

**BOLSHEVIKS  
IN THE  
UKRAINE**

**THE SECOND CAMPAIGN, 1918-1919**

**By Arthur E. Adams**

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## *Preface*

THE SUBJECT OF THIS BOOK is the Bolsheviks' second campaign in the Ukraine from November 1918 to June 1919 and its immediate consequences for the Bolsheviks and the Ukraine. The effort to bring European Russia's southern provinces under Communist control and establish a firm Soviet government there began hesitantly, tottered through eight months of experiment and error, and collapsed in disgrace. Yet, the experience was of immense significance for the Communist party and its leaders, for it revealed to them the depths of their ignorance about the chaotic realities of the area they hoped to rule. Both during the struggle and afterward, they feverishly re-examined their aims and methods, seeking to identify and correct their mistakes. From such study came policies designed to succeed in the Ukraine, along with greater centralization in the administrative machinery of both party and government.

The underlying theme of this book is the nature and importance of the interaction between the Communist party and Ukrainian realities during the formative period of the Soviet regime. It is generally agreed that the Bolsheviks' effort to consolidate their rule in Russia from 1917 to 1921 toughened their system of thought, changed their ideas about how to govern, and perfected their techniques for ruling. The second campaign in the Ukraine represents

but one episode in this process, yet it is of particular significance because it demonstrates with remarkable clarity the impact of factors other than Communist ideology upon the shaping of the Soviet regime. The roles of these "other factors" need underlining lest the attempt to comprehend the interrelationships between ideas and events be reduced to an esoteric discussion in political philosophy. I have, therefore, emphasized the operation of several factors that demonstrate both the complexity of the events in the Ukraine and the processes by which the Communists, who sought to change the world, were themselves subtly changed by the pressures of that world.

Of the "other factors" given special emphasis here, the first is the influence of the Ukrainian experience upon the development of Bolshevik administrative techniques. Lenin very early understood that a well-organized, tightly centralized party was essential to successful revolutionary action, and in 1917 his party was far better organized and more effectively led than any of its rivals. But to say this is to say only that the party was well organized for the seizure of power. Actually the Bolsheviks of 1917 were very poorly prepared to exercise political authority over a great multinational state. Even in late 1918, a year after coming to power, the party as a whole had neither grasped the fundamentals of administrative efficiency nor transformed itself into the host of hardheaded administrators its self-imposed tasks demanded. Nowhere is this shortcoming more dramatically displayed than in the Ukrainian campaign. Here, both the party and the government it established exhibited every variety of administrative inadequacy; they steadily worsened the situation by refusing to adjust to the Ukrainian situation as they found it, by clinging to preconceived theories about what ought to be; and eventually they gave up even the pretense of governing. Similarly, the Red Army created for fighting in the Ukraine during these months was little more than a number of partisan sections—poorly

trained, undisciplined, and habitually sullen or rebellious. Efficient administrative organization came only through experience, as events compelled the Bolsheviks to learn how to govern.

A second point of emphasis is the extremely important role of military action during the formative period. Many students of the early years of Soviet history customarily mention in passing that the civil war (1918–20) had considerable influence upon the course of political, economic, and social developments; but the precise relationship of civil affairs with military events during these years of violence and death is seldom examined in any detail. To ignore the influence of the war in this fashion is comparable to attempting an exposition of United States history from 1861 to 1865 without discussing at length the American Civil War and its impact upon the intellectual and political climate of our nation. My opinion is that without detailed knowledge of the military situation from moment to moment, it is impossible to comprehend the reasons for important party decisions, the rapid formation and disappearance of new administrative expedients, or the mercurial changefulness of the sociopolitical situation in the Ukraine. Victory and catastrophe alike dictated many decisions made at the highest levels of Communist party and Soviet government; therefore, in this book, military action has been systematically emphasized.

Attention is also focused upon several human factors not usually stressed in studies of early Soviet history. The campaign in the Ukraine demonstrates irrefutably the important influence that men at the middle levels of party, government, and army had upon policy-making and the general course of events. Communists, today more or less unknown, who worked on the geographical peripheries of what was to become the Soviet Union, either made decisions that were subsequently accepted at the apex of the Communist hierarchy, or by their aggressiveness and independence

created conditions that forced acceptance of decisions they desired. Outside party and soviet circles, Cossack and peasant partisan leaders also directly influenced the course of the Ukrainian campaign. Similarly, the thousands of peasants who repeatedly rose with rifles or hayforks in hand to defend their right to live without interference from any foreign rule played influential roles that are not easily weighed, yet must not be ignored. Finally, the influence of the Ukrainian nationalist leaders and their parties cannot be discounted. Although the nationalists lost their fight for independence, they roused the Ukrainian people to a new and dynamic consciousness of themselves as a nation; thus they helped to alter the very character of the society the Bolsheviks sought to master. I have attempted to give each of these groups the prominence in this account that the evidence available to me indicates it deserves.

There can be no doubt that Communist ideology and the Communist party led by Lenin were predominant factors in determining the character of the Soviet political system. It is just as obvious, however, that many other forces contributed to shaping the new order. The tedious scholasticism that sees all history as the working out of one or another system of ideas, Leninist or otherwise, too often tends to suppress the rich variety, the passions and personalities, the vast and fascinating and often unfathomable processes that make human history. It is my hope that this study of bolshevism in the Ukraine will have some small influence in bringing the human dimensions of Soviet history into better perspective.

I should like to express my gratitude to all those who have helped to make this study possible. The staffs of the Hoover Library at Stanford University, the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, and the Widener Library at Harvard have been helpful beyond any call of duty. I am especially indebted to the Houghton Library at Harvard for permission to make use of the Trotsky Archives.

I also wish to thank the Ford Foundation for its fellowship, the Social Science Research Council for a research grant, and Michigan State University for generous financial support over a period of several years. Grateful acknowledgement is also made to *The Slavonic and East European Review* and to *The Review of Politics* for permission to publish, with considerable revisions, portions of my articles that have appeared in their pages.

Friends and colleagues have aided me far more than they can realize. I am grateful to Alex Inkeles for helping me to follow my own interests in historical research, to André de Saint-Rat for making his valuable private collection of civil war materials available to me and for reading the manuscript in its early stages. John S. Reshetar very kindly read a large portion of the manuscript and gave me detailed and constructive criticism which did much to correct my understanding of Ukrainian political affairs. My colleagues Richard E. Sullivan and Frederick Williams also read the manuscript and made many valuable suggestions that improved the work immeasurably. Marian Neal Ash, of the Yale University Press, helped immensely with discerning and meticulous work in preparing the manuscript for publication. Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my wife, without whom this work could not have been accomplished.

ARTHUR E. ADAMS

*January 5, 1963*  
*Munich*



## *Contents*

1. Introduction	3
2. The Campaign Begins	25
3. From Kursk to Kiev	65
4. Communist Party and Soviet Government	115
5. A Partisan Fighter for Bolshevism	149
6. The Race to Odessa	186
7. Party Meetings, Resolutions, and Uprisings	215
8. International Complications and Internal Tensions	238
9. Rebellion	278
10. Bolshevik Administrative Breakdown	313
11. Defeat	349
12. Conclusion	387
Epilogue	402
Bibliography	405
Index	427
 Maps	
The Ukraine, 1917	6
Red Army Fronts: About December 1, 1918	34
The Southern Front	244



# **BOLSHEVIKS IN THE UKRAINE**



## CHAPTER 1

### *Introduction*

WITH THE COLLAPSE of Russia's imperial government in early 1917, a number of ardent Ukrainian nationalists moved to secure a limited degree of cultural and political autonomy for the Ukraine. The activities of these nationalists soon aroused many Ukrainians to a consciousness of their unique cultural heritage and to the exciting possibilities of national independence. Continuing revolution, civil war, and a series of foreign invasions unleashed other violent forces that had little to do with nationalism. Class conflicts were sharpened by bitter economic need. The chaotic aspirations of warlike Cossacks and murderous peasant brigands (*haidamaky*) fell athwart the socialist dreams of industrial workers and the democratic plans of well-to-do townsmen. Through four painful years of conflict, involving at one time or another most of the population, it seemed possible that at least some of the Ukrainians' hopes might be realized. But in the end there were too many obstacles. In early 1921 the might of the Red Army finally confirmed the right of Lenin's Russian Communist party to determine the Ukraine's destiny.

It is the purpose of this book to describe the Bolsheviks' efforts to win and hold the Ukraine during the Second Campaign (November 1918 to June 1919), and to explain both the causes and the significance of their failure. The

achievement of this purpose requires consideration of how the Ukrainian independence movement was destroyed, as much by the tragic heritage of the Ukrainian people as by the errors of nationalist leaders and the attacks of hostile armies. Necessary, too, is an examination of the singularly complex social turmoil that reigned during these months. Finally, it is essential to study the tortuous process of trial and error by which the Bolsheviks perfected during the Second Campaign the policies and techniques of administration used in later years to consolidate their power in the Ukraine. To set these events in context the present chapter offers a brief review of some of the most pertinent developments in the Ukraine from March 1917 until November 1918.

Immediately after the Tsar's abdication in March 1917, the members of the Society of Ukrainian Progressives at Kiev formed a small *rada* (council), headed by the venerated nationalist historian Mikhailo Hrushevsky. Subsequently this council increased its membership to several hundred and began calling itself the "Central Rada." Russia's new Provisional Government at Petrograd objected to the Rada, but was too weak to suppress it. When officials of the two centers met to formalize their relations, the Provisional Government refused to authorize Ukrainian autonomy, despite the fact that the Rada leaders sought, not separation from Russia, but the right to govern themselves within the all-Russian democratic federation of states they hoped would supersede the centralism of the past.

Tempers heated rapidly among the nationalists. Vladimir Vinnichenko, a dedicated nationalist author and leading member of the Ukrainian Social Democratic party, became the guiding spirit of the Rada. In July a General Secretariat, literally a Rada Cabinet, was formed, with Vinnichenko at its head and the fiery journalist, Simon Petlyura, as Secretary of Military Affairs. With the Rada's approval the General Secretariat arrogated to itself all legislative and execu-

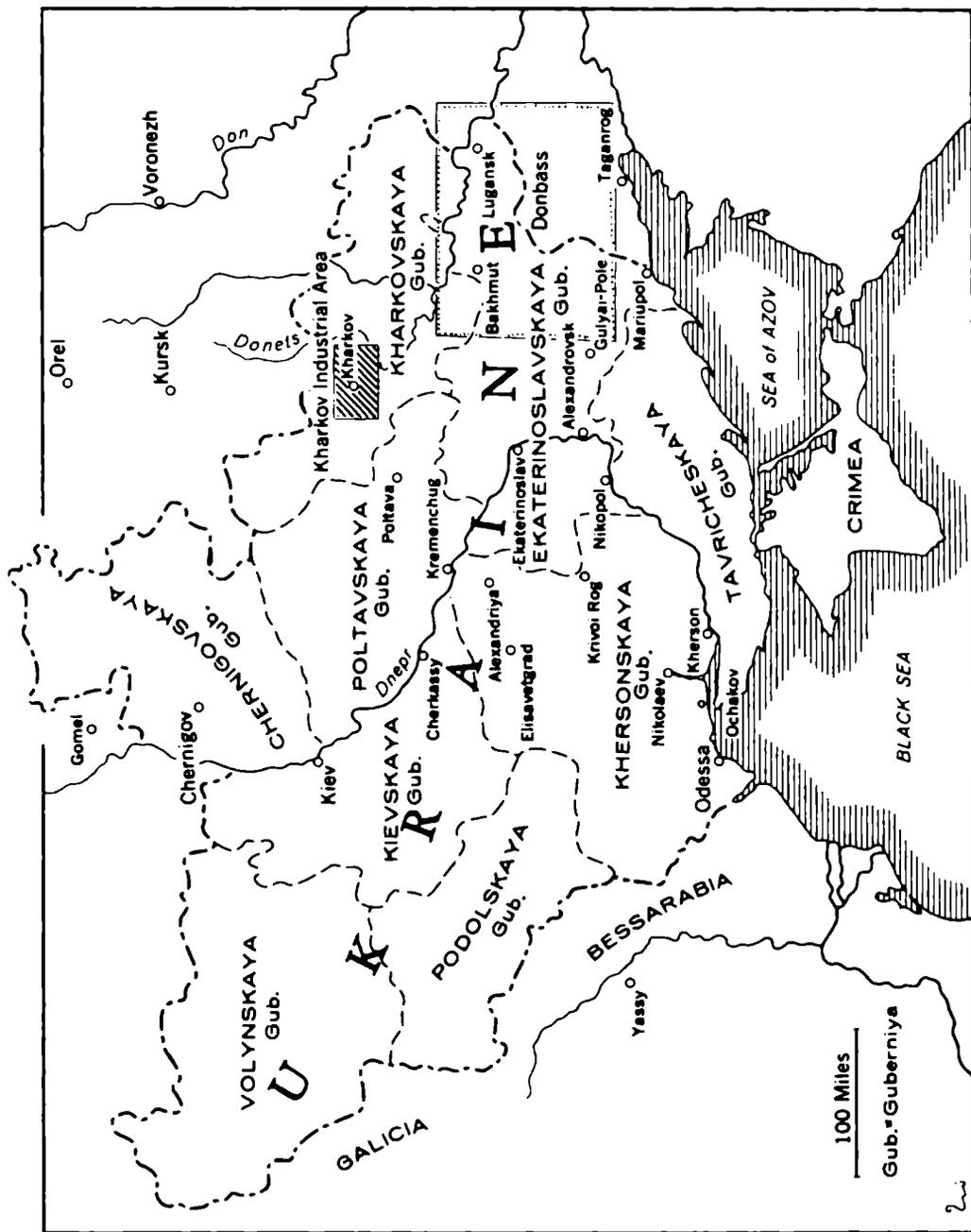
tive authority in the Ukraine, although it still refrained from declaring the Ukraine separate from Russia.<sup>1</sup> Bickering between the officials of the Rada and the Provisional Government went on until the Bolshevik takeover at Petrograd.

When the Bolsheviks came to power in the north, the Rada refused to recognize them as the new rulers of all Russia and announced that it would continue to exercise authority "until convocation of the 'Ukrainian National Constituent Assembly,' freely elected," which would "form a government for the whole of the territory of the Ukrainian Republic."<sup>2</sup> To the Bolsheviks this was "counterrevolutionary defiance," and Red troops invaded the Ukraine.

Toward the end of January 1918, as Communist forces neared Kiev, the leaders of the Rada found themselves staring into a grim future. To save themselves they took a bold step, which to them appeared perfectly logical. At Brest-Litovsk, where Leon Trotsky was discussing peace terms with the Central Powers, Rada representatives asserted their right to make a separate peace for the Ukraine. In a series of scenes as rapid as a runaway cinema strip, the Bolsheviks found themselves outmaneuvered. Early in February the Austrian foreign minister, Count Ottokar Czernin, announced German and Austrian recognition of the Ukrainian Popular Republic, as "an independent, free, and

1. The nine governments shown on the accompanying map were claimed by the Ukrainian Rada in its Third Universal of November 1917; Dmytro Doroshenko, *Istoriya Ukrainy, 1917-1923 rr.* (History of the Ukraine, 1917-23) (2 vols. Uzhgorod, 1930-32; New York, 1954), 1, 179-80; for discussion of the ethnic boundaries of the Ukraine, see *Entsyklopediya ukrainoznavstva* (Encyclopedia of Knowledge about the Ukraine), ed. Volodymyr Kubiiiovych and Zenon Kuzela (2 vols. Munich-New York, 1949), 1, pt. 1, 19-23, and see ethnographic map accompanying vol. 1, pt. 3; for present-day boundaries, see *Bolshaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya* (Great Soviet Encyclopedia), ed. O. Yu. Shmidt (2d ed. Moscow, 1949- ), 44 (1956), maps following p. 66.

2. John S. Reshetar, Jr., *The Ukrainian Revolution, 1917-1920* (Princeton, 1952), p. 89.



### THE UKRAINE, 1917

Sources: Antonov-Ovschenko, *Zapiski o grazhdanskoi voine*, 4, Sketch-Map 6; *Bolshaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya* (2d ed.), 50, opp. p. 200; and the territorial claims of the Rada in November 1917. The Donbass and Kharkov industrial areas were suggested by the map of the Ukrainian S.S.R. on pp. 436-37 of Theodore Shabad, *Geography of the USSR: A Regional Survey* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1951).

sovereign state.”<sup>3</sup> Recognition was followed on February 9 by the signing of a peace treaty between the Ukrainian and the Austrian and German governments. Ironically, Bolshevik forces took Kiev the same day the treaty was signed. Two days earlier the Rada had fled west to Zhitomir; thus the Central Powers were left in the unpleasant situation of carrying on diplomatic relations with a government that had ceased to govern.<sup>4</sup>

This situation was quickly reversed. German armies advanced into Russia after Trotsky announced at Brest-Litovsk that the Soviet power would neither fight nor make peace. They halted in the north when the Bolsheviks capitulated, but continued their advance in the south at the request of Rada representatives. On March 1 German troops occupied Kiev, bringing along a reorganized Rada government. Two days later the Bolsheviks accepted German peace terms, agreeing to recognize Ukrainian independence, clear the new nation of Russian troops, and cease all propaganda attacks against the Rada.

Through March and April the Central Powers spread both military and civil rule across the Ukraine. German troops occupied Kharkov on April 20 and extended their authority over the Donbass in May, checking their expansion at the boundaries of the Don Cossack region, east of the Ukraine. Austrian divisions occupied Odessa in April and subsequently advanced to Kherson and Ekaterinoslav.

For German officials the Rada had one main purpose—to facilitate collection of food and other supplies for shipment to Germany. In a series of agreements with the Rada they specified enormous quantities of grain and other foods to be assembled and shipped westward. The Rada, however, was incapable of fulfilling these obligations, and because Germany was hungry and Austria starved the occupation

3. *Ibid.*, p. 115; W. E. D. Allen, *The Ukraine: A History* (Cambridge, 1941), p. 286.

4. Doroshenko, *1*, 294, 316.

authorities soon began to cast around for more effective means of bleeding the Ukraine.

On April 28–29 the Germans supported a coup d'état carried out by General Paul Skoropadski, who revived an old title and declared himself *Hetman* (chief) of the Ukraine. Early in the eighteenth century, after the Cossack Hetman Mazepa betrayed Russia by joining forces with Sweden's Charles XII, Peter the Great had bestowed the title "Hetman" upon one of Skoropadski's ancestors. The twentieth-century Hetman boldly exploited this personal heritage and used the panoply of the Ukrainian past to veil his collaboration with Germany. During the World War he had demonstrated his loyalty to Russia by serving with distinction as an aide-de-camp to Nicholas II. One of the Ukraine's wealthiest land owners, he maintained close relations with other great farmers, with whom he shared an aspiration to preserve the predominance of the landed aristocracy in the Ukraine. His connection with the League of Landowners, an organization dedicated to strengthening the status of wealthy proprietors, made him particularly valuable to the Germans, who realized that the foodstuffs they wanted could best be drawn from big farms.<sup>5</sup>

Skoropadski created a façade of nationalism by celebrating elaborate religious-historical ceremonies and by wearing dramatic Cossack uniforms, but his government was little more than a front for German arms. Two days after his seizure of power he issued a decree ordering the restoration of property to its former owners and forbidding peasant committees "from interfering in the disposition of the land."<sup>6</sup> Thereafter, he worked hard at executing the

5. V. Myakotin, "Iz nedalekogo proshlogo" (Out of the Recent Past), in S. A. Alekseev, comp., *Revolutsiya na Ukraine po memuaram belykh* (Revolution in the Ukraine, According to the Memoirs of the "Whites"), ed. N. N. Popov (Moscow-Leningrad, 1930), p. 222.

6. Reshetar, pp. 173–74; I. Mazepa, *Ukraina v ohni i buri revolyutsii 1917–1921* (The Ukraine in the Fire and Turmoil of Revolution, 1917–21) (2d ed. 3 vols. n.p., 1950), 1, 54–55, 58.

orders of the German commander, Field Marshal von Eichhorn, employing both his own police units and German troops as grain collectors.

The Hetman's political activities quickly won him immense unpopularity. Not only did he imprison Simon Petlyura and other nationalist leaders, but he also let it be known that he was an ardent monarchist and that were it not for his hatred of the Bolsheviki, he would favor union of the Ukraine with Russia.<sup>7</sup> He welcomed Russian aristocrats, merchants, and intellectuals who fled south to escape bolshevism and plot its destruction. Thousands of former imperialist officers flocked to Kiev and were absorbed into his military organization. To hotheaded Ukrainian nationalists and socialists it seemed that the Ukraine was being transformed into a "bourgeois Mecca," where Russian and Ukrainian speculators were protected by German and pseudo-Cossack gendarmes.<sup>8</sup>

Beneath the pomp of Skoropadski's government and the power of German arms, the populace of the Ukraine grew ever more restless. All through 1917 and early 1918 soldiers deserting from Russia's defeated armies had streamed homeward, bringing along revolutionary fervor and stolen weapons. Returning to their villages, these men put their military training to good use by ganging together with other peasants to rob the rich man's farm and divide his land among themselves. Driven by a deep lust for land, the Ukraine's peasants took the law into their own hands, then hid their weapons and prepared to hang on to the property they had seized. When foreign troops or Skoropadski's gendarmes moved to seize grain or restore property to its former owners, armed resistance broke out.

Other virulent springs of peasant discontent threatened

7. Myakotin, p. 223; Vladimir Vinnichenko, *Vidrozhennya natsii* (Rebirth of the Nation) (3 vols. Kiev-Vienna, 1920), 3, 76, 107.

8. John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *The Forgotten Peace: Brest-Litovsk, March 1918* (New York, 1939), p. 323; Vinnichenko, 3, 61-84; Mazepa, 1, 54, 58.

to burst their dams. Long a reviler of the many Jews who lived in the Ukraine, the southern peasant (whether Ukrainian or Russian in origin) was always ready to believe rumors that Jews practiced the ritual murder of Christians and hoarded great wealth in their homes. Such rumors were particularly appealing in the revolutionary years, when the Jewish population furnished the peasant with an ideal scapegoat on which to vent the pent-up tensions and frustrations of revolution and foreign occupation. In 1918 the angry "dark people" of the Ukraine were primed and ready for bloody pogroms.

Poverty and disorder heightened peasant resentment of the Russians clustered in the big cities, who had long monopolized power and property in the Ukraine. Hatred of the "Billygoats" (*Katsapy*)—as the Ukrainians contemptuously called the Russians—mixed and blended with the peasants' war against the city. "Countryman" in the Ukraine had always pictured "Cityman" as a ruthless profiteer, fattening grandly by fleecing "Countryman." The fact that merchants were almost always either Katsap or Jew only strengthened the peasants' hostility.<sup>9</sup> In 1918 they desperately needed the manufactured goods of the city—boots and cloth, nails, kitchen utensils, and plows—but exchange of goods had broken down. Angry and impatient, they fell back on the well-remembered techniques of their haidamak ancestors. Armed bands plundered shops and warehouses and defended peasant villages against food collectors and

9. Pavlo Khrystyuk, *Zamitky i materiyaly do istorii Ukrainskoi revolyutsii, 1917-1920 rr.* (Notes and Materials for the History of the Ukrainian Revolution, 1917-20) (4 vols. Vienna, 1921-22), 4, 4; Khrystyuk indicates that from 75 to 80 per cent of the influential positions in Ukrainian cities were in Russian or in Jewish hands; cf. M. Kubanin, *Makhnovshchina: Krestyanskoe dvizhenie v stepnoi Ukraine v gody grazhdanskoi voiny* (The Makhno Movement: A Peasant Movement in the Ukraine Steppe in the Years of the Civil War) (Leningrad [1927]), pp. 27-30; Jurij Borys, *The Russian Communist Party and the Sovietization of the Ukraine* (Stockholm, 1960), pp. 62-63, 66.

German patrols. Thus, under Skoropadski the peasants were at odds with landowners and cities, perilously close to open war with Jews, Russians, and Germans, and actively hostile to the Hetman's forces. Against all these enemies, they were to prove themselves truculent and bitter fighters whose passions lay far beyond the reach of reason.

The hot embers of peasant revolt were fanned into flame by innumerable political activists and military adventurers, who appeared among the villages and collected small bands of armed followers by preaching what the peasants and Cossacks most wanted to hear. Excited and illiterate villagers gulped down every wild political creed from formal anarchism to "true" or "nonparty bolshevism." Ex-colonels, self-styled generals, Cossack *atamany* and *batky* blossomed like wild roses in this revolutionary summertime.<sup>10</sup> Some gained a degree of control over isolated areas and declared themselves "autonomous, independent, indivisible," mouthing the grand words they had heard from Kiev or Moscow. Others revived oft-told legends of the Zaporozhian Cossacks and orated in favor of the Cossacks' anarchic traditions of freedom from all authority. Everyone understood that a new day was dawning, but down through the ranks, from the village intelligentsia to the lowest strata of the peasantry, there was no strong consensus of opinion about what form the new order should take.

In May, landowners were murdered in growing numbers, and acts of violence against Skoropadski's officials and German troops increased.<sup>11</sup> One partisan commander later wrote that in his district during this month eighteen separate battalions of partisans, numbering some 20,000 men, were organized.<sup>12</sup> By June the whole country was up in

10. *Ataman*—chief of a Cossack regiment; *batko*—father, elder.

11. Iwan Majstrenko, *Borot'bism: A Chapter in the History of Ukrainian Communism* (New York, 1954), pp. 62–63.

12. I. Kapulovski, "Organizatsiya vosstaniya protiv getmana" (The Organization of Rebellion against the Hetman), *Letopis revolyutsii* (Annals of the Revolution), no. 4 (1923), p. 98.

arms, led by men who championed a wide variety of reform programs. Ukrainian Social Revolutionaries sparked important partisan actions, and representatives of the Russian Social Revolutionary party plotted and carried out, on July 30, the assassination of Field Marshal von Eichhorn. According to one of Skoropadski's intelligence agents, in the area of greatest conflict during July there were some 30,000 partisans, armed with two batteries of field artillery and 200 machine guns. These forces grew larger each day as new groups from neighboring areas joined up.<sup>13</sup> German troops, dispatched on punitive expeditions, "burning whole villages with the purpose of suppressing the uprisings, only provoked still greater fury against themselves."<sup>14</sup> It is estimated that German losses reached 19,000.<sup>15</sup> As for the peasants, though they came away from much of the fighting badly beaten, they managed to capture good supplies of weapons and cartridges, and they successfully destroyed important stores of German munitions.

The growing inability of Skoropadski's government to cope with these problems was paralleled by a deterioration of morale and discipline among the occupation forces. The German combat units that had entered the country in March had since been pulled out for service in France, to be replaced by older men from home-guard units. Among Austro-Hungarian troops desertions were fantastically high, and effectiveness extremely low. Small German and Austrian outposts, scattered thinly in the key towns and linked by patrols that moved along the main roads, were vulnerable to the vicious hit-and-hide tactics of the peasant partisans,

13. Ya. Shelygin, "Partizanskaya borba s getmanshchinoi i avstro-germanskoj okkupatsiei" (Partisan Struggle with the Hetman and the Austro-German Occupation), *Litopys revolyutsii*, no. 6 [33] (1928), p. 64.

14. M. Gorky, I. Mints, and R. Eideman, eds., *Krakh germanskoj okkupatsii na Ukraine (po dokumentam okkupantov)* (The Failure of the German Occupation in the Ukraine [According to the Documents of the Occupiers]) (Moscow, 1936), p. 168.

15. Reshetar, p. 174.

and the attrition of constant scrimmaging did much to undermine their morale. Soon German and Austro-Hungarian soldiers began to sympathize openly with the Ukrainian peasant and to complain of the continuous fighting. Following the German failures on the Western Front early in August, some Austrian troops became openly mutinous.

While Skoropadski and the Germans attempted to carry on with reactionary government and military force, the Ukrainian nationalists organized a coalition of party and nonparty groups, called the "Ukrainian National Union." Hoping for the eventual establishment of an independent Ukrainian republic, the leaders of this National Union tried first to exert influence upon Skoropadski's government. But as the Hetman's regime became increasingly rigid and suppressive, the leadership of the Union grew more and more hostile.<sup>16</sup> By September Vinnichenko, who led the National Union, was actively questioning Skoropadski's ability to rule the country. The Hetman's government had become so infirm that the Germans were compelled to consider seriously Vinnichenko's plea that the National Union be permitted to "Ukrainize" the Hetman's government. On October 10 the German Foreign Office finally ordered occupation headquarters at Kiev to accept nationalist Ukrainians in the government. But it was too late to patch things up. In Austria-Hungary revolts were shaking the government; and in the Ukraine, crowds of Austrian troops mutinied, killed their officers, and started for home, "selling their arms and munitions to the local population."<sup>17</sup>

Bolshevik activities in the Ukraine during the events just described followed a pattern all their own, remarkable neither for sense nor success. In particular, these early

16. Allen, pp. 288, 300; Vinnichenko, 3, 72-74, 82-83, 87-97, 105-07.

17. Allen, p. 300.

activities created an exceedingly awkward relationship between the Russian Communist party and the Communists who worked in the Ukraine. They also encouraged some Communists in the Ukraine to support political and administrative policies sharply opposed to those developed by Lenin. Both the organizational relationship and the dissensions about policy were to complicate endlessly the Bolshevik effort to win the Ukraine during the Second Campaign.

Prior to 1918 all Bolsheviks were members of the Russian party and were directed from Petrograd. The administrative weaknesses of this arrangement became glaringly evident early in 1918, when the great men of the party, engrossed in the struggle to seize and hold power in the north, failed to provide adequate leadership for the Communists in the south. Lack of authoritative supervision, combined with a violent conflict of interests between the Ukraine's industrial and agricultural sectors, led to the formation of several Bolshevik factions, each of which worked in relative isolation from the others and evolved its own formulas for winning the Ukraine. Among these factions some were fully prepared to follow policies that would lead them away from the Russian party or put them in opposition to its policies. Others, more loyal to the idea of a united party and a central government for all Russia, nonetheless believed that special tactics should be developed to fit the unique Ukrainian situation. Finally, some factions supported a program of complete submission to the Russian party.

Factional differences were heightened by doctrinal muddles. Of these, the most important was the question of the stand to be taken toward Ukrainian nationalism. The position of Lenin and the Russian party was that every national group should enjoy the right of self-determination, including the right to secede from the new Soviet state. But Bolshevik leaders on the Ukraine's Right Bank (west of the Dnepr) considered Ukrainian nationalism a counterrevolu-

tionary movement, standing in the way of the world's march toward an international classless society. These antination-alists judged Lenin's position untenable. The men of the Left Bank took a different position. While they firmly endorsed Lenin's principle of self-determination in theory, in practice they could not bring themselves to define the central and eastern industrial centers (Kharkov, Ekaterinoslav, Krivoi Rog, and the Donbass) as Ukrainian. Conscious of the immense value of these regions for the new Communist state, they simply refused to consider the territorial claims of the Ukrainian nationalists.<sup>18</sup> Tenacious adherence to these disparate opinions was to provoke bitter debate within the Communist ranks and to complicate the formation of a rational policy toward the Ukrainian nationalists.

When German victory brought Bolshevik withdrawal from the Ukraine early in 1918, representatives of the several Communist factions working in the Ukraine found themselves fortuitously gathered at the city of Taganrog, on the Azov Sea. In mid-April they convened to discuss policies for the immediate future. Although numerous interests and views were represented at this meeting, two Communist groups were dominant.<sup>19</sup> The first of these, the Ekaterinoslavs, came from the central and eastern regions and represented the urban proletariat of the industrial cities. This group believed that Communist victory in the Ukraine would come through patient organizational work concen-

18. See M. Ravich-Cherkasski, *Istoriya Kommunisticheskoi partii (b-ov) Ukrainy* (History of the Communist Party [Bolshevik] of the Ukraine) (Kharkov, 1923), pp. 5-6, 9-40; N. N. Popov, *Ocherk istorii Kommunisticheskoi partii (bolshevikov) Ukrainy* (An Outline of the History of the Communist Party [Bolshevik] of the Ukraine) (2d ed. Simferopol, 1929), pp. 5-11; Majstrenko, pp. 141-42; Mykola Skrypnyk, *Statti i promovy* (Articles and Speeches), vol. 1: *Proletarska revolyutsiya na Ukraini* (The Proletarian Revolution in the Ukraine) (Kharkov, 1930), pp. 144-50, 159-60, 168.

19. Ravich-Cherkasski, pp. 50-54, 60; Popov, pp. 157-58; Leonard Schapiro, *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy: Political Opposition in the Soviet State, First Phase, 1917-1922* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), pp. 133-38.

trated upon industrial laborers. For the Ekaterinoslavs the main Bolshevik struggle all through 1917 had been against the Russian Provisional Government rather than against the Ukrainian Rada, and in 1918 their enemies were the leaders of the Don Cossack and Volunteer Armies (Generals Peter Krasnov and Anton Denikin), operating to the east and south of the Ukraine. Since Krasnov and Denikin were also Lenin's chief enemies, it was natural for the Ekaterinoslavs to consider themselves an integral part of the Russian party and to perceive no really vital differences in the tasks facing the northern and southern sections of the party.<sup>20</sup>

On the other side at the Taganrog assembly were the men from Kiev and Poltava, the "Kievians." Two men, Yuri Pyatakov and Vladimir Zatonski, led the Kievian group. Both had been born in the Ukraine; both were destined to play important roles in Bolshevik affairs. The brilliant Pyatakov had joined the party about 1910, after starting his revolutionary career as an anarchist. His professorially benign expression masked an iron will that had already carried him to the top in the Bolshevik hierarchy. Zatonski was a former high school physics teacher who had once managed a chemical laboratory in Kiev. He had belonged for a time to the Menshevik branch of the Russian Social Democratic Labor party and had become a Bolshevik only in February 1917. Later in the same year he had worked at Kiev for closer cooperation between the Rada and the Bolsheviks, rising to the presidency of the Bolshevik party organization at Kiev after Lenin's seizure of power.

Pyatakov and Zatonski had helped to establish the first Communist Ukrainian government at Kharkov in January 1918. In February, after the Red Army captured Kiev, they had moved their government to Kiev for a stay of three weeks; then, when the Germans surged into the land at the invitation of the Rada, they had retreated toward the east

20. Ravich-Cherkasski, pp. 54-55, 57-58.

to reorganize and work for the future. Partly as a result of these experiences, they defined the essential Bolshevik task as liberation of the Ukraine from the rule of the Germans and from the influence of Ukrainian nationalists. Hailing from a predominantly agricultural area, they placed their hopes for revolutionary action, not upon the urban proletariat alone, but also upon the peasantry and the lower classes of towns and villages.

The main differences of opinion were underlined at the Taganrog meeting by the stand each group took toward the establishment of an independent Ukrainian Communist party. The Kievians demanded it; but the Ekaterinoslavs, recognizing no fundamental difference between workers at Petrograd and workers at Kharkov or Ekaterinoslav and regarding themselves as but one segment of the general front, saw no reason for a separate party. Under Pyatakov's direction, however, the Kievians succeeded in pushing through a resolution calling for the establishment of a Ukrainian Communist party with its own independent central committee. They also proposed a name for the new party, the "Ukrainian Bolshevik Party," but the Ekaterinoslavs countered with another suggestion—the "Russian Bolshevik Party, Ukrainian Branch." The compromise finally adopted was: the "Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Ukraine" (KP[b]U).<sup>21</sup>

Adoption of a new title did little to smooth out the tactical differences between the factions. After the Taganrog meeting the Ekaterinoslavs continued to place all emphasis upon work among the urban proletariat. They persistently argued that the German-Austrian regime in the Ukraine might last a long time; therefore, they concluded, the newly organized KP(b)U could best achieve its objectives by quietly organizing and preparing the workers for a fairly distant struggle. Representing the views of the majority of the

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-57.

Communists in the Ukraine and supporting the policies of Lenin, the Ekaterinoslavs became known also as the "Right."

On the "Left," Pyatakov, Zatonski, and their colleagues continued to consider the Ukrainian proletariat too small and underdeveloped to play a lone role in the next act of Ukrainian revolution. They hoped to make the numerically overwhelming peasantry the target of Bolshevik agitation, in order to rouse the peasants to increased guerrilla action against Skoropadski and the Germans. Furthermore, because they feared peasant hostility toward Russian intervention and believed they understood the Ukrainian situation better than the leaders in the north, the Kievians wanted the Russian party to follow a policy of "hands off." Their demand for a Ukrainian party guided by an independent central committee was in part the consequence of their evaluation of the growing pressures of Ukrainian chauvinism; they clearly understood the Ukrainians' conviction that no matter what mask Russian control of the Ukraine might choose to wear, the result would always be rule by foreigners. Present, too, was the thought that the Ukrainian organization might function as an autonomous party within an all-union (or international) federation of Communist parties. This belief that a separate Communist party of the Ukraine could solve Ukrainian problems more successfully and more intelligently than Moscow was to be an important cause of incessant strife not only between the KP(b)U and the Russian party but also between the factions within the KP(b)U.<sup>22</sup>

22. It must be emphasized that the Pyatakov group was not moved by Ukrainian nationalism. Pyatakov himself boldly refused to accept Lenin's principle of self-determination of nationalities, since he believed nationalism to be bourgeois chauvinism and counterrevolutionary. The Kievians were concerned with the *most efficient means* of carrying out the Communist revolution in the Ukraine. Because of their closeness to Ukrainian events and intimate knowledge of Ukrainian affairs, they believed that their KP(b)U could best make the necessary decisions and provide the most in-

At Taganrog the Kievians had their way. The assembly resolved that the KP(b)U should be an independent party, related to the Russian party as one member of a federation of equals. Formal relations, it was decided rather vaguely, would be worked out through "the recently formed International Bureau for the organization of the Third International," which was viewed as a future central coordinating bureau for all Communist parties. The Kievians also won a decisive majority in the new party's Organizational Bureau (Orgburo), and Pyatakov, elected its head, quickly published a manifesto in the name of the "Soviet Government of the Ukraine" summoning the Ukrainian people to rebellion.<sup>23</sup>

After the Taganrog meeting the Orgburo moved to Moscow. From there, and from an area known as the "Neutral Zone"—a buffer strip established by Russian-German agreement along the northern boundary of the Ukraine—the KP(b)U sent agitators and partisan cadres into the Ukraine.<sup>24</sup> Refugees driven into the Neutral Zone by Ger-

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telligent leadership. There was also a close relationship between the Left group of the KP(b)U and the Left Communists of the Russian Communist party (Bolshevik). In part this was the result of an overlapping membership between RKP(b) and KP(b)U. But also, the Russian Left Communists, who violently opposed Lenin's peace with the Germans and the growing centralization of authority, found strong support among Pyatakov's followers, who wanted desperately to gain the leadership of haidamak rebellions already in progress and to drive the Germans out of the Ukraine. Popov, pp. 174-75; Skrypnyk, 1, 160, 207-08. For definitive treatments of the controversy between Left and Right wings in the RKP(b), see Robert V. Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), chaps. 1-4; and Schapiro, chaps. 6-8.

23. Ravich-Cherkasski, pp. 57, 60-63.

24. The "Neutral Zone" was designed to prevent clashes between Soviet troops and those of the Germans. Established by agreements between local commanders, the area varied in width from about six to twenty-five miles. In theory it was a no man's land; in reality both sides constantly trespassed. Pyatakov's Orgburo employed it as a collecting point for Ukrainian refugees and as a staging area for partisan action in the Ukraine. See V. Aussem, "K

man suppressive actions in June and July were soon enlisted in the Communist ranks. By sending these recruits back into the Ukraine, the Bolsheviks were able to build up extensive but tenuous ties with the scattered bands fighting Skoropadski and the Germans.

Early in July, when the First Congress of the KP(b)U convened at Moscow, experience had increased the Kievians' assurance. Pyatakov's colleague, the Kievian Communist Andrei Bubnov, a seasoned "Old Bolshevik" and underground worker, claimed great success in organizing partisan action in German-held territory. By July there had been many uprisings, some of them remarkably effective.<sup>25</sup> Although the Bolshevik role in these uprisings had been rather minor, party cells were reportedly springing up in many towns and villages, and Pyatakov could argue at the congress that he headed a center well on its way toward making Communist rule in the Ukraine a reality under the Germans' very noses.

The Kievians' aggressive prosecution of partisan war against the Germans and their outspoken efforts to run the KP(b)U as an independent party provoked the ire of Lenin. In his view the Kievians' partisan activities threatened to drag Moscow into a new and unwanted war with the Germans; moreover, their independence challenged his deep faith in central authority. Lenin, therefore, endeavored to curb the Pyatakov forces. But the Kievians were riding the

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istorii povstanchestva na Ukraine" (On the History of Rebellion in the Ukraine) *Letopis revolyutsii*, no. 5 [20] (1926), pp. 7-9; V. Primakov, "Borba za sovetскую vlast na Ukraine" (The Struggle for Soviet Power in the Ukraine), in *Pyat let Krasnoi armii: Shornik statei, 1918-1923* (Five Years of the Red Army: Collected Articles, 1918-23) (Moscow, 1923), p. 183; Popov, pp. 172-73.

25. Shelygin, pp. 61-88; Gorky et al., *Krakh germanskoi okkupatsii*, pp. 165-71; A. S. Bubnov, S. S. Kamenev, M. N. Tukhachevski, and R. P. Eide-man, eds., *Grazhdanskaya voina, 1918-1921* (Civil War, 1918-21) (3 vols. Moscow-Leningrad, 1928-30), 1, 35-44, 46-52.

crest of a wave. Despite Lenin's powerful opposition they again won high places in the Central Committee of the KP(b)U. At the same time, however, they lost some of their independence, for Lenin demanded and received recognition of his right to make all general policy decisions for the Ukraine.<sup>26</sup>

Undaunted by Lenin's opposition, the Kievians worked out an ambitious scheme for an all-Ukrainian rebellion. Late in July, the saturnine but overoptimistic Bubnov counted the partisan units listed in his files and concluded that thousands of Ukrainians were primed for battle against the Germans. Basing his battle plans on the tall tales of partisan refugees, Bubnov thought in terms of hundreds of thousands, when in reality some of the "battalions" reported to him numbered less than a hundred men without weapons.<sup>27</sup> The general uprising he and Pyatakov ordered for August 8 was a Communist disaster. German troops retaliated swiftly. Some partisan units were caught totally unprepared for action; others failed to receive Bubnov's directives at all, or received them too late to save themselves from destruction. Beaten remnants of these units fled into the Neutral Zone, and for the moment the hopes of the Kievians were shattered. Through September and October they licked their wounds, worked at reconstituting crippled

26. *Komunistichna partiya Ukrainy v rezolyutsiyakh i rishennyakh zizdiv i konferentsi 1918-1956* (The Communist Party of the Ukraine in the Resolutions and Decrees of the Congresses and Conferences, 1918-56) (Kiev, 1958), pp. 9-19. For efforts of the RKP(b) to influence the First Assembly, see Popov, pp. 176-78; Ravich-Cherkasski, pp. 195-211.

