

PARVUS AND THE BREAK-UP OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

Following the February Revolution of 1917, the Provisional Government which took power in Petrograd was immediately faced with demands for independence from 'the Duchy of Finland' and from the 'Kingdom of Poland'. The Kingdom of Poland, with its capital in Warsaw, was made up of areas which had originally been taken in the eighteenth century by Prussia and Austria but were then taken in 1807 by Napoleon as part of his 'Duchy of Warsaw'. At the Congress of Vienna in 1815 the formerly Austrian part of the Duchy and most of the formerly Prussian part were ceded to Russia which was at the time the occupying power. The 'King' of the Kingdom of Poland was the Tsar. By the time of the revolution however the whole area was in German hands and the 'Central Powers' (Germany and Austria) had promised it independence, leaving the Russian Provisional Government little apparent choice in the matter.

Finland, which was still under Russian control and which was not at the time an area of military operations presented more of a problem. As the Tsar was King of the Kingdom of Poland so he was Duke of the Duchy of Finland. Finland, previously attached to Sweden, had been incorporated into the Empire in 1809 at a time when Russia was in alliance with Napoleon in opposition to Sweden. It had a notionally autonomous status within the Empire perhaps rather like the relationship of Scotland to England within the United Kingdom. A sense of Finnish national identity and use of the Finnish language had actually been encouraged under Alexander II in opposition to the largely Swedish ruling class and Finland had developed its own industrial base, working class and liberal and Socialist politics which came into violent confrontation with what were seen as the policies of Russification associated with Nicholas II and his governor-general Nikolai Bobrikov, assassinated in 1904 - policies continued after 1905 by Stolypin.

In opposition, of course, the liberal and Socialist parties now in power in the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet had been broadly supportive of the non-Russian nationalities within the Russian Empire, albeit with different ideas as to what the rights of minorities might be. But now they were in government and in a state of war with the Central Powers who were very aware of the opportunities presented by the multinational character of Russia. If they hadn't been able to figure that out for themselves they were reminded of it by no less a person than Alexander Helphand - 'Parvus' - the Social Democrat theorist of 'permanent revolution', adviser to the Young Turk government in Istanbul, successful businessman who

Solzhenitsyn sees, controversially, as a major influence on, or at least tempter of, Lenin, presenting the logic of seeking German support for the Russian revolution.¹

THE KONSTANTINOPLER AKTION

When the war broke out Parvus was in Istanbul, where he made contact with the 'Union for the Liberation of Ukraine' (SUU).² The Union had been founded in Austrian Galicia - Lemberg/ Lwow/ Lviv - at the beginning of the war and quickly established representation in Germany, Switzerland, Turkey and Bulgaria. The representative in Turkey was Mariian Melenevsky, aka 'Bako'. Melenevsky had been one of the founders in 1904 of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Spilka (union) which had, in opposition to the Revolutionary Ukrainian Party, joined up with the Menshevik wing of the RSDRP. According to Zeman (p.133), Parvus and Melenevsky had known each other back in the days of Parvus's involvement with the journal *Iskra*.³ Melenevsky had the support of the German Dr Max Zimmer and in 1914 the German Ambassador in Istanbul, Hans Baron von Wangenheim, wrote to the German Foreign Ministry:

*'The well-known Russian Socialist and publicist, Dr Helphand, one of the main leaders of the last Russian Revolution, who was exiled from Russia and has, on several occasions, been expelled from Germany, has for some time been active here as a writer, concerning himself chiefly with questions of Turkish economics. Since the beginning of the war, Parvus's attitude has been definitely pro-German. He is helping Dr Zimmer in his support of the Ukrainian movement and he also rendered useful services in the founding of Batsarias's newspaper in Bucharest. In a conversation with me, which he had requested through Zimmer, Parvus said that the Russian Democrats could only achieve their aim by the total destruction of Czarism and the division of Russia into smaller states. On the other hand, Germany would not be completely successful if it were not possible to kindle a major revolution in Russia. However, there would still be a danger to Germany from Russia, even after the war, if the Russian Empire were not divided into a number of separate parts.'*⁴

Even before Turkey formally entered the war the SVU/ULU was involved in planning a Turkish assault across the Black Sea, either on Odessa or on the Kuban, in the Caucasus, modern Krasondar Krai, on the East Coast of the Black Sea where there was a substantial 'Ukrainian' population, the 'Kuban Cossacks', descendants of the Zaporozhian Cossacks after they had been broken up at the end of the eighteenth century. Unlike in Ukraine as centred on the Dnieper river, but like the Don Cossacks, the Kuban Cossacks had been allowed to maintain a distinct

¹ Solzhenitsyn's fantasy of a confrontation between Parvus and Lenin in 1916 can be found in *November 1917*, Penguin Books, 2000, pp.635-678. I discuss it in my essay 'Solzhenitsyn's Jews - Parvus and Bogrov', *Church and State*, No.125, October-December, 2016, available on my website at <http://www.peterbrooke.org/politics-and-theology/solzhenitsyn/parvus/> It should be said that in Solzhenitsyn's account Lenin resists Parvus's temptation. The standard account of Parvus's life is ZAB Zeman and WB Scharlan: *The Merchant of Revolution - the life of Alexander Israel Helphand (Parvus), 1867-1924*, Oxford University Press, 1964.

² Account in Hakan Kirmli: 'The Activities of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Oct 1998, Vol.34, No.4, pp.177-200.

