

Solzhenitsyn and the 'Russian Question', Part 24 WHO ARE THE UKRAINIANS? - Part Six. 1919

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PETLIURA IN KIEV

In the form now of a grey cloud with a snakelike belly moving through the City, now of dark-brown turbulent rivers of people pouring through the ancient streets, Petlyura's innumerable forces were making their way to the cathedral square for the parade.

The first to arrive, carving their way through the black river of people, with a crash of gleaming cymbals and a blast of trumpets shattering the frost, were the densely packed ranks of the Blue Division.

Then, dressed in their blue jackets and in their showy astrakhan cocked caps with blue tops, came the Galicians. Two blue-and-yellow standards, propped between bared sabres, followed immediately behind the massed ranks of the brass band and, behind the flags, jauntily marching with measured tread on the crystalline snow, came rank upon rank of soldiers, wearing uniforms of a good-quality, albeit German cloth. The first battalion was followed by lines of troops in long, black, belted cloaks, wearing helmets and parading their bristling bayonets in a dense brown thicket.

Then came Cossack rifle regiments, in their countless numbers, wearing ragged grey uniforms, followed by battalion after battalion of Haydamak Cossack infantrymen, with the dashing regimental, battalion and company commanders prancing along on horseback between each battalion. Confident, triumphant march tunes crashed through the air like gold in the multicoloured river of the parade.

The infantry were followed by the cavalry regiments, the men rising and falling in their saddles as they trotted gently along. The eyes of the delighted crowd were dazzled by the sight of the crumpled, battered fur caps, with their blue, green and red tops and gold tassels. The lances, looped onto the cavalymen's right hands, jiggled up and down like needles. In among the cavalymen the standards waved cheerfully, and the horses of the commanders and the buglers were impelled forward by the triumphant sound of the music. As round as a ball, the large, jolly figure of Bolbotun rode ahead of his company, offering up his low forehead, gleaming with grease, and his chubby, radiant cheeks to the frost. His chestnut mare, her bloodshot eyes rolling, champing at the bit and dribbling foam, kept rearing up as it tried to shake off the sixteen stone weight of the colonel. His curved sabre clattered in its scabbard as he dug gently into her nervous, steep-sided flanks with his spurs.

"Our leaders are with us, are one with us, as brothers!" sang the brave haydamaks in chorus as they trotted and bounced along, their colourful cap tassels bobbing ...

Following the ten cavalry regiments came an endless column of artillery, with the fearsome rumble of heavy wheels and the rattle of limbers. The gun carriages carried large blunt-snouted mortars and compact howitzers rolled along. Cheerful, contented gun crews sat on the limbers with triumphant expressions, while the cavalymen themselves looked calm and sedate. The carriages were pulled by large, big-rumped, well-fed horses fourteen hands high, and smaller, hard working peasant horses, looking like pregnant fleas. A troop of light mountain artillery trotted nimbly past, the small cannon bouncing along with their gallant crews.

"So, there's your so-called fifteen thousand for you... What lies we were told! Fifteen thousand..."

*bandits... chaos... and look what we have! Good Lord, you'd never count them all! Another battery ... and another ... and another.*¹

Petliura's entry into Kiev in December 1918, as described in Mikhail Bulgakov's novel *The White Guard*, was perhaps the closest Ukraine ever came, prior to the present confrontation with Russia, to a unified military action. But this appearance was misleading. For the purposes of getting rid of the Germans and Skoropadsky Petliura had secured the support of many of the peasant ('Cossack') bands who had been conducting their own insurgency since May. But to quote the German historian Rudolf A. Mark:

*'The influx of new recruits into the Directory's army in November and December was both spontaneous and brief, the expression of a revolt against a hated regime - the Hetmanate - and the foreign occupying forces supporting it. The peasant population had joined forces with the UNR only for the short time when it seemed to be the most viable option and best suited to their own requirements. The peasants were fighting for the power to dispose freely of land and food - and nothing more. The Ukrainian nationalists came up against this attitude again and again in 1919 - in insurgent divisions as well as units of their vanishing army.'*²

At the same time the political leadership of the revolt - the 'Directory' - was split between the commanding personalities of its two leading figures - Volodymyr Vynnychenko and Simon Petliura. The original 'revolutionary' opposition to Skoropadsky had been put together by Vynnychenko at a time when Petliura was in prison. What might be called a loyal opposition to Skoropadsky, the Ukrainian National-State Union, had been formed as early as May 1918. It included Mykola Mikhnovsky's Ukrainian Democratic Grain Party. Mikhnovsky had been, as we saw in the last article in this series, a keen supporter of Skoropadsky who had seriously considered making him Prime Minister. But to quote the Russian Wiki account ('Mikhnovsky, Nikolai Ivanovich'):

'Pavel Skoropadsky was persuaded in the end not to appoint Mikhnovsky as prime minister, and he offered him the position of personal adviser. The ambitious Nikolai Mikhnovsky, of course, refused this. Together with the UDKhP [the grain growers party], he went into opposition to the hetman's regime, but the party refused to join the Ukrainian National Union, which was plotting against the Hetman. Nikolai Mikhnovsky made a lot of efforts to transform the hetman's political regime into a truly people's Ukrainian government. He was the author of a series of documents criticizing the composition of power and its policies, which were directly subordinated to the Hetman. Mikhnovsky was a member of the delegations that appealed to the German occupation authorities. Not trusting the socialists, Nikolai Mikhnovsky, like all democrat grain growers, did not support the idea of a mass anti-Hetman uprising.'