27. The members of the KP(b)U in the Neutral Zone were prone to make exaggerated claims about the degree of their influence in the Ukraine, and Communists writing after the civil war do not moderate these claims. In reality, the amount of influence exercised by the KP(b)U upon partisan actions from April through July 1918 cannot be exactly determined, but the available evidence indicates that it was relatively small. See Shelygin, pp. 61-88, 96, 98-101; Kapulovski, pp. 95-102; Aussem, pp. 9-10; Primakov, pp. 184-85.

units and building new ones, and feverishly laid plans for future action.<sup>28</sup>

The Bubnov fiasco, combined with Lenin's stubborn refusal to share the leadership of his party, brought about the Kievians' temporary eclipse. When the Second Congress of the KP(b)U met at Moscow in October under heavy pressure from the Russian party, it elected a Rightist, pro-Russian, and pro-urban Central Committee. Lenin strengthened the Russian party's control mechanism still further by securing the election of Joseph Stalin to the Central Committee of the KP(b)U. Formal recognition was thereby given to Stalin's important work as Lenin's watchdog and liaison agent between the Russian Communist party (RKP) and the KP(b)U, roles he had played unofficially for some time. The Kievians angrily withdrew their candidates; nevertheless, the principal Kievian leaders were given places on the Central Committee. Thus Pyatakov and Zatonski were compelled to remain and witness the destruction of the policies they had created.<sup>29</sup> With the Ekaterinoslavs in power and obediently following the will of the Russian party, the Second Congress resolved to emphasize party work among urban industrial workers and to revert to the Rightist tactic of patient propaganda in preparation for the German defeat. The collapse of the German Empire abruptly destroyed the rationale for this policy.

With the fall of Kaiser William's government on November 9, the German occupation authorities' greatest concern became protection of the rail lines leading from Russia.

28. Shelygin, p. 89; A. S. Bubnov, "Istoriya odnogo partizanskogo shtaba" (History of a Partisan Staff), in *Grazhdanskaya voyna, 1*, 35-45; Ravich-Cherkasski, pp. 84-85.

29. Ravich-Cherkasski, pp. 90-91, 96-98; Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923* (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), p. 136; Popov, pp. 178-80; *Komunistichna partiya Ukrainy*, pp. 24-28.

The ranks—demoralized, homesick, and haunted by memories of Napoleon's frozen thousands—formed soldiers' soviets and prepared to cooperate with whatever native elements could best help them return to the fatherland. Meanwhile, as German efforts to hold and defend the main rail centers provoked rumors that they were stripping the country prior to withdrawal, peasant raiders concentrated on rail lines, halted trains, and divested the fleeing troops of their weapons, food, and warm clothing.<sup>30</sup>

The Ukraine blazed with innumerable acts of violence against the despised Skoropadski's local officials and gendarme sections. Russian refugees who had jammed into Ukrainian cities frantically struggled to secure transportation to the western borders or the ports of the Black Sea. At a secret meeting held on the evening of November 13, the Ukrainian National Union formed an underground nationalist government, the "Directory," with Vinnichenko at its head. In the name of the Ukrainian People's Republic, this body immediately issued a summons to rebellion against the Hetman that was enthusiastically received by thousands of peasants and townfolk, who knew little or nothing of the Directory's political aspirations but furiously hated Skoropadski.<sup>31</sup> Casting about for support, the Hetman announced, on November 14, the future federation of the Ukraine with a non-Bolshevik Russian state. It was apparent to all that he would retain authority only as long as German troops remained at Kiev.

While Skoropadski's government rocked, a dangerous rift appeared in the leadership of the newly proclaimed Directory. The Ukrainian Social Democrat Simon Petlyura, but recently released from prison, began suddenly to be-

30. Gorky et al., *Krakh germanskoi okkupatsii*, pp. 187-90; M. G. Rafes, *Dva goda revolyutsii na Ukraine: Evolyutsiya i rashol "Bunda"* (Two Years of Revolution in the Ukraine: Evolution and Schism in the Bund) (Moscow, 1920), p. 105.

31. Mazepa, 1, 59; Vinnichenko, 3, 107-14.

have as if he were the sole leader of the nationalist liberation movement. Although he was but one member of the Directory, Petlyura addressed a special "Universal" to the Ukrainian people in which he named himself "Supreme Commander" and demagogically summoned loyal Ukrainians to join him against the traitor Skoropadski. He then prepared to advance on Kiev at the head of swiftly collecting hordes of peasants and deserters from Skoropadski's forces. By these actions, Petlyura insinuated himself into the scene as a national hero fighting to free the Ukraine from the Germans and the Hetman. His appropriation of personal leadership of the liberation movement thrust the Directory and its reform programs into the background.

Beyond the Ukrainian borders to the east General Krasnov's anti-Bolshevik Don Cossacks prepared to move into the eastern Ukrainian areas about to be evacuated by the Germans, hoping to seize Kharkov and the Donbass. General Denikin, commander of the Volunteer Army, whose flanks extended from the Caspian Sea to the Sea of Azov, gazed hopefully toward Kiev, dreaming of a united and indivisible Russian state; he now called upon his officer detachments in various Ukrainian cities to seize local control. From the Black Sea ports rumors reached Bolshevik headquarters at Moscow that Allied intervention might begin at any hour. The Ukraine seemed to offer itself to the strong military force that could arrive first.

## CHAPTER 2

### *The Campaign Begins*

ON NOVEMBER 12 the Revolutionary Military Council of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR), headed by Trotsky, took steps to push Bolshevik forces into the Ukraine. Acting on instructions from Lenin's Council of People's Commissars, the Military Council called Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko from the Urals Front and gave him orders to invade the Ukraine within ten days. A Ukrainian Revolutionary Military Council was immediately formed, with Joseph Stalin, Yuri Pyatakov, Vladimir Zatonsky, and Antonov-Ovseenko as members, and with a mission that was far from simple. The new committee had to approach the Ukrainian borders, throw an army together, form an effective government, and advance into the chaos—before the Directory could firmly establish its authority, before Denikin's officer groups could take over the cities, and before Allied armies could arrive to commandeer German arms and equipment and occupy the land.<sup>1</sup>

The man selected to lead the military action, Antonov-Ovseenko, was destined to play a most significant role in Ukrainian military affairs during the next six and a half

1. Vladimir A. Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski o grazhdanskoi voine* (Notes on the Civil War) (4 vols. Moscow, 1924–33), 3 (1932), 11–15; Nikolai Kukurin, *Kak srazhalas revolyutsiya* (How the Revolution Was Fought) (2 vols. Moscow-Leningrad, 1925–26), 2, 38–39, 73–75.

months. Short and slender and studious-seeming, at thirty-four he looked far more like some impecunious school-teacher or feckless Russian intellectual than a revolutionary warrior. Pince-nez rode high up on his long nose; straight, reddish hair grew in a ragged Bolshevik "bob," and a red mustache emphasized the wideness of his mouth. His eager gaze and somewhat nearsighted eyes made him seem very youthful, perhaps too innocent of worldly affairs to be of much use to the Bolsheviks, but in reality Antonov was one of Lenin's more experienced military troubleshooters. In addition, he had worked in the Ukraine enough to be a specialist in its problems. Born in the Ukraine, he completed his military engineering studies at a junker academy in St. Petersburg in 1904. A revolutionary at seventeen, he joined the Russian Social Democratic Worker's party in 1902, and as a member of the Menshevik wing of that party he was active in Poland during the Revolution of 1905. In 1906 he organized a revolt at Sevastopol, for which he was arrested and sentenced to death, a sentence later commuted to twenty years of penal servitude. He escaped, turned up in Paris in 1910, and there assisted Leon Trotsky at the work of editing several Menshevik émigré newspapers.<sup>2</sup> Somewhat grudgingly Trotsky later recalled that during the years of the First World War, Antonov "conducted in the Paris paper *Nashe Slovo*, a review of the military situation, and frequently revealed a gift for guessing out strategy."<sup>3</sup>

In June of 1917 Antonov returned to Russia, immediately joined the Bolshevik party, and in November 1917 played an important and dramatic part in the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks. As a member of Trotsky's Military Revolu-

2. *Bolshaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya*, ed., O. Yu. Shmidt (1st ed. 65 vols. Moscow, 1926-47), 3, 96-97; Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky, 1879-1921* (New York-London, 1954), p. 221.

3. Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. Max Eastman (3 vols. New York, 1936), 3, 299.

tionary Council, which directed the military action that drove Kerensky and his Provisional Government from power, Antonov was one of the three who planned the military strategy and led the action. Trotsky, his memory always implacably vague when it did not report himself or Lenin as the outstanding figure in past events, reluctantly gave Antonov first place when he later admitted that the military scheme was "formulated, it seems, by Antonov."<sup>4</sup> Capture of the Winter Palace, the tragicomic last act of the Bolshevik seizure of power in Petrograd, was also directed and led by Antonov, with the somewhat embarrassing assistance of the Bolshevik Nikolai Podvoiski, whose mind was too exuberant and complex for the simple tactical problems involved. The Winter Palace, where paralyzed ministers of the moribund Provisional Government huddled behind the pantaloons of an hysterical women's battalion, a few squads of student officers, and weary veterans, was the last symbol of Kerensky's authority. Its capture was imperative. Implementing an elaborate plan ornamented with signal lanterns, guns that would not fire, a navy cruiser, too many troops, and too many delays, Antonov and Podvoiski did take it.<sup>5</sup> William Henry Chamberlin has eloquently described the final moments of the Provisional Government in the Winter Palace's Malachite Room:

A last line of faithful junkers guarded the door of the room where the Ministers were sitting; but it was decided to surrender without further resistance. A slight figure, with a sharp face, a broad-brimmed hat, such as artists used to wear in Bohemian quarters, and a *pince-nez*, burst into the room and announced: "In the name of the Military Revolutionary Committee I declare you arrested."<sup>6</sup>

4. *Ibid.*, 3, 219.

5. *Ibid.*, 3, 247-301.

6. *The Russian Revolution, 1917-1921* (2 vols. New York, 1952), 1, 319.

The man in the artist's hat was Antonov. Years later Trotsky characterized him as an "impulsive optimist," called his military skill "impressionable amateurism," and remembered that "Antonov-Ovseenko was . . . far more apt at improvisation than calculation."<sup>7</sup> Written about 1930, Trotsky's judgments may have been colored by the long history of his own losing struggle with Stalin and by Antonov's support of Stalin, but they represent a reasonably accurate evaluation of the Antonov of 1918. However, in the first months of the Bolshevik regime, everyone, including Trotsky himself, was an amateur. Indeed, this was a period when unquenchable optimism, brute courage, a passionate and uncompromising devotion to the Communist cause, and inexhaustible energy were far more essential than mere professional knowledge. Antonov had these and more; his flair for improvising effective combat units out of revolutionary chaos was a priceless talent, and he had already found numerous opportunities to employ it.

Immediately after the November revolution he had held a series of important politico-military positions. As chief of the field staff of the Military Revolutionary Council during the first months of the Bolshevik regime, he had worked closely with General Staff Headquarters on Russia's Western Front and had also devised plans for halting the threat of attack by General G. Kornilov, then the strongest leader of reaction. In the first Bolshevik government, the Commissariat for Military and Naval Affairs was headed by a collegium of three men: N. V. Krylenko, P. E. Dybenko, and Antonov. During this period he also served as commander of the Petrograd Military District, and was responsible for the organization and direction of the city's defense.

All these positions brought Antonov into continuous contact with the party leaders. Lenin frequently called him

7. Trotsky, *The Russian Revolution*, 3, 298-99.

to the highest councils and asked his opinion or gave him important missions.<sup>8</sup> That Antonov did not shun responsibility is well illustrated by the readiness with which he stepped into a new job in December 1917. During conferences about ways and means of halting the dangerous incursions from the south by Kornilov and the Cossack general Aleksei Kaledin, Lenin requested his Military Revolutionary Council to name someone who could successfully command Red Forces against Kaledin. In his memoirs Antonov dryly reports: "I proposed myself for this work."<sup>9</sup> His proposal was accepted. Thus, on December 13, 1917, he went south to command the Red Army's first campaign in the Ukraine.

At the beginning the first campaign was very successful. Antonov selected for his chief of staff the Social Revolutionary Mikhail Muravev, an unstable and bloodthirsty ex-Tsarist captain, whose ambitions were boundless and whose abilities as a general in the field proved to be more than adequate.<sup>10</sup> Muravev captured Kiev, and a Soviet Ukrainian government was established there in February 1918.<sup>11</sup> To the southeast other forces under Antonov's direction fought against Kornilov and Kaledin, until early in February when Kaledin, his ranks weakened by internal dissensions, Communist infiltration, and the battering of Antonov's troops, committed suicide. Later the same month the Volunteer Army of Kornilov and Mikhail Alexeev was driven southeastward beyond the Don. Antonov lost some of his amateur standing in this fighting, for the generals he defeated had won exalted names in the imperial service: Alexeev had long served as Tsar Nicholas' chief of staff on the Western Front, and Kornilov had become famous during the war for his personal courage.

8. Antonov, *1*, 9-10, 25-26.

9. *Ibid.*, *1*, 46.

10. *Ibid.*, *1*, 78-85.

11. Chamberlin, *1*, 375.

When Trotsky's struggle to hold up the German advance on the Western Front by the sheer force of wit and words broke down, Antonov was forced to turn away from the Don and face the west. On February 28, he received a telegram from Lenin asking him "to take command over all Soviet troops fighting against the German-Austrian invasion of the Ukraine."<sup>12</sup> But that was a losing battle and a short one. On March 3, when Lenin signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Antonov was ordered to pull his forces eastward away from the advancing German army of occupation. In May the military staff which he headed was dissolved.

After German occupation had ended his usefulness in the Ukraine, Antonov went to the Eastern Front, where he served loyally but spent much time studying the situation in the Ukraine, longing to reconquer that vast region. In October while commanding an army group in the bitter fighting at Kazan, he also found time to involve himself in a heated newspaper debate about what ought to be done next in the Ukraine. Like Yuri Pyatakov, he was convinced that the German occupation was "in a condition of decomposition" and that quick action could win the Ukraine for communism."<sup>13</sup>

Summoned from the front in early November to receive instructions for the new invasion of the Ukraine, Antonov heard an official report on the Ukrainian situation. According to the information he was given, the Germans still commanded two corps, well armed but suffering from serious disciplinary problems. The Austrian divisions were falling apart. Skoropadski was believed to have an army of about 60,000 men (20,000 of them regular units). Denikin's representatives at Kiev and elsewhere in the Ukraine had amassed from 10,000 to 15,000 troops, and an officers' shock unit being organized for Denikin's Volunteer Army was expected to number about 5,000 officers later in the month.

12. Antonov, *1*, 298.

13. *Ibid.*, 2, 297.

It appeared that the main struggle would be Petlyura's war against Skoropadski, while at the secondary level Denikin's Volunteer Army, which stood for the re-establishment of an indivisible Russian state, could be expected to fight Petlyura, Bolsheviks, and Germans as well. In the official estimates reported to Antonov, the section headed "Our Forces" counted: "Two Ukrainian rebel [partisan] divisions scattered in the . . . Neutral Zone," the first numbering 3,000 men, the second, only 500 men. These units were said to have "almost no artillery," uniforms and arms were "in extremely bad shape," and discipline was thought to be "completely absent." Other partisan units were presumed to be scattered about through the Ukraine, but information was vague.<sup>14</sup> After a quick survey of this situation, the doughty Antonov concluded that his forces would be "adequate for the most active operations."<sup>15</sup>

He well understood what had to be done to win the Ukraine. The strategic keys were the great cities. Capture of rail centers, ports, warehouses, munition dumps, and factories would give him resources for further struggle, while denying them to his enemies. If he won the cities, urban industrial workers, susceptible to communist doctrine, could be persuaded to furnish significant native political support. Possessing the wealth of the cities, the Bolshevik party could woo the peasant masses, who would probably give their loyalty to the power that held the reins firmly and distributed manufactured goods cheaply.

On November 14, as newly appointed commander of a Bolshevik army at that moment existing only on paper, Antonov submitted a detailed strategic plan to I. I. Vatsetis, commander in chief of all Bolshevik forces. His plan was ambitious and daring. Essentially, it outlined three main objectives: First, Kharkov was to be taken as soon as possible, to serve as a base for further expansion into the rich

14. *Ibid.*, 3, 14.

15. *Ibid.*, 3, 13.

coal and iron regions of the Donbass. Second, troops would push westward to seize the Ukrainian capital, Kiev; and third, strong forces would plunge deep into the Ukraine to capture Nikolaev, Odessa, and the Black Sea littoral. It was essential to keep these port cities with their great warehouses from falling into the hands of the Western Allies, whose ships were expected to appear at any moment.<sup>16</sup>

Vatsetis, harassed and cranky, a stubborn ex-colonel of the Imperial Army trying to keep his head above water among a breed of men he would never thoroughly understand, accepted Antonov's report without comment. Antonov assumed, therefore, that Vatsetis approved the plan, that the necessary troops, staff officers, supplies, weapons, armored trains, and so on, would be quickly assigned to him.<sup>17</sup> For a variety of reasons, such was not to be the case.

On the night of November 19, the Ukrainian Military Council moved to its new headquarters, the city of Kursk, some 200 miles south of Moscow. On the way Antonov and the skeleton staff he had appointed made a preliminary survey of the troops he expected to have at his disposal. At Kursk, he and his colleague Stalin listened to a report from Glagolev, commander of a force called the Reserve Army, then completing its organization in and around Kursk. This Reserve Army was undoubtedly the most promising unit in the vicinity. It "consisted of nine regiments, one light mortar and one heavy artillery section, an engineer battalion, a communications battalion, and two cavalry regiments," and "its effective force came to 12,000 young and 2,000 older infantry soldiers, and 1,200 former cavalymen of the Tsar's army."<sup>18</sup> Most important of all for the Ukrain-

16. *Ibid.*, 3, 13-14.

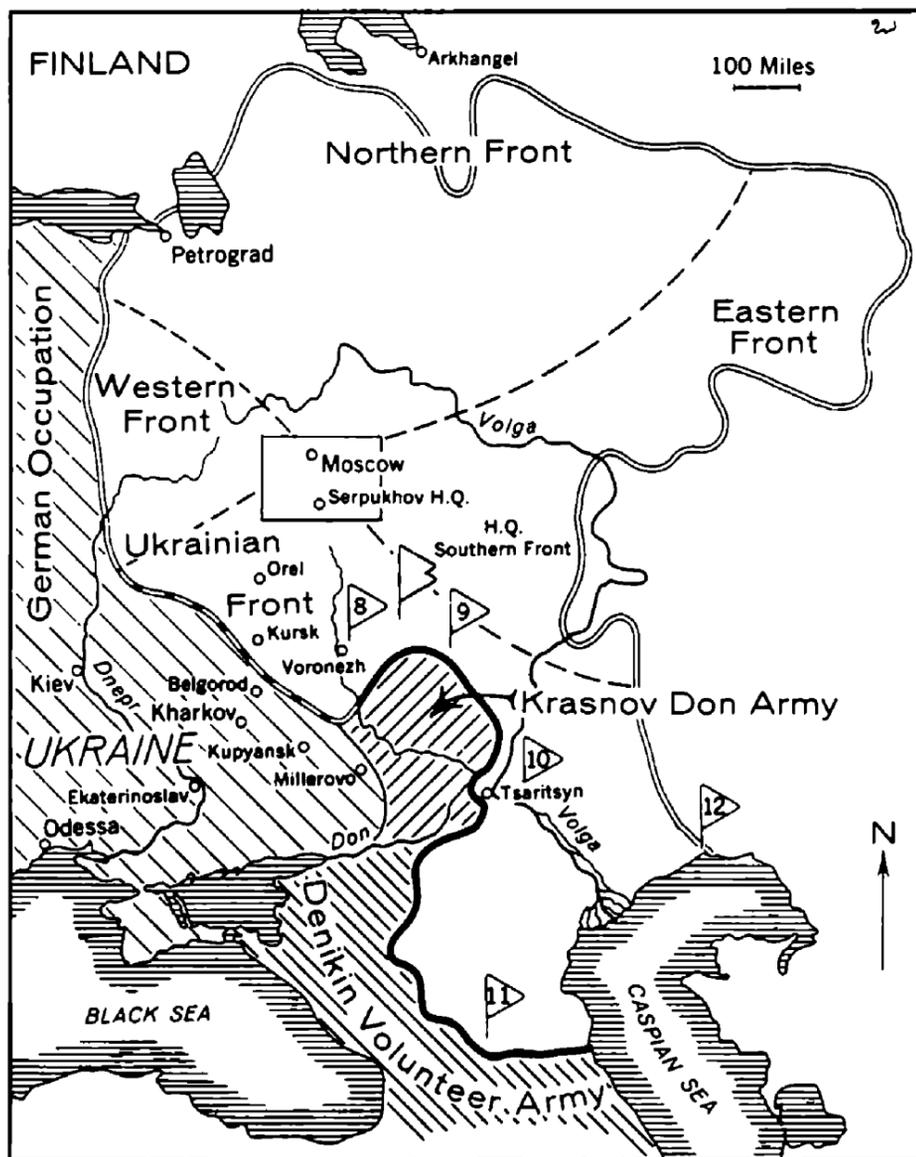
17. *Ibid.*, 3, 14.

18. *Ibid.*, 3, 15-16.

ian Revolutionary Military Council, although Glagolev's force suffered from a shortage of platoon leaders, it possessed full complements of artillerymen and staff officers, specialists who might be used as cadres for the organization of new units.

But the Reserve Army was not Antonov's. Vatsetis had given it another mission. On the complicated map of civil war in November, Red battle lines turned and twisted in such a way that Glagolev's mission and interests clashed with those given Antonov by the RSFSR Revolutionary Military Council. Generally speaking, the northeastern boundary of the Ukraine traced Antonov's line of departure for the attacks he intended to make toward the south and southwest. But that line, after passing below Kursk and Voronezh, suddenly made a right-angle turn, moved northward until it was just east of Voronezh, then turned east again for about 250 miles. Thereafter it swooped south and southeast in a long jagged curve reaching to the Caucasus Mountains and the Caspian Sea. Glagolev's mission, assigned by Vatsetis, was to assist in the defense of Voronezh against Krasnov's Don Cossacks, who were attacking from the southeast. In other words, Antonov looked to the south and southwest, while Glagolev looked to the southeast and the east.

It was immediately evident to Antonov that his plans would be in great danger should Glagolev persist in playing an independent role, for if troops of the Ukrainian Revolutionary Military Council moved against Kharkov or Kiev without carefully coordinating their movements with Glagolev, they might find themselves attacked by Krasnov from the direction of their left flank or from the rear. To forestall this threat Antonov and Stalin sent a telegram to Vatsetis noting the danger and asking for a clear definition of Glagolev's relationship to the Ukrainian command. The solution they recommended was Glagolev's subordination to Antonov, and they assumed that their telegraphed wish



- - - - - Vatselis' sectors for the fronts      8      Headquarters for the Southern Front Armies      ——— Vatselis' line for the Southern Front

**RED ARMY FRONTS (about December 1, 1918)**

Source: A. De-Lazari, *Grazhdanskaya voina v Rossii (v skemakh)*, Supplement to N. Kakurin, *Kak srazhalas revolyutsiya*, map no. 8; cf. *Istoriya grazhdanskoi voiny v SSSR*, 3, map facing p. 188.

would be Vatsetis' command. Subsequent events proved this assumption wrong.

Unfortunately, the picture of the situation held by the Ukrainian Revolutionary Military Council was not Vatsetis'. The commander in chief sat at Serpukhov, close to Moscow, near the central point of four great sectors that were his four battlefronts. In his estimation (and Lenin's and Trotsky's as well), the Southern Front, where Bolshevik armies faced Krasnov and Denikin, was one of the most vital threats, for a breakthrough by Krasnov could bring White troops within range of Moscow.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, when Vatsetis pored over his maps, his attention invariably centered on the area east and south of Voronezh. To him, the Ukraine—where German and Austrian troops were fleeing in disorder and where partisan bands swirled about like aimless whirlwinds—seemed relatively unimportant. Transferring Glagolev's Reserve Army to the Ukrainian Council was unthinkable, for in Vatsetis' scheme the troops of the Ukrainian Council simply represented one more military group that might be used on the Southern Front against the Krasnov-Denikin threat.

The men of the Ukrainian Revolutionary Military Council considered themselves members of a new and independent force with a mission that divorced it from the Southern Front. Here lay one source of the bitter conflict that was to hamper effective action on both fronts and, ultimately, to contribute to disaster. Vatsetis, working feverishly at his level, subject to the direction of his superiors, Lenin and

19. Although Trotsky was "inclined to give priority to the occupation of the Ukraine," Lenin's insistence upon defense against the more immediately threatening Urals and Southern Fronts, and the aggressive actions of Kolchak, Krasnov, and Denikin, forced the Revolutionary Military Commissar to concentrate his attentions upon the east and the south; Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, pp. 425-29; Leon Trotsky, *Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence*, ed. and trans., Charles Malamuth (New York-London, 1941), p. 291; Nikolai Kakurin, *Strategicheski ocherk grazhdanskoi voiny* (A Strategic Sketch of the Civil War) (Moscow-Leningrad, 1926), pp. 67-68.

Trotsky, was constrained always to see the greater picture and to disparage the Ukrainian affair. At the lower level, Pyatakov, Zatonski, and Antonov, harassed and incredibly overworked from the very beginning, understood best the needs of their own area and minimized all other problems. The struggle that developed between the two military commanders was probably the fault of neither Vatsetis nor Antonov; rather it appears to have been embedded in the conditions of the civil war and in the honest efforts of each man to interpret events from his vantage point.

Antonov began his venture with the information that he would have two rebel divisions, the 1st and 2nd. Other units were available to him, however, if he could put them into shape. On November 18 the commander of the 9th Rebel Division reported the location and condition of his force. The division was partly composed of soldiers who had mutinied or deserted from Tsarist units on the Western Front during 1917; partisans and peasants and workers helped to fill its ranks. Its 6th Regiment, according to the divisional commander, consisted of 1,127 soldiers, 50 artillerymen with no artillery, and about 158 cavalrymen, who had 130 horses, but no saddles. The regiment possessed, in all, 11 machine guns, 2,000 rifles, 1,400 grenades, and 650,000 cartridges. There were no uniforms or boots, but the supply center did have 400 coats. The 9th Regiment was less fortunate, for it had only 828 infantrymen (578 of them unarmed), 50 cavalrymen, 2 machine guns, and no uniforms. The 7th Regiment reported "1,288 soldiers, 8 machine guns, and 3 cannon." Another major unit, the 4th Orel Division, was in an even sorer state. Antonov reported to Serpukhov that "of its six regiments, two might be readied within the week, given a supply of weapons." But, he pointed out, "the other four regiments of this division are completely unarmed, and both cavalry and artillery are lacking."<sup>20</sup>

20. Antonov, 3, 15-16.

By November 20 Antonov had dispatched orders in every direction, addressed to all units that could in any way be construed as subordinate to his command. Instructions went to local Ukrainian leaders who leaned toward communism or indiscriminately hated Germans, Allies, the Whites, Skoropadski's government, or the partisans of Petlyura. Orders went to men who had only recently served Skoropadski and who were now swelling Petlyura's armies, to workers' groups in the German-held cities, and to isolated guerrilla units far off in the western Ukraine. According to Antonov's specific commands, the revolutionary forces near Gomel, north of Kiev, were to be mobilized for the occupation of Gomel and "to prevent by every means possible the movement of counterrevolutionary forces from Kiev toward Kursk or Bryansk."<sup>21</sup> Other rebel units were directed to seize certain towns where they could oppose hostile action against Kharkov. The people in the province of Ekaterinoslav were urged to foment insurrections that would help the Communist armies move southward; simultaneously they were to "prevent the movement of counterrevolutionary forces from Kharkov toward the south" and to prepare for the seizure of Nikolaev. To irregular units in the Crimea Antonov sent orders "that measures should be taken for opposing the landing of the Allies, their organization of bases in the Crimea, or their movement northward." Villages in the eastern part of the Ukraine were asked to organize partisan sections "for taking the northern areas of the Donbass" and seizing "munition factories."<sup>22</sup>

Reports that Petlyura's nationalist forces were on the move everywhere flooded into Kursk headquarters, but Antonov also learned that Petlyurian forces were weak at Kharkov, Poltava, and Chernigov. He eagerly reported to Trotsky's Revolutionary Military Council that the situation was favorable for Bolshevik attack and he warned that this situa-

21. *Ibid.*, 3, 17.

22. *Ibid.*, 3, 17-18.

tion might change for the worse within two weeks. Straining at the leash, yet feeling helpless to move without the supplies and reinforcements he believed Vatsetis had promised, Antonov incessantly pressed the commander in chief for support. As early as November 21 he was doggedly summing up the shortcomings at Kursk for Vatsetis' benefit. He insisted that he could "take nothing from the 4th and 9th Divisions without destroying the organization in process." With "only half a ton of benzine," his aviation sections were useless. "As before," he wired, "I remain without experienced staff officers and my staff is completely incapable of functioning."<sup>23</sup> A day later he went over Vatsetis' head, a technique he was to use constantly during subsequent weeks. Wiring to the Revolutionary Military Council, he prodded Trotsky with a warning that immediate action against Kharkov was imperative. He demanded an armored train, and his message ended: "I urgently beg your assistance. I have received nothing from you."<sup>24</sup> Wherever he discovered an idle unit, he requested its assignment to his headquarters. Since the warehouses of his rebel divisions contained only potatoes, oats, and sugar, he literally begged for food. But reinforcements did not arrive; weapons and units originally tagged for Kursk were shunted to Glagolev and the Southern Front with a regularity that seemed deliberate; and the promised transfer of a brigade of troops from the Reserve Army was canceled.

Antonov was quick to suspect that Vatsetis was purposely impeding the efforts of the Ukrainian Revolutionary Military Council. Vatsetis was an ex-Tsarist officer; thus it was easy to believe that he might still harbor sympathy for the monarchy and the past. Further, Vatsetis was a professional soldier, openly contemptuous of the "amateurs" who were busily botching his war for him, while the men he considered amateurs—many of whom, like Antonov, had rea-

23. *Ibid.*, 3, 19.

24. *Ibid.*, 3, 23.

son to think themselves competent fighters—were quick to resent the professional's contempt. Worst of all, Vatsetis made it only too clear that he had no patience whatever with the Ukrainian adventure. To mask its true mission the Ukrainian Revolutionary Military Council had taken the name "The Group of the Kursk Direction." Vatsetis, however, persistently overused the latter title, indicating by this emphasis that he intended to go on ignoring the special Ukrainian mission of the "Group" and to employ it in any way he deemed fit.<sup>25</sup>

The commander in chief made his position perfectly clear on November 21, when he issued orders which seemed, to Antonov, like a stab in the back. Antonov was directed to form a mobile shock force composed of one regiment of cavalry, a regiment of infantry, two batteries of artillery, and the partisan sections under the partisan leader Kozhevnikov. The mission of this shock group was "to deliver a blow at the rear of the Krasnov army in the direction of Millerovo."<sup>26</sup> The direction was southeast, in the area of the Southern Front. To Antonov this was a clear defiance of the Revolutionary Military Council's directive that the Ukraine should be invaded within ten days. Moreover, Vatsetis had multiplied insults in the details of his order. He referred to what Antonov already considered the Army of the Ukraine, as a "section." He directed Antonov to concentrate this "section" south of Kursk, adding the unrealistic request that Antonov should take measures to give it a "completely adequate organization." The "section" was to be warmly quartered, "in order to avoid creating dissatisfaction in the units," and Antonov was cautioned to

25. *Ibid.*, 3, 14.

26. Kozhevnikov had a large, well-organized partisan force (9,000 men). His units were in transit from the Eastern Front to Voronezh, and apparently very few had arrived at the time of Vatsetis' order, for early in December Antonov reported that he had only one echelon (about 500 men) from Kozhevnikov's section; *ibid.*, 3, 20.

give special attention to this detail. Supplies for the "section" were to be arranged by the staff of the Southern Front. In effect, the "Ukrainian Army" was made a subordinate part of the Southern Front. A final slap was administered in the last sentence of Vatsetis' order: "Concerning the Reserve Army of Glagolev, as I have explained to you personally, it has its own special assignment, and the judgment of this question does not come under your jurisdiction."<sup>27</sup>

It seemed to Antonov that Vatsetis was deliberately forcing him to disobey the central government's directive of November 12 by turning him from the west toward the east. In addition, the order displayed either an insulting lack of knowledge of the Ukrainian operation or a dangerously incompetent general staff at Serpukhov. It mentioned units in locations where no units existed; it assumed that Ukrainian forces which were actually just coming into existence were already well organized, armed, and ready for action; and it failed to draw any demarcation lines between the Southern and Ukrainian Fronts. As a final affront it paid no attention to preparations already made by the commander of the Ukrainian Front. Without waiting for instructions from Vatsetis, Antonov had formed his own plan "to move in two directions—against Kupyansk [south-east]," to protect his eastern flank, and "against Belgorod [south]." These movements were to be preliminary to his attack on Kharkov, the railroad center that had to be taken before he could advance further into the Ukraine.<sup>28</sup> Now, apparently, he was expected to ignore the mission originally assigned the Ukrainian Revolutionary Military Council and become a part of the Southern Front.

The day Vatsetis' order arrived, nationalist newspapers in the Ukraine carried a proclamation addressed "To the Population of Southern Russia," which promised an invasion of Allied forces that would "free the area from the op-

<sup>27</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>. Ibid., 3, 21.

pression of the Bolsheviks."<sup>29</sup> That day, too, the first ships of the Allied squadrons appeared at Odessa. For Antonov these events were but the newest indication that Communist action in the Ukraine was imperative. He angrily resolved, despite Vatsetis' order, to continue his preparations for an immediate attack on Kharkov, and he sought support for his plans from the highest authority in the land. On November 22 he dispatched a letter to Lenin:

Dear Vladimir Ilich!

The Council of People's Commissars and, at its direction, the Revolutionary Military Council resolved to enter into active operations in the Ukraine immediately. On November 17 the Council of the Ukrainian Front was formed, masked by the name, Council of the Group of the Kursk Direction. Its composition: myself, Comrade Stalin, Comrade Zatonski. Vatsetis ordered that we should have at our disposal: a) the 43rd Workers' Regiment, the 2nd Orel Cavalry Division (then being activated), and the supply regiments that were ready—all at Voronezh; b) the Moscow Workers' Division, which, according to information of the commander in chief's staff, was already at Voronezh; c) the rebel units of the Ukraine; d) the section of Kozhevnikov from Ufa; e) an armored train in Moscow. For the organization of a staff, the chief of staff of the commander in chief (according to his report) has assembled a group of five general staff members in Kozlov.

In Voronezh, the 43rd Regiment proved to be in the fighting; to withdraw it was impossible. The supply units were in the fighting or were inadequately organized. The 2nd Orel Division has hardly begun its formation—it is without quarters as well as weapons. The Moscow Workers' Division is still in Moscow; it has almost no artillery, and it is politically unreliable.

29. *Ibid.*, 3, 24; cf. *Pravda* (Nov. 21, 1918), p. 2, columns 6 and 7.

. . . There is an armored train at Yaroslav Station in Moscow, which, however, has not been transferred to me, despite petitions sent to Vatsetis. Another armored train, promised me by the 20th Central Armored Command, has not yet reported to me. The same is true of three armored cars which were to have come out the evening of the twentieth from Moscow. (Despite telegrams to me about their departure they have not yet left Moscow.) Meanwhile I have only the units of the two rebel divisions—about 4,000 men, badly supplied, badly organized, badly disciplined, and dispersed over 200 miles. At Kursk and Orel the 4th and 9th Rebel Divisions and supply regiments are being organized, but because of the absence of supplies nothing good can come from this. The Orel *okrug* [area] has nothing, and no one gives it anything. Vatsetis proposed that I base myself upon this *okrug*, that is, upon a complete wasteland.

I have exhausted all other channels that should have helped, and now I [must] trouble you. Help us. Vladimir Ilich, they call to us from the Ukraine. The workers everywhere welcome the Bolsheviks; they curse the Radaists. But the Radaists triumph, thanks to our inaction, and they are being swiftly organized. At Kiev the Germans are pulling their forces together; according to rumor, the Volunteers sit in Ekaterinoslav; the Cossacks are drawn up in the Donets. In such circumstances I have resolved to go forward. At the moment with our naked hands (and with courage) it is possible to take what later will have to be taken with blood.<sup>30</sup>

On the same day Antonov fired a letter at the commander in chief, reminding him "of the obligation laid on the Council of the Ukrainian Front to launch an attack in the

30. Antonov, 3, 25-26.

Ukraine within ten days (i.e., by November 22)."<sup>31</sup> In view of this obligation, he continued:

Antonov summons you to: 1) Destroy the confusion of command by establishing demarcation lines between the Ukrainian and the so-called Southern Fronts. 2) Subordinate the Reserve Army to the Council of the Ukrainian Front. 3) From the units already formed in the 4th and 9th Rebel Divisions, create one division and supply it by extraordinary means with all necessities; and transfer the Moscow Division to the reserve of our front in Orel-Kursk. 4) Take every possible measure for immediately supplementing the supplies of the Orel okrug. 5) Subordinate all border units in the area of the Ukrainian Front to the Council of this front. 6) Transfer to the disposal of the Council of the Ukrainian Front the provisioning units in N. Oskol and in the Orel Guberniya, assisting their swift formation by taking extraordinary means for their supply. 7) Put an armored train at our disposal, the one standing idle at Yaroslav Station in Moscow.

Behind the subordinate's outspoken resentment of the commander and the commander's inability to understand or sympathize with the Ukrainian ambitions of his zealous subordinate, other problems made conflict between the two men almost inevitable. Among the most important of these were the difficulties inherent in the work of recruiting, organizing, training, and supplying new armies while simultaneously carrying forward combat operations on several battlefronts. Other fronts than Antonov's busily swept the dregs of former armies into their units; other fronts were calling incessantly for more officers, armored trains, uniforms, political agitators, cartridges, horses, food, and all the other necessities of war. In these months no commander

31. *Ibid.*, 3, 26.

ever had enough. And because of the newness of the administrative machinery, the breakdown of transport, and the scarcity of trained personnel, the solution of every military problem required prodigious efforts. At Moscow and Serpukhov the leaders worked day and night to make the machinery more efficient, but jerks and halts, bottlenecks and snags were the rule; men, supplies, and equipment got through to the most important fronts; the others went begging. Few men, frantically working around the clock in the crisis hours of late 1918, were able to view their struggle with detachment, to weigh up calmly and disinterestedly the impersonal causes of the chaos they fought. As for Antonov, he blamed Vatsetis for his troubles.

Beneath the personal hostility and the problems of organization and supply lay even more complex issues. Despite its directive for invasion, Moscow was not yet prepared to support a powerful military action in the Ukraine. Other problems seemed more urgent. The chaos in the Ukraine and the incredible difficulties involved in analyzing the course of events there created a desire at Moscow to wait and see. Contradiction was added to caution by the fact that in October the Russian Bolsheviks had entered into an agreement with the Ukrainian national leader Vladimir Vinnichenko. In return for a promise to support the independence movement led by Vinnichenko, the Bolsheviks had received an assurance that they would enjoy legal status in the new Ukrainian government which Vinnichenko hoped to establish when Skoropadski and the Germans were driven out. Essentially an alliance of convenience formed by two hostile parties seeking strength in union, the agreement still remained in effect in November. Moscow balked at making an open break, because of a strong feeling that alliance with the Directory might be far more profitable than war against it.<sup>32</sup>

32. Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, pp. 138-41.

A further major problem was the violent controversy raging in the ranks of the Russian Communist party and in the military units of all fronts concerning the proper method of organizing and leading the Red Army. The crux of this conflict was the opposition among noncommissioned officers and Old Bolsheviks to the efforts of Trotsky and Vatsetis to build a regular army based on traditional models, rigid discipline, and a centralized command hierarchy, using former Tsarist officers. Although resentment of the former officers and of the arrogant "New Bolshevik" Trotsky played an important role, animosity toward centralization and discipline had several other bases.

Long before the revolution the most ardent Communists had steadily denounced the army, attacked its concepts of rank, hierarchy, and discipline, denied the very need for its existence in a well-ordered world, and eventually, by preaching their utopian and equalitarian doctrines, helped to destroy it. In 1917 dedicated Communists had formed Red Guard units, which they controlled by committee rule, and through 1918 they held to the principles of local autonomy and self-rule. Indeed, such was the faith of many Communists in soviet (committee) rule that they felt the soviet should govern in *all* affairs, civil and military alike, and *at all levels*, without interference from any center. Essentially, therefore, the opposition to Trotsky's organizational efforts was only one expression of a much larger question that challenged all earnest Communists: Was the new world to be governed by self-elected soviets? Would free men make their own decisions by means of open debate among equals, or was the noble dream to be jettisoned for a new autocracy more absolute than the Tsar's? Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, and other men close to the center concluded early that the utopian vision had to give way to hardheaded administrative organization, backed when necessary by the cruelest forms of violence. But other men were slow to abandon their dreams; they stubbornly defended the radical social

ideals which for them were the true objectives of the revolution.

This conflict over ends and means was complicated further by a frame of mind present among many Old Bolsheviks whose habit it had become through long years of opposition to Tsarist autocracy to regard resistance to any central authority as a virtue. Such men could not shake off the feeling that Trotsky and his officers represented a revival of the kind of authority they had always fought in the past. Another attitude which produced resistance to Trotsky's centralizing efforts was the self-sufficiency of courageous partisan leaders who were fully persuaded of their ability to repel any enemy without assistance or instruction from anyone.

Opposition to Trotsky's policies had reached a boiling point in the famous "Tsaritsyn conflict," just prior to the opening of the second campaign in the Ukraine. Since this struggle was to exert direct and important influence upon the work of the Ukrainian Revolutionary Military Council, its main outlines must be examined.<sup>33</sup>

When Joseph Stalin was sent to Tsaritsyn, on the Volga, in June 1918, as a tribune with plenipotentiary authority for his mission of expediting grain shipments from the north Caucasus area to Moscow, he found himself among friends. Klimenti Voroshilov, then commanding the Tenth Army at Tsaritsyn, and his commissar, Grigori Ordzhonikidze, were both Old Bolsheviks and close friends. To get his food trains through to the north safely, Stalin interfered in military affairs, and soon he and his friends were bitterly attacking the *spetsy*, the ex-Tsarist officers whom Trotsky had put in command of many units. There is no doubt that Stalin, Voroshilov, and their adherents at Tsaritsyn ac-

33. Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography* (New York, 1949), pp. 195-206. For prejudiced but penetrating analyses of the Tsaritsyn conflict, see Leon Trotsky, *My Life* (New York, 1930), pp. 440-46; Trotsky, *Stalin*, p. 264.

counted themselves superior military men, that they scorned the spetsy, and took an almost sadistic delight in baiting them. Under Stalin's protection Voroshilov even dared to oppose the orders of his military superior, the ex-Tsarist general, P. Sytin, then commanding the Southern Front. Stalin, encouraging this insubordination, eventually ordered Voroshilov to disregard the directives of Trotsky himself.

Discerning in this behavior an effort to sabotage the creation of his regular army, Trotsky thundered imprecations against Stalin and the "Tsaritsyn gang." Stalin countered with denunciatory telegrams to Lenin. Matters finally came to a head when Stalin threatened to disobey all orders from Trotsky and his commanders, whereupon Trotsky hotly demanded Stalin's recall and growled menacingly about a court-martial for Voroshilov. By October Trotsky had triumphed, but only for the moment. Stalin, the Georgian, reared in a region where the blood feud was traditional, patiently watched for the chance to satisfy his lust for revenge. Deeply wounded, he moved behind the scenes, working against Trotsky and Trotsky's commander in chief.