³ *Iskra* continued publication until 1905 after Lenin broke with it in the Bolshevik/Menshevik split of 1905).

⁴ M. Asim Karaömerlioğlu: 'Helphand-Parvus and his impact on Turkish intellectual life,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, Nov. 2004, Vol. 40, No. 6, p.149.

Cossack tradition, incorporated as a regiment in the Russian army - rather like the highland regiments incorporated into the British army after the suppression of the distinct Scottish political identity of the Scottish highlands. The Turkish project in the event came to nothing (the idea that the Kuban Cossacks would have taken kindly to a Turkish invasion was especially absurd) but this account of it by the Turkish historian Hakan Kirimli still makes interesting reading:

'By November 1914 (when Turkey entered the war) the plan of landing a Turkish expeditionary force involving the ULU crystallized and came to be known among the circles of the Central Powers as the 'Constantinople Action' [Konstantinopler Aktion]. The final details of the 'Constantinople Action' were presented to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office during the first week of November by Basok-Melenevs'kyi, who then travelled to Vienna. In his private letter to Colonel Hranilovic of 8 November 1914, Count Hoyos [chef de cabinet to the Austrian Foreign Minister Count Berchtold - PB] summarized the plan and his opinion of it. As explained in this letter, the emissaries of the ULU had discussed with Enver Pasha's representatives in Istanbul Turkish-Ukrainian military co-operation in order to instigate a revolutionary movement in Ukraine by landing on the Russian Black Sea coast a small Ukrainian detachment protected by strong Turkish forces.

'In conformity with the discussions in Istanbul, the ULU requested from the Austro-Hungarian government an expeditionary corps of 500 Ukrainians, composed of 400 Austro-Hungarian Ukrainian legionaries and 100 Ukrainians to be selected from among the Russian prisoners of war. Hoyos asked Hranilovic to seek the approval of the Army Supreme Command to implement this plan. Then Colonel Fischer in Bukovina would be entrusted with choosing from among the personnel of the Ukrainian Riflemen [Sichovi Stril'tsi] the 400 legionaries who would necessarily be all volunteers. As for the 100 volunteers from among the prisoners of war, Colonel von Steinitz would authorize their selection. With this in mind, Hoyos suggested establishing a separate prisoner of war camp for the purpose of conducting revolutionary propaganda where suitable elements for the expedition would be selected. An officer of the Ukrainian Riflemen, as well as a representative of the ULU would also go to Bukovina to help select volunteers

[...]

'While Basok-Melenevs'kyi and Zimmer were in Vienna, they discussed the plan with Hoyos in detail. According to this, the landing was to be in the Kuban region with a Turkish expeditionary force of 50,000, supplemented by the above-mentioned 500 Ukrainian volunteers. The primary aim would be to provoke an uprising among the Kabardians and Kuban Cossacks. Zimmer himself would also take part in the venture, and it was hoped that the presence of the Ukrainian legionaries would be of particular operational use in stirring unrest among their ethnic kinsmen, the Kuban Cossacks. If the operation were a success, a nucleus of the Ukrainian state could be established there, and the Ukrainian movement could be expected to spread toward the west.

'However, all these plans were yet to be cleared by Turkey. Upon their arrival in Istanbul, Basok-Melenevs'kyi and Zimmer would seek the approval of Liman von Sanders and Enver Pasha. To obtain this, Hoyos asked Pallavicini [Johann Markgraf von Pallavicini, Austro-Hungarian diplomat, notably serving as ambassador at the Sublime Porte during World War I - PB] to contact Enver Pasha and von Sanders. In fact, as Hoyos stated, the Austro-Hungarians preferred a landing in Odessa over an expedition in North Caucasus. The latter option would be acceptable only in the case of a complete abandonment of the Odessa action, or if both operations could be carried out simultaneously.

These were, however, not Hoyos' only reservations about the 'Constantinople Action.' He strongly favoured entrusting command of the Turko-Ukrainian expedition to the Austrian General Staff officer Count Szeptycki. For not only would the presence of an Austrian commander have a bearing on further developments in Ukraine (or rather the Kuban region), but it would also demonstrate that his country was not totally reliant on the Germans.

[...]

'Notwithstanding the euphoria of Basok-Melenevs'kyi, Zimmer, Nebel and the qualified enthusiasm of Hoyos, it soon became apparent that their optimism was premature: Turkey, which was supposed to bear the brunt of the operation, seemed to demur, to say the least. Pallavicini's telegram to Hoyos on 16 November 1914 made it clear that, although Enver Pasha agreed in principle with the idea of landing an expeditionary corps in the Northern Caucasus, this could only occur if control of the Black Sea could be fully secured, and that temporary control would not do. If the 500 Ukrainian legionaries cared to undertake the operation alone, Enver Pasha would be ready to take them to the Black Sea and have them landed in a designated spot; but once landed they would be on their own [auf eigene Faust operieren]. General Liman von Sanders was of a similar opinion, that landing a large force before securing total control of the Black Sea would be impractical. Even Pallavicini thought that Turkey should not commit itself to the operation until the position of the Bulgarians became absolutely certain.'

It's rather noticeable that in all this there is no hint of any contact with Ukrainian political groupings inside the Russian Empire, just an assumption that they would respond favourably to a Turkish invasion accompanied by a handful of Galician Ukrainians.

