

The Progressive Legacy of the Ukrainian People's Republic

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1. Introduction

On 17 March 1917, the Ukrainian Central Rada was founded. It united a strong coalition of revolutionary parties and movements of workers, peasants, students, feminists, soldiers, and representatives of national minorities and municipal associations. Two radical-left parties dominated the political field — the Ukrainian Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Ukrainian Social Democratic Workers' Party. The main aim of the Ukrainian Central Rada was to realise the demand for autonomy in a federated Russia by revolutionary means. The policy of the Central Rada moved along a spectrum as far as relations with the government in Petrograd were concerned. Some in the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries called for “complete independence” from the “Russian imperialist bourgeois government”,¹ the Ukrainian Social Democratic Workers' Party held a strong autonomist position until November 1917, and the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Federalists (a liberal democratic party) was most oriented towards compromise with the Russian provisional government. The Central Rada effectively established a separate autonomous government and attempted to organise land reform, local government reform and more but was actively undermined by the Russian provisional government, which threatened military actions and repressions against Ukrainians. In the elections to the Russian Constitutional Assembly on 5 January 1918, the bloc of Ukrainian socialist parties in the Ukrainian provinces received 2/3 of all votes;² later, on 9 January 1918, in the Ukrainian Constituent assembly, the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries (UPSR) alone received 61%, and the Ukrainian list more than 70%, which also legitimised its rule through elections.³

In November 1917, the Central Rada declared the Ukrainian People's Republic. Shortly afterwards, the Bolshevik government in Petrograd declared war, triggering the first war in history between two socialist states. Before the declaration of war, the Bolsheviks tried several times to overthrow the Ukrainian Central Rada. The reforms of the Ukrainian People's Republic were closer to the Bolshevik slogans than to those of the Russian provisional government. The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Social Democrats in Ukraine attempted to implement their party programmes, but more radical reforms were slowed and undermined by the war, famine and the need to build an entire state apparatus with a population that lacked education and expertise.

The Ukrainian People's Republic invited German and Austrian forces to defend it against Russian-Bolshevik imperialism, but the intervention forces overthrew them and established the authoritarian and right-wing patronage government of Pavlo Skoropadsky. The right-wing policies and the view that the Central Rada was responsible for the actions of the interventionist forces strengthened the popularity of pro-Bolshevik views and, together with other factors, radicalised the population in general. After German troops were recalled, the Skoropadsky government did not survive long.

In opposition to the right-wing and pro-Russian government of Skoropadsky, the Ukrainian left-wing parties of the People's Republic had formed the Directory (named after the Directory of the First French Republic). This revolutionary committee successfully organised the overthrow of Skoropadsky

¹ Tetyana A. Bevs: Partija nacional'nych interesiv i social'nych perspektyv (Polityčna istorija UPSR), Kyiv 2008, p. 188. Tetyana Bevs analyses in detail the position of UPSR about autonomy. For the socialist revolutionaries, autonomy either was not a final goal or was interpreted in the widest confederative way.

² Vladyslav F. Verstjuk: Vserosijs'ki ustanovči zbory, in: NAN Ukraïny (red.): Encyklopedija istorii Ukraïny (elektronnyj resurs), [Kyïv 2003] URL: http://www.history.org.ua/?termin=Vserosijski_Ustanovchi.

³ Olena D. Bojko: Ukraïnc'ki ustanovči zbory, NAN Ukraïny (red.): Encyklopedija istorii Ukraïny (elektronnyj resurs), [Kyïv 2019], URL: http://www.history.org.ua/?termin=Ukrainski_Ustanovchi.

but was immediately at war with the Whites and the Reds, who both declared their intention to occupy Ukraine. The Directory tried to negotiate a peace agreement with both forces, but ultimately, neither the so-called “anti-imperialist” Reds nor the Tsarist Whites were interested.

As soon as it became possible, the Directory organised the election to the Labour Congress. As the successor to the Central Rada, this congress was to be the Ukrainian constituent assembly and had to function as the Ukrainian parliament. The Ukrainian movements became radicalised, but only the left, as, apart from small monarchist groups allied with Skoropadsky, a right wing did not exist. However, this led to Soviet-democratic, communalist views and illusions about Bolshevik imperialism gaining popularity.

This radicalisation also made itself felt in the major left-wing parties, causing a split that was not dissimilar to developments in Western Europe. The Ukrainian Social Revolutionaries split into the Borotbysts (named after their Newspaper “Borotba”, to struggle, which referred to Taras Shevchenko’s Caucasus poem “Struggle — and be triumphant”) and the “main current”. Both the Borotbysts and the main current were in favour of a united, independent Ukraine governed by councils. Both fought against the Bolshevik and White forces, with the Borotbysts ultimately more willing to compromise with Lenin's forces. The same split occurred in the Ukrainian social democracy, whose left wing founded the USDWP (Independentist) — modelled on the German USPD (hence the name). Initially, the radical splits supported the Directory. Later, however, the radical left, which had meanwhile renamed itself the Ukrainian Communist Party (Borotbysts) and the Ukrainian Communist Party (Ukapists), attempted to create a third national communist force. For a short time, there was even a united front consisting of Makhnovites and the two national communist parties. Afterwards, the radical left wing of the revolution decided to co-operate with the Bolsheviks in the hope of “flooding” the Bolshevik Party with Ukrainian cadres, thereby overcoming the imperialist and one-sided character of the Bolshevik forces.⁴ This strategy failed completely, and later, the national communists who joined the Bolsheviks were forced to fight each other in order to prove that they had “renounced” their “nationalist” and “petty-bourgeois” past.

Returning to the Directory, the Labour Congress finished its session in a stalemate between supporters of democratic-parliamentary and Soviet forms of government. A hybrid “Labour principle”, a confusing parliamentary-Soviet regime, was introduced as a compromise.

At this time, Ukraine was under intense military pressure from Russian Whites and Reds as well as neighbouring states, especially Poland. The Entente also weakened Ukraine with a far-reaching embargo and the French intervention in Crimea. The disorganisation of the state and the army led to phenomena such as the Atamanschyna — the increasing importance of warlords and local peasant

⁴ The slogan proposed by Ellan Blakytyni was “Let's squirm, spill and flood the KP(b)U”. A large part of the Ukrainian Communist Party rejected the slogan and fought the Bolsheviks. Those who joined did their best to secure Ukrainian rights. Even the name “Union of Soviet Socialist Republics” and not only Russia and its provinces were imposed by the Borotbist opposition. However, the concessions ended only with changes in the name, not with real federative relations or Ukrainian rights. At the 9th Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviki) in 1920, Lenin said: “Instead of a Borotbist uprising, which would have been inevitable, we have brought into our Party, under our control and with our recognition, due to the correct policy of the Central Committee superbly executed by Comrade Rakovsky, all the best of the Borotbisty, while the rest have vanished from the political scene. This victory is worth several good battles” (quote in: Christopher Ford (ed.): Borotbism. A chapter in the History of the Ukrainian Revolution, Stuttgart 2019, p. 253). With this quote, Lenin showed that all concessions to Borotbists were political manipulations to disarm one of the strongest parties that could oppose the Bolsheviks on their own ground.

uprisings, which, like the Makhnovschyna or the forces of the Ataman Grygoryiv, were either allied or not allied with the republican army and the Ukrainian People's Republic. This period faced massive pogroms against the Jewish population by the warlords and the Republican army, as well as marauding, murder and looting of the Mennonite population by the Makhno forces.⁵

Despite all the problems, the Ukrainian People's Republic managed to carry out land reforms in this situation, to build state institutions without having the necessary cadres or experience to heroically defend itself against overpowering forces and simultaneously save the republic from hunger, unemployment, and for a time, anarchy and chaos. In the territories controlled by the republican administration, the minorities were protected from repressions and the peasants from requisitions. The Ukrainian forces successfully implemented radical political reforms and established a state-cooperative economy. As Bolshevik I. Sammer said: "*In Ukraine, we are forced to deal with a cooperative state*".⁶

During the revolution, most of the Ukrainian economy was under cooperative administration, and the state itself acted with proto-Keynesian methods to address unemployment, war needs and poverty. While the main current of the Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionaries advocated complete socialisation of the economy and the Social Democrats were in favour of a democratic socialist state along the lines of Kautsky or Bernstein, not a single party program was fully implemented. Nevertheless, the reforms carried out under absolutely extreme conditions were impressive.