Almost all the issues that had brought Trotsky's organizational policies close to catastrophe at Tsaritsyn found their counterparts in the Ukraine in November, and here they were further complicated by Ukrainian nationalist and separatist aspirations and by the intensely partisan character of the thousands who were joining Antonov's divisions.<sup>34</sup> Former members of the Tsaritsyn gang, many Old Bolsheviks, Ukrainian partisans, and "Left" Ukrainian Bolsheviks found themselves in agreement. All believed that efficient military action and effective government could best be secured through the exercise of independent local author-

34. Trotsky, *Stalin*, pp. 280-92; Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, pp. 409-16, 423-28; D. Fedotoff White, *The Growth of the Red Army* (Princeton, 1944), pp. 64-73; Schapiro, *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy*, pp. 241-42.

ity. Almost without conscious volition they resisted Trotsky's military center and ignored political instructions handed down from Moscow when such instructions appeared to them to be inapplicable. It is understandable that Lenin, Trotsky, and Vatsetis were reluctant to unleash this potential Frankenstein's monster upon the Ukraine and upon themselves.

Stalin's role in Ukrainian affairs late in 1918 should be noted but not overemphasized. His assignment to the Ukrainian Revolutionary Military Council lasted only a few days, since he returned to Moscow almost at once to perform other duties for Lenin and the Central Committee of the RKP. Nevertheless, it is evident that he kept an eye on the Ukraine. While there can be little doubt that he quietly encouraged Antonov's opposition to Vatsetis in order to advance his own private feud with Trotsky, it is impossible to accept the thesis of Trotsky and his supporters that Stalin was motivated solely by hatred of Trotsky and by personal ambition. Indeed, this thesis approaches the absurd. As People's Commissar of Nationalities, Stalin was more directly concerned than any other central official with Ukrainian affairs. In addition, he was a member of the central committees of both the Russian Communist party and the KP(b)U, he served on Lenin's Supreme Council of Defense, and was destined to become a member of the Politburo (organized in March 1919). He was a ruthlessly efficient leader whom Lenin entrusted with missions of the utmost importance, and he was an Old Bolshevik who had staked his life on Communist victory, in the Ukraine as elsewhere. In short, Stalin had excellent reasons for keeping a close watch on events in the Ukraine.

The problems of the Ukrainian Military Revolutionary Council appear to have pulled Stalin in many directions. Characteristically, he seems to have taken, at first, a position somewhere between the extremes of absolute centralism and anarchic localism. But his own administrative experi-

ence had been gained in regions of crisis where he had acted as a tribune with plenipotentiary powers. He knew the immense value of settling problems on the spot, where the demands of the situation could be sensed at every moment.<sup>35</sup> He tended, therefore, to believe that a strong Ukrainian government and a united Ukrainian army offered a better solution than Trotsky's centralism, and he listened to the Ukrainian Council's demands without exhibiting the suspicion and misgivings of Trotsky and Vatsetis.<sup>36</sup> Acting as the Ukrainians' spokesman at Moscow, he stepped in frequently to expedite their affairs. Thus, the long letter Antonov sent to Lenin on November 22, begging for the leader's intercession, was answered the same day by Stalin:

To Kursk Station, the Antonov train. To Antonov and Pyatakov:

We completely understand your uneasiness, and I assure you that I, and Lenin too, will do all that is possible. All your telegrams have been sent to Vatsetis with the demand that he give them his attention swiftly. Copies of his orders will be sent to the Council of People's Commissars. Copies are necessary for our inspection, and if we notice deceit, we will forgive nothing. It is impossible to send a great force to your front for understandable reasons. All the rest have been sent to Petrograd.<sup>37</sup>

In this case, despite Stalin's assurances to Antonov, Vatsetis' policy did not change. On November 24 the commander in chief summoned Antonov to Serpukhov, advising him that the Moscow Workers' Division, already on its

35. Trotsky, *Stalin*, pp. 293-94, 305.

36. Pipes, pp. 133, 139, 141.

37. Antonov, 3, 27.

way to Kursk, would have to be diverted to the Southern Front at Voronezh. Moreover, all armored trains were being sent west to occupy stations behind the retreating Germans. Stubbornly Antonov reiterated his desire to march on Kharkov; just as firmly Vatsetis again rejected this proposal, and insisted that Antonov's main task was to bolster the Southern Front's Eighth Army at Voronezh. Antonov expounded his many reasons for believing Kharkov both a legitimate and a feasible objective for his command, but Vatsetis was adamant. In a towering rage, determined to break down all obstructions, Antonov dashed from Serpukhov to Moscow, charged into the offices of the party greats—Podvoiski, Sklyanski, Muralov, and Sverdlov—and poured his troubles into their ears.<sup>38</sup> His anger cleared a way for him, and eventually that day he found himself face to face with Lenin—a Lenin who was, for reasons of his own, also in an irritated and uncompromising mood.

The dictator of Russia permitted Antonov to give him a detailed picture of the Ukrainian situation.<sup>39</sup> He listened carefully and fired short questions, "about landings of the Allies, their agreement with the Hetman, about our directives to the rebel units." But when Antonov went from factual reporting "to complaints against the actions of the supreme commander, Lenin grew tense, and his face hardened."

Antonov recounted Vatsetis' failure to understand the Ukraine's importance, the unfulfilled promises, the units diverted to the west or to Voronezh.

38. N. I. Podvoiski, Inspector-General of the Red Army; Ye. M. Sklyanski, Vice-Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic; N. I. Muralov, a member of the Revolutionary Military Council; Ya. M. Sverdlov, Chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets and Secretary of the Central Committee of the RKP.

39. The dialogue that follows was written from memory by Antonov. All material within quotation marks is from his *Zapiski o grazhdanskoj voine*, 3, 29-30.

There are no supplies [he told Lenin]. We have knocked together something resembling a staff, thanks only to Muralov. No planned work is possible. The decree of the government about an immediate attack in the Ukraine has been sabotaged. Vatsetis has ordered the commander of the Reserve Army not to be drawn into my adventures, but to form and train in the *raion* [region] of Kursk. He has proposed that my group observe Kharkov and be prepared for action against Kupyansk. Thus deprived of its share [of troops, etc.], it will be two or three months before our group can do anything.

When Lenin asked about the situation at Voronezh, Antonov waxed eloquent about the confusion of the Eighth Army. On the basis of his personal observation he described "the disorder and helplessness of this command, the complete disorder in its rear and the near-panic condition of Voronezh itself." He explained to Lenin: "In this situation, the commander in chief throws directly into Voronezh the still untrained, unblooded, and politically-uneducated, fresh units previously designated for us. Falling into the Voronezh uproar and semi-panic these units will quickly fall apart."

Lenin's temper was rising. "What ought to be done, according to you?" he asked.

Impetuously Antonov presented his own plans:

If these units had been given to us and transferred as we proposed, formed into two regiments of the 9th Reserve Division, we could have formed a shock group on the side away from Voronezh. With this group, we could advance on Kupyansk and from there go into Krasnov's flank. Simultaneously, concentrating the Ukrainian divisions, border units, and a pair of armored trains—a blow on Kharkov. Meanwhile, the

commander in chief throws forces directly into the [Southern] front, into certain destruction. This is either panicky stupidity, a trick of the military specialists, or—I don't even want to think this—it is treason.

The word "treason" destroyed Lenin's composure. He leaped from his chair.

"What?" he demanded. "Where is your discipline? I shall have to arrest you. Learn to subordinate yourself once an order is given! From the failure to do this comes all our disorganization."

Antonov stood his ground. "I have subordinated myself and I do," he insisted. "But I am obligated to report my opinion to you fully. You are responsible."

Without very clearly perceiving that Antonov was indeed caught on the horns of a dilemma caused by Vatsetis' rejection of the government's decree on the Ukraine, Lenin made his own position brutally clear.

"This is a military affair," he told Antonov. "Your business is to obey orders or be arrested."

Antonov's description of this interview is concluded with the brief statement: "I got out with Sverdlov."

Lenin's explosion was probably directed more toward the general situation than toward Antonov. For months he had been aware that the Red Army's fundamental difficulty was its inability to carry out an order in military fashion, and he well understood that one cause of this indiscipline was the very devotion of his most ardent followers to their utopian dreams. He had watched while Trotsky fought to centralize, while stalwart Communists dragged their feet, refused to obey their spetsy, and debated orders from above. Trotsky dubbed this behavior *partizanshchina*—the planless rule of self-willed partisans—and whether it appeared in a whole front, in a Tsaritsyn gang, or in the actions of a distinguished Politburo member, he stamped on it with both boots. He had persuaded Lenin that his methods alone

could build an effective army, and Lenin had not found belief difficult, for centralism, discipline, and obedience were vital keys to his own system of leadership. Now especially, when he was "responsible," as Antonov had said, Lenin placed the greatest emphasis upon these qualities. Thus Antonov was caught between the millstones of centralism and partisan rule. By championing the Ukrainian campaign he appeared to oppose the campaign on the Southern Front and thus to challenge the Center's authority; moreover, the threat that the Ukrainian Front might soon become the new center of a Tsaritsyn-like partizan-shchina was heightened daily by the influx of members of the Tsaritsyn gang at Kursk. Lenin had slapped out viciously, perhaps without due reflection, but not without reason.

In an "altogether unhappy mood," Antonov slipped back to Serpukhov, where he was surprised to find the commander in chief courteously prepared to yield a point or two. Vatsetis offered him a part of the contested Moscow Division and agreed to transfer some border guards in the Kharkov region to the Ukrainian Front. He even promised to send along two armored trains. A little overwhelmed by the events of that day, and worried by the situation around Voronezh, Antonov decided to renounce for the moment any immediate advance against Kharkov.

While Antonov labored to get an army into the field, Pyatakov and Zatonski, the political leaders of the Ukrainian Revolutionary Military Council, concentrated upon establishing a provisional government for the Ukraine. They worked at Kursk, just north of the Ukraine, and their efforts were inordinately complicated by the necessity for hurry, by the innumerable tasks their flimsy organization was compelled to shoulder from the very moment of its birth, and by Moscow's insistence upon directing all affairs. A number of military administrative agencies had to be set up at once. A system had to be devised for recruiting men

from all regions of the Ukraine; barracks and camps were needed, as were agencies for the collection and distribution of clothing, weapons, and food; morale and loyalty problems required that arrangements be made for the entertainment of troops and for the dissemination of Communist propaganda. All these activities were, of course, but preliminary to the fighting. Troops in combat would swallow up vast amounts of equipment, from boots and bullets to books of regulations. Somehow great stockpiles had to be collected so that action, once begun, could be supported.

Although organization of support for military action was imperative, it represented but a part of the total effort. The principal task for Pyatakov and Zatonski was the establishment of a Bolshevik government for the Ukraine which would function effectively in a land still to be won. When the new Revolutionary Military Council moved to Kursk, members of the KP(b)U, both Left and Right, came along, bringing with them the Neutral Zone organizations and the old feuds. It will be remembered that the Right group had gained control of the Central Committee of the party in October, but in the last weeks of November it was clear to everyone at Kursk that the Rights' dilatory tactics were now out of order and also that Moscow was incapable of keeping up with the swift flow of events and providing effective directives for action, despite its will to do so. Therefore, the Kievians who headed the Revolutionary Military Council now stepped forward to seize the reins. The time had come when any solution was better than none, and the aggressive Kievians were confident of their ability to solve the Ukraine's problems. According to Zatonski, through those first hectic days the Rights cooperated to the fullest possible extent.<sup>40</sup>

40. Vladimir Zatonski, "K voprosu ob organizatsii Vremennogo raboche-krestyanskogo pravitelstva Ukrainy" (On the Question of the Organization of the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of the Ukraine), *Letopis revolyutsii*, no. 1 [10] (1925), pp. 140-41.

On November 20 a Provisional Ukrainian Soviet Government was established, headed by Pyatakov. But immediately an impossible situation developed: Moscow, insisting upon its right to dictate every Ukrainian decision, refused to allow Pyatakov to proclaim publicly the existence of his new government. Lenin, remaining distrustful of the willful Kievians, declined to be catapulted into the Ukrainian morass. Meanwhile, Simon Petlyura seized the initiative in the Ukraine. As his nationalist army won growing support from Ukrainian peasants, it became apparent that soon a Communist invasion would meet, not a feckless Skoropadski, but a new and powerful nationalist peasant army. In view of this development, Lenin, Trotsky, and Vatsetis continued to hesitate, wondering whether Bolshevik interests would be best served by an aggressively prosecuted Ukrainian campaign or by renewed offers of friendship for the Ukrainian nationalists. Apparently the decision was taken to play both games simultaneously, for G. V. Chicherin, Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs, opened cautious negotiations with the newly established Vinnichenko-Petlyura Directory, as if Moscow were considering a new compact with the Ukrainian nationalists.<sup>41</sup>

Faced with these indications of vacillation at Moscow and spurred by the need to start their military campaign at once, the Kievians launched a desperate struggle to correct the Moscow line and to win for themselves the right to make their own decisions. Through a frenzied ten days, the leaders of the Ukrainian Provisional Government, hamstrung by the central administration's "uninformed interference," called hourly for intelligent assistance or independence. From the first days tempers threatened to explode. On November 23 Pyatakov showed the effects of the strain when he wired to Stalin that it was absolutely necessary for Lenin

41. *Ibid.*; Popov, *Ocherk istorii Kommunisticheskoi partii (bolshevikov) Ukrainy*, pp. 190-91.

to be made to understand "all the unbearableness" of the situation caused by the Center. "You know that I never despair," Pyatakov reminded Stalin; nevertheless, he prophesied swift catastrophe if intelligent action did not take place.<sup>42</sup>

Four days later Pyatakov and Zatonski together begged the Bolshevik Karl Radek to intercede for them and "explain the question about our political-military situation." As they set forth the situation to Radek, the confusion of instructions from Moscow was beyond belief. If Kursk headquarters was to function effectively it needed a united Ukrainian Front under one commander and one civil authority. Moscow should permit the Ukrainian government to function openly and independently, and the question "about the mutual relationship of military and civil authority" had to be resolved. "I beg you to assist me to prevail upon Moscow not to snarl up our work," Pyatakov wrote.<sup>43</sup>

Stalin warned from Moscow: "Take it easy there. The Old Man's getting mad."<sup>44</sup> But the Ukrainian Left Communists would not be silenced. Pyatakov and Zatonski addressed a new report to Stalin (with a copy for Lenin) about the 27th, in which they spelled out their difficulties in great detail and underlined an earlier prophesy that if "precise and clear mutual relationships between the Center and various organs carrying on military or political work in the Ukraine were not worked out, there would inevitably arise

42. M. Rubach, "K istorii grazhdanskoi borby na Ukraine (K voprosu ob organizatsii Vremennogo raboche-krestyanskogo pravitelstva Ukrainy)" (On the History of the Civil War in the Ukraine [On the Question of the Organization of the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of the Ukraine]), *Letopis revolyutsii*, no. 4 [9] (1924), p. 151. (All documents presented by Rubach were taken from the Arkhiv Oktyabrskoi revolyutsii, vol. 5.)

43. Ibid.

44. Zatonski, p. 142.

a whole series of frictions that would delay, if not completely halt, revolutionary work." Already, they pointed out, their predictions were coming true. Despite the fact that Left and Right members of the Ukrainian party were working together in perfect union, Moscow's interference was creating "unbelievable chaos and confusion, which completely disorganize all work."<sup>45</sup> The two Kievian leaders further considered it their "foremost duty to point out that all the control organizations working on the Ukrainian Front, separately and together, are striving to disentangle the chaos produced by the Center and to create some possibility of positive work." But, they insisted, "despite all good intentions, thanks to the vagueness on the one hand and to the contradictory orders from the Center on the other, not one of these organizations can function naturally." As a result, "in place of the centralization of effort, which we proposed should be under the general direction of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist party, we have uninterrupted chaos."<sup>46</sup> Illustrating the sort of difficulty they met everywhere, they explained how multiple agencies for mobilization trampled on one another's toes. "In some areas our representatives carry out mobilization, in others the work is done by the military commissariat of the Orel okrug, and in still other areas the local military commanders carry out mobilization on their own responsibility. We are not in a position either to publish obligatory decrees concerning mobilization or to oppose the Orel Military Commissariat. You must understand the consequences of this."<sup>47</sup>

But Pyatakov and Zatonski were not at all certain that

45. *Ibid.* (The documents presented by Zatonski were found in the files of ISPART, The Institute for the Study of Party History); cf. Rubach, pp. 160-61.

46. Zatonski, p. 142.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

the consequences would be obvious to the Center. Taking no pains to hide their exasperation, they presented a brutally detailed analysis of the central administrative failures:

We will not speak further about the fact that the supreme commander, considering military action from a purely strategic point of view and not taking into account all the complexity of the political situation in the Ukraine, neither wants to understand nor can understand that the operations in the Ukraine at the present moment cannot be defined by purely military considerations. From the military point of view, for example, the occupation of one or another town by a company or battalion of infantry seems stupid. However, in the present situation, this is not only possible but it is being done.

The Military Council of the Kursk Direction, being *au courant* with the course of all political events in the Ukraine, and also taking into account all of the circumstances of a purely military nature, can and must direct military operations in the Ukraine. But all its plans and operations knock against the contradictory, continually changing arrangements of the supreme commander in chief. From the other side, the indefiniteness of the situation of the Military Council of the Kursk Group makes it impossible either to organize an army or to supply it properly. If, today, the Military Council says that all of the Orel okrug is at its disposal, then tomorrow this okrug will be taken away from it; if today the Military Council controls all the military forces of the Ukrainian Front, then tomorrow it will receive an order to operate on the right flank of the Southern Army, executing a completely different mission. The continuous oscillations and hesitations, the continuously vague arrangements, disorganize the Military Council and make it impos-

sible to establish correct mutual relations between the Military Council and the future government.

The confusions are increased still more by the fact that even in the sphere of purely operational orders, a unified center has not yet been established; and it is impossible to understand . . . which group of troops has been designated for the establishment and support of Soviet power in the Ukraine. On one side we have the Military Council of the Kursk Direction; on the other, the Reserve Army. At the head of the Reserve Army stands a man who is not one of us [i.e., a non-Bolshevik, former imperialist officer], and nevertheless, such a delicate thing as the attack on the Ukrainian Front is transferred now to Antonov, now to Glagolev. It is not known who has control over a whole series of military units. Other units, having just adopted their numbers, are taken from the control of one organization and transferred to the control of another. Mutual relations between the Provisional Ukrainian Government and the commander of the Reserve Army have not been established at all. All of this has not only disorganized the work, but has also had a harmful effect upon the military units, weakening their combat fitness.

Counting on the concrete and full support promised, military units have undertaken one or another step and have advanced toward the ordered organizational objectives in agreement with the plans they possess. But suddenly that which was promised them is taken away; no support is given; on the contrary, certain units are taken away and sent off to another front. With such a state of affairs it is impossible either to reckon with anything or to summon up the necessary energy and resolution. The continuous ignorance about what will probably be the completely unexpected decisions of the Center, which results from the absence of a firm

line in the Center, utterly disorganizes our work and forces everyone to wonder whether this comedy shouldn't be cut short.<sup>48</sup>

To bring order out of chaos the Kievians presented concrete recommendations, backing them with bold threats and issuing them in uncompromisingly blunt terms:

In the first place it is necessary for us to issue decisions in the name of the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of the Ukraine, to publish manifestoes and to act in the capacity of a real Ukrainian government.

Second, all of the political part of the work in the cleared districts must be concentrated in the hands of the Provisional Government.

Third . . . establish unity of command, transferring power into the hands of the Military Council of the Kursk Direction. No form of power over the Ukrainian Front should be given to a man foreign to us.

Fourth, subordinate all military forces operating on the Ukrainian Front to the Military Council of the Kursk Direction.

Fifth . . . propose to Vatsetis that he leave the military forces of our front alone, not taking them away from us. If he cannot adjust himself to political affairs in the Ukraine with sufficient perception, then he must deal . . . with those organizations which, both by their obligations and by their situation, are alone able to unite correctly military and political work in the Ukraine. Such an organ, in our opinion, is the Provisional Government of the Ukraine.

Sixth, in line with the above, it is necessary to unite

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 144-45.

all the military units operating on our front as an independent army, which should be named the Army of the Soviet Ukraine, and which should be subject only to the general supervision of the supreme commander in chief.

Seventh, it is necessary to order the Orel Military Okrug not to sabotage the Ukrainian Front but to serve the needs of our army. . . .

Eighth, it is necessary to subordinate Glagolev to the Military Council. . . .

Finally, if all this is not done, then we, on the basis of our ten days of experience, must divest ourselves of all further responsibility for work on this front.<sup>49</sup>

Through November 27th and 28th more messages flew back and forth between Kursk and Moscow. In each new wire from Kursk, the Ukrainian Communists' demands grew more peremptory, the language used more violent. In one telegram to Stalin, Zatonski categorically demanded a reply and requested that Stalin visit Kursk to see for himself "the indescribable confusion created by the contradictory policies." Reflecting Antonov's suspicion of Vatsetis' motives, Zatonski declared that further division of the Ukrainian command by Vatsetis would be "positively criminal," and he sourly added: "If you were here, the expression used would probably be shorter." After signing this message he attached a postscript, saying, "The military command completely fails to consider . . . [the swiftly-developing crisis in the Ukraine], and even you in Moscow do not see this." And he explained, "Each day new facts burst out which it is utterly impossible to foresee from Moscow and Serpukhov." In Zatonski's judgment, the central administration was so far away, both in time and in its comprehen-

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 145-46.

sion of the Ukrainian situation, that its orders were "in the majority of cases either impossible to execute or such that their execution would lead to complete destruction of the work."<sup>50</sup>

Another telegram, sent on the 28th, repeated the old complaints and piled up new ones. "About one more change of course," Zatonski warned, "and the units will be torn asunder. Remember that such a degree of discipline as Trotsky dreams about does not exist in a single company, and to hurl units formed with difficulty from partisan sections into the fight against [Krasnov's] Cossacks would mean to destroy them completely." Addressing this telegram to both Stalin and Lenin, he begged: "Save us from many authorities. Permit us to create a unified center at once." Outlining what seemed to him the inevitable consequences of the Center's failure to give authority to the Ukrainians, he reiterated the impossibility of giving intelligent orders without knowing what Moscow was about to do next. "If you don't believe this," he concluded, "come down, do what you wish, but don't just confuse things."<sup>51</sup>

Stalin answered briefly that since he was busy organizing the All-Russian Council of Defense, he could not come to Kursk. But, he announced, he had arranged for the transfer of several commanders from the Tsaritsyn Front, and he claimed credit for having originally sent Antonov to Kursk. He implied that the Ukrainians' problems were actually caused by dissensions between the Right and Left wings of the KP(b)U. Regarding the legal question of the Provisional Ukrainian Government's right to make independent decisions, he indicated that this was a technical matter, to be ignored by bold administrators. The man who never hesitated to seize every ounce of authority within his reach frankly counseled Zatonski and Pyatakov to do the same.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 148.

"If you have disagreements," he told them, "you and Antonov can resolve them. All rights are in your hands."<sup>52</sup>

Zatonski's frazzled temper went out of control when he read those lines, for Stalin's statement that the Provisional Ukrainian Government had "all rights" defied the facts. "Call Stalin to the apparatus," Zatonski's next telegram demanded, and then: "Forgive me, but this is some kind of mockery. I, well, I say, for the third and last time today that there is no internal dissension at all among us here. All of the evil is in the fact that the Center confuses with its contradictory arrangements, with this vagueness which is created as if purposely. In the name of the Central Committee, I put the question to you directly: Do you authorize us to act?"<sup>53</sup>

Specifically, he demanded the right to publish a manifesto announcing the establishment of a Ukrainian Soviet Government in full authority; this government would then issue "an order . . . concerning the creation of a united front and a united command." Zatonski concluded, "I beg you to reply and to reply intelligibly." And to this telegram he impatiently appended instructions that the receiving office transmit his telegram to Stalin immediately, because he was awaiting an answer.<sup>54</sup> This message was sent at 3:30 P.M. on November 28.

The sources do not reveal Stalin's reply, but it is apparent that such a reply was made and that it sanctioned Zatonski's proposal. Sometime after 3:30 on November 28 the new Soviet Government of the Ukraine formally held its first assembly at Kursk and resolved to publish its manifesto.<sup>55</sup> The Ukrainian Communists finally had their government,

52. *Ibid.*; Stalin's claim that he had sent Antonov is not supported by Antonov, who states definitely that Trotsky assigned him to the Ukraine (*Antonov*, 3, 12).

53. *Zatonski*, p. 149.

54. *Ibid.*

55. *Ibid.*; *Rubach*, pp. 161-64.

and for the moment Moscow gave up a little of its authority. The men at the Center bowed to the demands of the Left Communists of the KP(b)U.

Although Lenin had no intention of actually relinquishing central control, he had been forced into temporary compromise. According to his habit, he made the best of what he could only consider a bad situation. As he somewhat cynically explained to Vatsetis on the 29th, there was, after all, a "good side" to this Ukrainian government. Now, rather than facing attack by "Ukrainian chauvinists," Soviet troops of the Ukrainian Soviet Government might advance and be welcomed as "liberators."<sup>56</sup>

56. V. I. Lenin, *Voennaya perepiska, 1917-1920* (War Correspondence, 1917-20) (Moscow, 1943), p. 47.

## CHAPTER 3

### *From Kursk to Kiev*

THE RUNNING DUEL with Vatsetis and Moscow slackened not at all after the Soviet Government of the Ukraine was proclaimed, but putting an army into the field was the most immediate objective, and the new government concentrated its efforts upon this work. Pyatakov's advice to Fedor Andreevich Artem, chief of his new Military Department, was brief and discouraging. "Remember," he said, "the responsibility is ours. The Center can give us nothing." On December 6 Antonov advised his subordinates that the Revolutionary Military Council of the Group of the Kursk Direction would henceforth be known as the Revolutionary Military Council of the Soviet Army of the Ukraine. Accused of Ukrainian separatism for this act, he quickly pointed out that the establishment of the Army of the Ukraine had been sanctioned by Pyatakov and Artem, who had first secured the approval of Stalin.<sup>1</sup> Now that they had their government, the Left Communists of the Ukrainian party displayed every intention of managing their own military affairs with as little interference from Vatsetis as possible.

1. Antonov, *Zapiski o grazhdanskoj voine*, 3, 39-41; Lenin, *Voennaya perepiska, 1917-1920*, p. 47.

But though Antonov intended to command his own army, he continued to demand assistance from Vatsetis. Early in December he dourly summed up the personnel transferred to him from various quarters: "two artillery batteries (from Moscow); an infantry 'hundred'; one echelon of Kozhevnikov's section (about 500 men), nearly a third of whom were unarmed; and the 4th Replacement Cavalry Regiment," which consisted of only one squadron without horses. Another "hundred," containing about sixty fighters, had arrived from Tsaritsyn.<sup>2</sup> Trotsky, relieving the Southern Front of its troublemakers, had sent them to Antonov; even Klimenti Voroshilov, one of the ringleaders of the Tsaritsyn gang, became a member of the Ukrainian government late in November. For other reasons, Stalin too sent along his former Tsaritsyn comrades, old friends who were Ukrainian or who possessed considerable experience and competence as military commanders.<sup>3</sup>

On December 5 Antonov secured Glagolev's permission to take over from the Reserve Army all its Ukrainian units. In effect, this placed under his complete control the two divisions on which he had based his plans from the beginning. Despite having previously assumed command of these divisions, issuing orders to them as commander of the Group of the Kursk Direction, Antonov had been hampered by a confused overlapping of subordinate units with Glagolev's Reserve Army. These rebel divisions—now renamed the 1st and 2nd Soviet Ukrainian Divisions—were destined to serve as the core of his fighting force and to provide the necessary cadres for expansion. Both were in sorry shape. Formed by the Left Ukrainian Bolsheviks in and near the Neutral Zone in mid-1918 for action against

2. Antonov, 3, 42.

3. Ibid., p. 38; Ravich-Cherkasski, *Istoriya Kommunisticheskoi partii (b-ov) Ukrainy*, p. 100; Trotsky, *Stalin*, p. 292; Trotsky, "The Trotsky Archives," (Unpublished; deposited in the Harvard College Library, Cambridge, Mass.), T-88, Dec. 14, 1918.

the Germans and Skoropadski, both subsequently suffered painful, almost disastrous experiences. Emerging badly battered from their risings against the Germans, they displayed, through the rest of 1918, a marked tendency to break apart upon the rocks of partisan and peasant localism. Most of the men in their ranks had originally joined up for the purpose of winning back their homes; consequently, when orders called for action in other directions, they sulked and complained, or deserted. Dissatisfactions were heightened further when the Second Congress of the KP(b)U in October gave power to the Rightist Executive Committee, which set going a plan to dissolve the divisional organizations and to shift the separate components of the First Division toward the Southern Front.<sup>4</sup>

Although efforts were made to formalize the organization of the two divisions, in December they little resembled regular units. They had been too swiftly organized, and their components were drawn from too many widely differing groups, each indelibly stamped with its own political and social peculiarities. Both divisions supplied themselves in any way they could; they were hampered by the inevitable impedimenta of such irregular forces—their wagons were loaded with homesick women and hungry children; and their leaders ranged from Communists to property-minded peasants and outright adventurers.<sup>5</sup> It is impossible to obtain a reliable numerical estimate of these divisions. Antonov himself seems to have juggled his figures up or down, depending upon whether he was demanding supplies or trying to persuade Vatsetis to send more men. Vladimir Primakov, who commanded a Cossack regiment in the 1st Division, estimated that in September each division held 2,000 or 3,000 men.<sup>6</sup> Other sources indicate that by the first

4. Aussem, *Letopis revolyutsii*, no. 5 [20] (1926), pp. 10–12.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 13; Primakov, in *Pyat let Krasnoi armii*, p. 187.

6. Primakov, p. 187.

week of December the strength of each division may have reached 5,000.<sup>7</sup> Antonov's effort on December 7 to convince Vatsetis of his readiness to advance on Kharkov provides interesting but not very reliable evidence. Although his grand total for all troops under his command exceeded 19,000, he admitted that less than a third were armed, and his figure included not only the 9,000-man Kozhevnikov section, which was not his to direct, but also "the rebel units of all the Ukraine." Thus Antonov counted some units over which he had no control at the moment and some he was never to control.<sup>8</sup>

In a whirlwind of organizational work during the first days of December, Antonov replaced a number of commanders and ordered military trials for slothful and incompetent officers. To quell the partisan spirit of the 1st Division and to create an organizational framework for expansion, he concentrated its men into a brigade, preserving meanwhile the divisional staff organization for future levies. In the 2nd Division, initially, two brigades were formed;<sup>9</sup> then, without consulting Vatsetis, Antonov ordered establishment of a Third Brigade and sent two assistants into the Novy Oskol region, southeast of Kursk, in search of recruits. These assistants sent a progress report back to headquarters on December 6, presenting a typical picture of chaos. They told of encountering a band of Red Army soldiers, deserters from other fronts, who now roamed about, living off the land. In Novy Oskol itself they found a unit they identified as the "4th Replacement Cavalry Regiment." Although Vatsetis' headquarters had already

7. I. K. Rybalka, *Vidnovlennya radyanskoï vlady na Ukraini (1918-1919)* (The Restoration of Soviet Power in the Ukraine, 1918-19) (Kharkov, 1957), p. 29; cf. A. V. Likholat, *Razgrom natsionalisticheskoi kontrrevolyutsii na Ukraini (1917-1922 gg.)* (The Destruction of the Nationalist Counterrevolution in the Ukraine, 1917-22) (Kiev, 1954), p. 198 n.

8. Bubnov et al., *Grazhdanskaya voïna, 1918-1921, 1*, 59-67.

9. Antonov, 3, 43.

assigned this organization to Antonov, neither the regiment nor the Southern Front had been so informed. At the moment the regiment called itself the "22nd Voronezh Regiment" of the 8th Division (Southern Front), and an officer of the Southern Front had just ordered its immediate removal to Voronezh, threatening to shoot its leaders if the move were not made. But the regiment was confused: Did it belong to the Southern Front or to Antonov? It seems probable that Ukrainians among its ranks may have argued for joining Antonov, that some of its members simply wanted to avoid any fighting no matter where it occurred, and that others were too weary to care. Because the regiment was quartered partly in the houses of Novy Oskol, partly in a neighboring village, the soldiers were "under the influence of women." Horses were poorly fed and inadequate in number; some of the soldiers were barefooted and half-starved; commanders spent their time napping; and the local military administrative office was without personnel.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Antonov's assistants hastened to bring the 4th Cavalry into the Soviet Army of the Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Antonov had ordered the creation of a special unit at Novy Oskol, to be called the "First Brigade of the 3rd Division," a division which as yet existed only in his optimistic imagination. As organizers and commanders of this unit he selected another pair of assistants (one, an anarchist), who had served him faithfully earlier in the year. Exploring southeast of Kursk, these men discovered a self-styled "Rebel Revolutionary Committee of the Ukrainian Eastern Front." Its leader, a certain Ryndiny, not a Bolshevik but a Left Social Revolutionary, commanded 1,500 men. Through his emissaries Antonov ordered Ryndiny's units formed into the "10th Soviet Ukrainian Infantry Regiment," directing this unit to place itself, along with the 4th Cavalry Regiment, under the staff of the First Bri-

10. *Ibid.*, 3, 45.

gade of the 3rd Soviet Ukrainian Division in Novy Oskol.<sup>11</sup> Thus a Bolshevik commander, aided by an anarchist commissar, commandeered a Left Social Revolutionary regiment for an almost nonexistent brigade in a hypothetical division. Such were the methods which created the Soviet Army of the Ukraine.

By December 18 Antonov had identified enough maverick units to give him a genuine First Brigade of the 3rd Division, and the unit was duly reported to Vatsetis' staff. According to his figures the new brigade comprised three regiments: the 9th—with 230 armed men, 1 machine gun, and about 2,000 men without arms (this unit was composed of border guards and new recruits picked up in the area around Novy Oskol); the 10th (Ryndiny)—with 1,000 armed men, 6 machine guns, and 2,000 unarmed men; and the 4th Cavalry—with 150 armed men, 1 machine gun, and 300 cavalymen with neither weapons nor horses. The discrepancy between Ryndiny's 1,500 men, mentioned earlier, and the 3,000 Antonov reported in the new 10th Regiment may be explained perhaps by the fact that Antonov's figures were presented with a request for arms and equipment. "I have been promised much," he told the All-Russian headquarters. "When I have received it there will be supplementary demands."<sup>12</sup>

In the vast area of military work subsumed under the heading "Services," Antonov and his aides had to build from the ground. They knocked together an intelligence organization, a training school for artillerymen, and another for young commanders. They formed political sections, appointed political commissars for new units, and dispatched agitators to distant partisan bands. They ar-

11. *Ibid.*, 3, 45-46. In early January Ryndiny joined a Social Revolutionary (SR) group which carried out an abortive revolt against the Bolsheviks; Leon Trotsky, *Kak vooruzhalas revolyutsiya* (How the Revolution Armed Itself) (3 vols. Moscow, 1923-25), 2, pt. 1, 169-70.

12. Antonov, 3, 46-50.

ranged for the printing of newspapers, the establishment of mobile libraries and political schools; they organized soldiers' choral groups, musical circles, clubs, and traveling artist companies.<sup>13</sup>

Supply, too, was a crucial problem. Shortages ran the gamut from trained and responsible officers and healthy soldiers to equipment, arms, and food. For a shock group that was to serve on his left flank, Antonov demanded the following items from Vatsetis: "an armored train, an armored column, an aviation section, a technical train (of bootmakers), a railroad section, a communications battalion, an engineer battalion, a division of light artillery and a battery of heavy artillery; artillery equipment, machine guns, rifles, cartridges, etc.; mobile kitchens and monthly norms of certain products."<sup>14</sup> Such demands were completely unrealistic. Though Antonov undoubtedly needed every item on the list, he must have been perfectly aware of their unavailability. Hence, this requisition, while underlining real shortages, was probably submitted largely to embarrass Vatsetis.

Well into 1919 the principal sources of the Red Army's supplies were the Tsarist stocks left over from World War I.<sup>15</sup> But such stores did not exist in the Kursk region, and the weapons brought into the Ukraine by deserting soldiers or stolen from German occupation forces during the mid-year skirmishes were far from sufficient. Nor did the rebel divisions have medical or sanitation services when Antonov arrived. Only by diligent search did he manage to discover and "capture" seven doctors and several sanitation sections. Medicines were cadged or stolen. Money was not available for food or equipment; consequently, foraging for food and other supplies was continuous. Pay was to be always in arrears. Good staff men were hard to come by,

13. *Ibid.*, 3, 35.

14. *Ibid.*, 3, 50.

15. Kakurin, *Kak srazhalas revolyutsiya*, 1, 148.

harder to keep out of the clutches of Vatsetis' headquarters, and adequate numbers of technical specialists, repairmen, and telegraphists were never found.

Through the first three-quarters of 1918 the lack of an effective central supply system had compelled most Bolshevik units to provision themselves. During the railroad war, when opposing forces chased one another back and forth along rail lines, units on each side did their best to capture locomotives and a few cars that could be fashioned into armored trains. With such trains, units attacked and retreated, and, stowing on board captured arms and food supplies, thereby made themselves more or less self-sufficient. By late 1918 this system had become almost traditional.<sup>16</sup> It closely suited the fighters' partisan tendencies and it helped to preserve the independence that partisan and Red Guard commanders insisted upon. But in late 1918 the success of this system was a major stumbling block to all efforts to develop an organized army and a planned supply organization.

Individual units hoarded goods, traded surpluses for needed items, and warily evaded interference by higher headquarters. It was slow work persuading hard-to-reach partisan commanders to transfer their surpluses to central warehouses and renounce their monopolies of grain, sugar, cartridges, or skilled technicians. To smash this supply bottleneck, Antonov introduced control inspectors who were ordered to inventory supplies and limit the stocks held by his divisions.<sup>17</sup> These efforts, however, went against the partisan's ingrained habits of self-protection and self-interest. Therefore, from the first the Soviet Ukrainian Army was hamstrung by the inability of its central organs either to supply the divisions or to control their supplies—an almost fatal weakness, since military authority rests ulti-

16. Antonov, 3, 36-37.

17. *Ibid.*

mately upon the ability of a government or a commander to dispense or withhold money, guns, and food to subordinate commanders. Supply was to remain an unsolved problem all through the Ukrainian campaign. As a direct consequence, the ability of Antonov and the Soviet Ukrainian Government to command and compel obedience was never firmly established.

Perhaps the most perplexing of Antonov's organizational problems concerned the best method of commanding his army. He stood between the horns of a dilemma. Though subordinate to the Revolutionary Military Council of the RSFSR, he could expect neither adequate support nor attentive direction from that source. To achieve success he had to function vigorously and independently as an autonomous commander under the Provisional Soviet Government of the Ukraine. In effect, although he was a loyal Communist, circumstances compelled him to establish a self-contained, partisan-style command capable of defying Moscow and making its own decisions. On the other side of the coin, in his relations with subordinate units, the circumstances were reversed. Subordinate commanders had to be controlled. The numerous egalitarian and separatist units, partisans, and autonomous peasants' and workers' groups had to be taught somehow to obey his commands.

Antonov did not hesitate to cast himself adrift from the superior authority of Moscow and Serpukhov; yet in order to subordinate others to his own command, he made good use of the centralizing techniques Trotsky was applying elsewhere. Tables of organization and equipment and other technical matters were regulated by Tsarist military codes adjusted to fit the Ukrainian situation. Since most officers and noncommissioned officers had lived through at least the last months of World War I, all possessed some knowledge of regular army routines, and Antonov made wide use of men with such knowledge in his efforts to form a

disciplined army responsive to his headquarters.<sup>18</sup> But the centrifugal forces were immense. Just as Vatsetis controlled Antonov with difficulty, so Antonov found himself hard pressed in his efforts to establish effective mastery over the Ukrainian divisions and the innumerable smaller units which made up his army.

Vatsetis had not been consulted either before the establishment of the Ukrainian government or before the announcement of the Soviet Ukrainian Army. He opposed both after the event.<sup>19</sup> Although his deepest concern remained the concentration of his troops at the most dangerous fronts, quelling the bumptious, aggressive "Kursk Group" appears to have become something of an obsession for him. Moreover, his administrative relationships with the Soviet Ukrainian Government and its army, which he doggedly continued to call the "Group of the Kursk Direction," left much to be desired in terms of sharply defined command authority. True, the Ukrainian Army remained operationally subordinate to Vatsetis, but members of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Ukraine—that is, the commander and the commissars of the Ukrainian Army—were to be elected by the Ukrainian government and confirmed by the RSFSR government at Moscow. Supplies for the Ukrainian Army were to be provided by Moscow through the military section of the Ukrainian government; further, Vatsetis was obligated to consult with Ukrainian representatives on the details of the Ukrainian campaign. Given the headstrong character of the Left KP(b)U leaders and their military commander, Vatsetis had ample reason to be dissatisfied with the situation. Understandably, he tried to gain more effective control.

On December 17 he received Antonov cordially at Ser-

18. Kakurin, *r*, 149.

19. Antonov, *3*, 57-58.

pukhov and offered him a position as Inspector General of the Red Army, but Antonov, determined to carry through what he had begun and convinced that Vatsetis was trying to lure him away from the Ukraine, refused the job. The next day Antonov learned that a group of critics around headquarters were attacking his fitness to command the Ukrainian Army. Rumors accused him of unwillingness to cooperate with workers' underground organizations, hesitation against the Germans, and too many delays in the move against Kharkov. The most dangerous insinuation labeled him "separatist," a term of damaging connotations suggesting both anti-Bolshevik and nationalist leanings. Disturbed, certain that Vatsetis was eagerly listening to these rumors if not actually fomenting them, Antonov made it clear that his actions were approved by Pyatakov and, through Stalin's intercession, by the Supreme Council of Defense.<sup>20</sup>

But Vatsetis' mind was made up. Two days after Antonov's visit, the commander in chief took positive action to separate himself from the Ukrainian problem. His decision was delivered in a surprise order too briefly worded to be clear:

19 December 1918. From 21 December I will subordinate the Special Group of the Kursk Direction of Antonov in all relations to the commander of the Southern Front. In view of this it is proposed to Comrade Antonov that he give the command of this group to Comrade Kozhevnikov immediately, retaining as formerly the duties determined by the decrees of the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of the Ukraine.<sup>21</sup>

Thus Antonov was neatly cut off. The wording of the message made it appear that he had been removed from

20. *Ibid.*, 3, 41.

21. *Ibid.*, 3, 51.

the command of the whole Soviet Ukrainian Army (Vatsetis' "Group of the Kursk Direction"); accordingly the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic at once began to send its directives to Kozhevnikov. Antonov, however, chose to assume that Vatsetis intended to transfer to Kozhevnikov only the shock group organized for action against Krasnov. Although this interpretation meant the loss of Kozhevnikov's powerful units, as well as of that First Brigade of the 3rd Division, which Antonov had so laboriously brought into being, he was glad to see the shock group go, for its transfer appeared to indicate that the Ukrainian Soviet Government might soon be relieved of any responsibilities on the Southern Front. Without delay, therefore, Antonov summoned Kozhevnikov; the necessary transfers were quickly effected; then Antonov hurried off to supervise preparations for his attack on Kharkov and to await clarification from Vatsetis.<sup>22</sup>

But clarification did not come. On December 25, determined to force the issue, Antonov and Zatonski sent a new letter to the Russian Soviet Government and to Vatsetis containing a list of forthright criticisms designed to build up a damning condemnation of the commander in chief. They argued that the Ukrainian Army found itself in a difficult situation because of the inefficiency of Vatsetis' headquarters. Specifically, they charged that Vatsetis had established no demarcation lines between the Southern and the Ukrainian Fronts; though ordering the transfer to Kozhevnikov, he had not followed through with a detailed list of the troops to be transferred, nor had he explained the mission of these forces. Moreover, the Revolutionary Council of the Ukrainian Army had received no general directive of any sort from headquarters, and all attempts to learn Vatsetis' intentions in regard to the Ukraine had been repeatedly put off. In consequence, Antonov and

22. *Ibid.*

Zatonski declared: "The Revolutionary Military Council of the Ukrainian Army has no confidence at all that it can count on any support from the Center." They saw "absolutely no indication" that headquarters would provide supplies; finally, they complained that the joint conference of headquarters and Ukrainian personnel, which Vatsetis should have called on December 21, had not met. Thus, according to them, every effort they had made to cooperate and to obtain cooperation had been unsuccessful because of the recalcitrance or the inefficiency of Vatsetis' headquarters.<sup>23</sup> Taken as a whole this list of criticisms constituted a brazen and insubordinate—and for Vatsetis undoubtedly an infuriating—statement of "no confidence."