The Ukrainian National Union was formed when the National-State Union was joined by the Socialist parties but it still didn't itself aim to overthrow the hetmanate. Indeed Skoropadsky towards the end of his rule invited it to join him in government. Skoropadsky had formed a quite substantial army of his own, using the many members of the Russian officer class who had taken refuge in Kiev following the Bolshevik revolution. Vynnychenko's achievement was largely to carve out of Skoropadsky's forces a revolutionary core prepared to take military action. It included Andrii Makarenko, in charge of the railway department at the Ministry of Transport, General Osets'kyi, who commanded Skoropadsky's railway troops, and, very importantly, Colonel Jehven [Evgeny] Konovalts, commander of the 'Sich' riflemen, formed in 1917 from

¹ Mikhail Bulgakov: *The White Guard*, translated by Roger Cockrell, Richmond, Alpha Books, 2012, pp. 222-5.

² Rudolf A. Mark: 'Social Questions and National Revolution: The Ukrainian National Republic in 1919-1920', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1/2 (June 1990), pp. 127-8.

former Galician-Bukovinian prisoners of war. The Sich riflemen had been disbanded after Skoropadsky had seized power in April but he had authorised their reformation in August. They played a crucial role in his overthrow. Konovalts was subsequently the founder in 1920 of the Ukrainian Military Organisation, maintaining the Ukrainian idea in Galicia in opposition to the Poles, and later he was the first leader of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists, formed in Vienna in 1929.

The conspiracy was joined soon after by Colonel Bolbochan, commander of the Zaporozhie division and General Yarishevich, the commander of the Podolsk Corps and of the 'Black Sea Kosh.'

Skoropadsky had released Petliura in November, apparently on the insistence of the Germans. Following the Russian language Wiki account ('Petlyura, Simon Vasilievich'): 'On November 13 in Kiev, at a secret meeting of the National Union, a decision was made to start an anti-Hetman uprising under the leadership of the Central Committee of the USDRP and the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Socialist Republic. Petlyura announced his participation in the uprising, a revolutionary triumvirate was planned, which was to lead the new revolutionary government: Vladimir Vinnichenko, Simon Petlyura, Nikita Shapova.'

The detailed account in the Russian Wikipedia entry on Petliura of the seizure of power begins by saying: 'Against the hetman's army of many thousands (about 30 thousand bayonets and sabers), which, moreover, could receive support from the German-Austrian troops, Petliura had only a small detachment of 870 Sich Riflemen at his disposal (according to other sources, 1500 or even 2000 people) and about 100 volunteers.' After many defections from the Hetman's army the account ends: 'On the night of December 12-13, a general assault on Kyiv began. The troops loyal to the hetman were no more than 3,000 bayonets and sabers, with 43 cannons and 103 machine guns. There were ten times more Petliurists who went to the assault. By the evening of December 14, all of Kyiv was in the hands of the Directory. Hetman Skoropadsky signed the renunciation manifesto and fled.'

DIVISIONS IN THE DIRECTORY

Rudolf Mark suggests that the coalition initially put together by Vynnychenko did not have a strong political character. Vynnychenko himself was quite determinedly left wing but once the new government was formed he had very little support. He was well known as a prolific novelist and dramatist³ but he had also been in and out of prison as an early member of the Revolutionary Ukrainian Party (RUP) and the original Ukrainian Social Democratic Workers Party (USDRP), formed in 1905. We have already seen how Vynnychenko and Petliura (also previously a member of the RUP and USDRP) had fallen out in the days of the Central Rada in Kiev in 1917, mainly over Petliura's insistence on the need for a regular army. Petliura believed that the Vynnychenko line had proved inadequate to defend Kiev against the Bolsheviks; Vynnychenko believed that the Petliura line had had the effect of provoking the Bolshevik invasion. The quarrel continued with the Directory installed in power after December 1918. Petliura was persuaded that nothing could be done without full independence. According to the Russian language Wikipedia he declared allegiance on 2nd January 1919 to the 'National Idea'

³ A footnote in the English language translation of Khrushchev's memoirs tells us that 'Khrushchev has on more than one occasion compared himself to the hero of Vinchenko's story [*The Talisman* - PB]. Pinya was a puny little Jew elected as their headman by a number of very tough prisoners as a gesture of contempt. When the proving time came - a prison breakout - he put them all to shame by rising to the occasion as a born and sacrificial leader.' *Khrushchev Remembers*, translated by Strobe Talbot with notes by Edward Crankshaw, Sphere Books edition, 1971, p.38, fn 11.

- which I assume means the National Idea as defined by Mikhnovsky, regarding all non-Ukrainian elements as enemies. Mikhnovsky himself was desperately worried about the influence of the Socialists on the Directory and, together with the Grain Growers, had hatched a plan to establish a military dictatorship under Bolbochan and Konovalets. But in the event Bolbochan was arrested and Mikhnovsky himself went down with typhus.

It's unclear from the Russian Wikipedia account how he regarded Petliura who seemed to be doing what he would have wanted. On 8th January 'a decree was issued on the arrest and trial of all citizens wearing shoulder straps of the Russian army and royal awards, except for St George's crosses as "enemies of Ukraine.'" On January 16th the Directory declared war on the Soviet Union. On 5th February, the Bolsheviks, led by Antonov-Ovseenko, drove them out of Kiev.⁴