Under external pressure, the Ukrainian People's Republic changed its government five times, with the political orientation evolving from the radical left to a moderate left and finally to an apolitical national democratic government. In the end, the Republic practically was led by the military leader and former Social Democrat Symon Petliura (who resigned from the Social Democratic Workers' Party on 11 February 1919). Petliura still firmly believed in the democratic process, but considering the extreme situation the People's Republic found itself in – the Entente was about to invade the region –, he advocated the centralisation of power.

The Social Democrats continued to play a significant role, but to enable them to negotiate with the Entente, they recalled their Socialist ministers from the government on 7 February 1919. Petliura's rule gradually alienated first the Social Revolutionaries and then the left wing of the Social Democrats. Due to military pressure from all sides, Petliura entered into an alliance with Poland and thus "left" Western Ukraine to the Polish armed forces. Western Ukrainian politicians were furious and demanded unification with the Ukrainian People's Republic in order to have a means of defending their homeland against Polish invaders. The greatest support for Petliura's government came from the moderate wing of the Social Democratic Party, led by the two orthodox Marxists Isaac Mazepa and Panas Fedenko.⁷

With the collapse of the frontline, Ukrainian armed forces organised an insurgent movement to fight the Reds and the Whites. In addition, the Bolsheviks were also confronted with a vast peasant resistance movement numbering more than 300,000 people. The most notable example of such a

⁵ O. J. Chodčenko: Meninity v period „Machnovs'ki Respubliky (kinec' 199 r.), in *Cučasni doslidžennja z himeckoï istorii*, (2022) 48, p. 51-68.

⁶ Illja Bitanovyč: *Istorija Ukraïns'koho kooperativnoho ruchu*, New York, 1964, p. 194-195.

⁷ Cf. A. Klymenko: *Ctavlennja Ukraïns'kych pomirkobannych ta radykal'nych livych v osobi USDRP ta UKP do Varšavskoho dohovory 1920 roky*, 2.7.2022, URL: <https://proletar-ukr.blogspot.com/2022/07/1920.html>.

rebellion took place in Kholodnyi yar, where the Republican army, together with peasant self-defence, organised a republic and resisted the Bolshevik forces for a long time, even drafting a project for a future constitution based on what is known today as “democratic market socialism”.⁸

To destroy the Ukrainian resistance, the Bolsheviks organised a repressive system that crushed any independent cooperative movement, subjugated the peasants through hunger and requisitions and pursued a clever policy of “divide and rule”. *“From the first years of the occupation, the Bolsheviks organised a repressive and punitive system in Ukraine, which included 18 concentration camps. In 1918-20 alone, more than 100,000 Ukrainians were exterminated,”* says Ukrainian historian Roman Krutsky.⁹

But Republican resistance endured. Between 1917 and 1932, Ukraine had 692 underground organisations and 1435 insurgent units, of which 689 were known and 746 were unknown. During this period, 268 uprisings were counted in Ukraine.¹⁰ It took a genocide to crush Republican resistance. Subsequently, Ukrainian elements in the Communist Party took over the flag of the opposition, followed by different insurgent groups during the Second World War and, finally, a post-war dissident movement.¹¹ The Ukrainian People’s Republic symbol became one of the most powerful images to mobilise those who fought against totalitarianism in Ukraine.

⁸ Načerk proekty Deržavnoho zakonolady dlja “Ukraïnc’koï Trudovoï Respubliky” (Taboru Hajdamakiv-povstanciv v Cholodnomy Jaru na Čyhirinščyni) 1919”, in: https://constituanta.blogspot.com/2012/10/1919_24.html.

⁹ Jaroslav Muzyčenko: Vijnna za narod, in: Ukraïna moloda, 11.11.2010, URL: <https://www.umoloda.kiev.ua/number/1778/222/63054/>

¹⁰ “Narodna vijnna” – častyna 2 kartynok z bystabky. Otaman Zelenyj, machnovci i ukraïnizacija votnem, 5 December 2010, URL: <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/artefacts/4cfbd1f9e30eb/>

¹¹ Apart from the well-known totalitarian and fascist tendencies of the Ukrainian uprising during the Second World War, there were insurgent groups with national-communist and socialist convictions as well as a significant reformist faction in the UPA that pursued a social-democratic, multicultural programme.

2. What was the Ukrainian revolution?

2.1 The Ukrainian Revolution is knocking at the door

The future Ukrainian revolution emerged in the territories of the Russian Empire and the Austrian-Hungarian dual monarchy under conditions of severe national oppression and assimilation. Ukrainians were a large minority in both countries and were among the poorest. At the same time, the Ukrainian nation was isolated from the cities and from any kind of social elite, consisting of the landowning and capitalist economic groups. In contrast to these groups, Ukraine was a nation of landless and small peasants through and through. The Ukrainian urban working class was tiny, and the middle class and wealthy even smaller. The cities were instruments of assimilation and “islands” of Russian or Polish rule in the Ukrainian land. For most Ukrainians, any social mobility associated with the cities was either not possible at all or associated with assimilation. In 1919, the population of Kyiv, the capital of the Republic, consisted of 43% Russian, 23% Ukrainian and 21% Jewish inhabitants. The situation was similar in the other cities in the territory of Ukraine. That made the cities difficult to control politically and, at the same time, contested. The cities were places of disproportionately concentrated power. They were used as an instrument to oppress the Ukrainian majority, making the establishment of the Ukrainian People’s Republic quite a difficult task.

The unique Ukrainian conditions (which also applied in other Eastern European countries, such as the Baltics) meant that social and national oppression were very closely connected. There were no “Ukrainian capitalists” or “Ukrainian landowners”, as being Ukrainian in itself was seen as having an anti-capitalist and anti-landowning identity. In a sense, although not absolutely, being Ukrainian entailed not only a national identity but also a social identity. This is one of the most important factors behind the enormous popularity of the socialist parties. They were not only the parties that consistently fought for national rights but also those that represented the social aspirations of Ukrainians. The history of Ukraine as a whole is a history of interconnected social and national resistance.

In 1917, Ukraine was a frontline territory that suffered greatly from the war. It was divided and faced the disintegration of the Russian army, internal migration, epidemics, the threat of starvation and anarchy. It was the region most affected by the Great War. It was under these conditions that the Ukrainian Revolution took place.

