in the context of political secession—generated significant public resonance, the reform was not revised. This outcome revealed the necessity for a new strategic approach: the formation of interethnic alliances with other politically active minorities – such as Czechs, Slovaks, and Romanians – as well as the development of autonomous Ukrainian political and civic structures capable of mobilizing a broader electorate and resisting the mechanisms of political marginalization within the framework of a multiethnic imperial system [1, c. 1–2].

The article “Second Reading of the Electoral Reform Bill,” published in the «Ruslan» newspaper, reflects the profound disappointment of the Ukrainian public with the outcomes of the newly adopted electoral reform in Austria-Hungary. The text provides a critical analysis of both the immediate results of the reform and the broader political context in which it was enacted. The author emphasizes that despite

the demographic majority of Ukrainians in Eastern Halychyna, their growing cultural development, and increasing economic potential, their representation in the imperial parliament remained disproportionately low. Compared to Poles, Germans, and Hungarians – many of whom were numerically inferior in certain regions – Ukrainians were effectively pushed to the periphery of the political process.

The author devotes particular attention to analyzing the causes of this political defeat: the absence of a cohesive and influential Ukrainian parliamentary faction, a lack of effective interethnic cooperation, and the structural incapacity of the Ukrainian political elite to influence legislative outcomes. Even the resolute position of Deputy Mykola Vasyl'ko, who participated in the Electoral Commission with a clear program to defend Ukrainian interests, proved insufficient to alter the overall result. This underscored once again the vulnerability of the Ukrainian position within a multiethnic parliament. In conclusion, rather than the anticipated revision of Ukrainians' status in the imperial political system, the reform led to even deeper marginalization. According to the author, this outcome necessitates not only a rethinking of political strategies but also the proactive development of new approaches to national solidarity and interethnic cooperation [6, c. 1].

Mykola Vasyl'ko raised another systemic issue – structural inequality in the field of education. He emphasized the catastrophic disparity between the number of Ukrainian and Polish gymnasiums in Halychyna, which significantly limited educational opportunities for Ukrainian youth. Moreover, the limited network of Ukrainian educational institutions was regularly subjected to pressure from Polish political forces, who viewed the intellectual development of the Ukrainian community as a direct threat to their political hegemony. Vasyl'ko also highlighted instances of political persecution of Ukrainian initiatives – notably, restrictions on organizing national commemorations such as celebrations in honor of Bohdan Khmelnytsky, which starkly contrasted with the unimpeded conduct of similar Polish events. In this context, he issued a strong call for the introduction of a direct

electoral system that would guarantee equal representation for all ethnic groups of the empire – including Ukrainians, Jews, Romanians, and other minorities – thereby laying the groundwork for a truly modernized Austrian parliamentarism [16, c. 2].

Working in tandem with Yerotey Pihulyak, Mykola Vasyľko demonstrated notable parliamentary initiative, submitting dozens of interpellations, appeals, and formal inquiries to central and regional Austrian authorities. In their speeches, they consistently raised issues of linguistic discrimination, educational barriers, and personnel policies affecting Ukrainians in Bukovyna. For instance, one of their key concerns addressed a particularly sensitive matter of national self-preservation – the problem of Romanianization of Ukrainian personal names and surnames in Bukovyna. This practice was especially prevalent in civil registry entries kept by Romanian clergy, who frequently translated or altered Ukrainian surnames, leading to legal confusion, administrative instability, and the erosion of personal identity. These changes not only complicated bureaucratic procedures but also had tangible material consequences – such as the inability to confirm inheritance rights or pursue judicial and educational claims. In response, the deputies demanded legislative action: the formal restoration of original names and the implementation of legal safeguards to prevent further assimilative practices [26, c. 2].

The publicistic discourse of the early 20th century clearly reveals an internal conflict within the Ukrainian political elite, which became particularly acute during the parliamentary campaign period. In the pages of the «Dilo» newspaper, Mykola Vasyľko was unjustly accused of collusion with the Austrian government, despite his active and consistent efforts to defend the rights of the Ukrainian population. Simultaneously, other key figures of the Ukrainian parliamentary faction came under criticism: Yulian Romanchuk was portrayed as a politically weak faction leader, while Oleksander Barvinsky, Oleksander Hladyshovsky, and Vasyl Yavorsky were depicted as ineffective and inconsistent politicians. This type of media campaign

fostered an atmosphere of voter frustration and mistrust, contributing to the image of a crisis in political representation.