Vynnychenko, by contrast to Petliura, had argued for a federal union with Bolshevik Russia and a system of government in Ukraine based on the Soviet, rather than the parliamentary model. Mark (p.126) quotes him writing in September 1917: 'For a Socialist, the national development is an unavoidable, natural and useful factor and means of bringing people closer to the higher forms of social life, and for nationalists it is the goal itself, the ultimate goal, on which they will dwell a while, freeze, and then return.' And he quotes him again in December 1918, at the moment of the Directory's triumph, saying 'that the Ukrainian people was still far from forming a nation: "They are a sullen, discontented ... people. We want to make them into a nation and they look askance at our manipulations and grumble angrily.'" For Vynnychenko, reform in the interests of 'the working people' (not 'the proletariat' since there hardly was a Ukrainian proletariat) had to come first. In December 1918 he had been engaged in secret negotiations with the Bolsheviks. But on 10th February 1919, following the Ukrainian Wikipedia account ('Volodymyr Kyrylovych Vynnychenko'): 'On the instructions of the Entente, Vynnychenko as "almost a Bolshevik", along with the rest of the left socialists, was removed from the Directory and other authorities of the UNR', leaving Petliura in full control. I'm guessing that Petliura was desperately seeking aid from the Entente after his expulsion from Kiev. The French at the time were occupying the coastline from Odessa to Kherson. There is a certain irony in that soon afterwards (in May) the Europeans (British and French) were obliging the White Army in the East to adopt the reforms of the February Revolution.⁵

We are moving into the period when Petliura and his army were to gain their reputation as anti-semitic pogromists. Indeed what Christopher Gilley describes as 'probably the worst single episode of antisemitic violence committed by UNR troops' occurred in the town of Proskuriv as early as February 15th, 1919. Gilley gives an account of the pogrom based on the necessarily rather self-serving memoirs (written in the 1960s) of one of the participants, K.Lysiuk:

'Lysiuk describes how in January he received information that the Bolsheviks were organizing an uprising in Proskuriv. The Bolshevik agents sent to stir up trouble were reportedly Jews, so he set out to find them in "Jewish circles." He claims to have been familiar with these, and to have trailed the movements of the agents round the Jewish communities in Proskuriv and the surrounding villages. He could not find the agents, but he reported to Semesenko and the Proskuriv commandant at the end of the month that there was an "excited atmosphere" among local Jews. A "good Jewish friend" of his (who died in the pogrom, making his existence or testimony unverifiable after the event) told Lysiuk that the agents were in Proskuriv and awaiting weapons to start a rising, for which they were mobilizing support. In the last days of January

⁴ According to the Ukrainian Wikipedia account of the Green leader Danylo Terpylo (Ataman Zeleny). The Ukrainian Wikipedia account of the Green leader Nikyfor Grigoriev gives 18th February, leading me to wonder if there is still a confusion between Old and New calendar dates.

⁵ Richard Pipes: *Russia under the Bolshevik régime*, London, Harvill (Harper Collins), 1994, p.78.

*and beginning of February, there were reports of shots being fired, for which the Jews received the blame. The situation became increasingly tense, and Semesenko issued an infamous declaration warning the Jews, whom he described as hated by all people, that they were not to misbehave. Patrols supposedly found arms in Jewish homes. According to Lysiuk, in response to the discovery, Semesenko ordered his men to kill only those Jews taking part in the rising; children were to remain unharmed. No other account suggests that Semesenko or his troops exercised any such restraint; indeed, while Lysiuk claims that the pogrom claimed 200 to 300 victims' lives, most other reports, including that by the UNR's own investigatory commission, give much higher figures [Gilley has already given the figure of 1,500 - PB]. The killing stopped only when Galician troops arrived in the town. Lysiuk's account, which reads like an extended exercise in victim blaming, demonstrates how the common assumption that Jews opposed the UNR led to the search for traitors among the Jewish community and then, in turn, to the mass collective punishment of Jews during the pogrom.'*⁶

The 'Galician troops' might have been Konovalts' Sich Riflemen, but they may also have been present as the result of a fusion between the UNR and the 'West Ukrainian' ZUNR. The West Ukrainian Peoples Republic (ZUNR) had been declared on November 13th 1918 by a Constituent Assembly first meeting on 19th October in Lviv, made up of Ukrainian representatives in the Austrian parliament, in the 'sejms' (local assemblies) of Galicia and Bukovina as well as representatives of the Greek Catholic Church. It claimed sovereignty over the entire ethnic Ukrainian territories of Halychyna (Galicia), Bukovina and Transcarpathia, territories of the now collapsing Austrian Empire also claimed by Poland, Romania and the Czech Republic. The territory claimed by the ZUNR as ethnically Ukrainian was based on an "Ethnographic map of the Austrian monarchy", published in 1855. At the beginning of November, faced with an imminent takeover by Poland (supported by the Austrian governor of Galicia) the Ukrainians took control of the town of Lviv but the ZUNR rada was forced out of Lviv by the Polish army on November 21st and moved to Ternopil. From January 2nd 1919 they were based in Stanislav (now Ivano-Frankivsk). Northern Bukovina was taken by the Romanian army.⁷

The ZUNR and UNR formally merged in the 'Act of Zluk' on January 22nd, 1919, the ZUNR becoming the 'Western Region of the Ukrainian People Republic' (ZO UNR). It was however a very tentative affair. As things got worse, Petliura, confined to the right (West) bank of the Dniepr river and desperately in need of allies, would eventually open negotiations with the Poles, the enemies of his own West Ukrainian allies.

THE 'WHITES'

The struggle of Petliura with the Bolsheviks ran into the struggle of the Whites with the Bolsheviks, the struggle of the ZUNR with the Poles, the fluctuating interest of the Entente and, most complicated of all, the struggle of the 'Greens' - the many more or less independent peasant militias, entering into temporary alliances of convenience with the different parties that aspired to govern the territory but who remained essentially opposed to any attempt to form a government that would rationalise agriculture or try to exercise compulsion to obtain the grain necessary for feeding their own armies.