From February 1917, the territory of the Russian Empire was engulfed by a revolution. Ukrainians were among the first to support revolutionary change — both the Ukrainian soldiers in Petrograd and other Ukrainians in Russia and the Ukrainian mainland.

Twenty thousand Ukrainians took to the streets of Petrograd to demonstrate in memory of Taras Shevchenko. Countless protests of Ukrainians took place in all of Ukraine’s major cities. Demonstrations on the day of Taras Shevchenko's death or birthday (9 and 10 March) had a long tradition and were central dates of Ukrainian protests at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. In 1914, the head of the Kyiv Provincial Gendarmerie, Colonel Shredel, reported to his superiors in St Petersburg: “The leaders of the Ukrainian movement united with other anti-government organisations and began to develop a plan for organising street demonstrations on February 25 and 26, directing all their efforts to attract Kiev students to these active protests. [...] A

special temporary committee was formed among the students to organise such speeches, which included representatives of foreign communities (Poles, Georgians, Armenians, etc.) and [...] began to prepare proclamations.”¹²

The revolutionary mood prompted Ukrainian political representatives, municipal leaders, underground revolutionaries, and cultural organisations to found the Ukrainian Central Rada. The **Society of Ukrainian Progressives**, a non-party organisation that existed before 1917, decided after lengthy discussions to organise a revolutionary body to coordinate Ukrainian forces and put the right to self-determination into practice. This society was dominated by liberal-minded politicians, with only a few Marxists and non-Marxist socialists. However, during the debates, the progressive liberal faction took an exclusionary and moderate position — the new Ukrainian revolutionary body was to be organised only to develop cultural, not political, autonomy, and only by the members of the Society. **They were immediately overrun by socialists, who argued in favour of** a participative political body representing all Ukrainians — the Central Rada. The initiative was thus taken by the Left and took on a popular, non-exclusionist character.

2.2 Who formed the Ukrainian provisional government — the Central Rada?

The Ukrainian Central Rada was founded in March 1917. However, the Central Rada was not an elected parliament, as there was no possibility of organising elections in the middle of the revolution. It was a national assembly consisting of delegates from the most important Ukrainian parties and organisations. The largest of these organisations represented in the Central Rada were the Peasants', Workers' and Soldiers' Councils (which functioned as a kind of soviet government); the other groups included the largest socialist parties, the organisations of national minorities, professional groups such as trade unions, student organisations, etc., municipal, cultural, sports and women's organisations, and delegates from the local administration. Council representatives made up more than half of the delegates. Massive demonstrations and other signs of support for the Central Rada by these organisations followed the next few months of its existence. Because of its composition – the formation and meetings of the various council congresses and the organisations of minorities took some time – the number of delegates in the Central Rada had increased tenfold since the first meeting. In that sense, the Ukrainian Central Rada was not a parliament but an institution of participatory, revolutionary democracy. Its main objectives were **the struggle for Ukrainian autonomy** (also against the centralism or the imperialism of the “great Russian” provisional government), **the organisation of Ukrainians, the planning of the Ukrainian Constituent Assembly and the implementation of land reform**. Later, the Central Rada was to be replaced by an elected parliament. The Central Rada thus became a provisional Ukrainian government.

In order to become operational, the Central Rada formed a committee called Mala Rada. It roughly represented the Central Rada and prepared laws between sessions, which were later voted on and discussed in the Central Rada. Of the 58 members of the Mala Rada, 18 were minority representatives. Above the Mala Rada existed a General Secretariat, which acted as a collegial body

¹² Dmytro Stefanovič: Juvilej T. H. Ševčenka i students'ki zavorušennja v Kyjevi 100 rokiv tomy, in: “Kyïvskyj politechnik”, 9/2014, URL: <https://kpi.ua/shevchenko-revolt>.

holding the highest executive power. With the Fourth Universal, it was expanded to include ministries of Jewish, Russian and Polish affairs.

2.3 The parties of the Central Rada

The Socialist Revolutionaries

When people as a community work with the tools of production, then they must receive the entire product of labour as a community. What they will give from that product to public affairs is up to them. It should not be the case that when one owner or a group of owners do not work, most of the product not produced by them is taken away. Both in the rural labour economy and in the industry, it is necessary to ensure that the master and the worker are one person so that the workers are masters in the collective. Eliminating this contradiction [of capitalism] will mean that the class of industrialists will be destroyed: the organisers of industry, owners, and workers will be the same people who run the enterprise, organised as a democracy. Labour democracy in the industry is a first. Next, the exchange of products (“trade”) must be organised through the cooperation of consumers. In its initial form, Labour itself will be nothing but a production cooperation. Cultural affairs (schools, publishing houses, newspapers, magazines, research institutions, art enterprises, etc.) must also be organised cooperatively. The management of the economy and cultural work should be organised by the village and town communities and their associations and centres on a democratic basis. On the other hand, the political organisation of society (the “state”) would only have to protect external and internal peace. We do not support the opinion held by the Bolsheviks, who concentrated all the economic and cultural functions of society in the hands of the “state”. The Bolshevik state has become an owner-capitalist, which forces the entire society to work for itself by all means of violence. State capitalism is the worst form of capitalism in general. The socialisation of land ownership will benefit those who want to work near the land, merge industry with agriculture, and destroy the gap between the countryside and the city, uniting agriculture with industry. This will also make the cultural differences between the village and the city disappear. We call this system of labour democracy socialism, or, as Drahomaniv said, Hromadivstvo (Communalism).¹³

M. Shapoval (1882-1932) — Land minister (December 1918 - February 1919), previously Minister of Telegraphy of the Ukrainian People’s Republic and one of the main organisers of the uprising organised by the Directory. He was one of the leaders and ideologues of the Ukrainian Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries (main current), a strong supporter of the Soviet platform. Even in exile, he put his ideological convictions into practice and co-founded the Socialist League of New East.

The Ukrainian Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries was by far the largest and most radical party in the Ukrainian Central Rada. It was founded shortly after the revolution and grew rapidly, with whole villages joining at once. The party had a radical attitude towards land and the issue of Ukrainian independence. Its ideological platform centred on a non-Marxist, plural, radical socialism. The UPSR was a peasant party that rejected the Marxist theory of the working class as the only revolutionary

¹³ Mykyta Šapoval: Velyka revoljucija i ukraïns’ka vizvol’na prohrama (Byklady v Ameryci), Praha, 1927, p. 38-39 (translation by the author). Drahomanov was the “father” of Ukrainian socialism, a critic of Marx and author of unique Ukrainian liberal-anarchist and ethic socialist tradition called Hromadivstvo (Communalism).

class and advocated the concept of “labouring classes” — peasants, farmers, workers, and labour intelligentsia who were equally important in building socialism.

The party underwent an evolution and radicalisation — from the concept of the “socialisation of means of production” and the radical decentralisation of government within the framework of an inclusive parliamentary democracy to concepts of syndicalism and council democracy. In the late phase of the Ukrainian revolution, the left wing of the party split the party into UPSR (borotbists) and UPSR (main current), with the Borotbist wing advocating almost anarchist views and the main current the idea of a council system (not in the Bolshevik sense, where the council respective soviet system was controlled by a one-party state).

UPSR was the biggest party in the Central Rada. However, it lacked experience, so most of the time, the party was second in command after the much smaller USDWP.