In March 1915 Parvus submitted to the German Foreign Ministry what Zeman (p.145) describes as 'a plan, on a vast scale, for the subversion of the Tsarist Empire' through using the revolutionaries (especially the Bolsheviks), nationalists (especially Ukrainians and Finns) and international public opinion (for example Jews and Slavs in exile in the United States). Of Ukraine he argued, in Zeman's account: 'The Ukraine was the cornerstone which, once removed, would destroy the centralised state.' Zbigniew Brzezinski wasn't the first to think of it. He was less sure about the Caucasus given the contradictions between the attractive possibility of a Muslim Holy War, and the need to secure the co-operation of the Christian Armenians, Georgians and Kuban Cossacks.

As a result of his memorandum Parvus received a grant from the German government of one million marks. It is unclear what he did with it. The literature on the subject turns mostly on how much, if any, went to the Bolsheviks. The Union for the Liberation of Ukraine was represented (three members out of thirty four) on the 'General Ukrainian Council' formed in May 1915 in Vienna. The Council, overwhelmingly made up of Galicians with seven representatives from Bukovyna, advocated an independent Ukraine in the territories under Russian rule but only autonomy for Ukrainians in the territory that had been under Austrian rule and had now become a battle zone. Its position was totally undermined, however, when, as part of the recognition of an independent Poland in November 1916, restoration of an autonomous Polish dominated Galicia within Austro-Hungary was agreed.

It may be that the most important achievement of the SVU/ULU was its propaganda work among Ukrainian prisoners of war, mentioned in the last article in this series. In August 1917,

according to the French historian Marc Ferro: 'The [Russian] press noted that among "wounded" prisoners sent back from Germany, 50% were unharmed and these were, precisely, Ukrainians.'⁵

UKRAINE, FINLAND AND THE BALTIC STATES

On the 2nd March (Julian calendar, 15th in the Gregorian calendar⁶) - the day when Nicholas II signed the paper of abdication and the names of the Provisional Government, handpicked by the KDT leader Pavel Miliukov, were announced - the different parties that identified themselves as distinctly 'Ukrainian' (with the exception of the openly pro-German/ Austrian SVU/ULU) formed a general council, the *Rada*, in Kiev.

According to the Ukrainian nationalist historian Serhy Yekelchuk: 'Ukrainian rallies and parades poured into the streets like never before. The city of imperial administrators and the official church found itself overrun by crowds waving blue and yellow flags.' However, he continues: 'this mass support evaporated with the disintegration of the front, economic collapse and the Bolshevik invasion ... the enthusiastic crowds of the spring of 1917 acquired the disparaging moniker of "March [1917] Ukrainians" - those who went with the flow of the revolution but disappeared in the days of defeat.'⁷

As he points out: 'the fall of the monarchy produced neither a Ukrainian state nor a Ukrainian army - nor indeed a Ukrainian nation. These things would have been possible only if patriotic activists had had the time to reach out to the masses and mould them into modern citizens and members of the Ukrainian nation.' Contrary to the development in Galicia 'the persecution of Ukrainian culture under the Tsars did not afford Ukrainian activists this opportunity.' As I've suggested previously the 'persecution' consisted mainly in depriving the Ukrainian urban intelligentsia of the possibility of communicating with the mostly agricultural population in their own language. In Austria, a process of popular education, taken over by the political radicals, had been initiated by the Greek Catholic Church. Something similar had occurred in Finland and in the Baltic provinces:

'In the nineteenth century the Finnish and Baltic clergy and professional intellectuals took the initiative in providing the pedagogical leadership for organising provincial or national school systems. Progress

⁵ Marc Ferro: 'La Politique des nationalités du gouvernement provisoire (Février - Octobre 1917)', *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, Vol.2, No.2 (April-June 1961), p.160, fn 124. My translation.

⁶ Russia was still using the Julian calendar and it isn't always obvious which calendar historians are using when they give dates. Ferro, *Politique des nationalités*, p.140 refers to a manifesto of the Provisional Government concerning the legal order in Finland on 6th March. This is a date from the Old Calendar; in the New Calendar, the suspension of martial law in Finland was agreed on the 19th March. But on p.136 he refers to a secret Franco-Russian treaty agreed on the 11th March. This must refer to the New Calendar since it was agreed with the Tsar on the very eve of his fall. I've tried to keep the calendar dates right but can't be sure I've always succeeded.

⁷ Serhy Yekelchuk: 'The Ukrainian meanings of 1918 and 1919', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 2019, Vol.36, No.1/2, p.73. Yekelchuk, President of the Canadian Association of Ukrainian Studies and a lecturer in the University of Victoria, is very active in arguing the Ukrainian case eg in his book *The Conflict in Ukraine: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. See Philip Cox, June 2, 2022: *Historian of Ukraine thrust into public role by war*, '<https://www.uvic.ca/news/topics/2022+ukraine-scholar-public-role+news>, '

*in that direction was slow, for the Russian central authorities displayed little interest in funding elementary education until the 1860s and local society had to be persuaded to finance the building of schools and the training of teachers. The pedagogical principles for the schools organised in Finland and the Baltic provinces came mainly from Pestalozzi, Diesterweg and Fröbel with whose ideas Finnish and Baltic German clergymen and professionals became familiar as a result of spending student years in Åbo, Helsingfors (Helsinki) or Dorpat; travelling in Germany or residing in St Petersburg, where tens of thousands of Germans, Finns and Swedes lived and maintained their own Lutheran churches and schools. Beginning in the 1860s more adequate funding came to be provided for education, gradually bringing a substantial proportion of the Estonian, Finnish and Latvian peasants into schools organised according to modern principles of pedagogy. Before 1917 universal, obligatory education was achieved in neither Finland nor the Baltic provinces but the majority of the population had one form or another of schooling by the twentieth century. Unlike the rest of the Russian Empire, practically everyone in Finland and the Baltic Provinces was literate.'*⁸

If that were to happen in the Ukraine it would have had to be done by the Russian Orthodox Church

Fat chance!