The Whites were divided into two main groups - the one in the East, originally centred on Social

⁶ Christopher Gilley: 'Beat the Jews, Save...Ukraine: Antisemitic Violence and Ukrainian State-Building Projects, 1918-1920', *Quest - Issues in contemporary Jewish history*, Journal of the Fondazione CDEC, issue 15 / august 2019. I have it off the web, unpaginated.

⁷ Account mainly based on the Ukrainian Wikipedia account ; Western Ukrainian People's Republic.

Revolutionaries wanting to reaffirm the authority of the Constituent Assembly, dissolved by the Bolsheviks in February 1918; the other in the West, the 'Volunteer Army', originally put together by the former chief of staff General Alekseev, joined by Lavr Kornilov, then by the leader of the Don Cossacks, General Alexis Kaledin. Following Richard Pipes,⁸ the Don, Kuban and Terek Cossacks had originally hoped for independence from Russia under German patronage and it was only with the collapse of the German army and the threat posed by the Bolshevik policy of land nationalisation that they turned to the Whites. Through 1918 Alekseev and Kornilov were largely at war with the Cossacks, especially after, early in 1918, Kaledin, sympathetic to the Volunteer Army, committed suicide. Kornilov was killed besieging the Kuban capital Ekaterinodar which was held at the time by the Bolsheviks. He was replaced by Anton Denikin. Alekseev died in October 1918 and in January 1919 Denikin became supreme commander of the Anti-Bolshevik forces in the South. With the departure of the Germans, the new leader of the Don Cossacks, PN Krasnow, elected in May 1918, was forced to cooperate with him.

Meanwhile, with British backing, Admiral Kolchak became 'dictator' in the East through a coup d'état conducted on 17th November 1918, beginning a process of suppression of the Social Revolutionaries - though Pipes absolves Kolchak of personal responsibility for some of its nastier aspects. He says of him (p.50) that he was 'an execrable administrator in whose name were committed unpardonable acts of corruption and brutality which he personally found utterly repugnant.' Denikin acknowledged him as 'supreme ruler' in June. Denikin, his problems with the Cossacks largely sorted and the Germans no longer present as an enemy, was torn between two strategies - entry into the Ukraine, or the policy recommended by his Second-in-Command, Peter Wrangel, to go East to join up with Kolchak in Tsaritsyn (later to be known as Stalingrad). While Wrangel went to Tsaritsyn, Denikin moved into Ukraine, with initial success, taking Kharkov on June 21st and Ekaterinoslav (now known to Russians as Dniepropetrovsk and to Ukrainians as Dnipro) on June 30th. Wrangel took Tsaritsyn on June 30th but by this time Kolchak was being pushed back East and the junction of the two armies proved impossible.

On August 30th 1919, the Ukrainians⁹ entered Kiev simultaneously with the Whites but, quoting Petliura's Russian Wikipedia account 'the very next day they were expelled by the White Guards. The Volunteer Army command refused to negotiate with Petliura and by October 1919 the Petliura forces were defeated. In early November the Galician [ZUNR - PB] army signed an armistice agreement with the command of the Volunteer Army and went over to the side of Denikin. That was the end of the "Act of Zluka." In Ukrainian historiography, the signing of this treaty is called the "November catastrophe" - but it had been rendered pretty inevitable by Petliura's readiness to sacrifice Western Ukraine in return for an alliance with Pilsudski.

THE 'GREENS'

The rather pathetic impression of Ukrainian military efficacy left by the history of the Directory gets modified if we take into account the activity of the 'Greens', who were also Ukrainian, also saw themselves as Ukrainian patriots and many of whose leaders had been involved with Petliura in the war against Skoropadsky and the initial occupation of Kiev. Because of their activities large areas of Ukraine were at least occupied by ethnic Ukrainians and closed to

⁸ This account is drawn from Pipes: Russia under the Bolshevik régime.

⁹ The Ukrainian Wikipedia entry on Petliura ascribes this to 'the Petliurists' but according to an article by Serhy Yekelchuk ('Searching for the Ukrainian revolution', *Slavic Review*, Vol 78, No 4, Winter 2019, p.946): 'The Ukrainian units belonged to the Ukrainian Galician army of the ZUNR, which the Whites considered foreign but legitimate - in contrast to the "treasonous" local Ukrainians from the Russian Empire.'

secure occupation by either the Reds or the Whites. They have a bad press in Soviet and Jewish historiography but, especially recently, 'certain Ukrainian historians (marginal in the universities but omnipresent in the bookshops)¹⁰ have begun to honour them as pioneers of Ukrainian nationalism. The problem is that there were so many of them. One of the most notable of the 'revisionist' historians, Roman Koval, has compiled thirty three biographies of leading figures. According to Thomas Chopard (p.57): 'We can recover, sometimes summarily, sometimes more precisely, the overall career and actions of nineteen atamans ... All the Atamans previously fought in the First World War ... all are young, their average age is less than 27 years; the oldest, Grigoriev, was 35 in 1919, the youngest, Sumtchuk and Angel, 21 and 22.'

In saying that they all fought in the war, Chopard is obviously not counting among their number the anarchist leader Nestor Makhno, who was in prison throughout the war, only released in March 1917. Although he certainly does not fit the usual picture of a Ukrainian 'Cossack' ataman he was one of the most important figures in the general history of independent regional chieftains following their own course with no fixed loyalty to the Reds, Whites or Ukrainian nationalists.