The Ukrainian Social Democratic Workers’ Party (USDWP)

The USDWP was a Marxist party based on the Erfurt Programme of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) of 1891 and was strongly influenced by Kautsky, Bernstein, and other left-wing leaders of the SPD. In Ukrainian politics, Marxist parties were labelled social democratic, while non-Marxist socialist parties were simply called socialist. The USDWP was a party with a great deal of experience from the 1905 Revolution and was active until the 1917 revolution and afterwards. It was a strong intellectual force, albeit quite dogmatic. The USDWP took the leading role in the revolution.

The Socialist-Federalists

The moderate members of the Society of Ukrainian Progressives reorganised themselves into a Socialist-Federalist party, which was socialist in name only but, in reality, was a social-liberal party enshrined in the ideals of local governance, social security and municipal autonomy. The Socialist-Federalist party was also the most moderate in terms of national demands and pursued a policy of appeasement towards the Russian provisional government. It was a marginal force, but the party nevertheless consisted of highly talented individuals, such as the future head of the Foreign Ministry of the Ukrainian People’s Republic, Oleksander Shulgin.

2.4 Congresses and movements

The Congress of Enslaved Nations

The Congress of Enslaved Nations of Russia met in Kyiv from 8 to 15 September on the initiative of the Central Rada. 92 delegates from Ukrainians, Georgians, Poles, Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Jews, Belarusians, Moldovans, Cossacks,¹⁴ Buryats, Tatars, Crimean Tatars, Turkic and Muslim organisations, and the Council of Socialist Parties of Russia were presented. Other nations that were

¹⁴ The Bolsheviks did not view the Cossacks as a separate community or nationality, while Ukrainians did. Depending on the classification, Soviet policies of de-Cossackisation from 1919 could be viewed as ethnic cleansing or genocide (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De-Cossackization>).

unable to attend sent their greetings and supported the initiative. The aim of the Congress was to establish cooperation between the enslaved nations of the Russian Empire and to create a new republican, decentralised reality. Mykhailo Hrushevskyi was elected as head of the Congress. The congress met with little support from the centralist, all-Russian parties such as the Russian Constitutional Democrats, the Mensheviks, and the Bolsheviks, who, according to their theories as well as their Russian nationalism, were more eager for a unitarian state or a pseudo-federation.

The congress was a great and symbolic event that not only confirmed cooperation between non-Russian nations but also motivated various nationalities to fight for their autonomy. Ukraine was “leading by example”, and it caused problems for the Provisional Government. The Russian Provisional Government had an imperialist character and rejected Ukrainian autonomy. The attitude of the Russian intelligentsia was even worse. The Provisional Government saw the containment of the Ukrainian movement as a means of stopping other national movements that threatened the centralised, “one and indivisible” Russia.

The Congress of Cooperatives

The Ukrainian cooperative movement played a crucial role in the Ukrainian Revolution. It was organised based on nurturing national consciousness and the unity of society. It sought not only the economic well-being of its communities but also the opening of schools and museums, the organisation of cultural activities and even funding of scholarships. It was a large, well-organised and principled movement. With the revolution, the cooperative movement expanded and developed self-regulating bodies to ensure broad democratic principles and participation (so-called “fight against pseudo-cooperation”), the defence of workers’ rights in cooperatives, the planning of a harmonious and not speculative market economy, and so on. The cooperative movement was based on principles of national liberation (cooperatives were seen precisely as a tool in the struggle for self-determination), “self-defence” against exploitation and unforeseen economic conditions, democracy, citizenship, community, and moral development (for labour to feel fulfilled). The Congress of Cooperatives met from 27 to 29 March 1917, electing the head of the Central Rada Mykhailo Hrushevskyi as honorary chairman of the Congress, and Tuhan-Baranovskyi, proto-Keynesian economist and theorist of cooperative socialism, as chairman, and P. Khrystyuk, a famous organiser of the cooperative movement and member of the Central Committee of the Socialist Revolutionaries, as secretary. The **congress ended with a declaration of full support of the Central Rada and** called for the creation of Ukrainian autonomy and its local representation, the expansion of the role of cooperation, the introduction of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of life, and police reform.

The cooperative movement united millions of people and was the economic basis for the Ukrainian people.¹⁵

¹⁵ Vsevolod Holubnychy/Illia Vytanovych: Co-operative movement, in: Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine, ed. Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1984, URL: <https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CC%5CO%5CCo6operativemovement.htm>.

The Soviet Congress and Bolshevik aggression

The Soviet Congress was convened by the Bolsheviks, and it was a conspicuous attempt to overthrow the Ukrainian government and establish a Soviet one. Even though the Bolsheviks were only weakly represented — around 60 out of more than 2000 delegates were Bolsheviks¹⁶ — they tried to push their agenda: overthrowing the Central Rada. The first point was the election of the Presidium, which ended in a clear defeat for the Bolsheviks: Nine members came from the Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionaries and three from the Ukrainian Social Democrats, while the all-Russian Mensheviks, the representatives of the South-West front, the Baltic and the Black Sea could allocate one member each. Seven others came from other Russian factions, and only four from the Bolsheviks. The elected honorary chairman of the congress was Hrushevsky, the head of Central Rada.¹⁷ The Soviet Congress was generally in favour of Bolshevik propaganda — it regarded the Bolshevik party as a progressive revolutionary force — but the Bolshevik party was still an absolute minority. The date of the congress could not have been worse for the Ukrainian Bolsheviks either. The day before, the Russian Soviet government issued an ultimatum to the Ukrainian People's Republic and threatened war, but even the Ukrainian Bolsheviks were unaware of this.¹⁸ That settled the issue — workers, many of whom were Russian nationals, as well as other representatives of the Soviets, condemned the ultimatum. It was emphasised that the Bolshevik ultimatum continued the centralist, chauvinist “one and indivisible” policy of Tsarism and the former Kerensky government. **The Ukrainian Central Rada received overwhelming support and cemented its authority with the Soviets**, and the Bolshevik faction left the Congress and moved to Kharkiv to organise a counter-government.¹⁹ According to Bolsheviks, 124 delegates supported leaving the congress. However, the number is contested.

For a time, Ukrainian socialists cooperated with the Bolsheviks based on a seemingly similar ideology, as the authoritarian and imperialist nature of Bolshevism was not yet clear. An important factor was the mutual hatred of the Provisional Government, which was preparing a military offensive against the Central Rada. The Central Rada prevented the troops loyal to Kerensky from moving from

¹⁶ It is important to mention that there were a substantial number of people in the Bolshevik party, Ukrainians, who wanted an independent Ukraine or at least federative relations. Because the Bolshevik party was authoritarian and centralised, policy was usually decided in Petrograd. It is important to note that people like the prominent Bolshevik Vasyl Shakhrai were kicked out of the party for their position on the independence of Ukraine from Russia.