The Provisional Government moved quickly on Finland. On the 4th/17th March it annulled the imperial legislation that had at least since the Manifesto of 1899, in Finnish eyes at least⁹, restricted the rights of the Finnish Diet; it also released political prisoners, including members of the Finnish Jäger movement which fought with the Prussian 27th Jäger Battalion. On 6th/19th it published a manifesto promising to respect the autonomy of Finland and extend the rights of the Diet. The ministry of Foreign Affairs even declared that Finland had a right to become independent or join up again with Sweden. Poland's right to independence was recognised on the 16th/29th March.¹⁰

Lithuania, like Poland, was under German occupation, while Latvia - then part of the governorate of Livonia - was the scene of fierce fighting. The Russians had evacuated Courland on the West Coast in June 1915 and Riga in July, practising a scorched earth policy, dismantling industry and taking a large part of the population with them. On 30th March/12th April, however, the Provisional Government united 'Danish Estonia' with the Northern part of what

⁸ Edward C. Thaden: 'Finland and the Baltic provinces: élite roles and social and economic conditions and structures', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, Summer-Fall 1984, Vol. 15, No. 2/3, p.219.

⁹ The Finnish view is contested in Osmo Jussila: 'The Historical Background of the February Manifesto of 1899', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, Summer-Fall 1984, Vol.15, No.2/3, pp.141-7.

¹⁰ Ferro: *Politique des nationalités*, pp.139-40.

had been the governorate of Livonia (the rest of it became 'Latvia') and elections were announced to a provisional assembly (the Maapäev) which were held over the Summer.¹¹

AUTONOMY

All this activity made the usual response given to Ukrainian demands - that all such decisions could only be taken by the Constituent Assembly - look rather lame. On 17th/30th March - the day after the commitment to Polish independence was announced - a group of Ukrainians in Petrograd submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister, Georgii Evgenevich Lvov, asking for a Commissar for Ukrainian Affairs, a proposal that would entail defining 'Ukraine' as a distinct territory with clearly defined affairs of its own. They also demanded official recognition of the Ukrainian language to be used in relations with the government and in the church. The Provisional Government discussed the memorandum with apparent seriousness but referred it to its 'Judicial Commission' where it seems to have disappeared. They did however appoint as commissar in the Kiev governorate Mikhail Akimovich Sukovkin, 'a Russian who got along well with the Ukrainian activists.' (Remy: It is unknown, p.696).

In Kiev, an 'Executive Committee of the Council of Combined Social Organisations' (IKSOO) had been very quickly formed by the city authorities on 1st/14th March. On the 4th/17th March the Society of Ukrainian Progressives, established the Ukrainian Central Council, the 'Rada', under the chairmanship of Mykhailo Hrushevsky. In 1894, Hrushevsky had been appointed Professor of the newly created chair of Ukrainian history in Lviv. He had been recommended to the post by Volodymyr Antonovych, who had been Drahomanov's colleague in the work of the Kyiv Hromada. While in Lviv he had taken control of and reorganised the Shevchenko Scientific Society, which was to become to the present day a major centre for the promotion and study of Ukrainian culture. His 'Traditional scheme of "Russian" history and the problem of a rational ordering of the history of the Eastern Slavs,' published in 1904 by the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences, laid the basis for the argument pursued by most Ukrainian historians, rejected by most Russian historians, that the Ukrainians had as much right as the Russians to claim descent as a distinct national identity from the original Kingdom of Kievan Rus'. His literary output was enormous - over 1,800 works, according to the Ukraine Encyclopedia. Following the 1905 revolution when the pressure on use of the Ukrainian language eased, he spent most of his time in Kiev where he was arrested at the outbreak of the war. He was in Moscow, only just released from exile, when he was elected in his absence to the Rada.

Hrushevsky presided over a rapid process of political development - a transition from an intellectual movement developing the appearance of a national culture to one that aspired - with, for the first time, a possibility of success - to being a popular movement. In the previous

¹¹ Wikipedia entry: 'Autonomous Governorate of Estonia'. Where other sources are not given the likely source is either Wikipedia or the Encyclopedia of Ukraine. Also Ferro: *Politique des nationalités*; Johannes Remy: "It is unknown where the Little Russians are heading to": The Autonomy Dispute between the Ukrainian Central Rada and the All-Russian Provisional Government in 1917', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 95, No. 4 (October 2017), pp. 691-719 and Richard Pipes: *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, Harvard University Press, 1964. Remy is a Finnish historian, a lecturer in the University of Helsinki specialising in Ukrainian history, also active in Finnish politics as a Social Democrat. Pipes, pioneer of russophobic neoconservatism, enemy of Solzhenitsyn, also seems to me to have been an excellent historian.

article in this series we saw how the Society of Ukrainian Progressives (the TUV) had been formed as an eclectic mix of a series of previous would-be parties operating for the most part clandestinely and using different combinations of the words 'radical', 'democratic' and 'Socialist'. Now it began to dissolve again into more clearly defined political groupings. The TUV itself eventually, in June, became the 'Socialist Federalist Party' but more important was the re-emergence of one of the earlier contributors - the Ukrainian Social Democratic Workers Party, whose leaders included the highly influential Volodymyr Vynnychenko, Simon Petliura and Mykola Porsh. It is doubtful if the USDRP could be called a Social Democratic Party in any meaningful sense of the term. It wasn't recognised as such by either the Menshevik or Bolshevik wings of the Russian party. The working class in the areas claimed by the Ukrainian nationalists tended not to identify as Ukrainian. Soviets were established throughout the area, beginning in Kiev, but they had a notably Russian character.