Grigoriev (Hryhoryev in Ukrainian) had been an officer in the Russian imperial army, staff captain of the 56th Zhytomir Infantry Regiment, and as such had been 'an active participant in the Ukrainisation of units of the Russian imperial army (1917) and the creation of regular units of the army of the Ukrainian Peoples Republic on their basis.'¹¹ But he left the army in protest against the German occupation and formed a rebel army in support of the Directory. As such he was part of the impressive array of forces that entered Kyiv in December. In January, Petliura appointed him 'Chief Otaman of the rebel forces of Kherson region, Zaporizhia and Tavria' but soon after he declared his lack of confidence in the Directory ('all kinds of careerists and adventurers who want to play the role of statesmen and great diplomats. These people are not professionals and are not in the right place. I do not believe them and go over to the Bolsheviks ...'). Late in February the forces at his command became 'the First Brigade of the Trans-Dnieper Soviet Division of the Ukrainian Red Army.' In that role he expelled the French and Greek forces who were at the time occupying Kherson, Mykolaiv and Odessa. This was part of an at the time quite massive transfer of Ukrainian peasant affections to the Bolsheviks, supported also by the Left Wing groups that had split off from the Social Democratic and Social Revolutionary parties with the establishment of an essentially right wing government in Kiev. These groups and, it seems, most of the 'atamans', held to what they had believed to be the basic Bolshevik idea - reorganisation of society on the basis of more or less independent self governing assemblies - 'soviets' - rather than the unitary parliamentary model favoured by Petliura. This had also been Vynnychenko's policy.

By April however a huge disillusionment with the Bolsheviks had begun to set in. It was the period of 'war communism' and what the Bolsheviks were chiefly after, like the Germans before them, was a monopoly control of grain, a policy enforced by the Cheka at its most brutal. To quote Chopard (*Ère des atamans*, p.61), ever since 1917 the peasants had demanded 'a power that looked like the rebels, relieved from "the yoke of strangers" that is to say of the national minorities, "a true worker and peasant power", they demanded, in the hands of Ukrainians, when the officers sent from the towns were most often Russian or Jewish.' To quote the Ukrainian Wikipedia account of the Grigoriev uprising, the leadership of the Ukrainian SSR and

¹⁰ Thomas Chopard: 'L'Ère des atamans', *Revue d'histoire*, Jan-March 2019, No141, p.56. My translation from the French.

¹¹ This account is based on the Ukrainian Wikipedia entries for Nikyfor Oleksandrovych Grigoriev and for The Grigoriev Uprising.

the Red Army 'did not have time to react to the rapid change in the situation in Ukraine, striving to achieve several ambitious goals at the same time. Namely: to obtain large supplies of food from Ukraine on a gratuitous basis (which required food distribution and a food monopoly), defeat the Volunteer Army in operations in the south of the Donetsk Basin, and invade Europe to support the Soviet regime in Hungary.' In this context the article claims: 'Thousands of peasants died at the hands of uncontrollably acting district and front-line Cheka, punitive squads and Revolutionary Tribunals. The Bureau of the Ukrainian Soviet Press reported on the "unnecessary brutality of the Cheka in the villages" - on floggings, robberies, shootings. Bolsheviks were losing their positions in local councils, peasants were turning to active forms of resistance.'

One of the first of the 'atamans', previously, at least briefly, allied with the Reds, was Yehven Petrovych Angel, who had already gained a reputation for brutality and antisemitism while still allied with Petliura. He was based in Chernihiv province just east of Kiev. According to his Ukrainian Wikipedia account:

'Already two months after the arrival of the Reds, Cossack unrest began in the north of the Ukrainian People's Republic. On March 25, 1919, free Cossacks from Guzhivka, Rozhnyvka, Krupychpol, Maksimivka and other Cossack communities liberated Ichnya in the Borznyi District. The uprising was poorly prepared, after the liberation of Ichna, a large part of the Cossacks went home, for which they paid the price. Ataman Angel was not in Ichenskyi at that time, he was conducting negotiations in Tripilla in Kyiv region about joint actions with Ataman Zeleny (ensign Danylo Terpylo) and other atamans. He became a member of the revolutionary committee of the rebels, whose military commissar became Ataman Zeleny [8].

'Returning to Ichnyan Oblast at the beginning of April, Angel with a detachment of 400-450 Cossacks continued the uprising, liberating villages in Borznyi and Prylutsky counties from the power of the Bolsheviks. On April 12, he liberated the ancient village of Ivanytsia, the former town of the Hundredth of the Prylutsky regiment, a stronghold of the free Cossacks. Red troops knocked out the ataman's detachment from Ivanytsia, but after a couple of days he entered the village again. On April 15, Angel together with Ataman Kyril Shekera captured the district center of Borzna, disarming the 20th Infantry Regiment of the 3rd Russian-Bolshevik Division, and held the town until April 23, 1919.

'Near the village of Yaroshivka, Prylutsky District, Angel's squad engaged in a five-hour battle with the Red Army, which tried to stop it. On April 23, the Prylutsky District Executive Committee reported that Ataman Angel was declared "outlaw" based on the order of the [Bolshevik] "Worker-Peasant Government of Ukraine", which was located in Kharkiv .

At the end of April 1919, near the village of Zagrebli in the Lubensk District, Angel's detachment entered into battle with units of the Lubensk Cheka and the Lubensk and Lohvytskyi Military Commissariats. They [the Reds - PB] captured the headquarters of the detachment and a significant part of the weapons, but Angel managed to break away from the pursuit with the main part of the detachment. After this battle, his detachment was divided into several parts - some Cossacks evacuated to family nests, while others, breaking into small groups, redeployed to the Prylutka and Ichnyan forests. On May 3, 1919, Angel with a small detachment (60 Cossacks) moved to the right bank of the Dnieper and joined the detachment of Ataman Zelenyi'

That pattern - an apparently substantial rebellion easily breaking up as the peasants returned to their farms - seems to have been common.