¹⁷ Ivan V. Chmil': Vseukraïns'kyj z'ïsd rad seljans'kych, rob. i soldat. Deputativ 1917 r., in: NAN Ukraïny (red.): Encyklopedija istorii Ukraïny (elektronnyj resurs), [Kyïv 2003] URL: http://resource.history.org.ua/cgi-bin/eiu/history.exe?&I21DBN=EIU&P21DBN=EIU&S21STN=1&S21REF=10&S21FMT=eiu_all&C21COM=S&S21CNR=20&S21P01=0&S21P02=0&S21P03=TRN=&S21COLORTERMS=0&S21STR=Vseukraïnskyj_z_izd_Ra

¹⁸ “What was our surprise, bitterness and indignation when Petlyura suddenly announced the Radnarkkom telegram on declaring war on Ukraine? Here it became clear that we had lost completely, and there was nothing else for us to do at the congress. At Petlyura's call the hall responded with a menacing “Get the Muscovites out of Ukraine!” - testifies E. Bosh. “Yes, the statement caused great indignation among the Congress majority and put us in a very difficult position because we did not yet know the text of the telegram in general, and we were not yet prepared for such a step from Petrograd comrades,” - H. Lapchynsky writes. Cf. Andrij Zdorov: Ukraïnc'kyj Žovten'. Robitnyčo-seljans'ka revoljucija v Ukraïni (listopad 1917 – ljutyj 1918 rr.), Odesa, 2007, p. 147-154.

¹⁹ Until the Russian-Bolshevik army stepped onto the territory of Ukraine, the Soviet government was highly democratic, and the Bolshevik party in Ukraine itself lacked authority — as local Soviets decided without party command. The Kharkiv government was even joined by some left radicals from Ukrainian social democracy who tried to pursue pro-Ukrainian policies. One could speculate that it was either a strategy to gain support or an honest attempt to organise a Soviet democracy by Ukrainian Bolsheviks — democracy incomparable with rising centralisation and authoritarianism in Petrograd.

Ukraine to Petrograd to join the Bolsheviks in their fight against Provisional government forces, trying to overthrow the Central Rada.

However, this cooperation was short-lived, as the Bolsheviks themselves tried to organise a coup d'état against the Central Rada. This uprising failed because the Ukrainian authorities discovered the preparation for the coup and disarmed around 7,000 Bolshevik soldiers in Kyiv. Another Bolshevik battalion was supposed to arrive in Kyiv by railroad to help in the fight against the Central Rada but was intercepted and disarmed. On November 27, the Soviet government began to deploy its forces in the border region. On November 30th, Bolshevik troops in Odesa attempted to overthrow the Ukrainian authority, which, after two days of skirmishes, ended in a Ukrainian victory and a truce.

On 4 December (the day of the Soviet Congress), the Council of People's Commissars (Soviet Government) sent an ultimatum to the Ukrainian Central Rada. The ultimatum demanded measures that would practically diminish the sovereignty of the Ukrainian People's Republic. The demands were formulated in a way that could be interpreted as a genuine concern of the Soviet Government. Nevertheless, the actions before and after the ultimatum, the prevailing party centralism and the widespread opinion in the Bolshevik party that Ukraine was an inseparable part of Russia, as well as the later invasions against the Crimean People's Republic, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Georgia and others, can confirm that imperialist occupation motives prompted the invasion of Ukraine. If the demands²⁰ had been met, they would probably have served as a means to overthrow the 'bourgeois' Central Rada. The war, which the Soviet government had started on the initiative of Lenin and Trotsky, brought chaos and destruction to Ukraine, with repressions and requisitions.

The Ukrainian Republic was later threatened by Russian White and Red forces, Poland and Romania, the German coup, the French intervention and economic sanctions from the Entente. Ukraine found itself in an international environment most hostile towards self-determination while simultaneously facing a lack of organised state capabilities, ammunition and military-industrial output, and available officers. These were the conditions under which the Ukrainian People's Republic had to exist.

²⁰ To maintain a common front with Russia, refuse to create a separate Ukrainian front. Not to let through Ukraine military units from the front to the Don region and other regions where a government hostile to the Bolshevik Council of People's Commissars of Russia was established. To allow Bolshevik troops to the Southern Front to fight against Oleksiy Kaledin. To stop the disarmament of Bolshevik regiments and Red Guard units in Ukraine.

3. Republican Reforms

3.1 Economic reforms

As the Ukrainian population was predominantly peasant, the main issue was land reform. The debate pitted ideas of broad socialisation against those of dividing the land into smallholdings. The latter meant that each peasant should receive as much land as he could work and that it should be distributed on a fair basis. Large and economically significant estates were to be nationalised.

On the “workers question”, the Ukrainian People’s Republic was one of the first countries to introduce the eight-hour workday, collective bargaining, freedom to strike and support for trade unions. In the turmoil of the revolution and the war, which caused immense destruction in Ukraine, the introduction of far-reaching socialisation of enterprises was impossible. Instead, the Ukrainian People’s Republic opted for a provisional corporatist model in which workers' committees jointly managed the enterprises with the state or private owners. A proactive labour inspection was introduced to collect statistics, maintain a constant dialogue with workers and commissions, to inform workers of their rights and train them to defend their rights and organise. This approach is very different from the current philosophy of labour inspection as a passive body which deals with complaints.

Cooperative enterprises were promoted as an alternative to private ones but existed alongside private enterprises. However, the majority of the economy was already cooperative, while the minority was state or privately controlled. When the Ukrainian People’s Republic existed, the Ukrainian economy was already predominantly cooperative, which in the language of the 20th century meant, “worker-owned” with the principle of “one person, one vote”.

As part of the implementation of the federalist-communal ideology of the Central Rada, the local authorities and self-governing bodies were given extensive autonomy and instruments to respond to local problems.

The majority of members of the Ukrainian Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries were in favour of more radical solutions, but they lacked the experienced cadres to realise their demands. The reforms already proposed were very radical and modern, had never been tried before and required high administrative capacity, which the Ukrainian People’s Republic did not have and came under intense pressure due to the post-revolutionary and war situation. Maintaining the army, preventing hunger, containing epidemics and forcing factories to be open to prevent the collapse of the entire economy took priority and made other reforms difficult.

3.2 National-personal autonomy and Jewish rights

The influence of the great Ukrainian socialist philosopher Mykhailo Drahomanov led Ukrainians to demand national autonomy for all nations. He especially seemed to influence opinions on the Jewish nation. While most (non-Jewish) social democrats did not recognise the Jews as a distinct national and cultural group, only as a religious group, it was Drahomanov who put forward demands to recognise

of Jews as a nation and for Jewish national autonomy. Subsequently, most Ukrainian parties adopted this kind of autonomy in their programmes, and, as Henry Abramson writes,²¹ some Ukrainian circles adopted the demand for Jewish autonomy even before Jewish organisations did so themselves. During the revolution, the Ukrainian Central Rada was led by the most prominent minority rights advocates, among them its chairman, Mykhailo Hrushevskyi. The Ukrainian government differed favourably from the Russian provisional government. The latter advocated “equal rights” but fell short of this demand and even tended to adopt chauvinistic positions when these equal rights were implemented in Ukraine. That made the Central Rada a strong competitor for the sympathies of the Jewish minority, which was strongly Russo-centric at that time.

All Jewish parties supported the proclamation of the Ukrainian People’s Republic, both the socialist-Zionist and the autonomist parties. However, conflicts arose with the Ukrainians’ aspiration for independence. “*For socialists, the preservation of the political integrity of the territory was especially important for maintaining the broadest possible ‘revolutionary front’, while for Zionists it meant the potential mobilisation of the largest mass of Jewry for their own political ends*”.²² Jewish parties were part of all-Russian politics, while Ukrainian parties were determined to separate their country from foreign and colonial Russian rule. There was no popular Jewish Ukrainian identity, as most Jews were part of the urban middle class, while Ukrainians were isolated as lower class in the villages. This led to a lack of understanding of both movements’ goals, general mood, and hostility based on class affiliation.