Hrushevsky himself joined the Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionary Party which held its first congress in April. He left the TUV because it was calling for cooperation with Petrograd. Hrushevsky believed that the Provisional Government would be shortlived, Russia would fall into chaos and that the Ukrainians should make a unilateral declaration of autonomy (not yet full independence) and elect their own constituent assembly.

The Socialist Revolutionaries were much more credible as a Ukrainian nationalist party than the Social Democrats since, like their Russian namesake, their principle appeal was to the peasantry. Richard Pipes (Formation, p.9) makes the interesting point that the Ukrainian peasantry was quite unlike the Russian peasantry because serfdom had never taken root. There was very little in the way of a native Ukrainian aristocracy. The Polish aristocracy, alien and unpopular as it was, had been greatly weakened by the failure of its rebellions in 1830 and 1863. Land had been bought and sold more freely than in Russia and there were many more small independent farmers working their own land. They were quite apprehensive as to what designs an all-Russian government under Socialist influence might have on the fertile black earth area of Ukraine.

The most radical nationalist party was the Ukrainian National Party led by Mykola Mykhnovsky advocating a federal arrangement with Russia as its minimum demand, but full independence as its ultimate goal. Mykhnovsky had, as a student, been one of the initiators of the Brotherhood of Taras and a speech he made had been adopted as the first - at the time independentist - programme of the Revolutionary Ukrainian Party. The Ukrainian National Party was formed in 1902 in Kharkiv (Mykhnovsky's stronghold even though it was a predominately Russian city). According to the Ukraine Encyclopedia:

'A 1903 brochure containing the UNP "Ten Commandments" [drafted by Mykhnovsky - PB] deemed the Russians, Poles, Jews, Hungarians and Romanians enemies of the Ukrainian people for as long as they kept exploiting them; it advocated a "Ukraine for the Ukrainians", the expulsion of all foreigners, the creation of an independent, unitary, democratic pan-Ukrainian republic [from the Carpathians to the Caucasus, ie the Kuban - PB] and the use of the Ukrainian language always and everywhere, and condemned marriage and fraternisation with non-Ukrainians.'

The Encyclopedia maintains that it had negligible support and 'became inactive' when Mykhnovsky left it in 1907, but Remy (It is unknown, p.699) has it still in existence in 1917.

TOWARDS THE 'FIRST UNIVERSAL'

In April (6/19-8/21) a National Congress was held in Kiev with 900 delegates from political parties, from cultural organisations, the Ukrainian Peasant Union and the 'Ukrainian Military Club.' This latter had been formed on 29th March (I assume New Calendar) on Mykhnovsky's initiative at 'a conference of Ukrainian officers and soldiers of the Kyiv military district.' According to the Encyclopedia it 'organised Ukrainian volunteer regiments and military organisations. Thanks to its efforts, similar clubs sprang up on all fronts ...'

The National Congress only included groups that favoured some form of Ukrainian autonomy. At this stage it was probably the peasants and Mykhnovsky's efforts with the army that were most important. According to Pipes (Formation, pp.56-7):

'All throughout the second half of March and the first half of April [Pipes consistently uses Old Calendar dates, as does Remy - PB] Ukrainian soldiers stationed in Kiev held impromptu meetings demanding the formation of separate Ukrainian military units and the creation of a Ukrainian national army. In the first half of April an all-volunteer regiment named after Bohdan Khmelnytskii, the Cossack leader of the seventeenth century, was formed in Kiev and sent to the front ...'

'How violent was the nationalism which had taken hold of the soldiers became evident in the course of the First Ukrainian Military Congress which opened on May 5. During the debates, the speakers attacked the Provisional Government for its failure to treat the Ukraine on equal terms with Poland and Finland, to both of which it had promised independence, and for ignoring demands of the Ukrainians to form military units on their own soil. Some voices were raised in favour of Ukrainian independence and separate representation at the future peace conference. The general tone of the sessions was so extremely nationalistic that Vinnichenko, the delegate of the Rada and a leading member of the USD, felt forced to plead with the delegates to remain loyal to the Russian democracy which had given the Ukraine its present freedom. Vinnichenko's suggestion that the Congress elect Petliura as its chairman was turned down on the grounds that the Rada, for which he spoke, had taken no part in convoking the military congress and consequently had no right to impose candidates on it. The Congress closed on May 8, with the resolution to send a delegation to the Petrograd Soviet to discuss the formation of Ukrainian regiments, and to establish a permanent Ukrainian General Military Committee (UGVK). The delegates recognised the Rada as the organ representing public opinion. Several days after the Congress closed, the Ukrainian delegates to the Kiev Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies separated themselves into a distinct faction.

'When the Ukrainian soldiers at the front learned of the decisions of the Military Congress, they too began to form national units, despite the remonstrations of Russian officers' and soldiers' committees. Among them, as among the Kievans, there was hope that the Rada would take care of their interests by terminating the fighting and helping the Ukrainians get their share of the land. The behaviour of the soldiers left no doubt about their impatience with the status quo. Anxious to win and retain the support of the Ukrainian troops, the Rada included in their platform their demand for the creation of national military units.'