The account of the Grigoriev uprising continues:

'If in March - April the situation was most acute in the provinces of Central Ukraine - Kyiv, Poltava, Chernihiv - then, at the end of April/beginning of May, the situation in the South sharply

worsened. Parts of the 6th Ukrainian Soviet Division, allocated for re-formation in their native places of Kherson Oblast and Yelisavetgrad [modern Kropyvnytskyi, previously Zinovievsk, then Kirovo - PB] Oblast, took an active part in peasant riots, offered armed resistance to the actions of advance units, and committed violence against Soviet activists. In the first days of May, the activities of the Kherson Provincial Committee were paralyzed, the Yelisavetgrad [modern Zaporozhia - PB] Executive Committee and the Party Committee were dispersed, the Bolsheviks were shot, a state of emergency was declared in Mykolaiv, and the Oleksandriysk Cheka was dispersed. In Kryvyi Rih District the dispersal of the Bolshevik councils and the killing of communists became massive. On May 1, an armoured train of the 6th Ukrainian Soviet Division fired at Yelysavetgrad.

'On May 2, a pogrom of the Jewish population took place at the Znamyanka station, on May 4-6, pogroms swept through Yelysavetgrad, Oleksandria, and Dolynska station ...

'On May 7, 1919, Grigoriev received a categorical order from the commander of the 3rd Ukrainian Red Army, M. Khudyakov, to stop the riots or to resign as commander-in-chief. Chekists of the Special Department of the Army tried to arrest Grigoriev, but were captured and shot by soldiers, which prompted him to take decisive action. Communist political workers were arrested in Grigoriev's units, on May 8, 1919, M. Grigoriev published the *Universal "To the People of Ukraine and the Red Army Soldiers"*, where he called for a general uprising against the Bolshevik dictatorship in Ukraine and announced the goals of his struggle:

"Ukrainian people, tortured people! The brutal war with the German coalition and the Entente states snatched the best sons of the earth from your villages.

"Civil war and hetmanism drove your best sons into graves and prisons. When you didn't have the strength to endure any more, you left the plow and machine, dug a rusty gun out of the ground and went to defend your right to land and freedom. But here, too, political speculators deceived you and used your credulity with cunning measures: instead of land and free will, they forcefully impose a commune, a state of emergency, and commissars from the Moscow "obzhorka" and the land where Christ was crucified. You work day and night, you shine with a muzzle [machine translation! - PB], you walk in sackcloth and pants; instead of tea, you drink hot water without sugar, but those who promise you a bright future exploit you; they fight you with weapons in their hands, take your bread, requisition your cattle and assure you that all this is for the benefit of the people."¹²

'On May 10-14, Grigoryov captured Uman, Pomoshna, Novomyrnod, Tarasha, Korsun, Oleksandria, Balta, Ananyiv, Kryvyi Rih, Kobelyaki, Yagotyn, Pyatikhatki, Khrystinivka, Lityn, Lypovets, Grebinka. Soldiers of the 14th regiment of the Red Army revolted in Pavlograd. In Kozyatyn, the Nizhinsky regiment went over to Grigoriev's side. In Lubny the 1st regiment of the Red Cossacks rose up, which defeated the Cheka, [and took control of?] the prison and the bank. The Bolshevik party organisation of the city of Lubny announced its support for Grigoriev.

'On May 11, the garrison of Verkhnyodniprovsk joined the insurgents in the Katerynoslav direction. Panic began in the headquarters of the 2nd Soviet Army, and it left Katerynoslav, hiding at the Sinelnikove station. Attempts to organize the defense of Katerynoslav were unsuccessful. A general escape began. On May 12, the Black Sea Regiment of the sailor Orlov and the cavalry unit of the anarchist Maksyuta rose up in the city; units loyal to the Bolsheviks and Soviet institutions left the city. On May 15, Katerynoslav was again captured by units of the Red Army under the command of Parkhomenko; every tenth prisoner was shot by them. On the

¹² According to the Mikhnovsky's Ukrainian Wikipedia account he wrote several of Grigoriev's proclamations, though a Wikipedia note complains that no source is given. He certainly wouldn't have been working for Grigoriev while Grigoriev was still allied with the Reds.

eve of new massacres, the captured "Grigoryevs" rioted in the prison and, uniting with criminal criminals, defeated it, seized part of the city, and again let Grigoryev's troops into Katerynoslav.

'In occupied cities, Bolshevik councils and the Cheka were dispersed, and communists were shot. Pogroms and murders of Jews and Russians took place. In Yelysavetgrad on May 15, several hundred Jews and Russians were killed, including by criminals released from prison, "for the support of the communes"; about 400 people died in Uman on May 13-15; similarly - in Kremenchuk, Cherkassy, Novy Buz , Oleksandria. Up to 150 Russians and 100 Jews were killed in Katerynoslav and its suburbs.'

However the defeat of the uprising seems to have been as quick and spectacular as its success:

'To combat the uprising, the Bolshevik government took extraordinary measures: there was a mobilization of communists, workers, Soviet officials, Komsomol members and members of Jewish socialist parties. About 10,000 soldiers were urgently transferred from Russia.

'Already on May 14, three groups of troops (30,000 soldiers), under the command of Kliment Voroshilov and Oleksandr Parkhomenko , began a general counteroffensive from Kyiv, Poltava, and Odessa. On May 18, the Council of Defense of Soviet Ukraine declared terror against the parties of the Ukrainian Left SRs and the Ukrainian Social Democrats - "independents" - as those who inspired the uprising.