Goaded into action, Vatsetis immediately called the overdue joint conference (which Antonov prudently found himself too busy to attend) and defended the work of his staff and himself. Unfortunately this conference added to Vatsetis' irritation, for it gave him new evidence of the insubordinate willfulness of the commander of the Soviet Ukrainian Army. On December 30, a day after Ukrainian representatives had informed him that Antonov was already attacking Kharkov, Vatsetis wired: "I ask you to tell me whether this is true and what called forth your decisions, which go contrary to my directives."<sup>24</sup>

Although Antonov's troops were indeed moving southward, he could honestly report that he had not yet attacked Kharkov. Yet all through December, while he wrangled with Vatsetis, gathered troops, and watched Ukrainian military developments, Antonov had edged his forces into the Ukraine, putting them into position for the Kharkov attack. In Vatsetis' mind these advances underscored the determination of Pyatakov and his aides to defy his authority. He was right. To the men of the Soviet Ukrainian Government and its army, the swift course of events in the

23. *Ibid.*, 3, 62.

24. *Ibid.*, 3, 64.

Ukraine had created a situation which literally cried for Bolshevik action, and they meant to take it regardless of the Center's wishes.

Inside the Ukraine in early December, conditions changed from moment to moment. German arms still preserved Skoropadski's authority.<sup>25</sup> But the Hetman's sun had set. As Petlyura's strength grew daily, the Germans, seeking protection for their continued movement out of the Ukraine and increasingly aware that they must cooperate with the strongest native force, soon turned openly to Petlyura and the Directory. Loss of German favor automatically destroyed Skoropadski's last shred of authority. Issuing a brief statement of abdication on December 14, he fled the country. On the same day Petlyura's troops occupied Kiev; in the south they marched into Odessa and Nikolaev; and a few days later Petlyura, the "Chief Ataman" and "National Hero," made his triumphal entry into the capital.<sup>26</sup>

Petlyura's army, numbering no more than 8,000 in the first days of December, had swollen by thousands each day as hordes of aroused peasants marched to join the fight against Skoropadski and the Germans. Within ten days after Kiev was taken, 30,000 Petlyurian troops had entered the city, while some 70,000 more were taking over the provincial areas.<sup>27</sup> To all appearances Petlyura's was the popular cause; nevertheless, there were many obvious weaknesses in his position. As a Ukrainian Social Democrat and member of the Directory, Petlyura considered himself the military head of the Ukrainian nationalist struggle for independence. Actually, however, he led not a great national-

25. *Pravda* (Dec. 7, 1918), p. 3.

26. Vinnichenko, *Vidrodzhennya natsii*, 3, 163-65; *Pravda* (Dec. 17, 1918), p. 3.

27. Majstrenko, *Borot'bism*, pp. 93-94.

ist army fighting for Ukrainian independence and a republican government but a motley horde of angry, unmanageable peasants and Cossacks hot for vengeance against the foreign despoilers and their puppets. The fury that impelled these peasants and Cossacks to action could remain at white heat only as long as the foreigners and the troops of Skoropadski remained to be scourged. Thereafter, Petlyura's forces were bound to melt away unless vigorous measures were taken to organize them into an obedient, disciplined nationalist army. Swift and competent measures were needed to form the many partisan bands into military units whose members were politically conscious and dedicated to an independent Ukraine, but such action was beyond Petlyura's power.<sup>28</sup> He possessed little experience in military affairs, and the Directory's military administrative system was weak and inadequate.<sup>29</sup> Thus, Petlyura, riding upon the crest of a peasant rebellion, organized his army by appointing local atamans as his commanders in the different regions of the Ukraine, and posed as a national hero, without being aware of his own helplessness.

The plight of the Ukrainian nationalist movement was further complicated by personal enmity between the two leading figures of the Directory, Petlyura and Vinnichenko, and by serious political differences among the groups supporting them. Vinnichenko well understood that a popular and effective government could only be created through the combined efforts of the several Ukrainian nationalist parties, with strong support from the masses, but he was incapable of leading an effective coalition.<sup>30</sup> His own political views made him suspect in the eyes of the other parties.

28. Reshetar, *The Ukrainian Revolution*, p. 257; Arnold Margolin, *Ukraina i politika Antanty* (The Ukraine and the Policy of the Entente) (Berlin, 1921), p. 373; Mazepa, *Ukraina v ohni i buri revolyutsii 1917-1921*, 1, 69.

29. Viktor Andriyevsky, *Z mynuloho* (From the Past) (2 vols. Berlin, 1921-23), 2, pt. 2, 18-22.

30. Vinnichenko, 3, 123-27; Reshetar, pp. 216-17; Majstrenko, pp. 93-94.

As a radical member of the Ukrainian Social Democrats (SDs) he was firmly persuaded in December that Marxian socialist revolution was the order of the day, and he therefore boldly advocated establishment of local soviets, radical land reforms, disenfranchisement of the bourgeoisie, and the creation of a dictatorship of labor. He believed that, owing to the nearly universal popularity of the soviet idea among the lower classes of the Ukraine, his program would obtain wide support for the Directory.<sup>31</sup>

Frightened by Vinnichenko's "Bolshevik" socialist program, strong middle-class elements desiring a democratic republic rallied around Petlyura and his conservative military commanders. The balance of forces was such that debate over whether the Directory and its provisional government, the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR), should establish a dictatorship of labor or a bourgeois republic went on through most of December. Meanwhile the people of the Ukraine waited and wondered what their new government would be and began to doubt that it would accomplish anything. Even when Vinnichenko succeeded in persuading the Directory to accept his program the conflict was not resolved, for although the Directory's "Declaration of December 26" was written by Vinnichenko and embodied the main points of his program, it fell short of establishing a genuine socialist order and at the same time sent more democrats scurrying under Petlyura's wing.<sup>32</sup> As for its appeal to the masses, such were the difficulties of communication and the inadequacies of the administrative organization of the UNR that few Ukrainians outside Kiev even heard of the new program until well into January.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, Bolshevik troop movements into the Ukraine

31. Vinnichenko, 3, 134-36, 186; Khrystyuk, *Zamitky i materiyaly do istorii ukrainskoi revolyutsii*, 4, 5-9, 47-48.

32. Khrystyuk, 4, 15-18, 24; Vinnichenko, 3, 138, 141-42, 168-76; Mazepa, 1, 74-75.

33. Vinnichenko, 3, 180, 196; Mazepa, 1, 79-80.

increased pressure on all groups supporting the Directory. For Vinnichenko, the Red advance made it all the more imperative that a Ukrainian nationalist dictatorship of laborers be established. As a Ukrainian nationalist *and* a Marxian socialist, he hoped for an independent Ukrainian state that could ally with the Russian socialist state in the struggle for international revolution. But among democratic and reactionary elements, the Russian Bolshevik advances only strengthened the conviction that good Ukrainian democrats should arm themselves swiftly to beat off all socialist incursions, whether Russian or Ukrainian. By maintaining a military dictatorship in his own name, though without actually claiming all political power, Petlyura neutralized the efforts of both socialists and democrats. Inadvertently, but quite effectively, he paralyzed the Directory.

As Vinnichenko was to point out in later years, the real government of the Directory was not the UNR but Petlyura's army, and it was neither a good government nor a good army. Composed of many locally formed partisan forces and independently operating Cossack atamans and adventurers, its separate components did as they wished. The local military leaders who called themselves Petlyurians had actually the most varied and undisciplined characters, and the political hues of their minds were many. Some of them were ex-servants of Skoropadski, reactionary Russian officers with little comprehension of the Ukrainian situation and no sympathy whatever for the revolutionary aspirations of workers and peasants. Others ranged the scale from colonels who talked about re-establishing "order" to unprincipled partisans who simply grasped this opportunity to rape and plunder.

Petlyurian sections captured cities for booty; they sacked villages, executed "political criminals," carried out pogroms, attacked one another, invaded Kiev itself on occasion, and even raided the UNR's administrative agencies.

Operating like Chinese robber generals, Petlyura's "followers" blackened his name as well as the reputation of the Directory.<sup>34</sup> It was inevitable that the victories won by these atamans in December, with their attendant acts of violence, should be quickly followed by widespread reaction against the Directory and by a marked decline in Petlyura's popular support.<sup>35</sup>

A case in point is that of Petlyura's commander in the Kharkov region, a forceful and reactionary colonel named Peter Balbachan, who operated with plenipotentiary powers on the Left Bank of the Dnepr. Vinnichenko subsequently charged that Balbachan's administration "could hardly be distinguished from that of the Hetman," and that the reactionary role played by Balbachan at Kharkov was responsible for having "killed the authority and influence of the Directory on the Left Bank."<sup>36</sup> Balbachan's political adventures in Kharkov began when he first seized it about mid-November with a force of some 2,000 men, occupying the city's government buildings and attempting to establish a "nationalist" government.<sup>37</sup> Pro-Bolshevik industrial workers opposed him, demanding formation of a workers' soviet. When this demand was ignored, they did their best to block the work of a Menshevik-inspired conference of workers supported by Balbachan, which nevertheless succeeded in denouncing the Bolsheviks as disorganizers. The latter, faced with the alternatives of either defending themselves or capitulating to Balbachan, proceeded to form their own workers' soviet.

This conflict reached its culmination in the first days of

34. Vinnichenko, 3, 147-48, 180-88, 192-94, 238-42.

35. Majstrenko, pp. 93-94; Reshetar, p. 257; Vinnichenko, 3, 201-04, 246.

36. Vinnichenko, 3, 145-46; cf. Mazepa, 1, 76.

37. Antonov, 3, 80; N. Popov, "Ocherki revolyutsionnykh sobyti v Kharkove ot iyunya 1917 g. do dekabrya 18 g." (An Outline of the Revolutionary Events in Kharkov from June 1917 to December 1918), *Letopis revolyutsii*, no. 1 (1922), p. 31.

December, when Balbachan's move to suppress the soviet provoked the workers into a general strike. The resulting chaos frightened the occupying Germans into action. German troops remaining in Kharkov, while forming a contingent not much larger than Balbachan's, still enjoyed much of their former military prestige and consequently exercised considerable influence. Here, imitating current Russian fashions, they had organized their own soldiers' soviet. Worried by the Russian winter and dreaming about getting home before Christmas, the German soldiers tried to sense at every moment which native group could best help them get safely out of the Ukraine. Their radical inclinations and the desire to please whatever group controlled transportation facilities caused them to support Kharkov's striking workers. Balbachan was compelled to hand over the reins of government to the Germans and leave the city.

With Balbachan outside and the German soldiers and Bolshevik soviet in control, Kharkov became for one week a workers' paradise. Workers were given the right to assemble, to strike, to arm themselves, and an abruptly flourishing workers' press published appeals for support from Pyatakov's Ukrainian government at Kursk. The workers' triumph was short-lived, however, for Petlyura's capture of Kiev in the second week of December strengthened his position throughout the Ukraine. Petlyura's atamans now controlled the railways; therefore, the Germans at Kharkov reversed their earlier decision; Balbachan re-entered the city on December 15, forced the workers' soviet underground, and began to prepare his defenses against Bolshevik attack from the north.<sup>38</sup>

38. N. Popov, pp. 32-34; cf. Maior G. Frants, "Evakuatsiya germanskimi voiskami Ukrainy (Zima 1918-1919 g.)" (The German Evacuation of the Ukraine in the Winter of 1918-19), *Istoriik i sovremennik* (The Historian and the Contemporary), 2 (1922), 264-65.

But Balbachan had lost too much time and had too thoroughly antagonized the Kharkov workers. On December 19 a newly elected workers' soviet defiantly endorsed its Bolshevik and Left SR leaders.<sup>39</sup> Members of the middle classes frantically began seeking escape from the city, paying as much as 1,000 rubles for railroad tickets southward.<sup>40</sup> German units, pressed back from the area north of Kharkov, made their own hurried plans for departure. Advancing cautiously, Bolshevik forces won ground by combining threats, negotiations, and minor battles with encirclement movements that endangered German escape routes. On December 20 Soviet troops attacked and seized Belgorod, 40 miles north of Kharkov. The way now lay open to Antonov's first main objective.

These military developments, indicating the possibility of major successes in the Ukraine, increased pressures in Moscow for reconsideration of the Ukrainian problem. Other factors augmented these pressures. With the landing of Allied armies at Odessa on December 18 (to be considered further in later pages), the need for an active and powerful front in the southwest became undeniable.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, as the threats on both the Eastern and Southern Fronts grew increasingly ominous, Lenin, who appeared to see even more clearly than Vatsetis the danger from the south and who disapproved Trotsky's concern for the Ukraine, impatiently pressed the latter to settle the Ukrainian quibbling and mount a general attack on the Southern

39. *Pravda* (Dec. 25, 1918), p. 3.

40. *Pravda* (Dec. 20, 1918), p. 3.

41. Vladimir Margulies, *Ognennyye gody: Materialy i dokumenty po istorii grazhdanskoi voyny na Yuge Rossii* (The Years of Fire: Materials and Documents about the History of the Civil War in South Russia) (Berlin, 1923), pp. 6-7; F. Anulov, "Soyuzny desant na Ukraine" (Allied Landing in the Ukraine), in A. G. Shlikhter, ed., *Chernaya kniga: Sbornik statei i materialov ob interventsii Antanty na Ukraine v 1918-1919 gg.* (The Black Book: A Collection of Articles and Materials about the Intervention of the Entente Powers in the Ukraine in 1918-19) (Ekaterinoslav, 1925), pp. 88-94.

Front.<sup>42</sup> If the truculent Ukrainians were allowed to go their way, so Lenin may have reflected, Vatsetis might concentrate more attention on the Southern Front. Finally, the flood of imperative demands presented by the Soviet Ukrainian Government, together with the machinations of Stalin, probably helped to swing opinion at the Center toward approval of a more independent Ukrainian Front.

Vatsetis alone appears to have been oblivious to the possibilities at Kharkov. During the last days of December his professional attention was focused upon the Eastern and Southern Fronts. It also appears likely that by this time he was too deeply and personally embroiled in his quarrel with the Soviet Ukrainian Government to judge the changing Ukrainian situation intelligently. Undoubtedly he had good reason to be concerned about the Antonov-Zatonski letter of December 25, for its heaped-up reproaches struck at his most vulnerable weakness by raising the specter of his possible disloyalty to the Communist cause. This was simply new fuel thrown on an already raging fire. The defection of other ex-Tsarist officers from the Red Army placed Vatsetis in a most delicate position. Moreover, Trotsky was under attack from ex-members of the Tsaritsyn gang who were determined to make him suffer for their humiliation. Among other things, Trotsky was being accused of irresponsibly delivering Communists to the firing squad and of overprotecting potentially traitorous ex-Tsarist officers. Vatsetis, as Trotsky's coworker, was tarred with the same brush that blackened the chief military commissar. The criticisms of Antonov and Zatonski, coming when they did, must have appeared to the tenacious colonel as simply one more phase of the general attack upon his honor and reputation. In self-defense he felt bound to reply to

42. Lenin, pp. 49-50; Lenin to Trotsky, Jan. 3, 1919. Lenin's irritation with the Ukrainians is clearly expressed by his use of the epithet "separatists."

such detailed charges, and on January 4, 1919, he did reply—with a long list of vitriolic countercharges on which he and his staff must have labored many hours.

In this document Vatsetis questioned Antonov's competence as a commander. He declared that the Ukrainian army had been given no strategic mission because it "had not yet completed its formation." Indeed, he went on, "the strategic tasks of the Ukraine are so vast that their resolution would require several armies. Only the RSFSR armies could muster that much strength." But though no strategic mission had been assigned, some minor tasks had been, among them "action against the railroad Bakhmach-Gomel, and this task," Vatsetis pointed out, "was not executed by you." To the complaint that no clear demarcation lines had been drawn for the Ukrainian Front, he replied that, as Antonov had been informed several times, there was no Ukrainian Front.

To the charges that the special group under Kozhevnikov's command had not been given a specific mission and that the troops to be transferred had not been identified, Vatsetis countercharged: "Your declaration is not entirely accurate; it only demonstrates that you are completely uninterested in what your neighbor is doing. To Comrade Kozhevnikov it has been exactly indicated what units belong to his group." Furthermore, the commander in chief insisted, Kozhevnikov had been assigned a specific mission; but for that matter—and Vatsetis made this point bluntly—Kozhevnikov was none of Antonov's business; he now belonged to the Southern Front. As for the Antonov-Zatonski statement of no confidence concerning the Center's support of the Ukraine, Vatsetis said: "I consider that this phrase fell into the report by a misunderstanding, since I have incessantly made it clear to you, and you have agreed with me, that our road to the Ukraine lies through the Don." In other words, action in the Ukraine would be feasible only after Krasnov had been cleared from the Don

region. "I have shown you . . . all the plans of our action in the South," Vatsetis declared, and to this he added that he had sent rifles by the thousands.

Thus in a four-page telegram Vatsetis called Antonov incompetent, charged him with indifference to the interests of his neighbors and with failure to obey clearly defined orders, pointed out that the Ukraine was not a separate front, and suggested that he be more careful with the truth. Finally, responding to Antonov's complaint that no general directive had been issued, Vatsetis issued one. He commanded Antonov to concentrate his forces against Chernigov and to maintain contact with Kozhevnikov.<sup>43</sup>

As always, Antonov's rebuttal was swift and furious. He denied all charges, pointed proudly to the swift growth of his forces, and repeated his demands for supplies.<sup>44</sup> Had it been left to these two, the quarrel might very well have gone on forever, but Lenin and Trotsky, each for his own reasons, had reached the end of their collective patience.<sup>45</sup> Besides, the time for bickering had passed. An important military event had changed the whole situation even before Vatsetis' letter had been dispatched. On January 3, 1919, Antonov's troops had taken Kharkov.

As with most of the other "victories" in the weeks immediately following this event, the actual capture of Kharkov was an anticlimax. But the military and economic significance of the victory was great, for this city stood at the center of important railway systems connecting the north with Kiev, the Crimea, and the Donbass. Administrative agencies governing the transportation of coal, iron ore, pig iron, and salt were here, as were the central agencies of the great metallurgical industries of the Donbass.<sup>46</sup> Bal-

43. Antonov, 3, 110-15.

44. Ibid.

45. Trotsky, *Stalin*, pp. 292-94; *Lenin*, pp. 49-50.

46. P. Ryabinin, "Yassy i soyuznaya okkupatsiya na Ukraine" (Yassy and the Allied Occupation in the Ukraine), in Shlikhter, pp. 36-37.

bachan and Petlyura should have defended this priceless gateway to the Ukraine with all their strength, but the independence and disorder within Petlyurian ranks precluded an effective grand strategy.

Antonov's military action against Balbachan was aided by the internal chaos at Kharkov. In the last days of December the workers carried on sporadic strikes, laying plans for a general uprising, and about December 28 Antonov learned that the Germans were paying huge sums of money to secure locomotives for their trains. By that time the city lacked electric power, tramways were halted, the water system was threatened, all foreign consuls had departed for Kiev, and firing in the streets at night attested to the paralysis of the civil administration. Emmanuil Kviring, a leader of the Right faction of the KP(b)U, in negotiations with the Germans secured their promise to evacuate Kharkov by January 1. On the last day of December Antonov received information that Balbachan's principal unit had broken up, its remnants either fleeing to safety or coming over to the Bolsheviks.<sup>47</sup> Well informed by telegraphers who relayed Balbachan's every order to Bolshevik headquarters, Antonov pushed his 2nd Division toward the outskirts of the city. Meanwhile his own telegraphers dispatched innumerable uncoded messages to nonexistent Soviet units in an effort to persuade Balbachan of his encirclement by an irresistible enemy.<sup>48</sup>

On January 2 Antonov received a message from the central committee of the Ukrainian Communists inside Kharkov advising him that the workers had begun an uprising and asking him to declare his own intentions. Antonov re-

47. Antonov, 3, 68-69, 75, 100.

48. Mikhail Kiselev, *Agitpoezd: Vospominanie o borbe s kontrrevolyutsiei na Ukraine 1918-1919 gg.* (The Agit-Train: Memoir about the Struggle against the Counterrevolution in the Ukraine, 1918-19) (Moscow, 1933), pp. 3-4.

plied, "Act resolutely. We will attack."<sup>49</sup> Balbachan's defeat in the suburbs on January 3 followed; his attempted withdrawal into Kharkov was blocked by the workers and he was forced to retreat westward. Vladimir Primakov's 1st Red Cossack Regiment and the 5th Soviet Regiment of the 2nd Division passed through the city without fighting and pursued the Petlyurian troops some twenty miles.<sup>50</sup> Antonov informed Vatsetis, Trotsky, and Stalin that Kharkov had been taken with the loss of only "three hundred killed and wounded." And at five o'clock on the afternoon of January 3 he personally entered Kharkov. The degree of confusion within the city is suggested by an incident which the conquerors considered only a minor irritation. Concurrent with the Bolshevik attack, the units of a partisan anarchist leader named Cherednyak had entered Kharkov from another direction. Cherednyak "autocratically seized the Grand Hotel, flew a black [anarchist] flag above it and began carrying on searches and requisitions." Polite words for systematic plundering. Antonov sent his new town commandant to break up the gang and arrest its leader.<sup>51</sup>

No longer able to pretend that the Ukrainian Front did not exist, Moscow rejoiced at the victory and bravely faced facts. On January 5 the Council of Defense put an end to the Antonov-Vatsetis polemics by ordering the organization of a Ukrainian Front, naming Antonov as its commander. As of that date the Ukrainian Revolutionary Military Council was to be designated by the Ukrainian Government. The ex-Tsarist officer, Glagolev, was assigned as Antonov's chief of staff, and all the staff of Glagolev's Reserve Army was

49. Antonov, 3, 103; cf. S. Barannyk, Kh. Mishkis, and H. Slobodsky, eds., *Istoriya KP(b)U v materialakh i dokumentakh (khrestomatiya), 1917-1920 rr.* (A History of the KP[b]U in Materials and Documents [An Anthology], 1917-20) (2d ed. Kiev, 1934), p. 397.

50. Primakov, pp. 188-89; cf. Vinnichenko, 3, 304.

51. Antonov, 3, 105, 108.

transferred to the Ukrainian Army.<sup>52</sup> This directive was followed on January 6 by a curt telegram from Vatsetis satisfying most of Antonov's demands. Headquarters established a clear line of demarcation between the Southern and the Ukrainian Fronts. Objectives for the Ukrainian Army were spelled out—all of them to the west or southwest—and Antonov was urged to make wide use of partisan sections and to extend his political and intelligence operations to the Black Sea. At long last the Soviet Ukrainian Government had fought clear of involvement with the Southern Front and had a positive mandate to mount a military offensive into the western and southern areas of the Ukraine.

Anticlimax or not, the capture of Kharkov had immediate and far-reaching consequences in the Ukraine. Not least among these was the effect that the appearance of a determined Bolshevik army in the Ukraine had upon the partisans who called themselves Petlyurists. Above all, these partisans were peasants and Cossacks fighting for land and freedom. Each armed detachment, with its ataman or batko, its homemade or borrowed political slogans, and its men recruited from a few villages in some isolated corner of the country, represented but one crest in a great sea of peasant unrest, which in vastness and complexity was like nothing comparable in modern times.<sup>53</sup> The variety of opinions, the confluence of idealism, self-interest, and hooliganism, the elemental violence of the forces behind this peasant upheaval—defy accurate analysis. All too frequently partisan

52. *Ibid.*, 3, 106, 115. For Trotsky's extensive and perceptive analysis of the significance of the Kharkov victory, see his letters of January 4 and 10 to Sverdlov and the Supreme Council of Defense, "Trotsky Archives," T-113 and T-116.

53. N. N. Popov, *Ocherk istorii Kommunisticheskoi partii (bolshevikov) Ukrainy*, p. 187.

bands formed, acted, and later dissolved or joined some greater body without leaving reliable records of their existence, their motives, or their deeds. Yet the most salient and general motives for the partisan activities are inescapable. Ukrainian peasants and Cossacks believed that the land and its produce should belong to them, and they wanted to manage their own affairs. In greater numbers than ever before, they were determined to seize the long-coveted lands of wealthy and noble proprietors, to govern themselves, and to fight off all interference from outsiders, whether foreign or native. Contrary to a popular Bolshevik myth, this twentieth-century haidamak-and-Cossack rising was not provoked primarily by well-to-do Cossacks, nor by the lust of the rich peasant, the *kulak*, for more land. Peasants who had always been landless dreamed now of obtaining *some* land; peasants who owned a *little* dreamed of getting *more*. The desire to come out of this "Time of Troubles" with a private plot and a system of self-government appears to have been virtually universal.<sup>54</sup>

When the peasants rose against Skoropadski through mid-1918 they were incited chiefly by the Hetman's efforts to reinstate aristocratic land ownership and by the actions of his military detachments, which confiscated the villages' produce to feed Germany. Similarly, in December when the peasants rallied to Petlyura's colors, the central issue was their desire to put an end to foreign and native interference and to rid themselves of the big landowner. Without any clear evidence that Petlyura could guide them to the reforms they desired, but blinded by their anxiety to be rid of the Germans and the Hetman, they poured into the nationalist army. Through the weeks of December, however, these partisans were roughly disillusioned by the reactionary policies and ruthless suppressions of Petlyura's commanders; they quickly perceived that the Directory,

54. Kubanin, *Makhnouchchina*, pp. 55-59.

too, was a hostile government that would betray their interests.<sup>55</sup>

With the Bolshevik victory at Kharkov, a new and as yet relatively unknown power came on the scene in the Ukraine. It talked persuasively of peasants' and workers' government; it begged the people to govern themselves by organizing soviets; it summoned the peasants to seize the landed estates immediately and to redistribute the land among themselves; it promised utopia to the laborers of the villages and the big cities. Ukrainian peasants and workers alike heard in these ringing Bolshevik slogans the stirring expression of their hearts' desires. The haidamak wave that had swept Petlyura into power at Kiev began now to surge in a new direction.

Almost imperceptibly, while leaders weighed the odds and hesitated, their followers changed sides, joining the Bolsheviks. The leaders followed. Adventurers who had been making the most of Ukrainian anarchy for their own profit took time for a long look to the future, reflecting on the best means of preserving their skins. They scanned the north, moved always by an ingrained dread of Moscow's might, and they too decided that security and profit might lie with the Bolsheviks. As the Ukrainian Soviet divisions moved westward after Kharkov's capture, more and more local units joined them. Each local victory swelled the Bolshevik ranks, while some of Petlyura's commanders, in desperation and vandalistic anger, sanctioned anti-Jewish pogroms and instituted repressive and dictatorial policies that literally drove peasants and workers into Bolshevik arms. For at least a few weeks, important sections of the Ukrainian peasantry believed they had found their true leaders in the Ukrainian Bolsheviks.<sup>56</sup>

Before the fall of Kharkov, Bolshevik divisions had cautiously advanced toward several key points in the

55. Vinnichenko, 3, 146-48.

56. Khrystyuk, 4, 27, 41, 78; Mazepa, 1, 74.

Ukraine. With that victory they forged ahead openly and quickly. On January 12 the 1st Division captured Chernigov, 200 miles west of Kursk and only 80 miles from Kiev.<sup>57</sup> The peculiar features of the railroad war of 1918 were changed now. In place of movement by captured trains, first in one direction, then in another, these troops advanced steadily overland or along roads, riding in peasant carts and wagons.<sup>58</sup> In some ways their progress resembled a primitive migration of a whole people, with the soldier-peasants' multifarious styles of uniform or civilian dress lending an aura of the wandering caravan to the irregular columns. When fighting was necessary, only the most general orders were issued; each regiment moved along in its own column, almost completely independent of its headquarters, and each commander resolved his military problems as he met them.<sup>59</sup> And, of course, the swelling units marched and fought far too constantly for discipline and order and loyalty to the Communist cause to have much meaning for the newcomers.

Peasant carts carried the Soviet infantry rapidly across the great steppes of the Dnepr's Left Bank. By January 20 Antonov announced the capture of Poltava after a sixteen-day battle.<sup>60</sup> Further to the south, Ekaterinoslav (now Dnepropetrovsk), the big industrial city at the head of the Zaporozhian rapids on the Dnepr, was taken by the 2nd Division after a fierce struggle. Here the anarchist Batko Nestor Makhno, who was destined soon to become the Ukraine's most famous partisan leader, had stubbornly con-

57. Antonov, 3, 136; Primakov, p. 189.

58. Primakov, p. 189.

59. *Chervonoe kazachestvo: Sbornik materialov po istorii chervonogo kazachestva* (The Red Cossacks: Collection of Materials on the History of the Red Cossacks) (Kharkov, n.d.), p. 43.

60. I. I. Mints and E. N. Gorodetski, eds., *Dokumenty o razgrome germanskikh okkupantov na Ukraine v 1918 godu* (Documents Concerning the Destruction of the German Occupiers in the Ukraine in 1918) (Moscow, 1942), p. 222.

tested the power of Petlyura. Late in December he seized Ekaterinoslav, only to be immediately driven out by a Petlyurist force under Colonel Samokish.<sup>61</sup> Recapturing the city the same day, Makhno immediately lost it again, and so the fighting went. When Red forces of the 2nd Division attacked the town, led by the intrepid Bolshevik sailor Paul Dybenko, they also found the Petlyurists hard to dislodge. On January 27, however, after five days of artillery bombardment, four days of bitter fighting, and a workers' insurrection inside the city, the Petlyurists were defeated.<sup>62</sup>

Having won the town, Dybenko's Bolsheviks, an eyewitness recalls, were strangely impressive: "In comparison with the Makhnovists and also with the Petlyurians, the Red Army men produced an extraordinarily disciplined impression."<sup>63</sup> The response to the Bolsheviks was not all favorable, however, for close upon the military victory came the *Chrezvychainaya Komissiya* (Cheka), the special security police, who set to work at once arresting "counter-revolutionaries," whom they imprisoned or shot without trial. Simultaneously the city was surrounded by military guards who mercilessly seized the produce which peasants tried to bring in to market. Stores of food inside the city were quickly monopolized by Bolshevik collection agencies intent upon feeding the army and forwarding supplies to Moscow. Ekaterinoslav was soon terrorized and hungry.<sup>64</sup>

On January 18 Antonov moved his headquarters to Chernigov in order to supervise preparations for the attack on Kiev. The great hurry to sweep westward and settle affairs with Petlyura and the Directory at Kiev was fully justified both by the high ambitions the Communists held for world revolution and by the developing situation in

61. Primakov, p. 188.

62. Kiselev, p. 9; G. Igrenev, "Ekaterinoslavskiya vospominaniya" (Recollections of Ekaterinoslav), *Arkhiv russkoi revolyutsii*, 3 (1921), 236-41.

63. Igrenev, p. 240.

64. Ibid.

the Ukraine. In the eyes of the Ukrainian Soviet Government, in fact of all Bolsheviks in the Ukraine, their work was but one phase of world revolution. Revolutionary outbreaks in Austria and Germany strengthened their faith in the imminence of world conflagration; they raced to complete the Ukrainian conquest in order to clear the field for further action. But there was an even more compelling motive for the Bolsheviks' haste. This was the threat that if they did not advance swiftly they might be destroyed. The instrument of destruction appeared to be already at hand, for in mid-December, French troops had landed at Odessa and in the Crimea. It was evident that the Allies intended to aid Denikin's armies; indeed, rumors from the south alleged that even now French and Volunteer forces were marching toward Kiev.<sup>65</sup>

The French intervention had its origins in Allied efforts to preserve an eastern front against Germany after the Bolsheviks had taken Russia out of the war. As early as December 23, 1917, British and French leaders had signed an agreement establishing spheres of action in Russia, with France taking for her portion Bessarabia, the Ukraine, and the Crimea. Later, following the Allied Powers' decision of July 1918 to intervene in Siberia, Georges Clemenceau contemplated intervention in the Ukraine by French and Balkan troops as a means of pursuing the war against the Germans.<sup>66</sup> Subsequently, in November, when this excuse for invasion was invalidated by the armistice, another was found. Anti-Bolshevik representatives of various Ukrainian and Russian groups met Allied envoys at Yassy in Rumania to beg for an Allied intervention that would "restore order." Acceding to these demands early in December, the Allied diplomats at Yassy gave Emile Henno, the French

65. "Trotsky Archives," T-116.

66. Sophia R. Pelzel, *American Intervention in Siberia, 1918-1920* (Philadelphia, 1946), pp. 45-48; Reshetar, p. 234.

vice-consul to Kiev, plenipotentiary powers in the Ukraine, ordering him to act for them at Kiev until Allied forces landed.<sup>67</sup>

An Allied army at Salonika, commanded by the distinguished General Franchet d'Esperey, put French arms close enough to the Black Sea to make intervention feasible. On December 18 the French disembarked 1,800 men at Odessa and in succeeding weeks brought in thousands more, building up a sizable armed force along the northern shores of the Black Sea.<sup>68</sup> The exact number of foreign troops that came in cannot be precisely established, but reasonably reliable estimates place the peak figure at 60,000–65,000 French, Senegalese, Rumanian, and Greek troops, scattered from Tiraspol, on the east bank of the Dnestr, to the Crimea, with the main concentrations at Odessa and Sevastopol. These troops—two French and two Greek divisions, and part of a Rumanian division—were joined by local Volunteer forces. The last remaining German troops, some 15,000 men quartered at Nikolaev, were also under nominal control of the French, although they could hardly be accounted battleworthy. Including Allies, Volunteer units, and Germans, but not Directory troops, the combined strength of the anti-Bolshevik forces along the Black Sea came to about 85,000 men.<sup>69</sup>

Some Soviet authors argue that the French hoped to plunder the Ukraine as the Germans had done before them; others insist that the French objective was preservation of a united and indivisible Russia able to serve in the future as an ally against France's old enemy, Germany. The real reasons for this intervention must be sought in a series of

67. Ryabinin, pp. 34–35, 40; Consul Henno was unable to get through from Yassy to Kiev, and so remained at Odessa.

68. Antonov, 3, 87, 98, 99.

69. A. I. Gukovski, *Frantsuzskaya interventsiiya na Yuge Rossii, 1918–1919 g.* (The French Intervention in Southern Russia) (Moscow-Leningrad, 1928), pp. 45–48.

complex and often contradictory motives.<sup>70</sup> French leaders undoubtedly shared with their Allies a genuine fear of the Red Peril—communist world revolution. They felt justified, too, in resenting the Bolshevik government, which had made peace with Germany, repudiated and published secret treaties, and canceled the foreign debts of previous Russian regimes. Added to fear and resentment were a profound knowledge of what the war had cost France and a somewhat muddled vision of the great profits that might be made if southern Russia became a French colony. After the armistice with Germany, when the impulse to grab new lands was strong among the Allies, some Frenchmen appear to have dreamed of establishing a permanent sphere of economic influence in southern Russia. But if the imperialist motive existed—as it undoubtedly did in influential sectors of French society—it was confused and neutralized by the war weariness of the French people, the bad morale of the French *poilu*, and the innumerable domestic and international problems that absorbed the attention of France's chiefs in early 1919. During their entire sojourn at Odessa,

70. The most convincing evidence of the multiple motives, cross-purposes, and poor execution of the French intervention comes from debates on this affair in the Chamber of Deputies during the last weeks of March 1919. See *Annales de la Chambre des Députés, 11<sup>e</sup> Législature, Débats Parlementaires, Session Ordinaire de 1919, Tome Unique, Première partie—Du 14 Janvier au 28 Mars 1919* (Paris, 1920), pp. 1278, 1284–85, 1302–06. For comment see *Journal des Débats*, March 21 through 27, 1919; and *L'Action française*, March 26–27, 1919. For Russian opinion, see Gukovski, pp. 7–44; this is the most accurate and careful Soviet analysis of French motives that has been published; cf. Kh. Rakovski, "Khozyaistvennye posledstviya interventsii, 1918–19 gg." (Economic Consequences of the Intervention, 1918–19) in Shlikhter, pp. 28–29; A. I. Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty* (Outline of the Russian Turmoil) (5 vols. Berlin, 1921–26), 4, chap. 5, passim; and Leonid Strakhovsky, "The Franco-British Plot To Dismember Russia," *Current History*, 33 (March 1931), 839–42. For a recent and excellent summary of Soviet writing on Allied intervention, see John M. Thompson, "Allied and American Intervention in Russia, 1918–1921," in *Rewriting Russian History: Soviet Interpretation of the Past*, ed. C. E. Black (New York, 1957), pp. 334–400.

an operation that can most mercifully be characterized as badly planned and poorly executed, the French made no systematic or intelligent effort to exploit the Ukrainian economy.

The French threat to Bolshevik control of the Ukraine and central Russia had several facets. Their possession of major ports from Odessa to the Crimea gave them warehouses piled high with munitions and assured them the means of strengthening their forces by land and sea. Late in January they expanded their area of occupation by advancing west and north along the railway lines leading from Odessa. From this beachhead, at the very least they could deny Moscow and Kiev the use of valuable ports and materials; at most they might mount an offensive against Moscow itself. Of the possible alternatives open to the occupation forces, three were carefully studied by both sides. First, it appeared that the French might combine with Directory forces to make a joint attack to the north; later, when the Directory fell back to the west it became more likely that the French might help Directory armies to create a strong anti-Bolshevik force west of Kiev. The third possibility was that the French would help a Volunteer army attack from the south and southeast, and with the passing of time, as Directory strength faded, this alternative became the most probable one.

The Bolsheviks took the Allied intervention very seriously. In a formal manifesto to the workers and peasants issued early in January, the Provisional Soviet Ukrainian Government explained that it had little fear of the White generals. "By themselves they are powerless; they have been beaten more than once." But now Allied capital, "thirsting for the blood of the rebellious workers," had joined in the fight. "Allied capital understands that now is its turn. It well knows that the workers' revolution must pass over to Italy, to France, to England, and to the United States of America. Feverishly it mobilizes all its strength in order to crush

the workers' revolution in Russia, Germany, and the Ukraine."<sup>71</sup>

There is no doubt that Pyatakov and his aides were sincere when they announced: "The final and decisive fight between world capital and the world proletariat is now beginning."<sup>72</sup> For them, it was only too clear that Petlyura would have to be destroyed as soon as possible, so that they could turn and face Denikin and the Allied invaders. Kiev, capital city of the Ukraine and headquarters for Petlyura and the Directory, had to be won without delay.

As Bolshevik troops concentrated against Kiev, the situation of the Directory and the Ukrainian People's Republic became more and more precarious. Not least among the causes of this were the Directory's confusion about its relations with the Bolsheviks and the inability of its members to agree on a common policy. It will be remembered that in October 1918, Vinnichenko and the Russian Bolsheviks had entered into an agreement whereby the Bolsheviks promised "absolutely not to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ukrainian People's Republic," in return for Vinnichenko's promise to legalize the Communist party in the Ukraine.<sup>73</sup> During the first weeks of January this agreement was still officially honored by the Bolsheviks, and G. V. Chicherin, Soviet Russia's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, very carefully sought to preserve the impression that Moscow was maintaining strict neutrality concerning Ukrainian affairs. However, it became increasingly difficult for the Ukrainian nationalists to give credence to Moscow's pose,

71. *Sobranie uzakoneni i rasporyazheni Raboche-krestyanskago pravitelstva Ukrainy* (A Collection of Decrees and Ordinances of the Workers' and Peasants' Government of the Ukraine) (1st ed. Kiev, 1919), no. 1, art. 1, p. 4.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

73. Vinnichenko, 3, 158-60.

especially when Bolshevik troops entered the Ukraine, captured Kharkov, and advanced over a wide front toward the Dnepr. If these troops had not been sent by Moscow, then by whom? If this was not invasion, then what was it?

The UNR's Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vladimir Chekhovski, sent a series of notes to Moscow, listing the incidents of Bolshevik military action in the Ukraine and demanding an explanation for the invasion. On January 5 Chicherin officially denied all Chekhovski's allegations: "There are no troops of the Russian Socialist Soviet Republic in the Ukraine at all," he advised Chekhovski by telegram. "Military action on Ukrainian territory is proceeding at this moment between the troops of the Directory and the troops of the Ukrainian Soviet Government, which is completely independent."

In successive paragraphs, though Chicherin held to his thesis that Moscow was not interfering in what he pretended to view as a wholly internal conflict, he made perfectly clear Moscow's hostility to the Directory. He characterized the struggle in the Ukraine as that of the Ukrainian people fighting for soviet government against the antisoviet Directory, whose agents were suppressing peasant assemblies, arresting strikers, and prohibiting political activities inimical to their own. He further declared that Moscow was aware of the Directory's efforts to get help from the Entente for its struggle against the Bolsheviks, and he denounced this as a repetition of the Rada's earlier collaboration with German imperialism.<sup>74</sup>

To the members of the Directory, Chicherin's bland assertion that Pyatakov led an independent Ukrainian Soviet Government was a blatant and incomprehensible lie. But Chicherin's charges that the Directory was antisoviet and antiproletariat were close to the mark, and very disturbingly so, for while powerful groups in the UNR supported the

74. *Ibid.*, 3, 205-08; Khrystyuk, 4, 35-36.

Directory's policies, others almost as powerful were inclined to agree with Chicherin. Thus the Bolshevik commissar's first note and the tragicomic peace negotiations it provoked, as well as the Bolshevik invasion itself, increased the centrifugal tensions within the widely divergent groups supporting the Directory.

The Left wings of the Ukrainian SDs and SRs, deeply devoted to the ideals of social revolution and to soviet government, could not easily bring themselves to support war with the Russian state. As an ardent Social Democrat, Vinnichenko stood for a social revolution that would destroy the old classes of society and place all political authority in the hands of a dictatorship of the urban proletariat. Thus would the poor inherit the earth and mete out justice for themselves eternally. Furthermore, because revolution in the Ukraine was but a segment of the world revolution, it was incumbent upon Ukrainian SDs to join all other forces supporting the revolution. It was, in short, theoretically obligatory for Vinnichenko to seek friendship and alliance with Soviet Russia. Yet Vinnichenko and his followers could not but feel perplexed and deeply disillusioned by what they began to recognize as the arrogant nationalist imperialism of the Russian Bolsheviks, who quite obviously were determined to rule the Ukraine. Clearly, cooperation with Russian bolshevism would destroy Ukrainian independence. But the Ukrainian SDs stood for "both" national independence and international revolution; they had not yet faced up to the fact that the two were incompatible and that a choice would have to be made, no matter how bitter the consequences.