With the war that broke out between Ukrainians and Russian-Bolsheviks, the Central Rada began drafting a law on the national autonomy of minorities, and at the same time, the first wave of pogroms occurred (in January 1918). The Central Rada partially failed one of the most important tasks of the revolution — maintaining order and organizing an effective and disciplined army. The lack of administrative capabilities and officers were objective conditions that were extremely hard to overcome.

The influence of minorities in the Central Rada was relatively stronger than that of other representatives. For example, when Ukraine began to prepare a land reform, a Polish delegate who defended the interests of Polish landowners agitated against the reform and threatened to resign. The protest led to some exceptions to the reform.

Already with the Third Universal (Declaration of Ukrainian People’s Republic on autonomous relations with the Russian Republic), the Ukrainian government formed ministries for each “big nationality”; it had Jewish, Russian, and Polish ministries. The law on national autonomy, which was introduced with the Fourth Universal, once again significantly expanded the influence and representation of minorities. The law provided for every minority to have a list on which anyone could register, and depending on the number of people, **Ukraine was to provide a proportional share of the budget for the national activities of minorities**. The national unions were established and given the right **to take legislative initiative and govern** within the limits determined by the Constituent Assembly.

²¹ Henry Abramson: *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917–1920*, Cambridge/Mass., 1999, p. 34-35.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Although the law was the most progressive in the world at the time, it also had flaws. On the list, National identity was based only on personal choice and could easily be changed. This opened up the possibility of joining the National Union, which granted the person the most preferential conditions, such as tax breaks and financial support. There was also the question of mixed identities: did people see themselves as (Russified) Jews, a Ukrainians, as both or neither?

The passing of the law was associated with a national tragedy — because the Fourth Universal, on which people voted at that time, was opposed by all nationalities except the Poles. Jewish and Russian parties abstained or voted against it, showing that they supported autonomy rather than independence. Ukrainians felt very demoralised by this, as their struggle was not understood and supported.

All the decent people of Ukraine must assist with all their strength the work of the General Secretariat and the local administrations in their struggle with the pogroms, which are an inheritance of tsarism... We have issued decrees [to the effect] that every Ukrainian should consider our freedom insecure until we are free of national hatred and anti-Jewish pogroms, a black spot on our faces, which makes the entire world consider us a people who are still enslaved.

O. Shulgin, Minister for Nationality Affairs, October 1917²³

I, as General Secretary for Military Affairs in the Ukrainian People's Republic, call upon all of you, my comrades and friends, to work in unity during this difficult time. Be organized and unified, one for all and all for one. Our army is young, it is just standing on its feet, but it will live up to the reputation of our ancestors. All must unite for the Central Rada and its General Secretariat. Do not tolerate any pogroms or disorderly behavior, because tolerating such activity will disgrace the name of the Ukrainian army. No pogroms must occur on our land. I have already called upon Ukrainian troops to protect the order in Ukraine. Be ready throughout all of Ukraine, particularly on the railroads, to put a stop to any pogrom activity...This responsibility I can place only on your shoulders, and I will have trust in you, Ukrainian soldiers.

Symon Petlyura, November 1917²⁴

Throughout 1917, the Ukrainian government managed to persecute pogromists, defend the Jewish population and prevent quite successfully pogroms. The Jewish Military Union supported the Ukrainian Central Rada,²⁵ and in December 1917, they jointly called for the creation of separate Jewish forces to defend themselves against pogroms. However, this call was met with resistance from the Jewish socialist parties, who saw it as a hostility and break with the Russian Republic. Such units were not formed until January 1918. Henry Abramson surmises that the creation of such units at an earlier date could have prevented or limited the massive wave of pogroms in 1919.

With more anarchy and less control by the Ukrainian People's Republic, there were eventually more pogroms committed, both by the regular Ukrainian army and by the atamans (warlords) loyal to it—a great divide formed between the government and the governed. Decisive factors were the lack of control, the confused and contradictory policies, and the political environment. Nevertheless, there

²³ Ibid., p. 81.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 83

was a large wave of pogroms, mainly carried out by regular troops of the republic. That is to say, the Ukrainian People's Republic and its Directory were responsible for **not stopping the pogroms and not disciplining its forces**. At the same time, all the governments of the Ukrainian People's Republic showed a solid commitment to the rights and safety of the Jews but did nothing to address the rapidly deteriorating situation for which the Directory was accountable.

Jewish parties supported the Directory, and many Jewish representatives became more open to the idea of Ukrainian independence, but the pogroms worsened the relationship. Even at that time, the de facto head of the Jewish Ministry of Ukraine, Nahum Gergel, estimated that at least 16,700 people had been killed by Directory forces alone. Today, most historians agree that the actual numbers were much higher. The antisemitism in parts of the Ukrainian forces and the inability of the government to take effective action against the pogroms became a heavy burden. The government of the Ukrainian People's Republic always provided material help and compensation, investigated pogroms and prosecuted those responsible, but didn't do enough to prevent pogroms from happening in the first place. For all Ukrainians, that is a dark spot in the entire country's history. For a realistic, non-idealised view of history, we cannot avoid talking about pogroms, even though the government of the Ukrainian People's Republic made enormous social and political progress, also concerning the rights of Jews.

3.3 Cooperative movement and self-organisation

The modern moment is the right time for the development of cooperative production, and therefore -

a) in this case, cooperatives must take all measures to take production in Ukraine into their own hands, helping the broadest masses, as well as the young state in its economic strengthening and building up new forms of production;

*b) for the same purpose, the state must make every effort with factories, which are transferred to the state from temporary, wartime institutions - to be **passed into the hands of the people through their economic organisations - cooperatives and their unions**;²⁶*

c) for the same purpose, the state, in its plans for the establishment of new industrial enterprises that will be supplied in independent Ukraine, should rely mainly upon, and where possible, also exclusively on cooperatives...

*3. - Cooperatives and their unions must establish industrial enterprises **only to serve the needs of the population** of their district by agreement with the correspondent cooperative union.*

4. - Uncoordinated performances of individual unions and cooperatives outside the general plan are recognised as harmful to cooperation, and therefore, planning the construction and management of cooperative enterprises is entrusted to the central Ukrainian cooperative unions...

— *Third All-Ukrainian All-Cooperative Congress in Kyiv, on May 26-29, 1918*²⁷

²⁶ This is a unique example of cooperative privatisation of the state's property, underlying the very non-statist and decentral character of Ukrainian revolution.

²⁷ Illja Vitanovyč: *Istoriya Ukraïns'koho kooperativnoho ruchu*, New York, 1964, 194-195.