'On May 18 , units under the command of Makhno came against the Grigoryov people. Nestor Makhno issued a retraction "Who is Grigoryev?", where he called the chieftain a "robber", "counter-revolutionary", "adventurist", "provocateur-pogromist" .

'In the second half of May, the Grigoryov rebels were surprisingly quickly defeated and localized in the steppe areas of Kherson. On May 19, 1919, a group of the Kremenchug direction under the command of Panas Egorov occupied Kremenchug, the Dnipro military flotilla and the battalion named after Spartak Feofan Ilyin - Cherkas district. From the south, the units of Pavlo Dybenko and Parkhomenko were advancing. Joining Yehorov's group, they occupied Kryvyi Rih, Dovhyntseve station. The forces of three red military groups managed to surround the region of the uprising ...

'Of the 15,000 to 23,000 insurgents, a little more than three thousand remained with the ataman, and another two thousand went to various small local atamans, who nominally considered Grigoryev their leader.'

As part of the explanation for the rapid collapse of the rebellion the article continues:

'The political situation in Ukraine did not contribute to the success of the uprising. Anarchist groups associated with the Makhnov movement were influential in the southeast of Ukraine. Having an inconsistent program of affirming "free councils" and a powerless society [presumably meaning a society without authoritative government - PB], anarchists were guided by the decisions of the Kursk Conference of 1918, which raised the slogan of inciting a "second" anarchist revolution in Ukraine. N. Makhno saw the main danger in the advance of the "cadets" (Volunteer Army) from the southeast and had a sharply negative attitude to anti-Semitism.

'In the center and in the north of Ukraine, left-revolutionary political currents dominated. Parties formed by SR currents, independent social democrats, etc. representatives of the left part of the Ukrainian political spectrum, who dominated the Transnistrian region, did not consider the existing contradictions with the Bolsheviks to be antagonistic. The ideological basis of their activity was the concept of a "labor nation", later summarised in M. Shapoval's work "The Great Revolution and the Ukrainian Liberation Program".[Shapoval had been an associate of

Vynnychenko who also, in exile, tried to come to terms with the Bolsheviks - PB] *These parties saw the basis of national and social enslavement in the domination of "foreign capital" in Ukraine, which "captures cities and power in its hands, develops a foreign culture on Ukrainian soil to subjugate the Ukrainian one", feeds on the labor of the Ukrainian working classes and the Ukrainian working nation devoid of exploitative classes .*

'The left wing of Ukrainian politics, even in the most critical moments of its conflict with the RKP(b)-KP(b)U, retained a great potential for conformist cooperation with the Bolshevik government and was always ready for unequal compromises. In such conditions, the rebellion, deprived of consistent political leadership, descended into partisanship and anti-Semitic actions.'

THE MAKHNOVISHCHINA

But this brings us to a consideration of Nestor Makhno.

Makhno's driving motivation was a peasant based class struggle broadly free of any attachment to political nationalism, yet in the area where he was operating, in what is now the Zaporozhia oblast on the left (East) bank of the Dnieper, the peasants were ethnically Ukrainian while the class enemy, large scale owners of the land, were largely German. From the age of eight or nine, Makhno, whose father had died while he was still an infant, was working as a farmhand in the area round Huliaipole, dominated by the sprawling Mennonite owned Schönfeld colony.¹³ In 1905, according to Patterson (p.46) the average Mennonite holding in the area consisted of c65 dessiatines (71 hectares) while the average Ukrainian holding was c6.5 dessiatines (6.9 hectares). Makhno's family held 4.4 hectares of poor quality land. After Emancipation in 1961 peasants in the Kherson, Tauride (North of Crimea) and Katerynoslav (modern Dnipro) areas owned 57% of all farms on only 12% of the land. The temptation to sell was considerable and the Mennonites were willing to buy. Peasants reduced to farm labourers were competing with immigrant labour. Between 1863 and 1873 there were 88 peasant uprisings in 188 villages. The violence reached a climax in 1902 when Makhno, born in 1888, was 14 years old. Three years later, in 1905, he became involved with the 'Union of Poor Peasants' based in Huliaipole, founded by Voldemar Antoni, a young anarchist who, following his Wikipedia account, organised 'reading groups to spool through the works of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Max Stirner, Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin'. In 1907, in reaction to Stolypin's reforms aiming to solve the agrarian problem through the creation of a substantial farming class, the UPP organised a wave of 'black terror against the kulaks and pomeschiks [nobles - PB] ... setting fire to the landlords' property and fields wherever possible' (Patterson p.50). Following the assassination of a local police officer Makhno was sentenced to death but this was commuted to life imprisonment with hard labour. He served seven years before being released as part of an amnesty in March 1917.

Under his leadership a number of estates were converted into free communes even prior to the October Revolution. In the confrontation between the Ukrainian Nationalists and Bolsheviks he encouraged support for the Bolsheviks, becoming the representative of the anarchists on the Revolutionary Committee in Oleksandrivsk (modern Zaporozhia). But he was forced to flee when the Ukrainian Rada, backed by the Germans, took control of Huliaipole. He went to Moscow where he met Kropotkin and had a long conversation with Lenin. He returned (on a

¹³ This account is based largely on Sean Patterson: *Makhno and memory: anarchist and Mennonite narratives of Ukraine's civil war, 1917-1921*, University of Manitoba Press, 2020. Patterson, himself a Canadian Mennonite, had developed a romantic interest in Makhno's anarchist rebellion before being confronted with Mennonite memories of various massacres committed by his followers.

false passport supplied by the Bolsheviks) in July 1918. By this time the Germans had installed Skoropadsky in power in Kiev and were conducting an intense and murderous war to restore landlordism and to requisition grain, their main motive for the occupation. In this they had the support of the German landowners. The Mennonites were notionally pacifists but from Summer 1918 they began to organise self defense units - previously, in 1905 for example (Patterson p.96), they had employed Cossack guards to defend their properties.