For more moderate and timid socialists and for the democratic and reactionary forces of the UNR, the Bolshevik invasion simply confirmed their worst suspicions, proving beyond any doubt the Bolsheviks' utter contempt for the Ukrainian independence movement. No alternative remained but to fight. Reaching such conclusions about Rus-

sian bolshevism, the democratic and reactionary groups quite naturally broadened their indictment to include Left Ukrainian SDs and SRs, convinced that the "Bolshevik" politics of men like Vinnichenko, who sought accord with Moscow, would accomplish the Ukraine's ruin. It was only a step further to the conclusion that Vinnichenko and other Leftists were deliberately planning to betray the Ukraine. This step, easily taken by those who opposed social revolution, brought fresh bitterness to the internecine conflict of the Ukrainian nationalist parties.

Seeking desperately to save itself, the Directory became involved in time-consuming and dispiriting negotiations for military assistance from the French at Odessa. But at every turn in these discussions, Directory members and representatives of the UNR met with an almost total failure on the part of the French to comprehend the situation. Even worse, from the viewpoint of the Ukrainian nationalists the French evinced a stubborn determination to do the wrong thing.

The Ukrainian anarchy, which perplexed even the analytical genius of Lenin and Trotsky, thoroughly bewildered the French. Natty French officers, revealing an ignorance of Russia and the Ukraine that was virtually suicidal, blithely landed at Odessa and proceeded to *play* at the task of saving Russia. Unfortunately, at the moment of the French landing there were many Russias and several Ukraines, each represented by a number of parties and armed organizations at loggerheads with one another. As we have noted, the objectives of these groups stemmed from deep-lying cultural traditions and a wide variety of political and social theories, but the French refused to concern themselves with ideological or national differences; indeed so great was their disdain for local politics that they attempted to lump together fundamentally incompatible factions. Ultimately, because of the conceit and political obtuseness of the French commander, General Phillippe d'Anselme, and the ques-

tionable motives and poor judgment of such assistants as Emile Henno and his successor, the chief of staff, Colonel Freydenberg, French friendship was more hindrance than help to all in the Ukraine who suffered from it.<sup>75</sup>

Conducting themselves as if they were the only civilized people in a backward colony, the French cooperated fully with no one and demanded total submission from friends and enemies alike; in this way they inadvertently crippled every effort by native groups to organize effective opposition against the Bolsheviks. Their inability to distinguish shades of political thought in Russia and the Ukraine was well illustrated when, two days before the first landings at Odessa, Bolshevik and Directory leaders alike were warned that the occupation commander would "hold them personally responsible for all hostile action and all efforts to violate the calm of the country."<sup>76</sup> Lenin must have laughed at the audacity of that declaration, but to Vinnichenko and Petlyura, who cherished hopes of Western support for the Ukrainian People's Republic, the order to "cease and desist" came as a shock. Later, at Odessa the French appointed a Volunteer Army officer, General Aleksei N. Grishin-Almazov, military governor of the city. Thus, Odessa was wrested from the Directory and given to General Denikin, who hoped to build a new united Russia upon the ashes of the empire; French troops protected the rear of Volunteer units that drove Directory troops out of the city.

Angrily trying to establish itself in the world's eyes as a bulwark against bolshevism and fed up with Moscow's

75. *Annales de la Chambre*, Séance du 24 Mars 1919, pp. 1248-51; M. S. Margulies, *God interventsii* (The Year of Intervention) (2 vols. Berlin, 1923), 1, 165-67, 176; Margolin, p. 121; Sergei Ostapenko, "Direktoriya i okkupatsiya Ukrainy" (The Directory and the Occupation of the Ukraine), in *Shlikhter*, pp. 265-66; and Vasili Mazurenko, "U.S.-D.R.P. i soyuznaya okkupatsiya" (The Ukrainian Social-Democratic Workers' Party and the Allied Occupation), in *Shlikhter*, pp. 272-82; Jean Xydias, *L'Intervention française en Russie, 1918-1919* (Paris, 1927), pp. 95-97.

76. Anulov, p. 93; cf. Mazepa, 1, 68.

specious peace talk, the Directory declared war on the Russian Soviet State on January 16. Thereafter help from the French became the Directory's sole hope. On January 20, Dr. Osip Nazaruk, Press and Propaganda Minister of the Ukrainian National Republic, and Sergei Ostapenko, Minister of Trade and Industry, were selected by the Directory to lead a mission to Odessa. In his memoirs, Nazaruk recalls the terse instructions he received from the Directory: "You know our situation. Swift assistance is indispensable; otherwise Kiev will fall."<sup>77</sup>

Colonel Freydenberg, to whom d'Anselme entrusted these most delicate political negotiations, summoned the delegation to his quarters at Odessa late in the evening of its arrival, where he kept it waiting for an hour and a half. Then, with contemptuous insolence, he announced that the French had come to fight Bolsheviks. "You also are Bolsheviks of a sort," he said, and proceeded to lay down his conditions for French-Directory cooperation. The "Bolshevik" Vinnichenko, the "bandit" Petlyura, and Chekhovski were all to leave their posts; in the future, French confirmation would be necessary for membership in the Directory. The UNR was to raise an army of 300,000, to be armed and commanded by the French. If an adequate number of Ukrainian nationalist officers could not be raised, Russian officers from Denikin's Volunteer Army were to be accepted. Given the circumstances, it was logical to expect that this new army would be called to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Volunteer Army and with French-supported Polish legions. As a further condition, the French were to control Ukrainian railroads and finances.<sup>78</sup>

Nazaruk and Ostapenko hurried back to Kiev with Freydenberg's humiliating terms. To the leaders of the Directory, the French demands were infuriating. As they saw the

77. Khrystyuk, 4, 42, quoting from O. Nazaruk, *Rik na Velyki Ukraini* (A Year in the Great Ukraine) (Vienna, 1920).

78. Khrystyuk, 4, 42-43; Ostapenko, p. 262; cf. Borys, pp. 216-17.

matter, they were directed to give up the sovereign authority of their government by permitting the French to decide who would be acceptable in the Directory and who would not. Further, they were ordered to cripple what would remain of the Ukrainian People's Republic by granting the French control of military affairs, communications, and finance. Finally, they were required to toss lightly aside their most cherished political ideals and cultural antecedents and to ally themselves with Great Russians and Poles, that is, with national enemies whom they abominated.

Bolshevik military successes gave the Directory no choice. Despite the offensiveness of the French conditions, Vinnichenko and his colleagues decided to pursue the negotiations further. They sent a new mission to Odessa, only to learn that Freydenberg had now added a third member of the Directory, S. Andrievski, to his proscription list, allegedly because the latter was an overardent devotee of Bacchus.<sup>79</sup> Again the effort to come to terms failed. As January came to an end, still another distinguished delegation, waiting upon the French, found it impossible to obtain help.<sup>80</sup> No agreement was ever reached.

While the Bolsheviks attacked Directory forces, and the French withheld assistance, the peasants who in December had called themselves Petlyurists continued to desert by thousands. The territory held by the UNR shrank daily. Efforts to devise strong government and an effective system of civil administration were feckless, not only because of military failures and erratic administrators, but also because of the very complexity of the Directory's tasks. One difficult problem had been created just before the Directory announced its rebellion against Skoropadski, when Ukrainian nationalists in Galicia formed a Western Ukrainian Republic at Lvov. On December 1, representatives of the Western Republic and the Directory had agreed to a union

79. Ostapenko, 264-65.

80. Margolin, pp. 111-24.

giving the UNR sovereign authority for all the Ukraine. This agreement was formalized early in January and confirmed later in the month. Due to the unique problems facing the western region, however, the Western Republic retained control of its foreign affairs and vigorously prosecuted its war against the Poles, who claimed Eastern Galicia. Although the UNR refused to declare war against the Poles, its relationship with the Western Republic involved it in that war and thus further complicated its affairs.<sup>81</sup>

In an atmosphere of mounting crisis and despair, the parties supporting the UNR tended to couch their positions in ever more extreme terms. The need to defend the Ukraine against "Bolshevik imperialism" gave the theme of national independence an exaggerated importance, and a number of party leaders jettisoned their political and social doctrines in favor of one or another form of "strong" government; to them, social revolution was out of the question until the Bolsheviks were driven from the Ukraine. Of a different mind were those who ascribed the Directory's weakness to its failure to promulgate an aggressive program of social and economic reforms. Of this group some argued that the Directory could be saved if socialist reforms were promulgated at once, while others, clinging blindly and hopelessly to their principles, prepared for the debacle they saw no way of preventing.

Through January several important party and government groups convened at Kiev to explore their problems and clarify their programs. Every meeting was marred by the disintegrating effect of external pressures and internal dissensions and by the steady increase of fear and demoralization. At the Sixth Congress of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Labor party, held January 10-12, the question of first importance was the party's relation to the soviet form of

81. Vinnichenko, 3, 153-56; Mazepa, 1, 86-87; Reshetar, pp. 212, 216.

government, heretofore strongly advocated by its principal leaders. The invasion of the Bolsheviks had made soviet government seem to be the instrument of Russian bolshevism; therefore, a majority of the Ukrainian SDs now felt compelled to repudiate the soviet idea in order to make their opposition to Russian bolshevism unmistakable. These Ukrainian Marxists were also having second thoughts about the type of central government they should establish. Their faith in the Marxian ideal of a dictatorship of the proletariat was shaken by a growing realization that the Ukraine's urban proletariat was far too weak to establish or effectively operate a dictatorship. Since the vast majority of the Ukrainian population was peasant, a number of these SDs had begun to believe that some form of government basing itself upon the peasantry should be devised. Others were realizing that in the name of the urban proletariat they had declared war on all other classes in the Ukraine, provoking thereby a violent civil war they could not win. Would it not be wise for them to compromise, to put an end to their hopeless civil war, to come to terms with the multiclass social order of the Ukraine?<sup>82</sup>

At the Sixth Congress the most responsible leaders of the Ukrainian SD party pointedly disavowed the social revolution of Marx and Lenin and its political connotations. In the resolution approved by the majority, the party declared itself "against the social revolution, against the workers' and peasants' dictatorship in the form of soviet government—and *for* 'true' democracy, that is, for elected organs of self-government in the localities and the election of a Constituent Assembly" that would work out the forms for a parliamentary democracy.<sup>83</sup>

In the effort to survive, the Ukrainian Marxists betrayed the workers and peasants whom they presumed to represent and joined the forces of order. Vinnichenko had moved

82. Khrystyuk, 4, 50-53; Mazepa, p. 79.

83. Khrystyuk, 4, 54-55.

much closer to Petlyura, whose main concern was to fight bolshevism, postponing all social experiments until that fight had been won. The Social-Federalists (democrats) naturally supported these "democratic" tendencies within the SD party, as did the vociferous and numerous petty bourgeoisie at Kiev and the officers who commanded Petlyura's regiments. Of this latter group probably the most important member was Colonel Eugene Konovalets, commander of the Kiev occupation forces and of the *Sichovi Striltsi* (Sich Sharpshooters), the Directory's most reliable military unit. The Sharpshooters, organized originally from Galician prisoners of war in Russia, were passionately nationalistic and anti-Bolshevik in their thinking, and since their main task in January was defense of Kiev, they felt deeply the need for a clear, firm policy, which in the circumstances meant a vigorously anti-Bolshevik line in the Directory.<sup>84</sup>

The decision of the official Ukrainian SD party to throw out the ideal of social revolution brought about a major schism in the party, which had been building for some time. The members of the new splinter group, calling themselves the *Nezalezhniki* (Independents), were to play a very significant role in Ukrainian politics in the following months. They stood firmly for the establishment of soviets in the Ukraine, friendly ties with Soviet Russia and Revolutionary Germany, immediate peace with Soviet Russia, and the proclamation of a Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Republic of the Ukraine.<sup>85</sup>

At a "State Conference" convened by the Directory on January 16, the most practicable form of government for the Ukraine was again debated. Present at this conference

84. Mazepa, 1, 78-81; Khrystyuk, 4, 34; Yevhen Konovalets, *Prychynky do istorii ukrainskoi revolyutsii* (Notes on the History of the Ukrainian Revolution) (2d ed. n.p., 1948), pp. 28-32.

85. Khrystyuk, 4, 49-50; for the origins of the *Nezalezhniki* movement in December 1918, see Khrystyuk, 4, 55-56.

were members of the Directory and government, representatives of the Ukrainian SDs and SRs, the *Nezalezhniki*, the Village Unions (*Spilki*), and the Sich Sharpshooters. The Sharpshooters' representatives presented a proposal that a military dictatorship be formed to include Konovalets, Andrei Melnyk (who with Konovalets had organized the Sharpshooters), and Petlyura. While the official Ukrainian SD party did not support this proposal, it did advocate the establishment of some form of strong rule which could defend the UNR more effectively.

Counterproposals were advanced by the representatives of the Village Unions, who called for a dictatorship of peasants—concretely, they demanded a central committee and an All-Ukrainian Soviet of Peasants' Deputies. Both the Ukrainian SRs and the *Nezalezhniki* continued to advocate soviet government and the Directory's turnover of political authority to the workers. No decisions were reached. Konovalets, seeing the hopelessness of the Sharpshooters' proposal for a military dictatorship, withdrew it, and as the conference broke up all was as before, except that the positions of Left and Right groups were more firmly marked. On the Right the Directory and the members of the official SD party had identified themselves more emphatically than before with Petlyura and the military leaders who wanted a firm and consistent policy against bolshevism.<sup>86</sup>

Thoughtful delegates at the State Conference realized that the peasants were swinging toward bolshevism.<sup>87</sup> At Kiev a Bolshevik press aggressively exploited Directory weaknesses. Shootings occurred in the streets, and homes were invaded by ruffians. While civil order degenerated, more and more important military sections defected from Petlyura's armies. Balbachan, chief ataman of the Left Bank, after withdrawing from Kharkov moved to Poltava,

86. *Ibid.*, p. 49; Vinnichenko, 3, 233.

87. *Mazepa*, 1, 84.

decided to take his forces over to Denikin, and was arrested and imprisoned on January 22. His actions destroyed the last hope of defending the Left Bank. Other atamany on both sides of the Dnepr fell away to join the Bolsheviks or to fight independently, while on the Right Bank pogroms swept the countryside.<sup>88</sup>

Meanwhile, loyal military commanders, hamstrung by the vacillation of the Directory, increased their criticism. There was talk of establishing a dictatorship of the Sich Sharpshooters. Though Konovalets later denied that the Sharpshooters ever had the ambition to rule, Vinnichenko was terror-stricken, persuaded that the military heads would arrest and shoot him if he spoke out for class revolution and soviet government.<sup>89</sup>

During the last weeks of January, Kiev was in a state of siege, very much under the rule of the military authorities. Its inhabitants were in panic. In surroundings heavy with the foreboding of disaster, a new representative body, the All-Ukrainian Congress of Toilers, took up its work on January 22. In December the Directory had promised that it would turn its temporary authority over to such a body, which would determine the permanent form of Ukrainian government. Accordingly, on January 8, instructions had been issued for the elections. The 300 delegates who arrived at Kiev (out of 593 elected) were supposed to represent the Ukraine's workers, peasants, and toiling intellectuals, but Bolshevik occupation of the Left Bank had crippled elections there or made travel to Kiev impossible for many of the delegates. In general, so difficult were the other problems with which the Ukrainian people were concerned at the moment, and so complete their loss of faith in the Directory, that there was little popular support for the congress.<sup>90</sup>

88. *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 84, 92.

89. Konovalets, pp. 19-24.

90. Rafes, *Dva goda revolyutsii na Ukraine: Evolyutsiya i raskol "Bunda,"* pp. 144-48, 152.

At Kiev many of the delegates were awed by reports that the Sich Sharpshooters would disperse the congress if it voiced or supported Leftist proposals.<sup>91</sup> During the congress the question of soviet government "was directly identified with the question of Moscow's effort to enslave the Ukraine," and efforts by Left SRs, the Nezalezhniki, and the members of the Jewish Bund (Social Democrats) to defend the class revolution were greeted with shouts and whistles in the meeting hall.<sup>92</sup> Although in theory the congress had been assembled to form the dictatorship of the proletariat, actually it achieved the opposite. So great was the feeling that social reform must await military victory that the basic resolution of the congress, issued on January 28, expressed "full trust and gratitude to the Directory for its great work for the liberation of the Ukrainian people." It repudiated the objective of a workers' dictatorship and explicitly declared itself in favor of a parliamentary democracy whose representatives were to be elected on the basis of universal suffrage. It also supported the continuation of the Directory as the chief authority until the military crisis was over.<sup>93</sup> Thus, Petlyura, Konovalts, and Vinnichenko managed to obtain approval of what were, in the minds of staunch Marxian socialists, "counterrevolutionary" policies; they had settled for a multiclass "bourgeois" democracy and joined with the atamany in a last effort to summon up the strength to fight off bolshevism. In this manner the Directory finally completed its isolation from the peasants and workers of the Ukraine and sealed the death sentence of the workers' and peasants' government.<sup>94</sup>

The resolution of the Toilers' Congress had little immediate influence. Nezalezhniki, Left SRs, and Bundists refused to vote and denounced the congress.<sup>95</sup> The very

91. Khrystyuk, 4, 60; Mazepa, 1, 82; cf. Konovalts, p. 33.

92. Khrystyuk, 4, 60-64.

93. Mazepa, 1, 95.

94. Khrystyuk, 4, 44, 57, 66-68.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

day the resolution was passed a conference of Ukrainian SRs reaffirmed their support of socialist revolution and soviet government.<sup>96</sup> With Bolshevik seizure of Kiev expected hourly, the congress hurriedly dissolved; there was no time to work out the details of the parliamentary government that had been decreed.

Thus the Directory lived out its last hours in Kiev. Petlyura had begun the evacuation of military personnel from the city on January 23, and the Sich Sharpshooters were preparing to withdraw, considering it preferable to fight another day rather than endure a battle they could not win.<sup>97</sup> The Directory's great army of December had steadily dwindled under its misfortunes: at the end of January Petlyura commanded little more than 21,000 men in all the Ukraine.<sup>98</sup> To the east and south the authority of the government ran only a few miles beyond Kiev.<sup>99</sup> Vinnichenko, distraught and beaten, left Kiev on February 1, resigning from the Directory a few days later. Petlyura, in order to make himself "acceptable to the French," was preparing to leave the SD party.<sup>100</sup> The Directory was on its last legs.

At the moment when units of Antonov's 1st Division moved into place for the attack on Kiev, they represented his best fighting force. As early as December 1 he had replaced the partisan founder of the division, Krapivnyanski, with one of his officers from Tsaritsyn, I. S. Lokotosh. The new commander was a vigorous, ruthless organizer who, while showing a marked tendency to take things into his own hands and to ignore his superiors, demanded strict

96. Mazepa, 1, 95.

97. Likholat, pp. 217-18.

98. Majstrenko (quoting Vinnichenko), pp. 93-94; Reshetar, p. 257.

99. Margolin, pp. 109-11.

100. Reshetar, pp. 243-44.

obedience from his subordinates. Through almost two months he had punished his officers and men into a semblance of military order, all the while driving the division westward and recruiting whatever partisan units fell in his way.

Some hint of the growth in Bolshevik strength can be gained from Antonov's estimates of the 1st Division's numbers as it concentrated its forces for the attack. The division had come a long way from the rabble of 3,000 it had mustered in late November. On February 3 it totaled some 10,702 men and officers. Moving through the Left Bank it had acquired stores of German matériel, seized the weapons of Petlyurists who had once served Skoropadski, and foraged for equipment in every city it passed; it was reasonably well equipped with artillery, artillerymen, and other specialist units and well supplied with wagons and horses.

On February 1 Lokotsh's reconnaissance units, penetrating the suburbs of Kiev, established contact with representatives of workers' organizations inside the city, who promised to begin uprisings. Antonov joined Lokotsh at Nezhin, seventy miles northeast of Kiev, on February 2, and two days later issued orders for an attack on the city at dawn on February 6.<sup>101</sup> But only a show of force was needed. There was to be no battle. When Antonov ordered the attack, the Directory government had already left the city, and Petlyura's troops were completing their withdrawal.<sup>102</sup> On the morning of February 5, representatives of a suburban workers' executive committee came out to announce that Kiev had been evacuated, and Bolshevik troops marched in.

The absence of booming guns and bloodshed did not lessen the significance of the victory. On the contrary, Kiev's seizure marked the end of the Directory as a leading player

101. Antonov, 3, 155-57; Primakov, pp. 189-90.

102. A. A. Goldenveizer, "Iz kievskikh vospominani (1917-1921 gg.)" (From Kievian Memoirs, 1917-21), *Arkhiv russkoi revolyutsii*, 6, 235.

in the Ukrainian drama, the end of its great aspirations, although Petlyura and others did not recognize this fact for many months. After losing Kiev, the nationalist government was reorganized at Vinnitsa, and valiant nationalist regiments kept the fighting going in the western areas of the Ukraine, seriously threatening Kiev repeatedly. But the nationalist cause was doomed. Though they continued to hold the Podolskaya, Volynskaya, and part of the Kievskaya gubernii (provinces), the Ukrainian forces were bottled up between Poles who were advancing against the West Ukrainian Republic, Bolsheviks in the north and east, and the French in the south. Henceforth, although they continued to pin down Bolshevik troops west of Kiev, their role was that of dangerous raiders, rather than of conquering armies.<sup>103</sup>

In another sense the capture of Kiev brought about a major transformation in the whole Ukrainian situation. Pyatakov's group had accomplished the mission assigned it in November. Pockets of resistance, hold-out towns and villages, and stiff-necked partisan groups still existed, Petlyura remained active, and the French had still to be dealt with; nonetheless, most of the Ukraine's Left Bank was under Bolshevik control. For a moment or two in the first week of February, the Kievians of the KP(b)U, and their military commander, may have permitted themselves a certain feeling of satisfaction. They had been right and Vatsetis wrong; the Ukraine lived under the Red flag of the Provisional Ukrainian Soviet Government, and they had won it.

103. "Doklady I. I. Vatsetisa V. I. Leninu (fevral-mai 1919 g.)" (Reports of I. I. Vatsetis to V. I. Lenin, February-May 1919), *Istoricheski arkhiv*, no. 1 (1958), p. 49.

## CHAPTER 4

### *Communist Party and Soviet Government*

AS REPRESENTATIVES of the KP(b)U and of Pyatakov's government rushed into the ever-expanding political vacuum left by departing Germans and defeated Petlyurists, their inability to put together an efficient administrative system became increasingly evident. There were simply not enough Soviet workers to organize authority in the territory won by the army. Partisan leaders, former members of the Tsaritsyn gang, self-styled "communists," Petlyurists-turned-Bolsheviks—all were pressed into service as local officials in the new government.

To Lenin this was political partizanshchina. He was worried by the thought that the political system manned by these unreliable agents must organize and direct the fight against the French, raise new armies, reconstruct the Ukrainian economy along communist lines, and carry out all the other rigorous tasks required to transform the Ukraine into a Soviet society. In the first half of January, while troops of the Soviet Army of the Ukraine rushed pell-mell toward the Dnepr, he watched, fretted, and frequently intervened. He was profoundly irritated by the continuing evidence of willfullness and independence among the Kievians, who headed the Ukrainian govern-

ment and followed policies he did not approve. Similarly, he was impatient of the enervating factional strife within the KP(b)U, where policies he had formulated were frequently the issues of controversy.

Although in late November he had appeared to compromise with the intransigence of Pyatakov and Zatonski, Lenin never doubted that the authority of the RKP and the Russian Soviet Government should be absolute in the Ukraine. Concerned by the headstrong nature of the men leading the Ukrainian Soviet Government and fearing the painful consequences their errors might have for all Russia, he began in mid-January to tighten the reins and reinstate his authority. His aim: complete submission of the Ukrainian Soviet Government and the KP(b)U to the party and government centers at Moscow.

Lenin had never been a man to hesitate or take half measures in his struggle for power. In order to crush the Ukrainian administrative *partizanstvo* at its source, he persuaded the Central Executive Committee at Moscow to remove Pyatakov from his post as President of the Ukrainian Government, and to replace him he selected the Bulgarian physician Christian Rakovski. A well-educated, courageous, and subtle Bolshevik who enjoyed Lenin's trust, Rakovski had gained considerable experience of Ukrainian affairs by acting as Lenin's representative in negotiations with the Hetman's government during several months of 1918. He had also served faithfully as one of Lenin's champions at the Second Conference of the KP(b)U in October 1918, where he had helped to rout the Kievians from their command of the Ukrainian party. Rakovski's principal qualification for this new position, however, appears to have been the lack of sympathy Lenin felt he would show toward the strong-willed members of the KP(b)U's Left wing. Lenin made his intentions perfectly clear during a conversation, about January 16, when he bade Rakovski to establish unity in the Ukrainian party as soon as possible, because party

dissensions were paralyzing the leadership; to this he added the need for liquidating partizanshchina in the Ukrainian Army.<sup>1</sup>

Rakovski became President of the Ukrainian government on January 25, although Pyatakov, who remained in the government, signed some presidential decrees as late as the 28th.<sup>2</sup> A series of governmental shake-ups followed this appointment, and several additional specialists from Moscow were assigned to Kharkov, where the Soviet Government of the Ukraine remained until March. But unity and efficiency were not easily achieved. In part this was due to the general shortage of competent men who could be assigned to the Ukraine and trusted to carry out Lenin's wishes. In part it arose from the fact that even the dictator of Russia could not change at will the minds of his followers and the conditions under which they worked in the Ukraine. Nor could he create new administrators out of thin air. It was simply not humanly possible at the moment to replace the Kievians; instead, Lenin's agents were assigned, as they became available, to collegial commissariats on which earlier incumbents often remained. The immediate consequence of Lenin's effort to gain absolute control, therefore, was a hodgepodge of new conflicts among the teams that ran the government.

Thus, Nikolai Podvoiski was teamed with Valeri Mezhlauk in the Commissariat of Military Affairs. Since the November Revolution, when Podvoiski and Antonov had worked together as Trotsky's assistants, Podvoiski had filled several distinguished posts, among them that of Inspector General of the Armies. An active and powerful figure, he had several shortcomings that made his presence

1. Kh. Rakovski, "Ilich i Ukraina" (Ilich and the Ukraine), *Letopis revolyutsii*, no. 2 [11] (1925), pp. 5-8.

2. *Sobranie zakoneni i rasporyazheni Raboche-krestyanskogo pravitelstva Ukrainy* (1st ed.) no. 3, art. 35, pp. 33-34; no. 4, art. 42, p. 41; no. 4, art. 46, p. 45.

in the Ukraine a disturbing factor. He possessed a marked penchant for elaborate plans and ambitious schemes—as if the utopian complexity of his political theories muddled his thinking about cadres and battalions. Moreover, he considered himself not so much a member of the Ukrainian government as an executive officer for Lenin, and he combined a desire always to do more than Lenin demanded with an aggressive habit of jumping all administrative channels when he wanted something done in a hurry. Podvoiski's partner in the Commissariat of Military Affairs, Mezhlauk, was one of Trotsky's favorites.

As important to Lenin as the military department was the Commissariat of Food (*Narkomprod*), whose task it was to collect and distribute provisions for Ukrainian troops and cities, as well as to provide food for armies and workers in the hungry north. For this work Lenin sent one of his most successful food collectors, Aleksandr Shlikhter, who joined his considerable experience of Bolshevik collection techniques with the Kievian Andrei Bubnov's extensive knowledge of the Ukraine. Pyatakov stepped down to the Council of Public Economy, where his impetuous will was curbed by Emmanuil Kviring, one of the principal leaders of the KP(b)U Right wing. The third man in this council, Moisei Rukhimovich, brought in an additional disturbing influence, for Rukhimovich was another of the ungovernable men from Tsaritsyn. Earlier in the month Trotsky, saying the meanest thing he could think of at the moment, had bluntly told Lenin: "Rukhimovich is only another word for Voroshilov."<sup>3</sup>

Strangely enough, the man whom Trotsky considered the epitome of partizanshchina, the "gifted brow-beater," Klimenti Voroshilov himself, headed the powerful Commissariat of Internal Affairs, where he worked with V. Averin, a member of the Ukrainian Communist Right.

3. Trotsky, *Stalin*, p. 296.

Zatonski, the onetime docent in physics at Kiev's Polytechnical Institute, became Commissar of Public Instruction, turning his boundless energies toward efforts to revolutionize Ukrainian education. Mykola Skrypnyk, leader of the Central faction of the KP(b)U, served as head of the Supreme Inspectorate and Commissar of Control, and Antonov retained command of the army.<sup>4</sup>

Although the members of the earlier government remained, their displacement from the highest offices confirmed the change of course. Centralist controls were being clamped down over the Ukraine, but the new men needed time to bring about the major changes Lenin expected.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, their failure to distinguish between Russian and Ukrainian interests and their very presence at Kharkov added fuel to the dissensions within Ukrainian government circles. As new conflicts over theory, policy, and practice developed, the personal hostilities of the men involved kept the Ukrainian Soviet Government in turmoil; to its misfortune, this new government, already torn by internal disunity, had yet to make its authority effective through the country. During the preceding two years the Ukraine had seen seven governments fall. All portents seemed to indicate that these bearers of the latest apocalypse would fare no better than their predecessors.<sup>6</sup>

Besides demanding that Rakovski bring the Ukrainian party, government, and army to heel, Lenin also emphasized the need to broaden the popular base of both party and government. With its primarily Russian and urban following, its ignorance of the peasant, and its Rightists' insistence upon emphasis on the urban-proletarian nature

4. *Sobranie uzakoneni* (1st ed.), no. 1, arts. 2-8, pp. 6-11; no. 2, art. 16, p. 20; no. 6, art. 71, pp. 76-77.

5. *Ibid.*, no. 4, art. 47, p. 48.

6. A. Shlikhter, "Borba za khleb na Ukraine v 1919 godu" (The Struggle for Grain in the Ukraine in 1919), *Litopys revolyutsii*, no. 2 [29] (1928), p. 105; "Dnevnik i vospominaniya kievskoi studentki (1919-1920 gg.)" (Diary and Memoirs of a Kiev Student [1919-20]), *Arkhiv russkoi revolyutsii*, 15, 209.

of the revolution, the KP(b)U was dangerously isolated from the majority of the Ukrainian people. It had no well-trained cadres sensitive to peasant psychology and skilled in winning the peasants to the Bolshevik faith. It lacked reform programs systematically designed to please the peasant, and the circumstances of war and economic crisis compelled it to enforce policies inimical to peasant interests. Unless the KP(b)U found ways to surmount these disadvantages it could only hope that the support it received in January would continue.

Recognizing the danger, Lenin devised a way out of it. In his last-minute instructions to Rakovski in January, he directed that various non-Bolshevik Ukrainian political parties be drawn into the government.<sup>7</sup> Several such parties, all more or less sympathetic to Bolshevik programs but hesitant to join the KP(b)U and lose their identity, had somehow to be placated and brought into the Soviet camp. Through them the Bolsheviks might gain greater contact with the masses. The most important of these parties, in Lenin's opinion, was the group of Left Ukrainian Social Revolutionaries who called themselves the *Borotbisty* (UPSR [borotbisty]).

Traditionally, in Russia and the Ukraine, the Social Revolutionary party was the party of the peasants. The origins of SR political philosophy ran back to the Slavophile's idealization of the peasant commune and to the populist movement of the 1870s that had helped to build a non-Marxian agrarian socialism founded upon the native peasant commune rather than upon industry and the urban worker.<sup>8</sup> The complicated history of the SRs cannot be repeated here; suffice it to say that by 1917 the Russian Social Revolutionary party, vaguely organized and with several

7. Rakovski, "Ilich," pp. 8-9.

8. Oliver H. Radkey, "Chernov and Agrarian Socialism before 1918," in *Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought*, ed. Ernest J. Simmons (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), pp. 63 ff.

branches, was still the principal party of the peasant in all of Russia.

In April 1917 Ukrainian nationalists established a Ukrainian Social Revolutionary party, which swiftly took over whole blocs of Ukrainians who had previously supported the Russian SRs, with the result that before the end of the year the new party had gained at least a million members. Advocating the immediate expropriation of the lands of wealthy proprietors for free distribution to the peasants, the Ukrainian SRs could not help but grow in importance; however, in 1918 inept leaders fumbled their political opportunities, and endless party dissensions neutralized the strength of the party's mass following. In May 1918, after the Center and Right elements of the Ukrainian SRs had proved themselves unprepared to lead peasant revolution against Skoropadski, Left (radical) SRs won control of the Central Committee, captured the party newspaper, *Borotba* (Struggle), from which they took their name, and formally dissolved the parent party.<sup>9</sup>

Starting as a populist and peasant-oriented group that leaned toward bolshevism, the Borotbisty moved steadily Leftward during the latter months of 1918. Skoropadski's policies, the failures of the Directory, and the peasants' growing insistence on making their own decisions continuously pushed Borotbist leaders closer to the realization that only a soviet government of workers and peasants could create a successful political and economic order for the Ukraine. But though they came to accept many planks of the Bolshevik platform and even to seek a merger with the Bolsheviks, the Borotbisty preserved important differences between themselves and the Bolsheviks. In official pronouncements, they condemned the national state and held that they stood for social rather than national liberation;

9. Majstrenko, *Borot'bism*, pp. 164-70; as was usual in such struggles the parent body ignored its dissolution by the splinter group and continued to function.

but in fact they were dedicated nationalists who stood for soviet government, dictatorship of the workers and peasants, and an independent Ukrainian army. Though their ideals were rapidly changing and sometimes confused, the Borotbisty defended them fervently, insisting upon the uniqueness of their program and demanding equality with the Bolshevik party in a soviet government.<sup>10</sup>

Lenin attached special importance to the Borotbist party because it was believed to have great influence among Ukrainian peasants. There was indeed a sizable fund of peasant good will for Social Revolutionaries, and in particular for the radical Borotbist group. With adequate leadership and organization the Borotbisty might very well have led the peasant rebellion, first against Skoropadski, and then against the Directory, but lack of capable and energetic leaders was their great misfortune. They were never able to organize their following, to set up an effective executive center or government; nor were they ever able actually to direct even those partisan forces which were actively sympathetic to the Borotbist political platform.<sup>11</sup>

Despite its organizational handicaps, the Borotbist party appeared to be the potential leader of the peasants, and after Rakovski became president, Lenin intervened frequently, both directly and through Stalin, to bring Borotbist leaders into the Ukrainian government.<sup>12</sup> But Lenin's efforts met strong opposition in the KP(b)U, both for ideological and for practical reasons. From the Ukrainian Bolshevik point of view, the Borotbist program, calling for a national Ukrainian army and an independent Ukrainian government and extolling the virtues of Ukrainian culture, sounded dangerously chauvinistic.<sup>13</sup> Flushed with their

10. Ibid., pp. 77-85, 99, 109-10, 234; Borys, *The Russian Communist Party and the Sovietization of the Ukraine*, p. 264.

11. Mazepa, *Ukraina v ohni i buri revolyutsii 1917-1921*, I, 28.

12. Rakovski, "Ilich," p. 9.

13. Majstrenko, pp. 109-10.

victories, the Kievians of the KP(b)U saw little reason for sharing power with a nationalist party that could neither raise an army nor direct the followers it claimed to have. On the other hand, the Borotbisty did their own bit to preclude conciliation by persistently refusing to submit to Bolshevik leadership.<sup>14</sup>

Rakovski carried on negotiations with representatives of an incipient Borotbist government, the "Council of Revolutionary Emissaries."<sup>15</sup> How far these talks went is not clear. One of the Borotbist leaders, Vasil Blakitny (Elanski), a terrorist and poet, visited Kharkov in January, but at that early date the Bolshevik leaders hardly bothered to acknowledge his existence. Later, when Blakitny moved to Kiev, talks were resumed with more interest from the Bolshevik side; finally, in March, Borotbisty were brought into the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee of the government, but interparty cooperation remained elusive.<sup>16</sup>

The Bolsheviks' failure to win support from the Ukrainian peasant was to be one of the important causes of their defeat in the Ukraine in mid-1919, but the catastrophe of May and June cannot be blamed wholly upon the KP(b)U's unwillingness to cooperate with the Borotbisty. The question (still hotly argued among surviving émigré Borotbist and Soviet scholars) whether an agreement with the Borotbisty could have brought the Ukrainian Bolsheviks strong peasant backing seems largely academic. Although Borotbist influence among the peasants was considerable in early 1919, it is highly improbable that Borotbist submission to the Bolsheviks would have augmented this influence.<sup>17</sup> Nor does it seem probable that absorption of the Borotbisty

14. Khrystyuk, *Zamitky i materiyaly do istorii ukrainskoi revolyutsii, 1917-1920 rr.*, 4, 82.

15. Majstrenko, pp. 110-12.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 124; Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski o grazhdanskoi voine*, 4, 208-09; Ravich-Cherkasski, *Istoriya Kommunisticheskoi partii (b-ov) Ukrainy*, pp. 113-14, 119.

17. Majstrenko, pp. 102-03.

would have enhanced Communist popularity. This is especially true because the Bolshevik policies that provoked greatest hostility among the peasants were created in part by necessity rather than by ideology. Merger with the Borotbisty would neither have changed those policies nor made them more palatable to the peasant.

The Borotbist party was only one of the pro-Bolshevik Ukrainian groups that sought places in the new government. But the Bolsheviks arrogantly rejected all such cooperation, partly because of their firm conviction that they alone possessed the one true version of Marxist theory, partly because of their contempt for Ukrainian nationalism. Even Rakovski expressed himself on the latter subject, publicly ridiculing the Ukrainian culture and the little clique of intellectuals whom he accused of having "invented" the Ukrainian nation. This refusal to cooperate with the Ukrainian nationalist parties was to be paid for in blood.<sup>18</sup>

Winning peasant support was made difficult for the Bolsheviks by the need to consolidate their military successes and establish Communist political authority. Pursuing the latter goal, the Ukrainian Soviet Government employed administrative measures that could only worsen Bolshevik-peasant relationships. Creation of local political organs in conformance with both communist theory and practical necessity was one of their most urgent tasks. Another was the introduction of a land policy which, while being theoretically correct, would also fulfill the military and economic needs of both Moscow and the Ukraine. Finally the near-famine conditions reigning in the north and the expanding Ukrainian army's imperative demands required

18. Kh. Rakovski, "Beznadezhnoe delo" (A Hopeless Business), *Izvestiya*, Jan. 3, 1919; *Khrystyuk*, 4, 82-83, 172-74.

the establishment of an efficient system of collecting and distributing food.

Early in December the Ukrainian Government issued its first instructions for the organization of local authority. Beneath the Commissariat of Internal Affairs, military revolutionary committees were to be formed at the *guberniya* (province) and *uezd* (district or county) levels. Not to be confused with the revolutionary military councils of commander and commissars making up the command group in Communist military units, the military revolutionary committees (*revkomy*) referred to here were organs of civil government. Appointed by the Commissar of Internal Affairs, which meant, in reality, the nearest responsible Bolshevik group, the revkomy initially had no standard form or organization. Some attempted to administer the general affairs of a whole province, while others directed the big cities and a variety of regional areas within the provinces. An official decree ordered the individual revkom to set up: a military section, to register and mobilize men for the army; a security section, for action against counter-revolutionaries—to include Cheka units and revolutionary tribunals; militia (police sections); and other bureaus needed for the organization of economic affairs, labor, education, and food provisioning. Significantly, it was decreed that all revkom members should be adherents of the Bolshevik regime, and the government reserved to itself the right to remove revkom members. Even before it had consolidated possession of its territories, the Ukrainian Soviet Government's determination to have absolute control over local government was thus clearly formulated into law.

Beneath the relatively formal organization of revkomy, at the *volost* (now obsolete administrative organization comprising several villages) and village level, government was placed in the hands of committees of poor peasants (*kombedy*). Only the poor and landless peasants, the men who were presumed to be most sympathetic to Bolshevik

aims, could belong to these committees, and one of their most important functions was to aid in the discovery and confiscation of grain "surpluses" hoarded by the more successful peasants. Thus the Communists deliberately intensified the class struggle in the village and deprived the middle and wealthy peasant of political rights. The first result of kombedy government could only be war between the politically important poor and the disenfranchised middle and wealthy peasants. Even here, however, Communist unwillingness to trust anyone but fellow Communists made genuine self-government by the kombedy impossible. Though "participation in the kombedy" was declared "the right of all the poor peasants of a given village," the organization of each committee was to be "carried out under the unalterable direction of Communists," specifically, members of the KP(b)U. Kombedy representatives were to be "exclusively the adherents of Soviet authority."<sup>19</sup>

It is especially significant that the kombedy system had already been tried in Great Russia and had been suppressed there, partly because it had provoked more middle peasant opposition than the Bolsheviks could manage, partly because the poor peasant committees tended to compete against local soviets for authority in the villages. That the kombedy system was introduced in the Ukraine at all indicates the willingness of the KP(b)U under pressure from Moscow to give food collection priority over political reform; in order to get food the Bolsheviks were prepared to push the social and economic war against middle and wealthy peasants by means more ruthless than those employed in the Great Russian areas. It indicates further the Center's realization that in many ways communist revolution in the Ukraine was at an earlier stage than in Great

19. *Sobranie zakoneni* (1st ed.), no. 1, art. 3, pp. 6-8; no. 3, art. 29, pp. 29-31; cf. B. M. Babi, *Mistsevi orhany derzhavnoi vlady Ukrainskoi RSR v 1917-1920 rr.* (Local Organs of Political Authority in the Ukrainian SSR in 1917-20) (Kiev, 1956), pp. 143-48.

Russia. In the south, where the new order was just beginning to dig itself in, the most easily organized and effective administrative system had to be established. Despite these considerations, however, it is difficult to understand why Lenin permitted the application in the hostile Ukraine of a technique that had already proved too dangerous for use nearer the Center. In doing so, he banked high explosives over the already raging fires of peasant dissatisfaction.<sup>20</sup>

In the early weeks of February new decrees ordered the formation of soviets, which were to be elected at the guberniya, uezd, volost, city, and village levels; carefully detailed instructions for electoral procedures, as well as for the organization and operation of these bodies, were published. It was anticipated that as these soviets came into existence they would take over the work being performed by the revkomy and would direct the operation of the kombedy. Arrangements were also made for the regular assembling of congresses of soviets at the several levels of government, and elections were ordered for an All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets of Workers, Peasants, and Red Army Men, scheduled to confer at Kharkov on March 1.<sup>21</sup>

It is difficult to match decree with reality and to form an accurate picture of the immediate consequences of the efforts to organize soviets, but it is evident that from February through May the spread of properly organized soviets was not rapid; in consequence, many of the revkomy and kombedy earlier established in rural areas continued to operate.<sup>22</sup> With the aid of workers' organizations and Bolshevik agitators, those cities under relatively firm Communist control did establish soviets; but many rural areas re-

20. Edward H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923* (3 vols. London, 1951-53), 2 (1952), 159-60; cf. Shlikhter, "Borba za khleb," pp. 116-17; Likholat, *Razgrom natsionalisticheskoi kontrrevolyutsii na Ukraine (1917-1922 gg.)*, p. 301.

21. Shlikhter, "Borba za khleb," 129-30; Carr, 2, 159-60; *Sobranie zakoneni* (1st ed.), no. 7, art. 86, pp. 91-96; no. 9, art. 113, pp. 125-26.

22. Shlikhter, "Borba za khleb," pp. 128-29.

mained without soviets, revkomy, kombedy, or Bolshevik organizers, and they governed themselves in whatever fashion the local inhabitants deemed best.<sup>23</sup> Though such local governments frequently termed themselves "soviets," as often as not their political temper was either non-Bolshevik or anti-Bolshevik.