The cooperative movement was the basis for the most progressive Ukrainian economic reforms. Ukraine was a nation of peasants who lived in awful economic conditions. They were exploited and denied the means to move forward, to receive proper education, skills, or wealth. Instead, the Russians tried to destroy Ukrainians by an assimilation policy. Here, the cooperative movement appeared naturally, as Ukrainians tended to defend themselves collectively against injustice, poverty, and assimilation. The cooperative movement was not only concerned with the profit of the collectives but also became the centre of cultural life. The cooperative movement spent the money it earned on schools, grants, museums, libraries, reading groups, and much more. The movement had a semi-centralised structure, i.e. a regulatory authority organised by cooperatives from below, which planned the activities of the cooperatives to prevent anyone from making excessive profits at the expense of the well-being of Ukrainians. Cooperatives were also prevented from adopting an undemocratic platform, thereby restricting their employees from building unnecessary hierarchies. This phenomenon was labelled “pseudo-cooperative”, and a regulatory authority of cooperatives was supposed to intervene and impose “sanctions” on that type of cooperative. Thus, the co-op movement became an important part of Ukrainian life. Most Ukrainian politicians acquired management skills through cooperative activities, later using them to build the Central Rada. More than half of the Central Rada members gained their experience in administrative organisation and democratic governance through their participation in the cooperative movement.

The cooperative movement also grew with the Ukrainian revolution. In 1920, there were 22,000 cooperatives in Ukraine with 6 million members.²⁸ 60 per cent of these were organised in consumer cooperatives. The cooperatives managed to finance and found their institute, the Tuhon-Baranovsky's Cooperative Institute –the first of its kind in the world to be opened by a cooperative movement. Ukrainian cooperatives had solid ethics and semi-binding planning structures; they were well-organised and engaged with local communities. It was also a movement of education and national self-determination that actively participated in the revolutionary struggle.

In the end, when the Bolsheviks came, the cooperatives were transformed into pseudo-cooperatives. They were no longer free associations of producers but party-controlled entities or, as a rule, transformed into state enterprises. The cooperative movement was still trying to grow in this form when the Bolsheviks declared a New Economic policy. The movement attempted to realise its goals of self-defence and national self-determination but was strictly controlled. From then on, Western Ukraine became the torch-bearer of Ukrainian co-operation and actively won the Polish non-cooperative market.

²⁸ Vsevolod Holubnychy/Illia Vytanovych: Co-operative movement, in: Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine [1984], URL: <https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CC%5CO%5CCo6operativemovement.htm>. Cf. Illja Vytanovych: Istoriiia ukrains'koho kooperatyvnoho rukhu, New York, 1964.

3.4 Church reform

This last method of struggle of the rulers against the Christian community extends to the present time, bringing the life of the Ukrainian Church of Christ to the state when the faithful begin to restore and liberate the Christian community, oppressed by the sons of the “prince of this age”, the ruling classes.

Volodymyr Chekhivskyi “For Church, Christian community, against darkness”²⁹

National-communists participated in the politics of the Ukrainian People’s Republic and were an essential part of democracy. Even though their sectarian and authoritarian interpretation of the theory of class warfare was dangerous for democratic forms of government, they played an important and mostly positive part in the activities of the Ukrainian People’s Republic. When the radical left factions split, first from their parties and then from the republic itself, seats were reserved for national communists at all important political gatherings in case they would return to participate in Republican democracy. This was also the case at the Labour congress.

This background should explain why the highly talented national communist Volodymyr Chekhyvskyi, a clergyman and one of the organisers of church reform, was Prime Minister from December 1918 to February 1919.³⁰ He was one of the brightest and most interesting examples of Ukrainian Christian socialism — a surprisingly small intellectual tradition that drew its socialist analysis from the Christian faith. Although Ukrainian activists were mostly religious, they were ardently secular in both public policy and their views. They considered faith a separate entity from their political beliefs, which they justified from these theories rather than religion. However, the first Ukrainian political organisation — the Cyril-Methodius brotherhood — of which T. Shevchenko was a member, was based on a very ardently republican, democratic and strongly socially oriented, if not outright socialist, interpretation of Christianity. Another good example where Ukrainian priests and clergymen participated in socialist politics was the all-Russian socialist “Christian Brotherhood of Struggle”, which existed at the time of the 1905 Revolution.

Volodymyr Chekhivskyi was one of the people who later organised a church reform that created the autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church and finally separated it from the Moscow-oriented Church, which acted as a highly politicised pro-Tsarist and imperialist entity.

Chekhivskyi did everything in his power to promote a peaceful, tolerant and secular approach to religion while stirring the clergymen into a spirit of progressiveness and social reform. The Ukrainian Church immediately took its place as a comparatively progressive community, strongly connecting with the goals of Ukrainian independence and Ukrainian democracy.

The Ukrainian Church managed to survive until 1937, when, after more than a decade of repression and a new wave of Stalinist terror, it was destroyed and replaced by the Russian church, an institution which was more political than religious.

²⁹ Volodymyr Čechivs’kyj: *Za Cerkvu, Chrystovu hromadu, proty carstva t’my*, New York, 1974.

³⁰ Short terms of governments at that period were common. From December 1918 to November 1920, the Ukraine government changed de-facto six times, “jumping” from radical left, to apolitical, to moderate left, to left, to centrist and then to the apolitical semi-dictatorship of Petlyura.

4. Soviet Ukraine or Democratic-Socialist Ukraine?

(...) That is why the Bolsheviks began to oppose the parliament democracy and put forward the slogan: “All power to the Soviets of workers and Soldiers' Deputies”, which were elected based on non-universal, unequal, non-secret, and often not directly electoral rights; the population showed indifference to these Soviets, and therefore the communists managed to take the Soviets into their hands almost everywhere; where it did not succeed, there the communists declared the Soviets bourgeois, and organised a revolutionary committee of their own.³¹

B. Martos

The Ukrainian left-wing tradition split in the harsh conditions of the revolution. It was not divided on the axis between radicals and moderates but between different mindsets. Should Ukraine be a Soviet country, in the sense that it should be governed by a soviet congress of peasants and workers in a manner similar to syndicalism, along class lines? Or should socialists accept the slogan of a democratic republic and rally around it?

Those who adhered to the Soviet system but maintained the pro-Ukrainian and anti-Bolshevik position were later labelled “Shapovalists”, derived from the name of the main ideologue and one of the leaders of the Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionaries (main current), Mykyta Shapoval, and led by him and Nykyfor Hryhoriyv. After the Russian Civil War, this group, together with Viktor Chernov from the Russian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries and other socialist parties of various nationalities, created the Socialist League of New East, a group of anti-Bolshevik radical democratic socialists who supported national demands for freedom and independent states and self-governance.

Another group consisted mainly of Marxists and Western Ukrainians who viewed the Soviet platform as a restriction of democracy and the narrowing of citizenship to economic representation. Instead, they saw the future of Ukraine as a parliamentary, albeit very decentralised, robust democracy. Among the main critics were democratic socialists of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Workers' Party, such as the cooperative movement activist, Borys Martos, and other deputies of the Ukrainian Central Rada, Isaac Masepa and Panas Fedenko.

As a compromise, a convoluted “Labour principle” which combined Soviet and Parliamentary democracy was adopted at the Labour Congress from 23 to 28 January 1919.

Tensions were high, as “the left” of the Republic, the National-Communists, together with Makhno, demanded the disbanding of the Directory and election of a fully Soviet government (but a Soviet government of an independent, united Ukraine), while “the right”, namely the democratic socialists from the Ukrainian Social Democratic Workers' party demanded the restoration of parliamentary democracy. The Ukrainian government was in constant disarray, which weakened potential resistance to the Russian-Bolshevik invasion. At this time, Ukraine was moving from the compromise “Labour principle”, which satisfied no one, to a parliamentary state under the influence of Symon Petlyura. The Ukrainian People's Republic began to disintegrate. Due to military pressure from all sides and the collapse of the front line, the government was practically unable to function. As the military defeats increased, so did the political differences.