By contrast, the «Ruslan» newspaper suggested that «Dilo»'s criticism was politically motivated and aimed at delegitimizing sitting deputies in order to promote parliamentary candidates loyal to the editorial circle. Rather than uniting Ukrainian forces in the face of electoral inequality and the growing threat of Polish dominance, «Dilo» effectively encouraged fragmentation of the political space. This fragmentation not only weakened the Ukrainian parliamentary faction's position but also gave Polish parties and government officials further justification to ignore Ukrainian demands by pointing to the absence of a unified political will among Ukrainians themselves [2, c. 1–2].

Despite having formal access to the parliamentary tribune as a platform for political expression, only a few deputies – most notably Mykola Vasyľko – consistently took advantage of the opportunity to speak. The majority remained passive, a pattern that, according to contemporary press accounts, stemmed from excessive centralization within the faction's leadership. This leadership structure unilaterally allocated speaking rights, often sidelining competent and active parliamentarians [15, c. 1–2].

An analysis of internal conflicts within the Ukrainian parliamentary delegation suggests that the lack of structural cohesion, ineffective leadership, and intra-factional competition significantly constrained the political impact of Ukrainian representation within the Austro-Hungarian political system. These limitations underscored the pressing need to revise the political strategy of the Ukrainian national movement – particularly by strengthening factional discipline, enhancing the professionalism of political engagement, and rethinking communication strategies with the electorate.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. The parliamentary activity of Mykola Vasyľko at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, as documented in the

Galician periodical «Ruslan», serves as a valuable case study in the formation of the Ukrainian political elite within the framework of a multiethnic empire. Vasyľko emerges as a representative of a new generation of Ukrainian parliamentarians—one who combined aristocratic heritage with a deep understanding of his people's needs, an ability for political analysis, and active engagement in the imperial legislative process. His role was instrumental in the political evolution of the Ukrainian movement in Bukovyna and exemplified the broader aspirations of the Ukrainian community to integrate into the Austrian parliamentary system on terms of national dignity and equality.

The analyzed sources reveal the multidimensional character of Vasyľko's parliamentary work: from the defense of educational and linguistic rights and opposition to Romanianization and administrative discrimination, to legislative efforts aimed at protecting the Ukrainian peasantry, combatting economic exploitation, and securing proportional representation for Ukrainians in the Reichsrat. His speeches are marked by rhetorical skill, historical argumentation, and a pragmatic approach to negotiation with the government and other parliamentary groups. Both his addresses from the parliamentary tribune and his participation in cross-party initiatives reflect the growing political maturity of Ukrainian deputies, and highlight Vasyľko as one of the most active and consistent among them.

Particularly noteworthy is his capacity for interethnic dialogue – with Romanian and Galician Polish representatives – as well as his attempts to consolidate Ukrainian deputies through the creation of the «Ruthenian Club». Despite the limitations of parliamentary instruments available to national minorities, Vasyľko succeeded in drawing the attention of the central government to a range of critical issues affecting Ukrainians in Bukovyna. The publications in «Ruslan» not only recorded these efforts but also played a vital role in shaping national consciousness and mobilizing public opinion around demands for national representation, educational reform, voting rights, and social protection.

It is also important to highlight the ideological transformation of Mykola Vasyľko – from a moderate Old Ruthenian position to an active commitment to the national-democratic (Narodovtsi) course. This ideological shift took place under the pressure of practical parliamentary experience and the growing awareness of the real mechanisms of influence within the imperial system. Thus, Vasyľko's political work not only reflected Ukrainian national ambitions but also represented an early attempt to formulate a viable strategy for their realization—one that combined historical argumentation, legal initiatives, and strategic alliances.

In a broader context, Mykola Vasyľko's experience can be viewed as one of the first systematic, legitimate, and effective efforts by Ukrainian political representatives to operate within the framework of imperial politics—balancing loyalty to the state with demands for national autonomy. His activity underscores the role of the parliament as a space for political struggle, national self-assertion, and, ultimately, the emergence of political modernism within the Ukrainian movement in the early 20th century.

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