By establishing the kombedy, the Bolsheviks brought down upon their heads the stormy wrath of Ukrainian peasants who owned land and intended to keep it. And though the intent to govern by means of soviets was widely publicized, the electoral regulations, which disenfranchised the wealthy peasants, provoked the resentment of this powerful group. Bolshevik political authority in the rural areas remained extremely fragile.<sup>24</sup>

Bolshevik land policies further stimulated the peasants' awakening opposition to the new regime. A manifesto issued about December 1 categorically announced that all lands of wealthy owners (*pomeshchiki*), with all the property on the lands, should be confiscated immediately and transferred without cost to the peasants.<sup>25</sup> This was followed, on the occasion of Rakovski's assumption of the presidency, by a more detailed statement to the effect that lands were being confiscated from *pomeshchiki*, kulaki, and monasteries for transfer to the "poor and landless peasants."<sup>26</sup> No other policy statement could have been so appealing to the poor peasants, for they had long coveted the big estates. Unfortunately both theory and necessity almost immediately forced the Bolsheviks to renege on their promises. Communist theory demanded that private farming be replaced by socialist methods if the agrarian

23. *Sobranie zakoneni* (1st ed.), no. 4, art. 47, p. 48; Barannyk, Mishkis, and Slobodsky, eds., *Istoriya KP(b)U v materialakh i dokumentakh (khrestomatiya)*, 1917-1920 rr. (2d ed.), 447-48.

24. *Sobranie zakoneni* (1st ed.), no. 9, art. 113, pp. 125-26.

25. *Ibid.*, no. 1, art. 1, p. 3.

26. *Ibid.*, no. 4, art. 47: "Declaration of January 26," pp. 46-49.

revolution was to be carried out to its logical and desirable end. Therefore, the government decreed the introduction of communal farming—the collective organization of land and labor—and opposed the existence or growth of farms operated by small private owners who could only be considered petty capitalists and virulent opponents of socialism.<sup>27</sup> In sum, the Bolsheviks were in the impossible position of trying to win popularity by giving each poor peasant a little land, while simultaneously destroying his right to own that land. For the peasants at all levels, whose chief aim in life was a small plot and freedom from interference, even the *threat* of communal organization was enough to provoke rebellious opposition.

Besides the ideological barrier to universal redistribution of the land to individual peasants, there were practical issues which had the same effect. Where agricultural industries had been supplied raw materials from their own big estates, the breakup of those estates and the distribution of their mill or factory properties meant the loss of products necessary to the national economy. Similarly the breakup of big farms into small subsistence farms meant a continuing drop in the quantities of agricultural products sent to market. At a time when urban workers and Red soldiers in the Ukraine as well as in other regions of Russia were near starvation, it was imperative to preserve the big Ukrainian farms and to channel their produce directly to government agencies.

There was still another obstacle to the free distribution of the pomeshchik estates. To promote the development of collective farms the state needed land, implements, and draft animals to offer the poor peasants it hoped to entice. In order to acquire these necessities, the government decreed that confiscated land in the Ukraine would be divided into two parts, half to be retained by the state, half to be

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 47; Alexander Baykov, *The Development of the Soviet Economic System* (New York, 1948), p. 18; Carr, 2, 151-57.

shared equally among the peasants. Inventories of machinery, livestock, and other farm property were reserved by the state for use on state and communal farms.<sup>28</sup> Subsequent decrees placed all large sugar beet estates with their refineries and other equipment under government control; so, too, lands producing grain or potatoes for the manufacture of alcohol were declared state property.<sup>29</sup> In this fashion the poor peasant was deprived of the land and farm implements he so coveted, the middle peasant found the principle of private property by which he lived threatened by the state's ambitious plans for the extension of communal farming, and the big estates were reserved to the government.

A resolution passed by the "Second Assembly of Rebels, Peasants, and Workers of Gulyai-Pole," early in February, succinctly stated the general peasant view: "The land belongs to no one, and it can be enjoyed only by those who cultivate it."<sup>30</sup> The man who plowed the fields believed that the act of cultivation should make the land his. He believed further that *all* land should belong to him, and he violently resisted the Bolshevik plan to push him into the communal farm, which seemed to him only a diabolical way of robbing him of his property and of the profits won by his labor. Fundamentally, *all* peasants desired more land; *all* wished to be private landowners. Even the landless peasants had little love for the collective farms; they shared the view of middle and rich peasants that the Bolsheviks were interfering where they had no business. This land policy, so resolutely thrust upon the Ukraine, was to be the "first cause which set the village against Soviet authority."<sup>31</sup>

28. *Sobranie uzakoneni* (2d ed. Kiev, 1919), art. 271, pp. 369-77; Kubanin, *Makhnovshchina*, pp. 54-55.

29. *Sobranie uzakoneni* (1st ed.), no. 6, art. 77, p. 81; no. 9, art. 111, pp. 123-24; (2d ed.), art. 271, pp. 377-79.

30. Kubanin, p. 59.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 58; N. N. Popov, *Ocherk istorii Kommunisticheskoi partii (bolshevikov) Ukrainy*, pp. 181, 185-86.

Another Bolshevik policy demanded by necessity also alienated peasant sympathies. The provisioning problem, partly an outgrowth of Bolshevik determination to nationalize the economy, was also the consequence of years of war, revolution, enemy occupation, civil war, the breakdown of industrial production, inflation, and the fluctuating abandonment and redistribution of farmlands. All these factors combined to depress the levels of agricultural production and to bring about the breakdown of exchange between city and village.<sup>32</sup> For Moscow in early 1919, conquest of the Ukraine signified more than political and military victory; it meant the acquisition of food for destitute Russian cities and for the Red Army.<sup>33</sup> The need was desperate. Unless some two billion pounds of grain were provided by June 1, Lenin told his chief food collector in the Ukraine, "we will all perish."<sup>34</sup>

As we have noted, Aleksandr G. Shlikhter, who had worked as an organizer of food collection both in Siberia and in the Kursk region, was selected by Lenin for the Ukrainian work. On November 23, 1918, Moscow gave Shlikhter plenipotentiary powers "in the areas of Soviet Russia freed from occupation [the Ukraine]," which position and authority the Ukrainian Soviet Government confirmed on December 7. Later, on January 19, when the Ukrainian Government underwent its early Moscow-directed reorganization, Shlikhter was named head of the People's Commissariat of Food Collection in the Ukraine.<sup>35</sup> The importance of his work was demonstrated by the magnitude of the authority delegated to him by the Ukrainian Soviet Government. He was given "full power to take all measures for the swiftest practical realization of the basic

32. L. Kritsman, *Geroicheski period velikoi russkoi revolyutsii* (The Heroic Period of the Great Russian Revolution) (Moscow, 1924), pp. 149 ff.

33. Carr, 2, 148-51.

34. Shlikhter, "Borba za khleb," p. 103.

35. Ibid., pp. 106-08.

tasks of Soviet provisioning policies." Without exception, every institute or agency concerned with provisioning was subject to his orders, which were to be immediately executed; in the event of disobedience or obstructionism, he was empowered to turn the culprits over to the government's revolutionary tribunals for trial.<sup>36</sup> On February 2 he was ordered to cooperate directly with Moscow agencies for the better provisioning of the RSFSR; in effect, he thereby became the arm of the Russian Soviet Government in the Ukraine.<sup>37</sup>

Giving himself a slogan to work by—"Bread for the Fighters, for the Salvation of the Revolution"—Shlikhter quickly sensed that the Ukrainian political and military situation made impossible the introduction of food policies used in Great Russian regions. In the north a state monopoly of the *most important* food products had been established, trade had been nationalized, and *all* provisioning organs had been brought under Communist party control. There, when peasants resisted grain collections, the firmly established Soviet organs of government could threaten the use of armed force with a reasonable expectation that the threat alone would be effective.<sup>38</sup>

Shlikhter considered the Ukrainian situation much too unstable to permit threats of extensive coercive action. He was thoroughly conscious of the fact that all through 1918 the peasants had resisted confiscation of their produce by Germans, by Skoropadski, and finally by the atamans who gave lip service to the Directory. Against each of these authorities they had risen en masse with guns in their hands. It was therefore obvious to Shlikhter that aggressive collection policies could all too easily provoke similar rebellions against Bolshevik authority; consequently, he began cautiously with the establishment of monopolies over only four commodities: grain, sugar, tea, and salt, permitting all

36. *Sobranie uzakoneni* (1st ed.), no. 3, art. 40, pp. 38-39.

37. *Ibid.*, no. 5, art. 61, pp. 66-67.

38. Shlikhter, "Borba za khleb," pp. 102-03, 109-10, 114-15.

other agricultural goods to remain in the free market. Similarly, he did not nationalize trade; instead, he ordered an inventory to be made of goods at Kharkov and Kiev, and he placed from 20 to 50 per cent of these goods under state control, leaving the remainder in the free market.<sup>39</sup>

Ukrainian peasants were accustomed to the barter system: "For a pood [36.113 lbs.] of grain—cotton cloth for a shirt." But the crippled Soviet industrial system could not provide enough manufactured items for a fair exchange; Shlikhter's collectors could offer goods amounting to only about a tenth of the value of the agricultural produce they sought. If he were to fulfill Lenin's demands, the balance of the produce had to be begged, paid for in cash, or confiscated by force. Shlikhter used every means he could devise to pry grain from the villages: he authorized private organizations to collect food on a commission basis; he leaned heavily upon support from the kombedy, who were asked to inform on the hoarding of middle and wealthy peasants; and he made wide use of thousands of zealous urban workers from the northern cities, whom he sent into rural areas to work as collectors.<sup>40</sup> However, in February and the months immediately following, all efforts to exploit the Ukraine as the victualer of Russia were poorly organized and ineffectual. Armed provisioning sections invaded the villages to confiscate grain and often had to fight for it. Hostile partisan leaders foiled or hampered collection activities over large areas, or simply confiscated all available goods for their own use. Troops nominally Bolshevik were far too unreliable to be trusted to enforce Bolshevik orders; political sympathies in local centers beyond the immediate vicinity of Kharkov and Kiev were often unknown; and even the poor peasants could not be depended upon to throw in their lot with the Bolsheviks, for they were not persuaded that the Soviet power would last.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 104-05, 110-12, 114-15.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 117-18, 128.

Given the political situation and the temper of the villages, Shlikhter had little success. Measured in terms of goods collected and shipped north, his efforts failed almost completely. Yet as early as February peasants and partisans vehemently complained about the quantities of food being sent to the north. Directory and other anti-Bolshevik propagandists busily exaggerated the volume of food leaving the Ukraine and spread stories about the tremendous profits Bolshevik speculators were making in Moscow with stolen Ukrainian produce. In late February Russia's great need for food was nowhere near solution, but Ukrainian peasants were seething rebelliously against the food collectors.<sup>41</sup>

In this partial list of the major political problems facing the Bolsheviks, at least one more deserves notice, if only because Bolshevik efforts to solve it further increased the probability of their general failure in the Ukraine. Though they tried where possible to attract social groups they believed to be sympathetic to the Communist cause, they acted with far greater energy to seek out and exterminate their enemies. Capitalists, bourgeoisie, middle and wealthy peasants, former imperialist officers suspected of harboring reactionary or nationalist sentiments, anarchist and SR partisans skulking in captured villages—all were enemies, both in fact and by Communist definition. To track down these "enemies of the people" and deprive them of the means of hostile action, the Ukrainian Soviet Government borrowed another page from Soviet Russia's book, instituting its own Red Terror. On December 3, 1918, the Ukrainian Extraordinary Committee (*Cheka*) was established under the direction of the Commissariat of Internal Affairs.<sup>42</sup>

41. Khrystyuk, 4, 175-76.

42. *Sobranie zakoneni* (1st ed.), no. 1, art. 7, p. 10; no. 2, art. 13, p. 19; cf. M. Ya. Latsis, *ChK po borbe s kontr-revolutsiei* (The Extraordinary Commission for the Struggle with the Counterrevolution) (Moscow, 1921), pp. 8, 15-17, 33.

Cheka investigating sections, exercising in practice almost unlimited authority and protected by their own troops, spread through cities, towns, and rural areas searching for counterrevolutionaries, saboteurs, speculators, and common criminals. Although Shlikhter hesitated to make use of harsh coercive measures for his food collections, the Cheka's policies were *founded* upon such measures. It deliberately practiced terrorism, publicly dedicating itself to the extermination of whole classes. Cheka units customarily moved into newly "liberated" areas directly behind the front lines, setting to work at once.<sup>43</sup> At Kiev, for example, several sections began to operate the day after Red troops arrived, and arrests were continued all through February.<sup>44</sup> There, while armed Chekists searched homes and apartments for hidden weapons, and, according to local rumor, grew rich on plunder, the efforts of other Soviet agencies to build good will were bound to be unsuccessful. Wherever the Extraordinary Committees functioned they roused intense opposition, not only from their victims but also from the many Ukrainian bystanders who disapproved of arbitrary confiscations, beatings, and summary executions. In mid-February, though the Cheka units were working hard at their mission of extermination, their most signal success was the creation of widespread resentment.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, the Bolsheviki's general approach to the whole task of organizing the Ukraine was as much a cause of their difficulties as were any of the specific policies mentioned in preceding paragraphs. As a group they displayed strangely combined qualities of utopian idealism and cynical realism; while they manifested a puritanical feeling of moral

43. Kolomiets, "Vospominaniya o revolyutsionnoi borbe v Elisavetgrade v 1917-19 gg." (Reminiscences on the Revolutionary Struggle in Elisavetgrad in 1917-19), *Letopis revolyutsii*, no. 1 (1922), pp. 200-01.

44. Goldenveizer, "Iz kievskikh vospominani (1917-1921 gg.)," *Arkhiv russkoi revolyutsii*, 6, 236-51.

45. "Dnevnik kievskoi studentki," *ARR*, 15, 209-10.

superiority, they simultaneously made systematic use of force, deceit, and terrorism. Destroying old institutions with the aim of building better ones, they frequently exhibited the scorn of the ignorant for knowledge and experience, presuming that anything new would be better than the old. Among the sometimes talented, always vigorous, and often violent personalities who served first Pyatakov and then Rakovski, immense inexperience coupled with ambitious plans for reform frequently led to bizarre and enormously complicated experiments. Every Bolshevik in the Ukraine, for example, seems to have had a passion for setting up elaborate educational and cultural sections in whatever governmental agency he directed or worked with, and Vladimir Zatonski zealously encouraged these efforts from his Commissariat of Education.<sup>46</sup>

The aim of the new government was to regulate everything, and it experienced serious difficulties in its efforts to distinguish between small and large issues. In one instance, possibly motivated by a sincere belief that the bourgeoisie were organizing drunken pogroms in order to discredit Bolshevik troops, the government forbade the sale of alcoholic beverages, ordered distilleries closed, and threatened to try heavy drinkers as counterrevolutionaries. Judging from reports of partisan drunkenness, these orders were unenforceable; nonetheless they undoubtedly heaped new tasks upon an already overburdened administration.<sup>47</sup> Zealous administrators organized and reorganized every conceivable agency, from judicial institutions, militia companies, and railroad directories to monopolies on leather and coal. Nothing could be preserved; yet, in the midst of change, someone had to see that work went forward efficiently in the vitally important areas of local government, peasant relations, and war. But always there were too few

46. Goldenveizer, p. 248.

47. *Sobranie zakoneni* (1st ed.), no. 2, art. 18, pp. 21-22; no. 6, art. 77, pp. 80-81.

competent and responsible men to cope with even the most pressing business.

The administrative chaos in the Ukrainian Soviet Government had serious consequences for military affairs. Because of the government's too numerous economic and political objectives—some necessary, some a little absurd, but all demanding immediate attention—military problems were too often relegated to the background. While it is undoubtedly true that every Bolshevik in the Ukraine understood the need to make rapid preparations for the next phases of the fighting, it is just as true that, for some, the nationalization of education or industry, the expansion of collective farming, or the suppression of counterrevolutionaries seemed to be the necessary first step to victory.

Swamped by its civil problems, the government tended to leave military affairs in the hands of Podvoiski and Antonov. And though Podvoiski defended his commander's policies in the government, he found it difficult either to direct or curb the choleric Antonov; indeed he suffered incessantly from Antonov's rudely phrased demands and recriminations. When other high officials of the Ukrainian and Russian governments stepped in to advise or restrain the Ukrainian commander, he habitually ignored them or ferociously lashed out at their "interference" in military affairs. Vatsetis continued to have only a limited ability to make his commands heard in the Ukraine, although few of his general directives were actually disobeyed. In consequence, Antonov continued to operate with an exceedingly high degree of independence, and the further course of the Ukrainian campaign was left largely in his hands. Thus, since the military operations had immense influence upon every other facet of the Bolsheviks' effort to win and hold the Ukraine, Antonov played a role far more important than his superiors should have permitted.

For Antonov, the most immediate task in early February was the reorganization of the army. His ragged partisans had still to be transformed into well-trained, disciplined units capable of successfully engaging regular French troops. Lenin had explicitly directed Rakovski to liquidate the partizanshchina in the Ukrainian Army, and Nikolai Podvoiski had arrived at Kharkov to help carry out this work. In late January transformation of the whole army into a regular force became the order of the day, but owing to a variety of reasons this task was a formidable one.<sup>48</sup>

After several conversations with Podvoiski, Antonov announced that all units would be set up in accordance with the Tables of Organization formerly used by the Tsar's army, which Trotsky, in November 1918, had made into Article 220 of the RSFSR Military Regulations. In general these tables called for the establishment of divisions composed of three brigades, each brigade to contain three regiments, the whole to be fully supported by appropriate service and staff components, officers, noncommissioned officers, and equipment. Given the conditions of the Ukraine, the effort to form regulation units was indispensable. The possibility of success was near zero.

According to Antonov's calculations, the 7,000 or 8,000 men he had started with had grown by mid-February to about 46,000. The latter figure included 5,000 Ukrainian troops transferred to him from the Reserve Army early in January and organized as the 9th Division. The only group that could fairly be called "regulars," this 9th Division was almost as badly lacking in training, equipment, and arms as the rebel divisions. Antonov's estimate also included at least 14,000 partisans commanded by men who were still almost completely independent in their operations and several other bands only weakly controlled. But using these numbers as a basis for planning, he developed a reorganiza-

48. Rakovski, "Ilich," pp. 5-6.

tion plan designed to bring each of his rebel divisions to about 17,000 men; he planned also to expand the 9th to about 9,000 men, to fill out three separate brigades, and thus to bring the total to about 55,000.<sup>49</sup> Podvoiski, always an elaborate but unrealistic planner, added proposals for two new sharpshooter divisions, the 3rd and 4th, to be built around cadres drawn from an international division (Hungarians and Austrians), which was expected from Moscow.<sup>50</sup>

To keep these forces in the field and prepare new units for action demanded mighty efforts in the rear areas. One of the first orders of the new government directed the collection of weapons, "fire and cold," from the civilian population, and its agents scoured the cities for rifles to arm the troops, for motorcycles, automobiles, and other equipment.<sup>51</sup> Captured military matériel, nine-tenths of it needing repair, was collected and pressed into service. Widespread conscription began, necessitating the creation of 36 replacement battalions, each of which was to train and then feed new recruits into one of the 36 front-line regiments that Antonov had projected. Former officers and noncommissioned officers were called up; training schools and refresher courses were organized. Major shortcomings in the nerves and sinews of the army required the rapid formation of engineer and communication units, to which end peremptory orders specified that such units should be made ready for duty—some within five days, others in two weeks, six weeks, or two months.<sup>52</sup> Antonov and Podvoiski were doing their best to prepare well for a long war.

But though the organizing and training of units had con-

49. Antonov, 3, 166–67; Bubnov et al., *Grazhdanskaya voina, 1918–1921*, 2, 60–62; "Doklady I. I. Vatssetisa V. I. Leninu (fevral-mai 1919 g.)," *Istoricheski arkhiv*, no. 1, 45, 57.

50. Antonov, 3, 169.

51. *Sobranie zakoneni* (1st ed.), no. 1, art. 6, pp. 9–10; no. 6, art. 78, p. 82.

52. Antonov, 3, 167, 169–72.

tinued all through the fighting against the Directory, though Antonov, his assistants, inspectors, and agents of the Ukrainian Government's Military Department were constantly on the move, it was not possible to visit every unit frequently enough nor to establish controls firmly enough to achieve the high degree of discipline and training required. In February the rebel divisions were still swollen hordes of partisan bands and peasant volunteers lumped together under divisional flags. On paper they presented compact units, but in fact their components were scattered across many miles of terrain, committed to a variety of military missions, and often too deeply involved in moving or fighting to concern themselves seriously with orders from above or with visiting commissars who criticized their housekeeping. Moreover, a number of partisan sections that nominally accepted Bolshevik leadership warily kept themselves beyond the reach of Antonov's inspectors, carefully maintaining a protective neutrality until they could more clearly foresee the course of events.<sup>53</sup> Given these conditions, it was impossible for Antonov and his staff to know positively at any moment the fighting strength, the reliability, or even the exact location of major units. Furthermore, despite Trotsky's efforts, Vatsetis' promises, and Lenin's directives, there were never enough competent officers or commissars, never enough intelligent Communists, to carry out orders, govern political sections, man propaganda trains, or persuade peasants that communism had the right answers for the Ukraine.

The peasant movement that had so dramatically swayed, first to the Directory and then to the Bolsheviks, could not be swiftly subordinated to the kind of order and discipline the men at Moscow had in mind. Indeed, with the capture of Kiev, management of peasant and partisan groups was made more arduous than before by the immense extension

53. *Ibid.*, 3, 150-51.

of the front lines. Towns and cities clung frantically to the units they had raised for their own protection against Allies, Petlyurists, partisans, and Volunteer forces. The truculence of partisan leaders whose men wanted only to defend their home villages made it quite impossible to shift units at will, now to the west, now to the southeast or the south, as regular units could have been shifted. The localist mentality of rebel units and partisan sections alike was an infuriatingly intractable characteristic; until it was checked there could be no regular army.

To capture real authority Antonov worked steadily at ridding his army of its atamans and batkos. Some he dismissed, others he arrested and executed, and the titles of remaining commanders he changed from ataman to colonel, but the partisan characteristics of units and leaders persisted. Not all the self-made commanders could be removed or shot, and as long as they remained their peculiar relationship with the peasants blocked Bolshevik access to the ranks. Usually these partisan leaders were men of the village who had received a better than average education. Enjoying the respect of their followers, sympathizing with peasant ambitions, sensitive to the temper of their own locale, they combined demagoguery and the ability to lead where their men most wanted to go with genuine talent for fighting. The greater figures drew some of their glory from deep-rooted Cossack traditions, which had long since made the proud defiance of all authority a virtue; in their own and in their followers' eyes they were endowed with the heroic stature of the legendary heroes who had fought Russian and Pole and Turk alike for the right to govern themselves. Such men were successful leaders because they were trusted by their followers; and they were trusted, above all, because they were "flesh of the flesh and blood of the blood of the village."<sup>54</sup>

54. Elias Heifetz, *Slaughter of the Jews in the Ukraine in 1919* (New York, 1921), pp. 60-61; Majstrenko, p. 102; N. N. Popov, p. 192.

Putting a commissar from Moscow or Kiev into a partisan unit as a means of persuading its ataman to bend his knee to Communist authority was a procedure of doubtful value. If the commissar demanded too much, if he were tactless, or a city man, or a Jew, his success was unlikely. Urban Jewish Communists sent to the villages excited the vicious passions of anti-Semitism, and all in a moment hatred of the city and the Jew became hatred of communism. In the peasant brain, Jew and city man and Communist coalesced into an image of a hook-nosed commissar who deprived peasants of land rightfully theirs, enforced grain requisitioning, confiscated movable property and weapons, and carried out the Cheka's executions. Where this image of the commissar reigned—and it was widely held—neither Antonov nor the Ukrainian government could have success.

Even when a sufficient number of commissars, officers, uniforms, and arms were available for some specific unit, when a partisan band could be endowed with many of the external aspects of a regular command, the peasant-partisan mentality continued to rule. No Bolshevik commissar could ever be certain that he was among friends; nor could he swear that he would live through the night if he offended the men he was supposed to indoctrinate and advise. Frequently, individual partisan units belonging to the Soviet Army of the Ukraine burst the bonds, running amuck, killing Jews, Cheka agents, and local officials, plundering towns, and ravaging the countryside until more reliable units came to suppress them. So explosive was the question of anti-Semitism that the creation of frictions between national groups was declared a military crime punishable by death, yet when partisan sections ran wild, few men thought of punishment.

To this many-layered anarchy in the Bolshevik forces, still another troublesome element was added by the desertion to the Ukraine of Red Army men from armies fighting elsewhere in Russia. Some of these deserters were lured by

the chaos, which led them to believe they could find plunder or safe hiding; others abandoned fronts where living and fighting conditions were unendurable; and in some cases homesick Ukrainians left other armies to fight near their farms and families. Whatever their reasons, deserters entered the Ukraine in such numbers that Rakovski was obliged to threaten to try them as "deserters to the general cause of socialist revolution."<sup>55</sup>

So pervasive was the spirit of Ukrainian partizanstvo that even the highest Bolshevik commanders were frequently guilty of partisanlike irregularities. When the former Tsarist officer, Glagolev, became Antonov's chief of staff, Vladimir Aussem, the ardent Communist who had previously held this staff position, was given command of the 2nd Division and its attached units—the whole now called the "Kharkov Group." As group commander, however, Aussem quarreled with Antonov's orders, found reasons why they were impossible to execute, and persistently made his own decisions. By late January Antonov left off complaining and began to threaten Aussem with court-martial. On February 11, in response to Aussem's continued flagrant insubordination, Antonov removed the group commander and put another Old Bolshevik, Anatol Skachko, in command, simultaneously ordering a series of similar changes throughout the command hierarchy of the division.<sup>56</sup> Lokotosh, commander of the 1st Division, victor at Chernigov and Kiev, also suffered steadily from a series of official reprimands. Prior to the victory at Kiev Antonov charged him with allowing banditism to flourish in his units, accepting troops and civilians of the Directory into his regiments without proper screening, and allowing his regiments to loot and hoard property.<sup>57</sup>

55. *Sobranie zakoneni* (1st ed.), no. 5, art. 62, p. 67.

56. Kiselev, *Agitpoezd: Vospominanie o borbe s kontrrevolyutsiei na Ukraine 1918–1919 gg.*, p. 4; Antonov, 3, 118–19, 192–97.

57. Antonov, 3, 137–38.

On the other hand, in some instances the dangers of the partisan spirit were so obvious and immediate that even former members of the Tsaritsyn gang, forced to work with units of the Ukrainian Army, turned into ardent disciplinarians and centralists. Men who had recently struggled against Trotsky's centralizing efforts now loyally served the cause by working to instill order into the Ukrainian Army. Belenkovich, an experienced Bolshevik who had helped to organize Ukrainian Red Guard units in 1917, came to Antonov from Tsaritsyn with a small staff and a few cadremen. Persuaded that partizanshchina was a great danger, he willingly accepted Antonov's commission to go into a partisan area and form several bands operating there into a regular brigade. But Belenkovich's work roused the usual opposition. His atamans-turned-officers proved to be men of "hysterical temperament, who did as they pleased," and they pleased, among other things, to plunder the local villages. It is of particular significance that though Belenkovich successfully organized the brigade, his experience made him too realistic to accept command over it. Indeed the discipline he introduced was so ineffective and his own authority so weak that Antonov was obliged to step in and help by ordering one of the regimental commanders arrested and sent under guard to Orel for trial by the Ukrainian Front's General Court.<sup>58</sup>

By February the Ukrainian Soviet Government had been in existence for two months and a few days, and its Military Department left much to be desired. The dual leadership of Mezhlauk and Podvoiski was so unsatisfactory that Antonov and Podvoiski together advised Trotsky of the problem. Trotsky quickly directed Rakovski to make it clear just who was responsible for Ukrainian military affairs, indicating Podvoiski as his preference. Yet the dual leadership continued. Another series of administrative quarrels

<sup>58</sup>. Ibid., 3, 151, 153-54; *Sobranie zakoneni* (1st ed.), no. 1, art. 9, pp. 11-14.

stemmed from the government's creation on January 30 of a Supreme Military Inspectorate. This organization was directed to "organize, control, and inspect all military work in conformance with the military statutes and administrative orders of the government." Agents of this organization were given immense powers, including the right to demand that their orders be executed without question and the authority to remove commanders arbitrarily and remand them for trial.<sup>59</sup> The hardheaded Antonov seems to have resented both Podvoiski and the Inspectorate.

It was only natural that Lenin, Rakovski, Trotsky, and Vatsetis, as well as Mezhlauk and Podvoiski, customarily blamed Antonov for the disorderliness and weakness of the Ukrainian Army. Antonov's own opinion was quite the opposite; in his mind, he did what had to be done despite the refusal of superior officials to give him adequate support. Thinking always about the fighting in progress, he tended to gloss over the weaknesses of his machine. Good or bad, he had to use it; though discipline and regular organization were desirable, immediate victories were indispensable. Where he recognized great weaknesses in the army's organization he blamed the government, and his peremptory demands for assistance with the essential work of recruiting, supplying, and training military units continued to enrage the higher authorities.

Antonov considered that Moscow had never given the Ukrainian Soviet Army its full support, and he was quite right, but there were good reasons for the Center's conduct. In the Urals the Siberian Army of Admiral Kolchak met demoralized Red units at Perm and in late December pushed them westward. So wretched was the morale of Red forces in this region that Trotsky agreed with Lenin upon the necessity for extraordinary measures, and Stalin was sent out with Dzerzhinski, Supreme Head of the Russian

59. Antonov, 3, 172-73; *Sobranie zakoneni* (1st ed.), no. 4, art. 51, pp. 52-54; no. 14, art. 157, p. 196.

Cheka, to investigate and correct the situation. Probably his hatred of Trotsky provoked Stalin to paint in unusually lurid colors the descriptions of disorganization he sent back to Moscow; still the situation was bad enough in truth, and Kolchak's forces, supported by the Allies, were building up strength for a major offensive toward Moscow. In consequence, Lenin forcibly turned Trotsky's attention in this direction, ordering reinforcement of the Urals Front. In another area, to the north, British and American Allies carried on operations from their headquarters at Arkhangelsk, still further diverting the Center's attention from the Ukraine.<sup>60</sup> Finally, on the Southern Front, Denikin's Volunteer Army gradually strengthened itself and moved into position for a new campaign.

On January 23, irritated by his feeling that the Ukrainian Front was being treated like a country cousin, Antonov requested Lenin's Council of Defense to review its position in regard to the Ukraine. Criticizing the Center's hesitation to send Russian units because of its "exaggerated" fears of nationalist and separatist tendencies in the Ukraine, he argued that such tendencies did not exist, that in fact workers and peasants warmly welcomed the Bolsheviks, and he reminded the Defense Council that the quick union of Russia and the Ukraine was vital for the continued existence of the Russian Soviet Republic because of Russia's need for food.<sup>61</sup> Nikolai Shchors, commanding the First Brigade of the 1st Division, and later adulated as a Ukrainian hero, echoed what must have been a common hope among Red commanders. In an interview given to a reporter of the Kiev *Kommunist*, he said that in a few days he "expected the arrival of big reserves of Soviet troops, after which a reinforced attack to the south would be undertaken."<sup>62</sup> Argu-

60. Trotsky, *Stalin*, pp. 293-94; Antonov, 3, 197.

61. Antonov, 3, 127-29.

62. Mints and Gorodetski, eds., *Dokumenty o razgrome germanskikh okkupantov na Ukraine v 1918 godu*, p. 223.

ments and hopes voiced by Antonov and his subordinates, however, did little to persuade Moscow to send troops. Quite the contrary: instead of sending reinforcements, Vatsetis demanded them.

For Vatsetis the primary danger areas were still the Eastern and Southern Fronts, and early in February he began to bleed the Soviet Army of the Ukraine for reinforcements. The Ukraine became not only a source of food for Moscow but also a source of troops for the south. And once begun, demands for aid to the Southern Front increased steadily, making the accomplishment of Antonov's organizational plans and tactical missions increasingly difficult. Vatsetis' first call for help came the day after Kiev fell to the Communists, when he demanded of Antonov an infantry brigade (three regiments) and two batteries of artillery to support Kozhevnikov's right flank. Upon a repetition of this request the following day, Antonov duly sent off the desired units, which Vatsetis formally transferred to the Southern Front. Four days later, on February 10, Rakovski ordered new reinforcements sent to the south. On the 12th Vatsetis' headquarters demanded still more.<sup>63</sup> Thereafter until June, demands were incessant, and for the most part Antonov honored them. In terms of troops actually lost during the four months from February to June, the Southern Front may justly be termed the Ukrainian Army's worst enemy.

It is worth remembering that only a few weeks before, in late December, Vatsetis had contemptuously declared that there was no Ukrainian Front and that the magnitude of the military tasks involved in clearing the Ukraine would require whole armies; now, in February, he began to de-

63. Kozhevnikov's units stood at the right flank of the Southern Front near the towns of Bakhmut and Nikitovka, about a hundred miles north of Taganrog. His unit was contiguous with the anarchist forces of Makhno which were serving Antonov, and which were extremely independent, thus the juncture was a weak spot for both fronts. See Kubanin, pp. 46-47; Antonov, 3, 197-99.

pend upon the Ukraine and its military commander for the reinforcements needed to keep his "regular" units alive on the Southern Front. Antonov, bent on executing the missions already assigned him, fought tooth and nail after the first transfers to the Southern Front to prevent further losses, yet in every case when it was at all possible and after the Center had reiterated its demands, he gave up his units. Later in the year he would claim that, owing to his own apprehension of the dangers threatening in the south, he had actually sent to the Southern Front more than was ordered.<sup>64</sup>

The combination of several battlefronts, a variety of enemies and missions, and the need for quick action pushed Antonov as hard in February as it had in December. His forces had grown, but so had the demands upon them. More than anything else he was always desperate for new fighting men. So badly did he need men that he was in no position to examine closely the motives or interests of the atamans who continued to come in and volunteer their services. By the middle of February he seldom looked too closely at a partisan leader's politics; he could not afford to. The question he asked was, "Will you fight for the Bolsheviki and execute my orders?" If the answer was "Yes," the partisans were welcomed. Recruiting in this fashion on February 18 Antonov met the man who was to be his most daring commander—and his nemesis—the Cossack adventurer who called himself Ataman Grigorev.

64. Antonov, *3*, 193, 199–200.

## CHAPTER 5

### *A Partisan Fighter for Bolshevism*

ATAMAN GRIGOREV, to whom Antonov turned for military support on February 18, was hardly the sort of ally the Bolsheviks would have sought in less trying times. A devious, brazen Cossack with remarkable capacities for vodka and fighting, Grigorev had had an adventurous but not particularly praiseworthy career. He had attained the rank of staff captain in the Tsar's army during the World War, and was, to quote a man who knew him, "the seageant-major type, cunning." In 1917 he had played an active role in the soldiers' revolutionary committees, which for a time virtually dictated the course of military events on the Southwestern Front. Later in the year, while Russia marched toward communist revolution, he had deserted, returning to his home, the village of Aleksandriya, some hundred and seventy miles southeast of Kiev. It appears that he supported Hetman Skoropadski in 1918 until August, when Petlyura commissioned him to prepare armed uprisings against the Hetman and the Germans in the Kherson guberniya.<sup>1</sup>

1. M. A. Rubach, "K istorii grazhdanskoi voiny na Ukraine (Perekhod Grigoreva k Sovetskoii vlasti)" (On the History of the Civil War in the Ukraine [The Transfer of Grigorev to the Soviet Power]), *Letopis revolyutsii*, no. 3 [8] (1924), p. 183; V. T. Krut, "Do istorii borotby proty hryhorivshchyny na Ukraini" (On the History of the Struggle against the Grigorev Movement in the Ukraine), *Litopys revolyutsii*, no. 5-6 (1932), pp. 128-31; Kubanin,

About thirty-five, small and thickset, dressed usually in whatever mixture of military and civilian clothing suited his fancy and kept him warm, with a "Mongol's face" and "lively eyes," Grigorev soon made his organization the most powerful partisan band on the Dnepr's Right Bank. A series of successful engagements brought him fame and popularity among the peasants, and in December, when the Ukrainian nationalists moved openly against Skoropadski at Kiev, Petlyura appointed Grigorev Ataman of Zaporozhe.<sup>2</sup> Thus Grigorev became the direct heir of the legendary Cossacks of the Zaporozhian Sich. Fond of high-sounding titles, Grigorev proceeded to give himself others. His proclamations and dispatches he signed variously as Ataman of Zaporozhe, of Aleksandriya, of Kherson, and of Taurida.

Grigorev's fame in late 1918 came most of all from the undeniable fact that he was a brilliant and fearless commander who enjoyed fighting and did it superbly. Such men were in short supply on all sides. He was gifted as well with remarkable organizational ability. In the first days of December, according to Antonov's information, Grigorev had brought 117 local bands under his command, and by December 10 he led some 4,000 cavalymen, 200 grenadiers, and several infantry contingents—perhaps 6,000–8,000 men.<sup>3</sup> But fully as important in Grigorev's career as the will to fight and the talent for administration was his bizarre love of the limelight, his genius for doing the dramatic thing and making sure that everyone within telegraph range knew he had done it. He appears to have seen him-

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*Makhnovshchina*, pp. 64–65; Yu. Tyutyunik, "V borbe protiv okkupantov" (In the Struggle against the Forces of Occupation), in Shlikhter, *Chernaya kniga*, p. 214; E. A. Shchadenko, "Grigorevshchina" (The Grigorev Movement), in Bubnov et al., *Grazhdanskaya voina, 1918–1921*, 1, 68–70; *Bolshaya sovetkaya entsiklopediya*, ed., O. Yu. Shmidt (1st ed.), 19, 360–62; Kiselev, *Agitpoezd*, p. 38.

2. Shchadenko, p. 69; F. Anulov, "Soyuzny desant na Ukraine," in Shlikhter, p. 144.

3. Antonov-Ovschenko, *Zapiski o grazhdanskoi voine*, 3, 89.

self sometimes as the Ukraine's Lenin; occasionally he spoke with words he must have considered worthy of a Ukrainian Napoleon; at other times he consciously mouthed the resounding and boastful periods of his predecessors, the Zaporozhian Cossacks. Viewing himself as savior and conqueror of the Kherson Steppes, intensely aware of the international significance of his actions, Grigorev deliberately presented himself as hero, conqueror, political philosopher, and reformer in the telegrams, manifestoes, and public declarations he loved to compose. He was capable of terse, clear dispatches. Thus, for example, in March 1919 when one of his bravoes irresponsibly dashed forward by armored train from one station to the next, finally wiring back that he was a long way off and still going, Grigorev's telegram said quite simply, "Blockhead! Stop!"<sup>4</sup> More often his loquacious telegrams announced incredible successes or terrifying disasters and painted Ataman Grigorev as the chief source of law, retribution, victory, and social reform in the Ukraine. Part hero, part charlatan, sincerely defending the interests of his "people," but even more sincerely dedicated to his own aggrandizement, Grigorev assumed that all the world was watching him and labored to give his deeds a proper aura of magnificence.

In mid-December the ataman had attracted wide attention by issuing a manifesto listing in detail the revolutionary reforms he had decided the Ukrainian people should adopt. Later in the same month he sent an ultimatum to the Germans at Nikolaev, an ultimatum cast in the typically blustering tone that suited him best:

I, Ataman Grigorev, in the name of the partisans whom I command, rising against the yoke of the bourgeoisie, with a clear conscience declare to you that you have appeared here in the Ukraine as blind instruments in

4. Tyutyunik, p. 222.

the hands of our bourgeoisie, that you are not democrats, but traitors to all the European democracies. If in four days you do not abandon Nikolaev and Dolinskaya and Znamenka, by foot, beginning at 12 o'clock on the thirty-first, then not one of you will ever see his fatherland. You will be destroyed, like flies, with the first wave of my hand. We will not provide transportation for you. You have had adequate time to leave without saying "goodbye." We consider you as accursed enemies, but out of humanity we will give you four days for withdrawing.<sup>5</sup>

Variations of this order were displayed in Petlyura's postal and telegraph offices as far away as Kiev, and Grigorev followed up his threats with efforts to make them operative.<sup>6</sup> To the commandant at Znamenka he announced that he had "unconditionally forbidden the Germans to use the railroads"; the commandant was therefore directed to halt any German troop train and report his action immediately. "Letting it pass will mean getting a bullet in your head, without trial," Grigorev warned. "The Germans are permitted to move only on foot and without weapons. Collect all your armed forces, and when you meet the Germans open fire. Balbachan is coming with two divisions and a regiment of cavalry and we will destroy these German dogs."<sup>7</sup> The ferocity of such orders, given in midwinter and directed against beaten men who had many miles of foreign land to traverse, is self-evident.

Although Grigorev served Petlyura for a time, he was fundamentally his own man—a military adventurer attracted by the lures of glory, booty, and power, an opportunist fascinated and perplexed by the political reforms and

5. Kubanin, pp. 65-66.

6. Frants, "Evakuatsiya germanskimi voiskami Ukrainy (Zima 1918-1919 g.)," *Istoriik i sovremennik*, 2, 263.

7. *Ibid.*; Balbachan was one of Petlyura's commanders.

dreams of utopia which revolution had made into common currency. Edgy, quick-tempered, resentful of every restraint, yet never certain just what it was he represented or wanted to represent, he could not be wholly trusted by any ally. His relationship with Petlyura was a marriage of convenience that proved decidedly inconvenient to both parties. His independence and the efforts of Petlyura's officers to command him created steadily mounting frictions that made a split inevitable. Thus, late in January, Ataman Osmolov, a colonel on Petlyura's general staff, charged that one of Grigorev's regiments was guilty of plundering and attempted to call Grigorev to order. In reply Grigorev dashed off an 800-word telegram in which a great deal of bombast was combined with open contempt for the colonel. Asserting that the general staff was "completely ignorant of what is going on in the Southern Ukraine," Grigorev asked if it were aware that he had been fighting Germans for weeks. Then he added an illustration of the degree of his success. "Do you know," he asked, "that four of the volosti see salvation from anarchy only in my sections and that they always greet me as if I were God?" With similar pride he reported: "a delegation of twenty men coming to me from the German colonists<sup>8</sup> declared that I am for them the star of salvation."

Further along in the telegram Grigorev interlarded insolent questioning with complaints: "Do you know that my partisans have not had clean linen for six weeks? They are half barefooted and their bodies are covered with wounds; their bodies are filthy; there is no linen. Do you know that I, Grigorev, have already crushed [Denikin's] Volunteer bands four times and that no later than the twenty-first I took Aleshino by storm and there smashed a Volunteer band and took 18 machine guns?" Again the question was

8. People of German descent whose predecessors had entered Russia as colonists under the aegis of official policies established by Catherine the Great.

followed by bluster. "Such discipline as I have probably exists in no other unit [in the Ukraine]. I have decreed that if someone falls back more than two steps from his comrades in a fight, he will be executed. In cases in which shooting is not decreed the sentence is 25 lashes of the ramrod and banishment from the section. For pillaging, I shoot." Through a succeeding paragraph he supplied information about German depredations at the Nikolaev shipyards, but he quickly returned to Osmolov's criticisms: "I declare that the units with me are in perfect order, and just now I have received thanks [directly] from Ataman Petlyura for my services. I have Cossacks in all twenty volunteer units, not robbers, but only true fighters for freedom. We are the first army in Kherson and Taurida, and, I will say, the most stalwart and [politically] conscious." Finally, seething with antagonism, Grigorev made his position perfectly clear. "You, especially, do not command, because *we are the army upon whose bayonets all is supported*. No one mobilized us, no one hired us. . . . We are partisans . . . volunteers. I am not an invalid; if you [act this way in the future] . . . I shall go home and disperse all the sections. Then you can command yourself as much as you wish."<sup>9</sup>

It was said above that Grigorev was his own man. In the sense that he insisted upon making his own decisions, he was; but in another sense he was as much a victim of the awesome processes of revolution and civil war as were many millions of men and women in the Ukraine. He could not foresee whether the victor in the Ukraine would be nationalist, French, Volunteer, Bolshevik, SR, Cossack, or peasant. Further, although he was prejudiced in favor of certain political ideas—those of the Borotbisty—he could not dedicate himself to them. Sensitive to the changing wishes of his followers and to the strength of the various political winds blowing across the steppes, he faced always

9. Antonov, 3, 218–20. The italics are mine.

the necessity of allying himself to strength. In the Ukraine this meant joining forces, not with the party of his preference, but with the party that would eventually triumph; in practice this meant shifting from group to group as affairs evolved.