Under pressure from the military congress and also from the rapid spread of nationalist ideas among the peasantry, Vynnychenko in mid May / early June led a delegation from the Rada to Petrograd but they received very little satisfaction either from the Provisional Government or

from the Soviet, where according to Remy, (It is Unknown p.702), the Soldiers' Soviet had discussed and rejected the formation of national units in the army before the delegation arrived.

Remy (p.703) quotes a number of markings made by government ministers on the margins of their copies of the Rada's proposals. They include this from the Procurator of the Holy Synod, Vladimir Nikolaevich Lvov (not to be confused with the President of the Provisional Government, Prince Georgii Evgenevich Lvov):

'I proposed elections, but they do not agree to elections, [they] want one party rule; it is unknown where the Little Russians are heading to.'

The demands made by the Rada delegation were at the time relatively modest, falling well short of the instructions they had been given by the Rada: 'Instead of demanding that the government declare Ukrainian autonomy, the delegation only asked it to express a favourable attitude regarding such autonomy. The draft declaration was not included in the memorandum. The delegation also dropped the demand concerning the nominations of commanders of military districts. It is likely that the delegation softened the proposals in order to smooth the expected negotiations. It seems likely that the memorandum reflected Vynnychenko's views: while Hrushevs'kyi was not afraid of breaking with the government, Vynnychenko strove for agreement' (Remy, p.701). In a footnote Remy mentions that the UPSR (Socialist Revolutionary) member of the delegation, Mykola Kovalesky, did not sign the memorandum the delegation gave to the government. The Ukrainians did, however, declare that an autonomous Ukraine should cover twelve of the existing Russian administrative divisions. This was quite a maximal demand. It would have included the Kuban area, which includes Sochi, and would therefore have covered almost the whole of the 'Russian' Black Sea coast.

By this time, it should be said, the 'dual system' of rule by the 'bourgeois' Provisional Government and the 'proletarian' Soviet had broken down and members of the Soviet - for example the Menshevik Irakli Georgievich Tsereteli - were now in government. Tsereteli noted in his comments on the Ukrainian memorandum: 'Before the Constituent Assembly we cannot decide. We cannot declare the independence of Finland or Poland. So far, only not repress. There is no institution of the Russian people with the prerogative to decide.' They could, however, as they had done in the case of Poland and Finland, have expressed a preference.

In response to what they saw as the contemptuous reaction in Petrograd, the Rada in Kiev, on 10th/23rd June, issued what it called its 'First Universal', the term 'universal' being borrowed from proclamations issued in the days of the Cossacks - and before that, Pipes tells us (p.59) by Polish monarchs. The First Universal proclaimed the Rada as the government of an autonomous Ukraine. It laid out a division of responsibilities between the Ukrainian government and Petrograd. It had at least the potential for a backing by military force. A second Ukrainian Military Congress was in session, in defiance of a prohibition by Alexander Kerensky, who was now, since the demission of the Octobrist leader Alexander Guchkov, Minister for War.¹² The

¹² The 'Octobrists' were monarchists who supported Nicholas II's 'October manifesto' of 1905 which they saw as establishing a constitutional monarchy. Solzhenitsyn holds Guchkov in high esteem and sees him as the man who might have saved the day except that by the time the revolution came along he was very ill and unable any more to cope. Kerensky, as a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, had entered the Provisional Government, becoming initially Minister for Justice (he was a lawyer), in defiance of the Soviet's decision to boycott it, establishing itself as an independent centre of power

Rada imposed a tax on Ukrainian society to pay for its administrative functions. A 'Mala Rada' (small Rada) of forty five members was formed to sit permanently and exercise legislative functions when the full Rada was not in session. A General Secretariat, equivalent to a Council of Ministers, was established with Vynnychenko as Chairman and Simon Petliura as general secretary for military affairs. The Provisional Government had received thirty one appeals from army units demanding Ukrainian autonomy, According to Remy (pp.707-8): 'In Odessa and the whole Kherson gubernia, the Ukrainian military suspended the deployment of Ukrainians to the front, ostensibly in protest against Ukrainians in the rear being replaced by Don Cossacks.' Ukrainian troops had refused to go to the front on the grounds that they might be needed to defend the Rada, presumably against the Russian government (ibid., p.711).

THE JULY OFFENSIVE

These events need to be put into the wider context of what was happening in the war and in Russia at the time. In what follows I'm making use of Solzhenitsyn. His 'novel' - if that is the right word - *The Red Wheel* - ends on May 18th (New Calendar - he uses new calendar dates throughout). This was the date he had reached in his massive work (eight large volumes completed) when he himself was overtaken by events in Russia in the 1990s. But the book gives a very summary account of subsequent developments. These begin with the period 22nd June to 25th July. The period from 18th May to 22nd June, which includes the visit of the Rada to Petrograd, is missing but he does mention briefly the First Universal. What concerns us here is that Kerensky, as Minister for War, managed to get the consent of the Congress of Soviets to launch a new offensive against the Germans. This began in Volhynia, in what is now Ternopil oblast, West of Lviv, a part of Austrian Galicia that was still in contention, and initially it was, or appeared to be, successful:

*'Our offensive of the XIth and VIIth armies in the Zlotezow and Brzezany sector began, with an abundance never before seen (and which would never be seen again) of heavy artillery ... Then, the 1st and 2nd July, we advanced from two to five versts [a couple of miles - PB], made 18,000 prisoners and then stopped ... But our gangrened units were not at all committed to the offensive and it was the officers and elite detachments that fell in the war. Under the influence of Bolshevik propaganda, the regiment of the Grenadier Guards, acted on their own initiative to leave its positions and withdraw twenty versts [about twelve miles - PB].'*¹³

But as we have seen it wasn't just Bolshevik propaganda that was undermining the army - it may be that Mikhnovsky played a more important part in Russian history than has usually been acknowledged. Nonetheless on 8th July, the Russian VIIIth army under General Kornilov had a further success West of the town of Stanislavov (renamed in 1962 Ivano-Frankivsk in honour of Ivan Franko) taking, according to Solzhenitsyn, ten thousand prisoners, one hundred guns and advancing thirty versts (about eighteen miles). Meanwhile, a new revolt had broken out in Petrograd on 1st July, when a demonstration allowed by the government as a declaration of support for the new offensive turned into a violent confrontation with forces opposed to the government. And at the same moment the Finnish parliament was in the process of preparing a unilateral declaration of independence.

¹³ Alexandre Soljénitsyne: *La Roue rouge - avril 17*, tome 2, p.527, my translation.

On 13th July, Kerensky, Tsereteli and Mykhailo Tereshchenko ('the only real capitalist in the government' according to Solzhenitsyn, Minister of Foreign Affairs and scion of one of the wealthiest and most powerful families in Ukraine) were in Kiev trying to repair the damage that had been done since the Rada delegation to Petrograd. After very stormy negotiations with Hrushevsky, Vynnychenko and Petliura, an agreement was reached, authorising the Rada to prepare a project for the establishment of Ukraine as a separate administrative entity with its own legislative assembly. The agreement was announced by the Rada in its 'Second Universal' on the 3rd/16th July and the Mala Rada set about the task of preparing its constitutional proposals.

Meanwhile, on the very same day(16th July) two further disasters hit Kerensky and his July offensive. The Cadet members of the government resigned in protest against the agreement with the Rada, and the Bolsheviks, in conjunction with the First Regiment of Gunners and a number of other army units, launched an armed revolt under the slogan 'All power to the Soviets.' The rising was largely inspired and organised by Trotsky - Lenin was out of the city at the time. Kerensky fled and it was, according to Solzhenitsyn, the Minister for Justice, Paul Pereverzev, who took the initiative to mobilise the remaining loyalist elements in the army by releasing what evidence the government had that the Bolsheviks had been financed, through the efforts of Parvus, by Germany. As a result the revolt, spontaneous and ill-organised as it was, was suppressed by the 18th July. Trotsky was in prison, Lenin went into hiding. A campaign was launched against the slanderous accusation that the Bolsheviks were German agents and Pereverzev was forced to resign.

Solzhenitsyn refers to an army revolt launched in Kiev on the 17th/18th July by the Ukrainian regiment Hetman Polubotok. According to the Ukraine Encyclopedia Mikhnovsky was involved with this but it seems to have been suppressed by the Rada with relative ease.

It seems quite amazing that the Cadets should resign from the government precisely at the moment when a new offensive was being launched and Petrograd was again collapsing into anarchy. Solzhenitsyn was to comment that in 1917 power was being passed from hand to hand like a flaming ball until it reached hands (Lenin's) tough enough to grasp it. In fairness, I begin to think Kerensky was a more impressive figure than he is usually shown to be (including by Solzhenitsyn), the one who saw the whole process of the Provisional Government through to the bitter end. But it might also seem surprising that the issue that prompted the Cadets' resignation was Ukrainian autonomy when we remember from the last article in this series that Peter Struve, leading theorist of the Cadets, had been forced out because of his opposition to the idea of a distinct Ukrainian national identity.

But the Cadets had taken on board, not the idea that nations have a right of self determination, but the idea of national cultural autonomy. The distinction is drawn clearly in Stalin's *Marxism and the national question* (1913). The idea of national cultural autonomy was developed in Austria by the Socialists Otto Bauer and Karl Renner. It allowed for the intermingling of peoples within a large territory such as the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires. It allowed the 'nation' full rights of cultural self expression, including language rights, but on a non-territorial basis. In principle it rather resembles the system of Jewish self government that existed in Poland prior to the Cossack ('Ukrainian') risings of the seventeenth century. It particularly suited the Jews who had no clearly defined territory of their own and in Russia it had the firm support of the Jewish Socialist Bund and also of the other 'mercurial' people (using the term introduced by

Yuri Slevkine in *The Jewish century*), the Armenians, a people of merchants and traders scattered throughout the Empire. It was very firmly rejected by Lenin and Stalin but they were exceptional in Marxist circles - including among the Bolsheviks - in recognising a right of national self determination. The Bolshevik opposition to the Lenin/Stalin line included the leading Ukrainian Bolshevik, Georgy Pyatakov, a consistent opponent of Ukrainian nationalism. He doesn't feature so far as I can see in the Encyclopedia of Ukraine. Nor, I think, does the Kyiv Soviet.