³¹ Borys Martos: *Vyzvol'nyj zdybh Ukraïny*, New York, 1989, p. 192 (translation by the author).

5. The idea of the Ukrainian People's Republic

In 1921, the Ukrainian People's Republic collapsed, and Bolshevik forces occupied the entire Ukraine. The illusions of a semi-democratic and semi-independent Bolshevik Soviet government quickly disappeared, and Ukraine was rapidly incorporated into a system of colonial rule by Lenin's government. This process was finalised by the introduction of the centralised planned economy by Stalin.

It would be reasonable to argue that, in some way, the Ukrainian SSR's existence resulted from the struggle of Ukrainian revolutionaries. The Ukrainian SSR was not simply the continuation of the former province of the Russian Empire under Bolshevik leadership, nor was it due to Bolshevik notions of some sort of Ukrainian right to exist. The same can be said about Ukrainisation. The Ukrainian cultural revival in the 1920s was the result of the previous anti-Bolshevik struggles involving more than one million Ukrainian soldiers and rebels, which made the occupation of Ukraine impossible without substantial compromises. Even after the collapse of the front, there were numerous peasant uprisings against the Bolsheviks in Ukraine, whether anarchist, republican or national communist. Student circles, partisan detachments and self-defence groups were active until the genocide in 1932-1933.³²

The memory of the republic inspired many people to resist Soviet rule and fight for an independent state — because they already had an example to follow. The Ukrainian People's Republic became a mobilizing myth in a long history of struggle against foreign rule and occupation, and conceptual discussions about Ukraine's liberation could not be conducted without the experience of the Republic. However, when the Republic lost to the Russian-Bolshevik forces, the question arose: Why did we lose? The various groups gave different answers to this question. For the right-wing, it was socialist populism; for the social democrats, the situation was too bad to achieve more;³³ for the socialist revolutionaries and national communists, it was mainly passivity in organizing social reforms.³⁴ The later radical right of OUN was the most critical. They concluded that it was democracy that had weakened the Republic, while the authoritarian and totalitarian forces that opposed the Republic had been victorious.

However, it is quite remarkable how the various forces repeatedly adopted the slogan of the Ukrainian People's Republic, even if they acted in completely different contexts. In 1942, the “left-wing” split of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) under the leadership of Ivan Mytrynha, together with Taras Bulba-Borovets, joined republican, nationalists and national communist groups and founded the so-called “first Ukrainian Insurgent Army” with the primary goal of restoring the Ukrainian People's Republic.³⁵ The same was true of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army organised by

³² Arsen L. Zinčenko: Povstannja Seljans'ki proty bil'sovyckoho režymu 1929-1932, in: NAN Ukraïny (red.): Encyklopedija istorii Ukraïny (elektronnyj resurs), [n. d.] URL: http://www.history.org.ua/?termin=Povstannia_sel_1929_1932.

³³ Isaak P. Mazepa: Bol'shevizm i okupacija Ukraïny. Socijal'no-jekonomyčni pryčyny nedozrilosti syl ukraïns'koï revoljucii, L'viv/Kyïv, 1922; Volodymyr Vynnyčenko: Vidrodsennja nacii. Istorija ukraïns'koï revoljucii (marec 1917 r. – hruden' 1919), Kyïv/Viden', 1920.

³⁴ Mykyta Šapoval: Velyka revoljucija i ukraïns'ka byzbol'na programa, Praha, 1927.

³⁵ For the „left wing“ of the OUN cf. the interview with Borys Levitskyi (who was later employed to the RES for some years (<http://poliskasich.org.ua/?p=630>)). For the national-communists cf.:

Banderites, which, after its transformation into a mass organisation, was actively joined by new members from all regions of Ukraine. Under pressure from its newly arrived partisans, the Insurgent Army could no longer adhere to its totalitarian far-right program. It was forced to adopt a social democratic program, incorporating leading figures of the Ukrainian People's Republic into its ranks and creating a semi-democratic pre-parliament with a socialist revolutionary at its head.³⁶

Outside of Ukraine, a whole range of different organisations took up the cause of restoring the socially progressive democratic republic in the form of the Ukrainian People's Republic. First and foremost, the Ukrainian National Rada, a coalition government formed by the Ukrainian People's Republic government in exile and joined by the OUN(M) (Melnyk), the OUN(R) (Bandera), the Ukrainian National Democratic Union (UNDO), the labour-left Ukrainian Revolutionary Democratic Party (URDP) led by Ivan Bahryaniy, the URDP-socialists; the Ukrainian National State Union (UNDS), the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries (UPSR), the Ukrainian Socialist Radical Party (USRP), the Ukrainian Social Democratic Workers' Party (USDWP) and the Ukrainian Agrarian party. OUN(M) and OUN(R) soon left³⁷ the Rada as it was incompatible with their authoritarian and totalitarian approaches, while other parties emphasised the Republican heritage and its struggle for social and national rights.

Dissidents also carried the Ukrainian People's Republic on their banners. On the night of 22 January 1973, for example, student dissidents carried yellow-blue flags and placed a proclamation that read:

*"Dear comrades! Today, 55 years have passed since the day when the independence of the Ukrainian state was proclaimed by the IV Universal of the Central Rada in Kyiv. This historical act demonstrated the will of the Ukrainian people, their original desire for independence. However, today's Soviet official historiography tries to show this event in the eyes of our generation as anti-people and anti-democratic. This gross distortion of historical reality is indignantly condemned by the conscious people. This is condemned by everyone who cares about the interests of the nation."*³⁸

Under the influence of the distorted USSR social system, the social appeal of the Ukrainian People's Republic was slowly downplayed, and national, anti-colonial and democratic aspects of it were disproportionately brought to the centre of the discussion. This led to very imbalanced views on the legacy of the Republic. This is the situation that still exists. The horrible trauma left by the Soviet Union led to the suppression of discussion of the boldest, most progressive social and economic reforms ever produced by the Ukrainian people in their struggle for social and national independence and later in their fight to realise a modern, democratic socialist vision.

Volodymyr V. Dz'bak: Konflikty v OUN(b) i ich vplyv na ukraïns'kyj Ruch Oporu (1941-1944 rr.), Kyïv, 2005, p. 36. Cf. also T. Bul'ba-Borovec': Za ščo boreťsja Ukraïns'ka Povstans'ka Armija (UPA) (1942 r.)?, URL: https://hai-nyzhnyk.in.ua/doc2/1942.UPA_Borovec.php.

³⁶ Jevhen Staxiv: Rol' Schidnoï Ukraïny u formuvanni novych idejno-polityčnych zasad OUN-b, in: NAH Ukraïny, Instytut ukraïnoznavstva im. I. Krip'jakevyča (red.): Ukraïns'ka Povstans'ka Armija u borot'bi proty totalitarnych režymiv, L'viv, 2024, p. 51-55.

³⁷ Then 'left-democratic' split of OUN in emigration, so-called 'dviykary', rejoined Ukrainian National Council.

³⁸ Borys Zacharov: Rosochac'ka grupa, 24.5.2005, URL: <https://museum.khpg.org/1116887093>.