In late October 1918 there was a major battle in Dibrivka when the Ukrainians led by Makhno defeated a much larger force of Austrian troops (the area was part of the Austrian area of responsibility) and German colonists. Turning to the Wikipedia account:

'Makhno's victory in the battle of Dibrivka provoked a vicious retaliation from the occupation forces. Velykomykhailovka was subsequently attacked by Austrian troops reinforced by National Guard and German colonist units. The village was set on fire, killing many inhabitants and destroying some 600 houses. Makhno, in turn, led a campaign of retributive attacks against the occupation forces and their collaborators, including much of the region's Mennonite population. Makhno also focused much of his energies on agitating amongst the peasantry, gathering much support in the region through impassioned impromptu village speeches against his enemies.'

Patterson (p.58) gives the text of a speech of Makhno directed to his enemies:

'The road is open to you to join the toiling peasantry ... But speak freely to those of the bourgeois class who are close to you and let them know why we burned your rich homes and killed your fathers, husbands, sons ... The crimes of the bourgeoisie will call forth retaliation by the Ukrainian toilers on a level such as the world has never seen before. No-one will be spared unless they come to their senses and voluntarily renounce the position of lording it over the country.'

Makhno's forces were not part of Petliura's triumphal entry into Kyiv in December. With the departure of the Germans he controlled the whole area round Huliaipole. The Germans of the Schönfeld colony fled *en masse* to the more southern Molotschina colony. At this time Makhno was allied with the Reds, his forces in January being incorporated into the Red Army as the '3rd Trans-Dnieper Brigade' later, still under Makhno's leadership, becoming the 7th Ukrainian Soviet Division. Denikin was beginning the White advance into Southern Ukraine and many of the colonists saw him as a potential saviour. Makhno however overran the Molotschina colony in March. Throughout 1919 the level of violence, as throughout Ukraine, was increasing. Makhno's former lieutenant, the Jewish anarchist Vsevolod Mikhailovich Eikhenbaum ('Volin'), later complained (Patterson, p.68) of 'an army élite, drunk with power and obsessed with violence.'

The Bolshevik leadership was divided in its attitude to Makhno who operated quite independently of the supposed chain of command but eventually in late May/early June the breach became irreparable. Makhno was denounced by Trotsky who called for his arrest. Anxious to preserve a united opposition to the Whites, Makhno resigned his position in the 7th Ukrainian Soviet Division but formed his own following concentrating on guerrilla tactics.

By early July Makhno had been pushed back into the Kherson area controlled by Grigoriev but during a quarrel as Makhno accused Grigoriev of tolerating pogroms and negotiating with the Whites Grigoriev was shot by Makhno's lieutenant, Oleksiy Chubenko. As the Bolsheviks retreated under the White onslaught Makhno gathered together remnants of Grigoriev's army as well as scattered groups left behind by the Reds but was still pushed back to Uman in the extreme West, one of the few territories still held by Petliura. However Denikin, thinking Makhno was finished as a force, neglected his defenses. This was apparently the low point for the Reds and the high point for the Whites as Denikin in September ordered a march on Moscow, taking Kursk on September 30th, Voronezh on October 6th, Chernigov on October 12th. At the same time, General Iudenich, backed by the British fleet, launched an offensive against Petrograd,

taking Tsarskoe Selo on October 16th (Pipes, pp.121-125).

But behind Denikin's troops, Makhno launched a spectacular counteroffensive, seizing the coastline - Zaporozhia, Huliaipole, Berdiansk, Melitopol and Mariupol, cutting Denikin off from his supply lines from the Black Sea. In the course of the advance the Makhnovites seized the Mennonite colonies of Molotschina, Chortitza, Jasykowa and Sagradowka. The iron seems to have entered his soul. He established a counterintelligence organisation, the Kontrrazvedka, which soon began to resemble by its methods the Cheka and was regarded with horror by Volin. Makhno took Katerinoslav (Dniepropetrovsk/Dnipro) on 20th October. On 8th November there was a famous massacre of Mennonites in the village of Eichenfeld, part of the Jasykowa estate. Following the Wikipedia account ('Eichenfeld massacre'):

'Going from door-to-door, the insurgents executed the village's landowners and their adult sons. After interrogating them about their property holdings, those that were found to own land were systematically murdered, while the landless peasants were left alive. The insurgents appeared to be under orders to specifically target landowning men, in an attempt to eliminate Mennonite property claims and the possibility of inheritance. After the men were dispensed with, the insurgents then raped many of the women and girls that were left over, infecting them with a number of venereal diseases ... Houses were burnt down and belongings looted before the insurgents left the village, where 75 people had been killed, while 61 more people were killed in the surrounding area ... Between 8 November and 18 December 1919, 827 Mennonites were murdered in the insurgent-occupied colonies, accounting for two-thirds of all Mennonites murdered during the war. Further massacres were documented at Blumenort, in Sagradowka, where insurgents indiscriminately killed over 200 Mennonite men, women and children, and Borosenko, where no Selbstschutz [self-defence] unit had ever been present.'

The extent of Makhno's personal responsibility is a matter of controversy.

I think I have to finish here, though there's much more to be said. I had hoped to cover the process by which the Red Army finally managed to gain control of the whole area with the final defeat of the Ukrainian Nationalists, the Whites, the various 'atamans' and Makhno but this will have to wait for the next article, together, perhaps, with an account of the ensuing terrible famine.