DISAPPOINTED HOPES

The Mala Rada produced its scheme for an autonomous Ukraine on the 16th/29th July. It proposed to cover nine of the existing governorates - Kiev, Volhynia, Podillia, Poltava, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Kherson, Katerynoslav (modern Zaporozhia) and the Tauride, which included Crimea¹⁴). The Rada had legislative powers but the legislation had to be approved by the government in Petrograd. At the same time laws produced by Petrograd had to be approved by the Rada. Fourteen secretariats were to be created including one for military affairs, but not foreign policy, which remained in the hands of the all-Russian government. There would be elections to a Ukrainian Constituent Assembly independent of the Russian Constituent Assembly.

Yekelchik (Meanings of 1918 and 1919, p.75) emphasises the willingness of the Rada to accommodate 'national minorities' - 'In one of his brochures aimed at explaining the Ukrainian agenda to the wider public, the Chairman of the Rada, Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi, promised to provide minorities with all the cultural rights that the tsarist monarchy had denied the Ukrainians. The Ukrainian government created a ministry of nationalities with deputy ministers for the Jewish, Polish and Russian minorities and eventually went on to establish the world's first ministry for Jewish affairs which was headed by a succession of Jewish politicians.' He does, in all honesty, continue: 'tragically, this unprecedented attempt to imagine the new Ukraine as a land of equality and minority rights was overwritten by the reports of violent Jewish pogroms in 1919, a significant share of them committed by warlords affiliated with the same Ukrainian administration.'

The accommodation of minorities seems however to have been as much a condition of agreement with the Provisional Government as a matter of free choice on the part of the Rada. Pipes gives the text of the resolution agreed by the Provisional Government on July 3rd/19th following Kerensky's return from Kiev. It makes clear that a final settlement would have to wait for the establishment of the Constituent Assembly. It agreed 'to appoint, in the capacity of a higher organ, a General Secretariat, the composition of which will be determined by the Government in agreement with a Ukrainian Central Rada augmented on a just basis with democratic organisations representing other nationalities inhabiting the Ukraine' (my emphasis - PB). When the Mala Rada's proposed constitution was forwarded to Petrograd its provisions were greatly watered down. Instead of nine provinces the area covered by the distinctive

¹⁴ Pipes gives an account of political developments in Crimea. Although he says there are no figures for people defining themselves as Ukrainian or Russian, it was the main Russian parties that were organised there rather than the Ukrainian ones. The Tatars were developing their own politics largely in opposition to their own traditional religious leadership.

Ukrainian administration was reduced to five - losing Kherson, the Tauride and Katerynoslav, i.e. the Black Sea coast, as well as Kharkiv. The fourteen secretariats were reduced to nine and they did not include military affairs or food supply. Four of them had to be in the hands of members of the newly created, non-ethnic Ukrainian national minorities. The Rada was to be appointed by and responsible to the central government. The central government was not answerable to the Rada.¹⁵

The toughness of the government response has been ascribed to the return of the Cadets. On the 24th July / 6th August, Kerensky had formed a second coalition of Cadets and moderate Socialists. The Bolshevik rebellion, such as it was, had been crushed. The July offensive had failed and with it perhaps the need to conciliate the Ukrainians. But in fact it seems to me to be quite consistent with the interpretation of the agreement Petrograd had published on the 6th / 19th July.

The Rada was divided as to whether or not to accept Petrograd's conditions. According to Pipes (pp.62-3) the 'Social Democrats' continued to dominate but 'began to split into two factions: one led by Vinnichenko urged a more conciliatory attitude toward the Provisional Government and a policy of moderation; another, dominated by [Mykola] Porsh, demanded a more radical course and closer ties with Russian extreme socialist groups hostile to Petrograd.'

The Socialist Revolutionaries increasingly went into opposition to the Social Democrat dominated Rada. When finally 'at the end of August' (Pipes) or early September (new calendar) a new cabinet was formed by Vynnychenko with the approval of Petrograd, the SRs boycotted it.

At the 'end of July' (Pipes) or early August (new calendar) municipal elections were held which, according to Pipes, showed that popular support for the Ukrainian parties, at least in the urban areas, was weak:

'among them they controlled less than one fifth of the urban electorate. In Kiev itself, the combined USD-USR ticket received 20 per cent of the total vote, as against 37 per cent cast for the ticket of the united Russian socialist parties, 15 per cent for the ticket of "Russian voters", a group hostile to the Ukrainian movement, 9 per cent for the Russian Kadets, and 6 per cent for the Bolsheviks.

'In twenty other towns (including Kharkov, Poltava, Ekaterinoslav and Odessa), the USD and USR parties, running separately from Russian parties, captured 13 per cent of the seats on the city councils, and on combined tickets with Russian socialist parties, an additional 15 per cent.' (p.63)

In fact the Rada and its quarrels with Petrograd were becoming irrelevant as the whole area collapsed into chaos. The failure of the July offensive and the break up of the army left large numbers of armed men roaming freely through the countryside. Many of them were themselves Ukrainian peasants and according to Pipes (p.66): 'the countryside was dominated either by soviets, which had no responsibility to the General Secretariat or by Free Cossack and Haidamak [A term evoking Cossack rebellions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as in Taras Shevchenko's poem Haidamaki - PB] units, which the rural population began to organise spontaneously for local self defence and other, less meritorious purposes, such as looting.'

¹⁵ The text of the 'Temporary Instruction of the Provisional Government to the General Secretariat of the Ukrainian Central Rada' issued on 4th (17th) August is given in Pipes: Formation, pp.64-5.

This was the situation that prevailed when the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd. What happened then - the forced requisition of grain, Brest-Litovsk, the German occupation - will be the subject of the next article.