Identifying Grigorev's true political faith is made difficult by the variety of motives that moved him. At one moment he might desire to emulate the Cossacks of the past and defy the nearest authority; at another he could be moved by the opportunity for rich plunder, a night of heavy drinking, or the need to save his skin. Often, simultaneously with one or several of these motivations, the conviction that particular political or social arrangements could save the Ukraine had to be balanced against the mood or the needs of his troops. Although he denied the fact in February 1919, Grigorev had apparently considered himself a member of the Borotbist party in earlier months, and for a time both before and after coming over to the Bolsheviks he appears to have seriously contemplated the idea of supporting a Borotbist bid for power.

The evidence here is scanty and puzzling. Specifically, by late January when it had become quite evident that the Soviet Ukrainian Army had defeated Petlyura and would soon capture Kiev, Grigorev contacted representatives of the Soviet government to make the startling suggestion that his armies be *combined* with those of the Bolsheviks. Concomitant with this proposal and intermixed with it in such a way that fact and fiction could be disentangled only with difficulty, he told the Bolsheviks about a new government that had been established to take over power from the collapsing Directory. In a telegram sent to the Bolshevik Revolutionary Council at Aleksandrovsk (now Zaporozhe), Grigorev explained: "A new government has been formed of Left SR's [Borotbisty] and Ukrainian Bolsheviks. Members of the new government include Hnat Mykhaylychenko, Mykola Shynkar', Kolos[ov], Shums'kyi, Vasyl' Blakytnyi,

Vyacheslav Lashkevych, and Mykola Lytvynenko [all Borotbisty]. Revolutionary headquarters of the Central Revolutionary Committee is located in Kharkov. Do you know about this?"<sup>10</sup> Through the negotiations that followed his proposal of alliance, Grigorev continued to supply details about the Borotbist government, which, despite his allegations, did not exist in Kharkov, although a small body of Borotbisty grouped at Znamenka called themselves the "Central Revolutionary Committee," and the Borotbist Blakitny was at Kharkov hoping to bring Bolsheviks and Borotbisty together.

Grigorev must have been aware of the relative insignificance of the Znamenka Borotbist committee and his own "army"; nevertheless, when Soviet officials demanded his "unconditional recognition of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Ukrainian Soviet Army as the only military center," the ataman clung to his pretense. "Such a council should be formed from representatives of our center and yours," he said. "We have almost the same platform as you and have our own Central Revolutionary Committee. In my opinion it would be most advisable to unite our armies and high commands into one; it would not be fitting to subordinate one army to the other. At present we have approximately 100,000 men on all fronts, of which 30,000 are partisans and the remainder are regular units."<sup>11</sup>

While Grigorev's talk about a Borotbist government indicates that he was in contact with Borotbist leaders and sympathetic with their plans, it does not imply that he was a dyed-in-the-wool Left SR pledged to fight for a Borotbist government. The weight of evidence indicates rather that the ataman was using the Borotbist "government" as a pawn in an effort to secure better conditions from the Bolsheviks for himself. It is of course quite possible that he was misinformed about the nature of the Soviet government at

10. Quoted from Majstrenko, *Borot'bism*, pp. 112-13.

11. Rubach, p. 181.

Kharkov, but it appears more likely that he was attempting here the familiar, and for him habitual, trick of playing one party against another for his own interests. The exaggerated claim that he commanded an army of 100,000 men only heightens the suspicion that he was using every possible dodge to build an appearance of strength in order to drive a hard bargain for his services.<sup>12</sup> Concerning the theory that Grigorev did head a Borotbist army subject to the orders of a well-organized Borotbist government, even its most ardent adherent, the former Borotbist Iwan Majstrenko finds the evidence disconcertingly flimsy. Despite his somewhat strained efforts to prove that Grigorev's was a Borotbist army, Majstrenko is ultimately forced to conclude of Grigorev that, "like so many of the partisan leaders of the day, he was an independent ataman whom no party, either Borotbist or Bolshevik, could discipline."<sup>13</sup>

Prating about the Borotbist center and the necessity of uniting the forces of Borotbist and Bolshevik, Grigorev nonetheless tentatively agreed on February 1 to join the Bolsheviks. For the latter this defection of one of Petlyura's most famous leaders was a triumph. Rakovski immediately wired the news to the party chiefs at Moscow, and on February 6 he proudly advised the French Foreign Minister, S. Pichon, and, through him, the representatives of other Allied governments that Petlyura's Ataman Grigorev had changed sides.<sup>14</sup>

There remained the task of working out command relationships with this new partisan leader. When Antonov's troops captured Ekaterinoslav on February 10, Grigorev sent in a report of his own military operations. In quick response Antonov directed a brigade commander of the 2nd Division, Zhupan, to establish communications with

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 181-83.

13. Majstrenko, p. 128.

14. *L'Ukraine sovietiste (Quatre années de guerre et de blocus)* (Berlin, 1922), p. 10; Rubach, p. 185.

Grigorev at once, and he arranged that the ataman would receive his orders "directly from the staff of the Kharkov Group." He then instructed Grigorev to concentrate some of his forces in the Kherson-Nikolaev region, while leaving others along a line a hundred miles north of Nikolaev at the disposition of the 2nd Division. This was a deliberate effort to weaken Grigorev, "toward whom," as Antonov explains, "we felt an understandable mistrust." But the wily Grigorev disobeyed orders, pulled his units away from the northern line, and proceeded to fight in the south as though he were completely independent.<sup>15</sup>

On February 18 at Kharkov the two men met for the first time. Grigorev arrived, swaggering and eloquent, proud of his role as leader of the Zaporozhian Cossacks and, above all, fully aware of the importance of his ability to fight. Antonov thoughtfully studied the strange figure, "dwarfish and square, with a round head, a closely shaven skull, and a gray face." Grigorev's past made it only too obvious that he was completely untrustworthy, yet his troops and his courage made him invaluable: the problem was how to gain his loyalty and obedience. During the interview Grigorev "painted his past victories in brilliant colors." He reported that his command consisted of 26 sections totaling 15,000 men, but he "gave very contradictory information about their armament." Also he did his best to use Rakovski against Antonov, arguing apparently that the President of the Ukrainian Soviet Government had promised him special rights and privileges. According to Antonov, the ataman "tried to demand the preservation of the organization of his sections and their independence."<sup>16</sup>

In an account of the Grigorev movement written later by one member of Antonov's revolutionary military council, E. A. Shchadenko, Grigorev is said to have won everything he demanded. Shchadenko angrily declares that Gri-

15. Antonov, 3, 220-21.

16. *Ibid.*, 3, 166.

gorev was permitted to preserve his organization intact, to maintain complete control of all arms and equipment, to keep his titles, and to exact a promise that there would be no Soviet (Bolshevik) interference concerning his territory, his army, and his booty.<sup>17</sup> If Grigorev's subsequent conduct were taken as an indication of the content of the agreement reached with Antonov, one might be led to believe that Antonov did indeed capitulate to the ataman; but, in fact, Antonov stood his ground. During this first interview he issued a "categorical directive" demanding Grigorev's submission, to which Grigorev "reluctantly agreed." Following this, in his official Order to the Front, dated February 18, Antonov issued directives that, on paper at least, gave formal organization to Grigorev's partisan troops. The ataman was instructed to organize his various sections into a "brigade of the regulation composition," to be called the *Zadneprowskaya* (Trans-Dnepr) Ukrainian Soviet Sharpshooter's Brigade. The three regiments of the brigade, with various lesser units accompanying them, were to be subordinate to the Kharkov Group, "under the supervision of the brigade commander, Comrade Grigorev." The glorious Ataman of Zaporozhe, et al., was thus degraded to the rank of "comrade." Having issued these orders, Antonov arranged through the Ukrainian government's Commissariat of Military Affairs for the immediate dispatch to Grigorev's brigade of a number of Bolshevik military commanders and political workers.<sup>18</sup>

Grigorev's recent history made accepting him into the ranks of the Ukrainian Army an immensely dangerous act—although a necessary one—and no one in the Soviet Government of the Ukraine thought otherwise. Still, Antonov had many such men fighting for him; in mid-February there was little reason why Grigorev should be treated with more than the usual suspicion and watchfulness.

17. Shchadenko, 1, 72.

18. Antonov, 3, 166.

Following his interview with Antonov, Grigorev dutifully renamed and renumbered his units. His immediate superior, Anatol Skachko, commander of the Kharkov Group, sent out some officers to form a staff for the new brigade, and Skachko also transmitted Antonov's command that Grigorev stop loosing his unciphered telegrams in every direction like flocks of pigeons. All messages were to be routed through Kharkov Group Headquarters.<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately Grigorev's impatience with outside interference was not moderated by his newest alliance. Yuri Tyutyunik, a partisan leader who joined the ataman during the last days of February, described in later years his first impressions of the state of Grigorev's mind and military organization.<sup>20</sup> Tyutyunik, a Ukrainian SR disillusioned with Petlyura and convinced that the French had to be driven out of the Ukraine, came into Kherson guberniya seeking to recruit forces with which to carry on the fight. Instead, he soon realized he was in a region where Grigorev's name and Grigorev's lieutenants ruled, where the central Soviet government seemed not to exist. Near

19. *Ibid.*, 3, 223; P. Dybenko, commander of the Trans-Dnepr Division of which Grigorev's brigade was a part, was involved in important military actions on the Dnepr's Left Bank. Skachko, therefore, assumed direct responsibility for guiding Grigorev's operations.

20. Tyutyunik, pp. 210-28; A resourceful and adventurous Left Ukrainian SR and former schoolteacher, Tyutyunik helped organize resistance to German occupation forces as early as February 1918. He also served as a Rada official in charge of demobilization of troops for a section of the Southwestern Front, and in this position he channeled weapons turned in to him by demobilized soldiers to his partisan colleagues rather than to the Rada or to the Germans. E. A. Shchadenko, in his article on Grigorev in *Grazhdanskaya voyna*, 1, 69, states that Tyutyunik was with Grigorev while the latter still served Petlyura; but Tyutyunik's own account and other reliable evidence dates his first meeting with Grigorev after the ataman had joined the Bolsheviks (February 10-18) and after he had captured Snegirevka (February 27-28), but before the attack on Kherson (March 1-2); see Kapulovski, "Organizatsiya vosstaniya protiv getmana," *Letopis revolyutsii*, no. 4 (1923), pp. 95-102; Khrystyuk, *Zamitky i materiyaly do istorii ukrainskoi revolyutsii, 1917-1920 rr.*, 4, 41 n.; Krut, p. 133; N. I. Podvoiski, *Na Ukraine: Stati N. I. Podvoiskogo* (In the Ukraine: Articles by N. I. Podvoiski) (Kiev, 1919), p. 20.

Grigorev's front line at Snegirevka, some fifty miles north-east of Kherson, Tyutyunik wandered through a maze of locomotives and boxcars and finally discovered the ataman astride a horse behind the railroad station, swearing in a new section of volunteers. Grigorev pocketed Tyutyunik's letter of introduction without reading it, brusquely ordered him to report to the staff, and rode off, leaving Tyutyunik to search the sidings again until he came upon a car painted "half blue and half a dirty cherry color" that bore a sign identifying it as Grigorev's staff car. Entering, he found himself standing before the ataman—"middle-sized, squat, with a Mongol's face, a bluish-red nose and sharp eyes."

Without preliminaries Grigorev asked Tyutyunik if he were literate. Upon Tyutyunik's reply that he could read and write, Grigorev ordered an aide to hand the newcomer a pencil and a pad of telegram blanks. Then he ordered, "Write!" and dictated the following message:

To Rakovski at Kharkov, to Antonov and Podvoiski; a copy to Dybenko at Ekaterinoslav; copies to the commanders of my regiments—Gorbenko, Yasinski, Mosenko; copies to all the rebels of the gubernii of Kherson, Ekaterinoslav, and Taurida; a copy to Aleksandriya in the Kherson guberniya addressed to Matilda Vasilevna Grigoreva:

If you continue to organize authority behind my back, I will refuse to fight. Send your greenhorns [the staff officers Skachko had sent] to school, and give the people a government they can respect. Once more I remind you; otherwise I will refuse to fight.

When the message was completed, Tyutyunik held it out for Grigorev's signature, but the ataman pulled a stamp from his pocket. "I don't put my signature on telegrams," he explained. "The stamp is adequate. And you write *Grigorev*, and further down write: *Chief of Staff*."

Tyutyunik did as he was told and then inquired who would sign as chief of staff.

"Are you afraid to put down your signature?" Grigorev demanded. "Write your own name."

Thus with one short telegram Grigorev threw down the gauntlet to the Bolsheviki. By addressing his message to every partisan in three governments, including his own family, he made it quite clear that he would send telegrams as he pleased. The message itself succinctly expressed his attitude about Communist officers and the Bolshevik government. Finally, the selection of Tyutyunik as chief of staff blatantly affirmed his determination to make his own appointments.<sup>21</sup>

All too clearly, from the Bolsheviki's point of view, Grigorev's attitude was unsatisfactory. On the day of Tyutyunik's arrival at Snegirevka, Skachko announced to Antonov that he had just completed an inspection at Aleksandriya, Grigorev's home and permanent headquarters. Despite considerable military experience gained during the World War, Skachko was far from being the best possible man to command partisans. Tactful and formal, he expected his subordinates to act like subordinates and to make their soldiers behave like soldiers. His inspection left him furious and frightened. "Grigorev himself," he reported, "fore-

21. Tyutyunik not only remained as Grigorev's chief of staff, but lived to claim in later years that he had been the true organizer of Grigorev's victories. His claim appears to be somewhat exaggerated. While it is true that as chief of staff Tyutyunik performed much of the detail work of planning and organizing, and undoubtedly influenced Grigorev in many ways, the ataman appears to have made the important decisions, even when quite drunk, a condition habitual to him. Peasants and Cossacks were attracted by Grigorev's dramatic posturing. The manifestoes, declarations, telephone conversations, and telegrams, which played such an important part in the Grigorev movement, all bear the strikingly original characteristics of the ataman's mind. Though Tyutyunik wrote and sent messages, the ideas, the strategy, and frequently even the words themselves appear to have been Grigorev's. In addition, by prohibiting his staff from communicating with Bolshevik officials, except through himself, Grigorev preserved his role as sole arbiter of partisan-Bolshevik relations.

warned of my coming, departed for the front with his chief of staff several hours before I arrived and left no responsible person at headquarters. I found, instead of a staff, a filthy freight car and a swarm of unorganized bandits." The camp was everything a camp should not be: "A water cart of spirits from which all drank. Two or three hundred half-drunken soldiers. Five hundred wagons loaded with every kind of goods—spirits, benzine, sugar, cloth."<sup>22</sup> He angrily reported the partisans' refusal to share their booty with other units of the Ukrainian Army.

The fact that Skachko complained to Antonov but took no effective action to bring about the proper distribution of goods hoarded at Aleksandriya provides a telling insight into Skachko's character as a commander: he lacked the personal courage or the bad manners required to impose his will upon the partisans in face-to-face contact. He needed someone else for such dirty work. Nonetheless, he could reach a proper decision. Irritated by the information that Grigorev was refusing to use the Communist officers on his staff, he wrote: "My impression—it is impossible to trust Grigorev. It is necessary to liquidate him." Noting that he had left members of his staff to check on a rumor that some of the partisans were dissatisfied with Grigorev's leadership, Skachko repeated and emphasized his conclusion. "If this is confirmed, I consider it definitely necessary to take the most resolute measures for the liquidation of Grigorev and his staff. Until this is done I find it impossible to consider the sections of Grigorev as our troops or to depend upon them."<sup>23</sup>

The men Skachko left at Aleksandriya carried out a thorough investigation. Their chief, a man named Akhmetov, submitted his report in the first days of March.<sup>24</sup> In Akhmetov's opinion, Grigorev was "greedy for honors,

22. Antonov, 3, 223: "Report of February 28, 1919."

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., 4, 68-69.

crafty," and had "a subtle political instinct." Though an enemy of communism, he appeared to understand that he must inevitably submit to the Communists. Accordingly, while he discouraged Communist agitation among his partisans, he permitted the commissar sent to him to sign all military papers; similarly, he carried on a running battle with the local revkom without actually trying to take over the local government. In sum, he appeared to be fighting a delaying action, as though hoping for some development that might obviate the necessity of bowing his head.

According to Akhmetov the situation in Grigorev's camp was especially dangerous because of the Bolshevik failure to send out enough agitators and organizers and because the few who had been sent were poorly trained or incompetent. As a consequence, no Communist agitation was going on in the partisan sections. This failure he considered particularly serious in the light of the considerable Borotbist activity in and around Aleksandriya. The Borotbisty had established a brigade Information Bureau and with the aid of a freight-car printing press were turning out leaflets, protests, and invitations to theatricals. Not only were they operating freely in Grigorev's camp, but, Akhmetov asserted, they were also in contact with the SR central committees of Great Russia and the Ukraine. However, though he underlined the activity of the Borotbisty, he was of the opinion that much of their work was executed "slothfully" and without great success. Partisans answered requests to support the Borotbist party by saying, "We are Bolsheviks." This surprising declaration meant a good deal more than it implied, though it did not mean the partisans were members of the Communist party. Actually the illiterate and politically vague partisans were well to the left of the Borotbisty and were in favor of most of the objectives expressed in the aggressive utopian creed of the Bolsheviks; yet the partisans bitterly resisted the Bolshevik commissars and their political and economic dictatorship.

Though the partisans called themselves "Bolsheviks," when they went on to define themselves more accurately they explained that they were "non-party Bolsheviks." For them the distinction was neither subtle nor hard to understand: they rejected the Communist party and the authoritarian policies it had come to represent; they stood for Communist and Left SR *ideals*—*bolshevism*. Thus in their judgment they were the true Bolsheviks, while the members of the Communist party were would-be dictators. Finally these men were persuaded that if a better world was to come out of chaos, it was up to them to build it. In effect, Grigorev's partisans floated in a peasants' world, between parties, longing for simple self-government, primitive and unfeasible economic reforms, and independence—independence from commissars, from Katsapy, from the French, in a word, from all external restraints.

Akhmetov mentioned still another problem that was to be a central cause of many of Antonov's worries. He reported that the anarchist batko, Nestor Makhno, had established communications with Grigorev, presumably by exchanging representatives with the ataman. Makhno's position at the moment was similar to Grigorev's. Another "natural" leader, he had formed his own powerful partisan band in the area southeast of Ekaterinoslav around his home village, Gulyai-Pole, and had first cooperated with the Bolsheviks in late December. Early in February he agreed to serve with Antonov and accepted assignment in Dybenko's Trans-Dnepr Division as the Third Brigade (Grigorev's, absorbed later in the month, became the First Sharpshooter's Brigade in the same division), and he was given the task of defending the Ukraine near the dangerous juncture of the Southern and Ukrainian Fronts. But if the situations Grigorev and Makhno found themselves in were similar, the men were not. Makhno had spent the years from 1908 to 1917 in Moscow prisons, where he had learned well the doctrines of Russian anarchism from some of its

more important advocates, who were his fellow prisoners. Combining all the violent emotions of the Ukrainian Cossack with his well-developed political theories, and advised by educated and fanatical anarchists who joined him at his headquarters, Makhno made no pretense of sympathizing with the Communist party and its leaders. Though he allied himself with them against reaction and intervention, the goal he sought was political freedom in its most extreme form—the end of all government. Alone, he was as dangerous a threat to Antonov as Grigorev, and, as was true with Grigorev, every day increased Makhno's power; allied, these two could very well bring about the destruction of Bolshevik hopes in the Ukraine. Here, in the threat of alliance between Grigorev and Makhno, was one more peril for the Soviet Ukrainian Government to consider and avoid.

Examining all the portents borne in the information he received about Grigorev, Antonov fully comprehended the hazards of his position. Unlike Skachko, he understood that he could not refuse to employ the partisans simply because their military manners were deplorable and their faces dirty; he believed that Grigorev could be taken in hand if only the right hands could be found. Skachko's petulance helped not at all—he lacked the toughness and the personal daring needed to bring Grigorev into line. By the same token, the political commissar sent out to the ataman, a certain Ratin, was in Antonov's opinion "completely out of his element"; like a frightened parasite he attached himself to the ataman and proudly countersigned all messages, thereby giving them the stamp of Communist approval and authority.<sup>25</sup> Possibly Antonov should have put more pressure upon Skachko, forcing him either to command his subordinates or get out. Perhaps Antonov should have more insistently screamed his demands for a competent commissar to serve with Grigorev until Podvoiski or Rakovski or

25. *Ibid.*, 4, 82.

Trotsky or Vatsetis dispatched what was needed. But the shortage of good men, the press of time, the fact that other matters seemed more important, and a certain lack of personal ruthlessness in Antonov himself encouraged him to put off a decisive struggle for more adequate control over Grigorev. Despite all omens, Antonov needed fighting men, and he sensed from a distance what Tyutyunik felt close up. "The commanders of the regiments were copies of Grigorev," Tyutyunik wrote. "The regiments formed a mob. But it was an inspired and passionate mob—a beast that would see the enemy, recognize him and seek to destroy him."<sup>26</sup> Antonov needed just such a beast to turn against the French. Although the Grigorev brigade was a far cry from the nicely disciplined and polished fighting units Leon Trotsky was dreaming and writing about, still the beast would fight, and Antonov stood fast in his determination to use it.

For Grigorev the need to be the aggressor, to bully and attack and crush the enemy, was like an ungovernable passion. Even while the first steps toward formalizing his relations with the Bolsheviks were being taken, his partisans prowled southward, capturing villages and towns. Moving with them to Snegirevka, Grigorev scented the rich booty waiting at Kherson and Nikolaev and impatiently rushed his troops forward. Kherson, on the Dnepr River, was a major shipping center; with a population of some 100,000 in 1917, it was packed in March 1919 with "bourgeoisie" who had fled from other cities, Ukrainian and Russian, bringing all their movable possessions. With its shops and warehouses, its shipyards and ships, Kherson was a good fat prize. But the city was under French control. A Greek infantry battalion and a company of French soldiers oc-

26. Tyutyunik, p. 216.

cupied it, supported by a pair of mountain guns and the artillery of French naval vessels anchored in the river. Though these were not overwhelming forces, any attack upon them could be expected to bring down upon the head of the attacker the full weight of Allied arms. Since the French had troops in the Crimea, Odessa, and Nikolaev and controlled the Black Sea, the potential defensive power of Kherson seemed formidable.<sup>27</sup>

Grigorev considered Nikolaev, thirty miles northwest of Kherson, an inseparable part of his offensive. Like Kherson, Nikolaev was an important port city. In size and wealth it resembled Kherson, but the special promise and challenge here lay in the nature of its occupying force. Some 15,000 German troops were marooned in the city, blocked from Kiev and the land route home by Grigorev and other partisans. The main force at Nikolaev, the 15th Landwehr Division, was composed mostly of older men, whose fighting ability was poor and whose morale was almost nonexistent; but German officers still possessed considerable authority, even among soldiers who had organized their own soviets and were openly sympathetic to the Bolsheviks. The 15th Landwehr and the lesser units grouped about it were commanded by a General Zak, who was in turn subject to a governor general, Rear Admiral von Kessler.<sup>28</sup> To Grigorev, Nikolaev held a special fascination. The Germans, frantic to avoid more fighting, might capitulate at his first blow. If his attack were successful, he could strip the Nikolaev garrison of all its military stores; he could seize German

27. "Ocherk vzaimootnosheni vooruzhennykh sil Yuga Rossii i predstavitelei frantsuzskago komandovaniya" (Outline of the Mutual Relations of the Armed Forces of Southern Russia and the Representatives of the French Command), known as "Oranzhevaya kniga" (The Orange Book), *Arkhiv russkoi revolyutsii*, 16, 233-78; Gukovski, *Frantsuzskaya interventsia na Yuge Rossii, 1918-1919 g.*, p. 203.

28. Anulov, p. 144; Boris Lizov, "Kherson pod pyatoi okkupantov" (Kherson under Five Occupations), in Shlikhter, pp. 237-38; Allen, *The Ukraine: A History*, pp. 288, 308; Frants, p. 262.

heavy guns, armored trains, machine guns, trucks, automobiles, horses, and munitions—enough to transform his Cossack and peasant rabble into a well-equipped army, enough perhaps to make him the most powerful man in the Ukraine. The Nikolaev situation was complicated, however, by one of the freakish accidents of the World War and the peace that followed it: the German garrison was subject to French military authority. A preliminary draft of the peace treaty had placed German occupation forces under the obligation to remain in the Russian areas they held until their departure was approved by the French. At Nikolaev, this necessity to obey French orders was made absolute by Allied control of the Black Sea—the only escape route left open to the Germans. Thus von Kessler was forced to submit to the wishes of Germany's conquerors. These wishes were simple. With morale in their own units at a mutinous level, French commanders knew it would be impossible to halt Grigorev with French troops; they wanted the Germans to do their fighting. The Nikolaev garrison was ordered to defend the city.<sup>29</sup>

Political authority at Nikolaev made defense a matter for many chiefs, each of whom regarded the problem in his own way. The governor general, von Kessler, shared power with an elected city government (*duma*), a Petlyurian commissar, a workers' committee, and a burgeoning Communist underground organization. All these functioned, not at all smoothly, under the guardianship of the French.<sup>30</sup>

Grigorev's attention swung back and forth, probing feverishly for a soft spot in the enemy defenses, now at Kherson, now at Nikolaev, now back again to Kherson. As early as March 2, with troops and at least two armored trains in action against Kherson, Grigorev turned to Nikolaev, threatening that "in a little while" he would "take

29. Gukovski, pp. 152-53.

30. Ya. Ryappo, "Nikolaev v period interventsii" (Nikolaev in the Period of Intervention), in Shlikhter, pp. 373-76.

Nikolaev by storm." He then proceeded to instill terror into the German garrison by ultimatum, a device as automatic with him as war whoops among American Indians. Though he liked to fight, he liked best to win victories by trickery and big words. "All the world is trembling with revolution," he told the Nikolaev garrison; "and the proletariat pours out torrents of its blood to support victory. Look around and see whom you are gathered with for fighting. They lead you against the proletariat, drinking their blood and sucking their bones. We know that you want to go home. So—go! The conditions of your departure have been outlined by the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government. Other conditions will not be added, but if you do not go home, you will die."<sup>31</sup>

Antonov's response to Grigorev's threatening of the Germans was immediate. The relations of the Ukrainian Soviet Government with the German garrison were excellent; both parties worked for one objective—to get the Germans home, and the last thing Antonov wanted was that the powerful German force should be pushed unwillingly into an unnecessary fight that might cost many lives. "Your ultimatum to the Germans in Nikolaev is stupid," Antonov wired Grigorev. "Negotiations are being carried on with the Germans by the Center." He explained that the ultimatum would "uselessly provoke the Germans to fight," and ordered Grigorev to "concentrate on Kherson."<sup>32</sup> Grigorev bridled resentfully a few days later, calling Antonov's telegram "insulting and undeserved," and he added: "One has to be an iron man to swallow the insults the Center piles on me." However, at the moment Antonov's telegram arrived, Grigorev's forces were hotly engaged in the Kherson attack, and Grigorev allowed himself temporarily to be waved away from Nikolaev.<sup>33</sup>

31. Antonov, 3, 225.

32. Ibid., 3, 226.

33. Ibid., 3, 229.

During the second day of March, as the battle for Kherson developed, the partisans ran into stubborn resistance by the Greeks. A German armored train moved down from Nikolaev to oppose the partisan attack, and fire from the French vessels in the harbor helped slow the advance.<sup>34</sup> While the attack went on during the 3rd, the French brought in reinforcements by sea. Faced with a hard fight, Grigorev fell back on his tactic of trying to frighten the enemy into surrender. On the evening of March 3, his men managed to get a telephone wire into the Greek lines, and Grigorev put Tyutyunik at the telephone to talk with the commander of the forces that had defended the railroad station during the day. The conversation that followed is probably unique in the annals of modern warfare—a Cossack ataman sending his war cry by telephone to a brave, humble, and very honest Greek:<sup>35</sup>

Ataman Grigorev asks the Greek commander whether the Greek troops will oppose the attack of Soviet troops on Kherson.

*Reply:* We are at the Kherson station by order of the Supreme Command and we cannot leave and give this place to another. We can withdraw only on orders from above. We will fight only if you attack us.

*Grigorev* [through Tyutyunik]: What kind of devils are you Greeks who have come into the Ukraine?

34. Lizov, p. 237; Gukovski, pp. 153, 203.

35. There are three differing records of this conversation: Tyutyunik's, Boris Lizov's and Antonov's. Tyutyunik's version was written from memory several years after the event and only partially reproduces the exchange in general terms. Antonov's is the most complete, and Lizov's, published before Antonov's, differs only in minor omissions; the Antonov version, therefore, is reproduced here. The conversation is in the bold and challenging style of Grigorev, not in the considerably more genteel manner of Tyutyunik. This difference of style, emphasized by the mild phraseology Tyutyunik uses in his own account of the conversation with the Greek, argues that Grigorev must have stood over his chief of staff providing him with both ideas and words; cf. Tyutyunik, pp. 217-18; Lizov, pp. 248-49; Antonov, 3, 226-27.

*Reply:* I presumed that I was dealing with a responsible person; otherwise I would not have come to the apparatus.

*Grigorev:* You are dealing with very responsible people who have conquered Europe. You—insignificant, hired bourgeoisie—have come into our land, into our homes; you even want to meet the people with weapons in your hands. Cast away your plan. Get out at once. If you cannot leave, lay down your arms and we will send you home. Otherwise we will deal with you as we deal with the most evil enemies of the working people. Acknowledge the fact that your sojourn in the Ukraine is a violation of our people. I declare to you categorically: either get out or lay down your arms. Understand that your actions . . . will be written down in black lines in the history of the revolution. The plot of the world bourgeoisie has suffered failure, but perhaps it is not known to you what is going on in England, France, and Germany. Our bourgeoisie have blinded you. Open your eyes, wake up and you will see that you are far from a people harassed by you. Its sons curse you. I demand an immediate categorical reply—a reply without qualifications.

*Reply:* If you are speaking to me personally, then I will reply to you.

*Grigorev:* Yes, yes. Go ahead.

*Reply:* In reply to the question, "What sort of devils are you Greeks who have come into the Ukraine?" I would excuse myself. The blame rests on the power that sent us. You should turn to that power. Once more I say to you that only one soldier is talking with you. Do you desire that I transmit your conversation to the High Command?

*Grigorev:* In Kherson you are so few that for us you do not represent forces capable of great opposition. We are sorry for you and consequently we propose:

Lay down your arms for the love of mankind. I have not been empowered to speak with the rest of your allies. Ataman Grigorev asked me to warn only the Greeks, about our other enemies nothing has been said to me. Consequently my negotiations with you must be known only to the Greeks. I ask you to reply.

*Reply:* You will not touch us, and whoever does we will fight him as the Greeks fight. Goodnight to you.

*Grigorev:* It is too early to sleep. We, according to Russian tradition, cannot yield, come what may; and we know how to fight not only in the Greek fashion, but also French-fashion, German-fashion, Czechoslovak-fashion, Krasnov-fashion, Denikin-fashion, Tatar-fashion, and Cadet-fashion.<sup>36</sup> Glory to God! You have suffered examination before the whole world, and will in the future. In two or three months, all of you in one voice will say: we are the pupils of Great Russia and the Ukraine in the struggle of the working people for the right to be human beings and not the slaves of the bourgeois and of capital. Goodbye. Sincerely, Ataman Grigorev.<sup>37</sup>

Grigorev kept his word. Fighting moved into the suburbs of Kherson and advanced from house to house, while the ataman's telegrams transformed the battle into a series of triumphs. On March 5 he announced to Antonov that the Greeks had "suffered great defeats," and bragged that his artillery was "above all criticism." The fighting at Kherson was of "colossal significance," he declared. "Morale is superior. The partisans march into positions singing. Hunger and cold are impotent against them." The Greeks were

36. "Cadet," originally a shortened title for the Constitutional Democratic party, which played an important role in Russian political developments after 1905, is apparently used here by Grigorev as a rough synonym for "Reactionaries" and "Whites."

37. Antonov, 3, 226-27.

"flying around like grasshoppers," and the "English ships' artillery fire" was "beneath contempt."<sup>38</sup> Despite his assurance that the fight for Kherson was settled, Greek resistance continued. Kherson lay in the balance while troops struggled bitterly to win or hold streets and houses.

Restlessly, though he kept the Kherson battle going, Grigorev turned on Nikolaev again and made a new effort to win that city by threats. On March 5 he sent a note to the Nikolaev Duma announcing that he intended to attack the city on March 7. Another message dispatched the same day ordered the city administration to provide 2,000 pairs of shoes for his partisans, to be paid for "by the Kharkov and Kiev bourgeoisie residing in Nikolaev."<sup>39</sup>

The exact order of events in and around Nikolaev from March 5 to 7 is not clear. Sometime during the 5th, the Communist Ego, an official of the Ukrainian Commissariat of Foreign Affairs sent by Rakovski to negotiate with the Germans, arrived at Snegirevka, where he talked with Grigorev. The following day he advised Antonov: "From Grigorev's staff I met full support, and in the future I trust I will continue to meet full support for the execution of my task. The reproaches in relation to Ataman Grigorev's efforts to subvert negotiations are unfounded."<sup>40</sup> Ego was easily gulled. Although there is confusion in the documents concerning these events and in the memoirs of the men who took part in them, it is clear that Grigorev's decision to take Nikolaev for his own purposes was not automatically canceled simply because of Ego's presence. On the contrary, Grigorev's declaration of March 5, that he would take Nikolaev on the 7th, had set in motion a series of events, which he made no effort to halt. During the night of March 5, a delegation of the Bolshevik underground military organization in Nikolaev led by the commander of that

38. Antonov, 3, 227.

39. Anulov, p. 159; Ryappo, pp. 378-79.

40. Antonov, 3, 228-29.

organization, Ya. Ryappo, came through the lines to Snegirevka, arriving there about dawn on the 6th.<sup>41</sup> Ryappo and his colleagues came to Grigorev's staff car hoping to dissuade him from the impending attack, fearful of its consequences. Knowing the Germans' strength, they presumed Grigorev would be destroyed, and they believed that if they called a workers' rising to support his attack, they would doom themselves and the Nikolaev proletariat to a useless blood bath. On the other hand, if the French became involved, as they would in the event of a Grigorev victory, French reinforcements would make Nikolaev the scene of further battles. Either way the workers and Bolsheviks of Nikolaev were in the middle. In addition to these distressing alternatives, although Ryappo does not mention the fact in his memoirs, he and his fellow Bolsheviks were reasonably well satisfied with the situation at Nikolaev. The German authorities were friendly; if they were allowed to leave the city in their own way they intended to turn over their arms to the workers; this would not only put the town in Bolshevik hands, but would also give it a well-armed workers' militia, an arrangement which Ryappo and his colleagues much preferred to rule by Grigorev, whose attitude toward city workers and Bolsheviks was, to say the least, equivocal.

The mission was not successful. Ryappo decided almost as soon as he entered the staff car that Grigorev was "an obvious degenerate," who "was drunk as usual." Grigorev bluntly informed the delegates that he would be in Nikolaev "at dinner time tomorrow." Tyutyunik, whom Ryappo found to be "undoubtedly smarter and more clever than Grigorev," explained the plan of attack. Ryappo expostulated for some time, trying to convince the partisan leaders that the 1,600 infantrymen, 20 cavalrymen, and three cannons Grigorev planned to employ would have no chance

41. Ryappo, p. 378.

at all against "not less than" 10,000 Germans, 1,500 Greeks, 50 cannon, and 100 machine guns. But "the drunken Grigorev held to his plan." Ryappo returned to Nikolaev convinced that he was dealing with an "incorrigible adventurer," and the evening of March 6 was spent in preparations for Grigorev's attack.<sup>42</sup>

On the 7th, when Grigorev's forces advanced, they met well-organized resistance from the Germans and from the French cruiser anchored in the river. In a last effort to prevent loss of life, representatives of the Bolshevik underground again went out to beg Grigorev to withdraw.<sup>43</sup> And Grigorev agreed. What happened to change his mind is not known. Perhaps the combined arguments of Ego, Nikolaev Bolsheviks, and German and French guns were too much for him. It is obvious, however, that Ego's demands for "full support" had been temporarily set aside while Grigorev made his bid for the German weapons; the strength of those weapons turned against him—rather than pleas that he consider Bolshevik interests or the suffering of Nikolaev—probably turned the scales. Whatever the decisive reason for this reversal, back he went to Kherson.

All told, the battle for Kherson lasted eight days, from March 2 to 10. The German armored train withdrew on the 5th, removed apparently by secret orders from von Kessler, and this made the attack somewhat easier; but new Allied units were brought into the city by ship. A company of the French 176th Infantry Division at first refused to disembark, so bad was its morale; then when brought into the city it balked at fighting and had to be pushed forward by curses and threats.<sup>44</sup> At least one additional company of Greek infantry was also brought in, and about the 7th, some

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 378–79; during the first days of March some German troops had been evacuated; they were replaced by a contingent of about 500 Greeks.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 380–81.

44. "Oranzhevaya kniga," p. 247.

500 Greeks who had found themselves very unpopular at Nikolaev were transshipped to Kherson.<sup>45</sup> At the end of the fighting, as well as can be estimated, the Allied forces had lost about 400 killed and wounded, including 14 officers.<sup>46</sup> Grigorev claimed that he had lost only 9 men killed and 37 wounded,<sup>47</sup> but it is not likely that his records were accurate or that his commanders paused long to count their losses in the rubble of Kherson.

Kherson's population was the chief victim, not only because of the artillery and small arms fire that had raked the city, but because of a singularly ghastly incident that grew into an Allied atrocity. In the last hours of March 8, as the occupying forces fell back on the wharves, and during the morning of the 9th, while some of their units were embarking on transports in the harbor, Greek troops rounded up hostages—men, women, and children—and drove them into a warehouse close to the docks. The reason for these arrests is not known; presumably the French command intended, by threatening the lives of these hostages, to prevent Grigorev's partisans from overrunning the waterfront. Whatever the original purpose, it was apparently forgotten in the heat of battle. After the transports had pulled away from the wharves on the morning of the 9th, naval guns shelled the city. Incendiary shells, said to have come from a French ship, set fire to the warehouse holding the prisoners, and Greek machine guns cut down the frantic, burned people who tried to claw their way out of the flames. Of approximately 2,000 people imprisoned, at least 500 died.<sup>48</sup> To this atrocity, Grigorev replied with his own. His partisans slaughtered the Greek soldiers remaining in Kherson.

45. Ryappo, pp. 378, 380, 382; Lizov, pp. 238, 240.

46. Gukovski, p. 204.

47. Anulov, pp. 153–54.

48. Lizov, pp. 241–42; Anulov, pp. 151–52; *L'Ukraine sovietiste*, pp. 19, 25–27; "Rakovski to M. Pichon"; I. Kogan, "Koshmarnaya noch v ambare" (Night of Horror in the Warehouse), in Shlikhter, pp. 411–15.

Then, as Tyutyunik recalls, Grigorev grimly ordered his regimental commander, Mosenko: "Load a ship with these [Greek] corpses and send it to Odessa with a letter, 'From Ataman Grigorev, a present to the French Commander in Chief.'"<sup>49</sup>

As the fighting reached its height at Kherson, Ego diligently pushed forward negotiations with the Germans at Nikolaev. As early as the 7th, von Kessler intimated his desire to hand German arms over to the Bolshevik underground rather than to the French. Next, the French, their belligerence at Nikolaev softened by the Kherson events, tentatively agreed to permit the Germans to transfer their arms to the Russians in return for a little help from the Germans; specifically, they wanted the Nikolaev radio station disabled. Ryappo's underground group managed, however, with German collusion, to save the station, and when the French threatened to shell the city from their cruiser, Ryappo countered with a threat to turn German guns against the cruiser. The French decided to withdraw.<sup>50</sup>

The course of events in and around Nikolaev between March 11–15 is obscured by misdated and undated telegrams, by the confusion of the participants, each of whom saw only a part of the action, and by the demonstrably unreliable memoirs of the chief witnesses. On the 11th, Ego wired Rakovski that he had been invited to go into Nikolaev to work out an arrangement for the transfer of arms from the Germans. On the same day Ego wired congratulations to Grigorev at Kherson: "Your brilliant victory over Kherson had great influence." He also requested Grigorev to send the political commissar, Ratin, and other "experts" from the partisan staff to help with the negotiations.<sup>51</sup> At

49. Tyutyunik, p. 218.

50. Ryappo, pp. 382–83.

51. Anulov, pp. 158–59; Antonov, 3, 229; Antonov positively states that Ego's message, which I have dated March 12, was sent on the evening of March 13. It is my supposition, based upon the logic of subsequent events

this moment apparently, Ego still trusted Grigorev and expected his assistance. A day later, on March 12, Ego sent a jubilant message to Rakovski announcing the accomplishment of his mission. French naval units and Greek troops were to leave Nikolaev at once; the Germans would depart during the course of the week and had agreed to turn over their arms and equipment to Ego. A local soviet was to declare itself the governing authority, and the workers' organization led by the Bolsheviks was to be armed with the German weapons. Ego also requested that Rakovski rush a responsible representative of the Ukrainian Economic Commissariat to Nikolaev, evidently for the purpose of supervising the distribution of Nikolaev's war matériel to the Ukrainian Army. The jubilation of this message was marred by a worried note. Ego asked Rakovski to warn Grigorev as swiftly as possible "not to undertake any operation against Nikolaev, to remain in a position of readiness, to confine himself strictly to the execution of my orders, and above all, [to commit] no hostile acts against the Germans."<sup>52</sup> The nature of this request suggests that Grigorev was getting out of hand. He was.

Unfortunately for Ego, Grigorev could not bear to see the booty he had connived and fought for fall into other hands than his own. Informed of Ego's success, Grigorev sent a note (March 11 or 12) to the city Duma, accusing Ryappo of "skinning a bear killed by the partisans," and he marched on Nikolaev.<sup>53</sup> Ignoring Ego's peace, the partisans fought a series of minor engagements that ended when the Germans flew the white flag, and Ego's arrangements were roughly shoved aside when Grigorev entered Nikolaev

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and the testimony of the participants Tyutyunik and Ryappo, that the message must have been received at Kharkov on the 13th. Because of Grigorev's actions in the city through the 12th and 13th, it is inconceivable that Ego would have been jubilant about anything on the evening of the 13th.

52. Antonov, 3, 229.

53. Ryappo, p. 382.

late on the 12th with two companies of infantry, followed the next day by Cossack cavalry.<sup>54</sup> Tyutyunik justifies this action, claiming that Grigorev was already moving against Odessa and that the German forces were delaying him by dragging out the evacuation of Nikolaev. "Every moment was valuable for us," Tyutyunik insists. It must have been, for the Germans were now given 15 hours to load onto transports and get into the Black Sea. They were, of course, stripped of their military properties.<sup>55</sup> Tyutyunik recalls that Rear Admiral von Kessler, after signing the capitulation, commented sadly on the hard life of the defeated and then, cheering up, ended his comments by saying, "But there is one consolation: with these arms you will fight the French. . . . I understand you. . . . In order to take Paris, possibly we must all become Bolsheviks."<sup>56</sup> Thus Grigorev captured Nikolaev and the German arms. On March 15 in a triumphant telegram he informed Antonov of this "victory."<sup>57</sup>

Antonov was furious. The ataman, playing all the cards his own way, had by his cunning and aggressiveness stolen both the glory and the material rewards of the campaign; worse, he had the gall to crow about his victories at Kherson and Nikolaev and to pretend that he was a true servant of the Bolshevik cause. Angrily, Antonov sent Skachko a telegram on March 18, indicating his feeling that Skachko's earlier suggestions about Grigorev's liquidation should be followed up with action. But the strange alchemy of victory had begun to work upon Skachko. Fear and distrust were turning to pride. Basking in his own share of the glory shed by Grigorev's successes, Skachko was now prepared to risk protecting his willful subordinate. In answer to Antonov's inquiry, he replied in sum that Grigorev was under sur-

54. Vladimir Margulies, *Ognennyye gody*, p. 11.

55. Tyutyunik, p. 219.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 220.

57. Antonov, 3, 229; cf. Anulov, pp. 162-63.

veillance, but that it was not yet time "to take resolute action."<sup>58</sup>

The measure of Skachko's change of heart was vividly illustrated by the way in which he had abetted Grigorev's actions at Nikolaev. Ignoring Antonov's general instructions and without consulting him, Skachko had personally authorized Grigorev to carry on his own negotiations with the Germans. Informed of Grigorev's intention to enter the city, Skachko not only did not oppose the action but actually supported it, for he ordered the movement of two regiments from other areas to Nikolaev as a means of strengthening Grigorev's partisans. When Antonov learned of these transfers, he revoked them at once. But he was too late. One of the regiments he had hoped to stop was already on the road, and Grigorev was in possession of the city.

When called to account for his action later, Skachko protested that the partisans had behaved in exemplary fashion in the city, and that Grigorev himself, the perfect soldier, had forcefully prevented a pogrom. Skachko's blundering interference tied Antonov's hands; though Grigorev was the culprit who needed disciplining, he had a perfect defense in the argument that he had simply followed the orders of his immediate commander. Skachko's error prevented Antonov from placing the blame squarely upon the ataman for the seizure of Nikolaev after Ego's peace had been signed. Nonetheless Antonov had no doubt as to where his main problem lay. On March 18 he had wired Skachko: "It is necessary to replace Grigorev, with the pretense that he is ill."<sup>59</sup> But Skachko invented new reasons for delaying the change. Having found a subordinate who could bring him glory, he became that subordinate's patron. Already he had given Grigorev orders to attack Odessa, and Grigorev was on the move. Skachko intended to hang on and hope for the best.

58. Antonov, 3, 230, 240.

59. Ibid.

The immediate consequences of Grigorev's capture of Kherson and Nikolaev were immense. In terms of enemy morale, French troops, already demoralized, and determined only to live through the occupation period and get home safely, panicked at the thought of facing the partisans; they mutinied, refused to advance toward the fighting, and fled when partisans approached. Greek troops, compelled to defend the French at Kherson, had borne the brunt of partisan ferocity, and their military ardor had cooled considerably. At Odessa the French command began feverish preparations to meet Grigorev's attack; d'Anselme declared a state of siege, announcing that the city would be defended, but the sullenness and apathy of Allied troops gave an air of unreality to all French actions after Kherson. The civil population added another dimension to the rising swell of fear. Bourgeois refugees packed in Odessa anxiously sought escape from the country; feverishly and openly they discussed the likelihood of French evacuation without a fight; gathering in hotels, in restaurants, on the streets—everywhere—they examined and multiplied fresh rumors of imminent catastrophe.

Victory at Kherson and Nikolaev also had important effects upon Grigorev's partisans. Peasants and Cossacks had advanced against the invincible Allies, against the conquerors of the German Empire; then, instead of smashing themselves upon impregnable defenses, they had found the contest exciting, profitable, and almost disappointingly easy. The famed *poilu* was a coward; the dreaded Allied tank was either a myth or a clanking and useless monstrosity. At the fire of partisan guns Allied opposition had quickly melted away. For its effect upon partisan morale this breakthrough against the Allies cannot be overemphasized. Psychologically, the partisans were primed for the attack on Odessa; they believed victory possible; and their confidence was shared by the countryside.

Recruits now poured into Grigorev's camps in small

groups, in whole companies, even in roughly formed regiments flying homemade flags and marching to the music of their own bands. Within days after the Kherson victory Grigorev's brigade began to swell to division size. The spoils from Nikolaev armed the newcomers and, most important, gave them good artillery support, vehicles, horses, and clothing. Grigorev had much more than a division needed in terms of weapons and ammunition; he could arm all who came to him.

The new-found confidence of the partisans also penetrated into other quarters, affecting groups whose support Grigorev would be slow to accept, but whose actions would nonetheless be important in the days ahead. In hiding places in towns and cities from Nikolaev to Odessa, Bolshevik zealots heard the reassuring rumblings of Grigorev's victorious horde. They took courage from the sound, and strengthening their underground headquarters, they began to organize workers for strikes, sabotage, and armed resistance to the Allied commanders who occupied their cities. Whether he wanted it or not, Grigorev's campaign at Kherson and Nikolaev gave him a burgeoning fifth column behind the enemy's lines.<sup>60</sup>

As for Grigorev himself, the changes wrought by victory over the Allies were far from subtle. Through the Kherson fight he signed his telegrams "Ataman Grigorev." After Nikolaev the title became grander: "Commander of the First Soviet Zadneprovskaya Brigade, Ataman Grigorev."<sup>61</sup> One might suppose that he had absorbed the Bolsheviks rather than being absorbed by them. His messages took on a more sonorous tone; he spoke from a grander level as befitted the commander of an army that had fought and defeated Allied armies; his exaggerations grew more extreme; his greed for recognition, for glory, became an unending

60. Gukovski, p. 205; Anulov, pp. 153-54; *L'Ukraine sovietiste*, p. 22; Antonov, 3, 228; Tyutyunik, p. 221.

61. Gukovski, pp. 205-06.

effort to claim all honors for himself and his partisans. Inside the man there were other important changes that can only be surmised. Grigorev set a high value upon his achievements, and in the days immediately following events at Kherson and Nikolaev, he apparently expected Antonov and Rakovski, perhaps even Lenin himself, to welcome him with open arms, to offer him respect and high honors and some lasting position in the rulers' hierarchy. After Nikolaev he viewed himself as a great general, but because he was still treated with distrust, the bluster and swagger of former days soon began to be tinged with the deepest dyes of resentment. Bolsheviki who knew little of front-line fighting persisted in trying to tell him how to fight and continued to treat him as simply another untrustworthy partisan leader. He was constantly and sensitively aware that although he had won victories, he was kept outside the sacred circle of authority, refused admission to the powerful clique of Bolsheviki, whose very lives, he believed, depended upon his tactical skill and courage. Thirsting for glory, but rebuffed and surrounded with suspicious Bolsheviki, he carefully nursed his resentment and saw in every Bolshevik a man jealous of his talents.

Finally, the way Grigorev had achieved his victories, lunging ahead under his own command, spelled out in large letters the weaknesses in Antonov's military organization. Antonov merely pretended to drive the runaway stallion he could neither turn, nor curb, nor halt. The faults in the command system were Antonov's responsibility, not Grigorev's. The intermediary, Skachko, an Old Bolshevik who could have been disciplined, gave his subordinate the same permissive treatment he received from above, and the result was a growing variance between the commander's intent and the subordinate's execution. Such administrative chaos could only be ended by the commander's adamant insistence that his orders be carried out to the letter; but Antonov had avoided bringing this matter to a decision in

late February, and in mid-March he put it off again. Given the rolling swell of victory toward Odessa and the heavy demand laid upon his armies in the west and in the area of the Southern Front, Antonov persuaded himself that he was justified in stopping short of the extreme measures which might build a properly functioning military machine. He would protest later that it was impossible in those days of rapid advance to plant the full weight of his authority upon every subordinate. But Skachko, amazed and delighted by the way Grigorev brought victories to the Kharkov Group, should have been disciplined to firmer control, and, in turn, should have demanded greater obedience from Grigorev. Antonov's responsibility as a commander was to teach his subordinates to obey orders themselves and to insist upon the execution of their own orders. By failing in this, he sowed the whirlwind.

## CHAPTER 6

### *The Race to Odessa*

IMMEDIATELY AFTER Nikolaev fell, Antonov commanded Skachko to prepare a shock group for an attack on Odessa. Since Grigorev had already decided upon Odessa as his next objective, Skachko hastened to assign him the new task.<sup>1</sup> But Antonov, determined to break Grigorev to discipline, directed Skachko on March 17 not to involve Grigorev in the Odessa campaign; instead, units of the 2nd Ukrainian Division, along with various partisan groups available north and west of Odessa, were to be readied for the attack. As for Grigorev, he was assigned a limited sector west of Nikolaev in the area between Ochakov and Berezovka. Despite these explicit instructions, Skachko reported to Antonov on the following day that Grigorev would lead the attack on Odessa. Again Antonov objected, advising Skachko to get rid of the ataman; and this time, though Skachko did not act upon the latter suggestion, he did revise his orders to the ataman, instructing him to prepare his brigade for action in the Crimea.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, from Antonov's point of view, Skachko's reluctant execution of orders gave the situation time to change. A strong attack by Petlyurian forces against Kiev

1. Tyutyunik, "V borbe protiv okkupantov," in Shlikhter, *Chernaya kniga*, p. 219; Antonov-Ovschenko, *Zapiski o grazhdanskoj voine*, 3, 240.

2. Antonov, 3, 240, 242.

destroyed Antonov's plan, for the units of the 2nd Division and some of the partisan units moving toward Odessa had suddenly to be deflected westward. Under these conditions, Skachko again sent Grigorev instructions to prepare for the Odessa assault—orders which the ataman obeyed without a murmur, having never slackened his westward movement.<sup>3</sup> Once more Antonov demurred; he had had enough of the ataman's willfulness and meant to take no more. In an effort to form a multi-unit group capable of forcing Grigorev into the background, he began to concentrate a number of separate regiments and partisan sections in the regions north and west of Odessa, intending that Skachko would lead them against the city.

Grigorev's onward rush, Skachko's apathy, the need for reinforcements in the west, and continuing demands for aid to the Southern Front combined to upset Antonov's somewhat elaborate scheme. About March 23 Grigorev blandly announced his plan to attack Odessa from the northeast, citing Skachko's authority for doing so. Desperately, Antonov requested from Kharkov, Ekaterinoslav, and Kiev "not less than one hundred fighting comrades" (Communist cadres) for service with the ataman. But this call for loyal Bolsheviks who could help bring discipline and order into Grigorev's units was to no avail. From Kiev came word that it was impossible to send out even one Communist worker.<sup>4</sup> Antonov also asked for a new commissar to replace the spineless Ratin, then serving with Grigorev, and, when no loyal Communist could be found for this position, he arranged to send to Grigorev, as assistant chief of staff, Sergei Savitski, a Borotbist with strong Communist sympathies. Savitski, however, did not reach his new post until April 2, and thus Ratin remained the principal Bolshevik agent serving with Grigorev all through March.<sup>5</sup>

3. *Ibid.*, 3, 242, 308.

4. *Ibid.*, 3, 243-44; Kubanin, *Makhnovshchina*, p. 68.

5. *Antonov*, 4, 71.

As Grigorev's units advanced—sometimes taking strong points by tricks or threats, sometimes by hard fighting—Grigorev systematically absorbed the lesser units Antonov tried to range against him. A strange series of events at Berezovka, just fifty miles north of Odessa, provides an excellent example of Grigorev's unit-stealing talents and Skachko's vacillations. At Berezovka Allied forces were routed. When attacked by Antonov's 15th Regiment, three battalions of Greek infantry, a battalion of Zouaves, and two squadrons of Volunteer Army cavalry, the whole supported by artillery and tanks, threw down their arms and fled, losing in the process an estimated 500 killed and wounded.<sup>6</sup>

At the moment of attack the exact relationship between the 15th Regiment and Grigorev was far from clear. Skachko had assigned the regiment to Grigorev at Nikolaev about March 15; but, it will be recalled, Antonov had immediately countermanded Skachko's orders, making clear his intention to prevent the 15th Regiment's subordination to the ataman.<sup>7</sup> Skachko, however, appears to have misinterpreted Antonov's directive. With Nikolaev taken, he reported that although the 15th was in contact with Grigorev's brigade, it refused to obey the ataman's instructions; he intended, therefore, to subordinate the unit to Grigorev, "who would know how to keep it in order." Once more he was trying to shift his responsibilities to the ataman and make use of the latter's superior ability as a field commander of irregular troops.

Brusquely Antonov repeated his warning that under no circumstances must any "regular unit" be put under Grigorev. But Skachko's fear of giving Grigorev unpleasant orders exceeded his fear of the commander of the Ukrain-

6. Vladimir Maiborodov, "S frantsuzami" (With the French), *Arkhiv russkoi revolyutsii*, 16, 127-35; "Oranzhevaya kniga," *Arkhiv russkoi revolyutsii*, 16, 249; Antonov, 3, 242.

7. Antonov, 3, 229-30, 240.

ian Front. He soon worked out another way of getting around Antonov, duly advising him, about March 26, that he was putting both the 15th and the Voznesenski Regiments under the command of his subordinate, Akhmetov, who in turn would be subject to Grigorev's "operational directives." This time Antonov's response was too direct to be ignored. "Go out and command yourself," he told Skachko.<sup>8</sup>

Still the group commander delayed. He was a staff officer, comfortably ensconced several hundred miles behind the fighting, competent to command men who respected his authority and obeyed his orders, but painfully aware of his inability to control a man like Grigorev. Instead of moving into the Odessa area, Skachko dilatorily *prepared* to move forward and spent his time composing recommendations that Grigorev's units and commanders be awarded the highest Soviet military honors in recognition of their exploits at Kherson and Nikolaev.<sup>9</sup> Grigorev meanwhile cut the Gordian knot without admitting its existence. Arriving at Berezovka before any other ranking commander, he not only managed to make it seem that he had been the leader of the Berezovka attack, but also audaciously assumed command of the 15th Regiment. Thus he successfully stole the credit for the victory at Berezovka.

There can be little doubt that Grigorev's manner of recruiting new units as he advanced added to the general confusion. Despite Antonov's repeated directives to the contrary, the ataman continued to dispatch his telegrams to "All, All, All," boasting of his strength and his victories, transforming raids into full-scale battles, recruiting followers, and mouthing dire threats at his enemies in words that set the minds of his followers aflame. From Nikolaev he sent a message to the Volunteer general, Aleksei Grishin-Almazov, who served the French as governor general at Odessa,

8. *Ibid.*, 3, 243.

9. *Ibid.*, 3, 243-44.

ordering him to remove his troops from the city and threatening to use the general's skin for a drum if he failed to obey.<sup>10</sup> Also, apparently with Rakovski's blessing, he issued a manifesto offering to accept Volunteer officers and enlisted men into his own service if they came over at once. Otherwise, he promised: "Death to all who oppose us with arms in their hands!" In this manifesto he warned the Volunteer Army that he would take Odessa at nine o'clock on the morning of March 29; and he added: "Possibly you think you can skip off to the Kuban. You won't succeed." Instead: "the sole way out for you—is to throw your generals into the sea, raise the Red flag, put down your weapons, and in place of 'God Save the Tsar,' come with us peacefully and sing 'Arise, Arise, Working People.'"<sup>11</sup>

Grigorev played his role as independent and autonomous commander and liberator of Odessa with consummate skill, as if he had been born for it. "We will surround Odessa and we will take it quickly," he announced "to all partisans" on March 25. "I invite all comrade-partisans to come to the festivities at Odessa."<sup>12</sup> Overwhelmed by his bluster, lesser commanders fell into line and joined him in the march toward Odessa. Meanwhile, for Antonov's benefit, the ataman ceremoniously announced the formation of new units, demanded weapons and supplies for them, and complained bitterly when Antonov refused to encourage or recognize these formations. It was doubly infuriating for Antonov to learn that these "new" units were sometimes already on his lists as components of the Soviet Ukrainian Army.<sup>13</sup>

Events in the last days of March compelled Antonov to temper his resistance to Grigorev. The fighting west of

10. Anulov, "Soyuzny desant na Ukraine," in *Shlikhter*, pp. 167-68.

11. I. Alekseev, "Odessa v epokhu okkupatsii," in *Shlikhter*, pp. 361-62: "Arise, arise, working people . . ." are the first words of the Communist battle hymn, "The International."

12. Antonov, 3, 244.

13. Tyutyunik, pp. 220-21.

Kiev continued, accompanied on the Soviet side by the defection of Red units, rebellions among partisan sections, frantic pleas from the front lines for men and cartridges, and the removal of commanders proven incompetent or unreliable. A further complication developed on March 27 when a well-organized and strongly armed "anarchists' rebellion" broke out near the city of Aleksandrovsk in the rear area of the Kharkov Group. Skachko, pleading an almost total lack of reserves, reported that the anarchists had created a "catastrophic" situation and begged for reinforcements. Antonov asked for a little more "cold blood," ordered Skachko to stop throwing around words like "catastrophic," and pointed out that demands on the front west of Kiev were such that troops could not be drawn away to settle troubles in the rear. He also prohibited Skachko from removing troops from the Kharkov Group's front and offered advice that must have been of small comfort to the group commander: "Work at the front, and the rear will take care of itself!" Still another event retarded the build-up before Odessa. On March 29 Vatsetis peremptorily demanded that the Third Brigade of Dybenko's Trans-Dnepriian Division—Makhno's brigade—be transferred to the Southern Front. Antonov, as always, protested; Vatsetis, as always, overrode the protests, and Makhno's brigade, which had been acting as the anchor of the Ukrainian Front's left flank in the Mariupol-Taganrog area, became the property of the Southern Front.<sup>14</sup>

Hampered by these difficulties, but inflexibly determined to win Odessa, Antonov brought to completion a new reorganization of his units. By April 1 the Ukrainian Front was divided into three sectors. On the west the "First Army," composed of his 1st and 2nd Divisions and many attached units, faced Petlyura with a strength of between 30,000–37,000 men. In the area just north of the Crimea, Dybenko,

14. Antonov, *J*, 244, 246, 283–313.

with what was left of his division after the loss of both Grigorev's and Makhno's brigades, had been given the task of forming a shock group for action in the Crimea. And in the center, under Skachko's command, was the assemblage of units Antonov now called the Odessa Group.<sup>15</sup> The commander of the Ukrainian Front had scraped together all the strength he could spare for this group. Grigorev's brigade, less the one regiment that remained with Dybenko, was its largest component, but it also included several independent regiments, among them that led by Tkachenko, a partisan leader loyal to the Bolsheviks and extremely hostile to Grigorev; the 15th; the Voznesenski; and the Taras Shevchenko, a unit formed in the Poltava region and named after the Ukraine's most famous poet. In addition there were several small partisan sections, and an ostentatious little force acting near Tiraspol, led by a partisan named Popov, who referred to his 600 men as the "Southern Army."<sup>16</sup>

Not at all confident that these forces could crush the estimated 35,000 men of the joint force at Odessa, Antonov had also set in motion on March 29 the formation of a "Special Odessa Group," but this organization was just taking form in the first days of April. By that time Grigorev was only a few miles outside Odessa. Caught up in the fever of the advance, his heart set on having the city, Antonov finally directed Skachko to give Grigorev all possible support. Odessa was to be Grigorev's fight, after all.

Inside Odessa the problems of the French had multiplied rapidly after Grigorev announced his decision to take the city. Here, although General d'Anselme declared a state of

15. *Ibid.*, 3, 295. Although Antonov had designated the Communist Khudyakov commander of the Odessa Group on March 25, Skachko actually remained in command.

16. *Ibid.*, 4, 124-25.

siege on March 13, announced on the 14th that the city would be held, and subsequently launched an ambitious program of entrenchment and fortification, neither military nor politico-economic factors boded well for the defense.<sup>17</sup> Numerically, the French command had a decisive superiority over the partisans. Two French and two Greek divisions, a portion of one Rumanian division, and a Volunteer Army brigade under General Timanovski were quartered in and around the city. The 35,000 to 40,000 troops were supplied with the superior arms and equipment of the Western powers, supported by naval vessels, good artillery and tanks, and led by experienced professional officers.<sup>18</sup> But Allied numbers and arms were not the decisive factors. Far more meaningful were the morale of the French troops, the French commander's unfortunate relationships with the joint forces under his command, and the obscurity of French policy both at Paris and Odessa. Although the French have published nothing of value concerning the breakdown of morale at Odessa, the latter must be assessed as probably the most important influence acting upon the decisions of the French commanders. It was quite true that, in the words attributed to Colonel Freydenberg, "having kept his head at Verdun and . . . the Marne, no French soldier would agree to losing it on Russian fields."<sup>19</sup> War

17. Vladimir Margulies, *Ognennye gody*, p. 15; Gukovski, *Frantsuzskaya interventsia na Yuge Rossii, 1918-1919 g.*, p. 205.

18. "Oranzhevaya kniga," p. 249; the "Orange Book," one of the principal sources of information about French strength in South Russia, was prepared as a Top Secret Document by General Denikin's staff and published at Ekaterinodar in 1919. Although other scholars in this field have not questioned its accuracy, I have little confidence in the figures it presents. French figures are not available, but comments made during the debates in the French Chamber of Deputies in late March 1919 indicate a much smaller Allied force at Odessa than does the "Orange Book." A downgrading of Allied numbers, it should be noted, would not change the central argument presented in the later pages of this chapter concerning the influence of Grigorev.

19. Gukovski, pp. 122-23.

weariness, Bolshevik propaganda, and the demoralizing effects of demobilization created an atmosphere in which individual acts of insubordination and the mutiny of whole units were almost routine.<sup>20</sup>

But if the French position at Odessa was troubled by poor morale and worsened by the unsuccessful relations between the French and the various Russian military groups with whom they pretended to cooperate, it was made intolerable by the failure of Paris to work out a clear policy for the Ukrainian intervention. The initial intervention had been made despite the objections of the one high French commander who knew enough about the Russian situation to give advice—General Franchet d'Esperey, hero of the Marne and at the time of the intervention commander in chief of Allied Forces in the Near East. Opposing the intervention because he believed it ill-advised, he lost control of events at Odessa. A talented but overambitious subordinate, General Berthelot, who supported the advocates of intervention at Paris, was given an independent command in South Russia, and d'Esperey was shunted aside.<sup>21</sup> In the early weeks of 1919 French policymakers were involved in peacemaking; they had problems to solve at home, in the Near East, and in Poland; little popular interest in the Ukrainian intervention was developed in France, and the French and African troops sent to Odessa appear never to have understood their mission.<sup>22</sup> Probably, as one consequence of the uncertainty of Paris about its own intentions, the Odessa force was never built up to a strength capable of mounting a major offensive against the Bolsheviks; at the same time French commanders, who could not decipher the intentions of Paris, made promises to native forces which they were unable to keep.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 186–89.

21. Paul Jean Louis Azan, *Franchet d'Esperey* (Paris, 1949), pp. 241–47.

22. George Bernard Noble, *Policies and Opinions at Paris, 1919* (New York, 1935), pp. 270–74.

Berthelot, soon worn out by problems he had never anticipated, began to agree with d'Esperey's point of view, and when Grigorev took Kherson, the French commander demanded relief from his onerous duties, justifying his request by pleading ill health. In mid-March, when it was already too late to straighten out the accumulated results of months of muddling along, d'Esperey was made responsible for Odessa. Arriving there from Constantinople on March 20, he announced to the press that the Allies would bring in major reinforcements for Odessa's defense; but privately, to local Russian political leaders, he indicated that if they could not raise a Russian army to repel the Bolsheviks with the assistance of French matériel and technical help, French troops would be withdrawn.<sup>23</sup> Actually the military situation was impossible. For months d'Esperey had known this well, and had persistently but ineffectively expounded to men like Foch and Clemenceau the reasons why the Odessa adventure could only harm French prestige.<sup>24</sup>

Economic and political difficulties harassed the French military situation. Cut off from its normal sources of food and fuel, Odessa as early as January was beginning to starve and freeze. Without reliable sources of water, electric power, and raw materials its factories and industries were compelled to shut down. Grigorev's seizure of Kherson and Nikolaev completed the blockade, intensifying these economic difficulties. E. F. Riggs, an American colonel who headed a mission sent to Odessa "to study and report on political, economic, and military conditions," dispatched a succinct analysis on March 15 to the Commission to Negotiate Peace, at Paris. He reported: "Food situation here exceedingly serious . . . now that Kherson-Nikolaev grain stores are cut off. Prices very high, money practically worthless, and every sort of speculation being carried on to an

23. Azan, pp. 246-47; V. Margulies, pp. 17-18.

24. Azan, p. 247; Xydias, *L'Intervention française en Russie, 1918-1919*, pp. 112-16.

extraordinary extent."<sup>25</sup> Riggs' colleague at Odessa, the American consul, William Jenkins, reported to Paris on March 22 that Odessa's population, swollen 30 per cent above normal by refugees from the Bolsheviks, had reached a peak of 800,000. Of the 40,000 industrial workers in the city, 80 per cent were unemployed. "Congestion, under-feeding, and lack of sanitary supplies are the underlying causes of the prevalent typhus epidemic," Jenkins concluded.<sup>26</sup>

Political administration was shared by too many authorities. General d'Anselme claimed a part in local government; the Volunteer general, Grishin-Almazov, and then his successor, Schwartz, ruled as governor general; and the city also had its elected municipal дума. The result of this overlapping apparatus was a city where gangs of prowlers and thieves ruled after dark, and in some areas during the daylight as well. Small armed bands worked as "escorts," accompanying and protecting more respectable people who had to move about the city on business. Shots rang out through the streets at night, but no one dared to investigate their cause.<sup>27</sup>

Shaken by successive losses at Ochakov, Berezovka, and Serbka, committed to the defense of Odessa, yet certain of its inability to employ French troops in the fighting, the French command tried to keep news of Grigorev's successes out of Odessa, and when this proved impossible, it announced that various "unimportant" points were being evacuated. But accounts of Grigorev's approach spread through the city, terrifying the bourgeois and noble refugees trapped there, stirring up the workers, encouraging

25. U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: 1919, Russia* (Washington, D.C., 1937), p. 756.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 754.

27. Prince E. N. Trubetskoi, "Iz putevykh zametok bezhentsa" (From the Travel Notes of a Refugee), *Arkhiv russkoi revolyutsii*, 18, 164-66; Gukovski, pp. 79-80; V. Margulies, p. 161; Andrei Lobanov-Rostovsky, *The Grinding Mill* (New York, 1935), pp. 329-31.

the Bolshevik underground to prepare for a seizure of power. In the last days of March, representatives of the Communist underground went out with d'Anselme's adjutant to parley with Grigorev. The Bolshevik representatives, pretending to seek a truce which would give the French time to evacuate, actually hoped to coordinate risings in the city with Grigorev's attack; d'Anselme apparently hoped to gain time for further military preparations.

Both plans failed, for the ataman refused to negotiate. Toward Odessa's underground Bolshevik organization Grigorev presented the same front he had shown at Nikolaev, but now his demands were much greater. "Your blood is not necessary to me," he told them. "Only give me 15,000 pairs of boots."<sup>28</sup> For the French adjutant, a lieutenant, he had compliments, vodka, and a message that if the French wished to negotiate they should send men of higher rank. Interesting evidence of the changes that had taken place in Grigorev's concept of his own position appeared at this interview. As the ataman met the delegates from Odessa, his orchestra—composed of clarinets, violins, trumpets, accordians, and tambourines—played "something like the 'International.'" When he stepped into his staff car, after him strode his bodyguard—"six big fellows armed to the teeth." "Coming into the car," one of the visitors recalls, "the ataman, with a grandiose gesture, took off his fur hat and handed it to the last partisan [of the bodyguard]. That man took it reverently and held it to his breast with both hands all through the interview."<sup>29</sup>

On April 1 or 2, apparently with no advance warning, d'Esperey at Constantinople received Paris' order to evacuate Odessa. His instructions to d'Anselme were received at Odessa during the evening of the 2nd; and on the following

28. Anulov, pp. 186-92.

29. Ibid.; Tyutyunik's account of this interview differs considerably; its details are much more vaguely presented, and it makes Tyutyunik himself the chief actor; Tyutyunik, pp. 223-24; cf. Kiselev, *Agitpoezd*, p. 38.

day local newspapers published d'Anselme's explanation that the Allies found themselves unable to obtain the necessary provisions for Odessa. "Consequently," this published statement explained, "*with the purpose of lessening the number of consumers, it has been resolved to begin a partial evacuation of Odessa.*"<sup>30</sup> A flood of rumors surged through the already demoralized city, the most important of which reported that Clemenceau had been driven from power by the Chamber's lack of confidence in his Ukrainian policy. D'Anselme's "partial evacuation" almost at once began to resemble a rout, and Grigorev did his bit to increase the tempo of events by thundering about the imminence of his attack.

When a new delegation of French officers went out to beg for a truce, they found the ataman already playing the role of conqueror. Carefully staging this meeting, Grigorev was present but refused to speak with the delegates. Instead, he had Tyutyunik (coached beforehand for his part) do all the talking; and Tyutyunik, familiar with the uncontrolled outbursts of violence that accompanied Grigorev's purpling face, manufactured new insults for the French each time he saw the scowling ataman's cheeks change color. Pleading for mercy and humanity, the French were reminded of their own inhumanity at Kherson. With the staff car window significantly opening on a view of Odessa, Tyutyunik promised that the city would be in partisan hands the next day.

Pushed too far, the French made their own threats. "We

30. V. Margulies, p. 33 (italics are mine). The "Orange Book" states (p. 250) that the order from Paris was sent by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pichon, straight to d'Anselme. Gukovski (pp. 221, 264) accepts this. Azan (p. 249) has the order going first to d'Esperay. For a good many reasons, not the least of them the nature of the French administrative system, it seems unlikely (although not impossible) that the Foreign Ministry would have superseded the Ministry of War; for similar reasons, it is unlikely that d'Esperay was "jumped"; cf. Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, 5, 69.

will fight," they declared. "We can still defend Odessa."

"Fight then! Defend it!" Tyutyunik challenged.<sup>31</sup>

But the French were beyond fighting. Late on April 5, after a lapse of a bare 72 hours since the order to evacuate had arrived, the last French ship drew away from the wharves. Some Greek troops and contingents of Timanovskii's Volunteer brigade had departed overland, marching toward Rumania.<sup>32</sup> In a frenzy of effort, d'Anselme had removed the army, many Russian and Ukrainian refugees, Russian naval vessels and trading ships, and as much military matériel as he could manage.<sup>33</sup>

The Bolshevik "victory" at Odessa was proclaimed by Anatol Skachko on April 6:

At two o'clock in the afternoon, the troops of the First Brigade . . . entered Odessa and were dispersed in the city, at the station and at the port. The enemy remains in the villages: Tatarke, Dalnik. Naval vessels are near the port with their weapons on the city. Trophies are colossal. The field staff of the group is at Kremidovo; Grigorev's staff is being untangled at Odessa. At Vygoda station there is fighting with the Rumanians.<sup>34</sup>

From Odessa itself came Grigorev's more dramatic announcement:

After incredible violence, sacrifices, and tactical maneuvers, the French, Greeks, Rumanians, Turks, Volunteers, and our other enemies have been cut to pieces at Odessa. They have fled in a terrible panic, leaving

31. Tyutyunik, pp. 223-26.

32. Gukovski, pp. 222-23; Lobanov-Rostovsky (pp. 322-28) gives an excellent eye-witness account of the pandemonium at Odessa during these last days.

33. *L'Ukraine sovietiste*, pp. 27-28: Message from Rakovski to Pichon, April 5; cf. Denikin, 5, 52.

34. Antonov, 3, 249.

colossal trophies which have not yet been counted. The flight of the enemy was so swift and panicky that even d'Anselme begged for at least three hours for the withdrawal, but this was refused him, and, departing, he forgot his trunk.<sup>35</sup>

To the people of Russia and the Ukraine, Antonov's announcement was brief and triumphant:

To All, All, All. On the sixth of April, Odessa was taken by the Ukrainian Soviet Army. The supports of the allied imperialists in the Black Sea have crumbled. Long live the Soviet authority! Long live the World Socialist Revolution!

Rakovski greeted the news with an enthusiasm typical of the higher Ukrainian government officials, and, in doing so, set the tone for the national response to Odessa's capture. His telegram to Antonov on April 9 read:

In the name of the Workers' and Peasants' Government, transmit the warmest greetings to the regiments, squadrons, and batteries, and to all the units of the Red Army on the occasion of the liberation of Odessa. Of all the glorious victories with which the Red Army has covered itself and has introduced into the history of the Revolutionary War in the Ukraine, the taking of Odessa has the most worldwide significance. The strong point of rapacious international imperialism fell in the southern Ukraine on the same day that the telegraph communicated the joyous news about the proclamation of the Soviet Republic in Bavaria and about the invasion of our troops into the Crimean peninsula.

Before the victors of Odessa are opened new per-

35. Ibid.

spectives; the rebelling workers and peasants of Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Galicia call to us for assistance. To them, through the Carpathians stretch the hands of the Red Army of the Hungarian Socialist Soviet Republic. The workers and peasants of the Ukraine are convinced that their revolutionary advanced guard—the Ukrainian Red Army—will carry out its motto: Forward, forward, always forward.

I propose to present for awards the specially distinguished commanders and units and also the directors of the Odessa operation. Simultaneously with these I will present awards for distinguished service at Mariupol by Red units and commanders.

Long live the Red Army of the Ukraine!

Long live the Red Army of the Soviet Republic of the world!

Long live the World Revolution!

Long live Red Odessa!<sup>36</sup>

The irony of Rakovski's dispatch lay in the vast distance between words and reality. The "Red Army" that took Odessa was not a Communist army. "Red Odessa" was not "Bolshevik" but "Partisan Odessa." The victory was more a triumph for "Grigorev the Unruly" than for bolshevism. But at the moment, these distinctions were missed and Grigorev was acclaimed a Soviet hero. When he drove through Odessa a few days after its occupation to review one of his regiments, his automobile was mobbed by admirers. As the car moved slowly through the crowds, people pressed as close as possible. "Someone seized the ataman's hand and kissed it. After that, the ataman himself held out his hands for the crowd's kisses."<sup>37</sup> The Ukrainian countryman and Cossack was at last receiving the respect he felt he deserved.

36. *Ibid.*, 3, 249–50.

37. Anulov, p. 208.

The significance of Odessa's capture was to be interpreted in a variety of ways by the men involved, as well as by scholars studying the events in later years. On April 6 the most decisive and irrefutable fact was that the French had fled—abruptly, in a condition close to panic; and the most flattering and exhilarating assumption the partisans could make was that their own warlike advance had broken the Allied will to fight. Quite naturally Grigorev himself became the chief spokesman for this point of view. On April 6, in his Order No. 1, addressed: "To the Soviet Troops of the Odessa Group and to the citizens of Odessa," he announced: "The enemy, shamefully defeated by us . . . flees to Bessarabia without looking backward, and in order not to be disgraced, he blames the changing course of France's domestic and external policies."<sup>38</sup>

Grigorev found support for his theory in the rumors that plagued Odessa. Clemenceau's reported fall from power had spawned other rumors which were accepted as fact. The high French officers who, on April 4, had tried to negotiate with the ataman had affirmed that the Socialist deputy, Albert Thomas, had seized power at Paris.<sup>39</sup> And in the following days revolution was reported to be in full swing at the French capital; it was said that President Poincaré had been killed, that Clemenceau, wounded, was under arrest.<sup>40</sup> With his sensitiveness to international affairs and his well-developed ego, Grigorev could hardly fail to see himself as the predominant figure even in the Parisian events. In the Order No. 1, mentioned above, he declared: "It is very likely that at Serbka [about 40 miles north of Odessa] we defeated not only the French, Greeks, Rumanians, and Volunteers, but also the policy which France carried on in

38. V. Margulies, pp. 47-49.

39. Tyutyunik, p. 224.

40. V. Margulies, p. 50; cf. Alekseev, p. 364.

Southern Russia; it is possible that one of our shells blew the Premier's chair out from under Clemenceau."<sup>41</sup>

Despite an uneasy truce with the Odessa Bolsheviks, who scorned the partisans and credited themselves with driving out the French, Grigorev designated Tyutyunik temporary commandant of the city. He adjured the citizens to maintain order and laid down a set of rules signifying his intention to preserve that order with his usual ruthlessness. Thus, for buying or selling or otherwise misappropriating military property, he decreed the death penalty; for "agitation against Soviet authority . . . death; for the pogromist, death on the spot." The man who had "defeated the French, the victors over Germany," signed his order above a title more impressive than any he had used before. He was now "Commander of the First Brigade of the Trans-Dneprian Soviet Division, Ataman of the Partisans of Kherson and Taurida."<sup>42</sup>

Grigorev spread his interpretation of the victory at Odessa far and wide. On April 10 a telegram went to Rakovski, Antonov, Dybenko, Makhno, to his own staff and regimental commanders, and to a variety of other addressees. In this message he described the daring feats of his partisans, telling how they had fought "with extraordinary violence, with losses, with sacrifices," and how, "without catching their breaths," his units were "already west of Odessa striking the enemy." Promising to "guard Odessa loyally against all possible adventures by the hirelings of the bourgeoisie," he begged that Kiev help to ease the famine conditions within the city. In another dispatch to Rakovski, Podvoiski, Antonov, and others, he took pains to make his part in the Odessa battle unmistakably clear. "Odessa was taken exclusively by my units, from my school," he declared. "Not one Red Army soldier of another regiment was in the fight

41. V. Margulies, p. 47.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

at Odessa. The peasants of the 52 volosti that form my cadres seized Odessa." And in his accounting of casualties he boasted, "a horse was killed under me and a rifle bullet passed through my long coat between my legs." A demonstration of his closeness to the Ukrainian peasantry was provided, too, for after he again mentioned the "colossal trophies of arms, equipment, manufactured goods, and stores," announcing that these "manufactured goods were seized for all the Ukraine," he presented a special request to his superiors. "The peasants who shed their blood at Odessa beg to give the manufactured goods to all the villages at a fair price. In our villages the women sew garments from sacking. I earnestly ask that all the manufactured goods be directed immediately to the peasants of the Ukraine. These peasants took fortified, barbed-wire positions by storm, while their fellow countrymen and wives were sowing the fields. Near the city of Odessa there is a settlement that gave 800 fighters."<sup>43</sup>

Anatol Skachko, deriving his information from Grigorev, made noticeable contributions of his own to the glory of Grigorev's partisans, and undoubtedly his exaggerations helped to persuade others that Odessa did indeed represent a military victory won by a loyal Red army. In his messages to Antonov, Skachko blindly repeated the statement that Grigorev's troops alone had taken Odessa, a statement manifestly inaccurate, since Grigorev had enjoyed the support of every unit Antonov had been able to push into the area. Skachko also praised the "unexampled tenacity and outstanding revolutionary valor" of the partisans, and again recommended the highest Soviet military awards for Grigorev's regiments and commanders. As for Grigorev, who had "two horses shot from under him," and whose "clothing was perforated in several places," Skachko could not speak too highly. Writing to Antonov about the ataman, he said: "by his skill he attained victory over a most power-

43. Antonov, 4, 72-73.

ful enemy with few losses. . . . [I recommend] awarding him the order of the Red Banner."<sup>44</sup> A little sullenly, perhaps, Antonov approved Skachko's recommendations. Although he too regarded Odessa as a triumph and personally enjoyed the credit accruing to him, he fully understood the dangers of continuing the pretense that Grigorev was a loyal Red commander.

Unavoidably, in later years, Grigorev's "conquest" of Odessa has been re-examined and the causes of his startling achievement reappraised. For a variety of reasons, the ataman's role at Odessa has been buried beneath a mountain of explanations, all of which carefully ignore him. Quite obviously his own explanation—that he was simply a better, braver fighter than the French—is unsatisfactory; yet it is just as unsatisfactory to dismiss his claims, as later studies do. Since in this case the truth lies somewhere between several interpretations, it will be useful to consider those which have been most widely accepted in the past. The French, who should have had much to say about these events, have preserved a stony silence; they have published none of the documents they must possess concerning the Odessa intervention and debacle, and they have offered no explanation for the decision to evacuate, beyond that presented by General d'Anselme in his published order of April 3. The Russians, however, because the events so vitally concerned the Soviet state, have written much. Their early theories, good and bad, were critically examined by an intelligent and honest Soviet scholar, A. I. Gukovski, writing in the late 1920s. His interpretation, roughly combining the several theories he deemed most acceptable, represents a valuable and interesting effort to provide a sophisticated explanation for complex events.<sup>45</sup>

44. *Ibid.*, 4, 74.

45. Gukovski; while this study is the best that has been published, it suffers from its early publication and from the total lack of French archival material.

Gukovski rejects the theory that Grigorev's military action was *the* cause or even one of the important causes of the evacuation. So, too, he rejects the claims made by the Bolshevik organizers inside Odessa that their underground organization of the proletariat drove out the French.<sup>46</sup> He also throws doubt on the insistence of the French Communist, André Marty, that the rumor about Clemenceau's fall was the proximate cause of the sudden departure of the French. As for Marty's claim that he personally started the rumor, Gukovski points out that this story was already running through the streets on April 2, a day before Marty's arrival at Odessa. So too, Gukovski jettisons the theory, popular in Denikin's camp, that the Soviet government paid d'Anselme's chief of staff, Colonel Freydenberg, four or five million gold rubles to sabotage France by ordering the evacuation.<sup>47</sup> Dismissing all these theories as principal causes, while retaining all but the last as probable contributing factors, Gukovski constructed his own composite explanation upon more solid ground.

He considered of first importance the unpleasant predicament of the French commanders, who found themselves leading an army that would not fight, despite numerical and technical superiority—low morale and growing demoralization rendering the troops untrustworthy for battle. A second principal cause, Gukovski believed, was the catastrophic character of the food situation and the Allied failure to send in promised supplies. As evidence of the decisive nature of this food shortage, he quotes General

46. For the claims see Anulov, Alekseev, and F. Bolkun in Shlikhter; the most important and recent Soviet study places immense emphasis upon the Bolshevik underground and its propaganda successes among the Allied troops. See *Istoriya grazhdanskoi voiny v SSSR* (History of the Civil War in the USSR) (Moscow, 1957), 3, 345-53.

47. See Sergei Ostapenko, "Direktoriya i okkupatsiya Ukrainy," in Shlikhter, pp. 256-57; Gukovski, pp. 227-28; Xydias, pp. 250-51; Xydias believes that the rumor claimed by Marty was introduced into Odessa by a German or Bolshevik radio broadcast.

d'Esperey, who, at the end of April after Sevastopol had also been evacuated, explained to Denikin that both cities were relinquished due to the impossibility of furnishing them with provisions.<sup>48</sup>

The third important influence for Gukovski was the lack of French success in winning popularity among the Russian people. French political and military policies and the failure to solve pressing economic problems steadily worsened relations with the lower classes; while French treatment of native political groups, from members of the Directory to General Denikin, embittered potential allies. Muddled policy, politically inept officers, the desire to have Russian armies do the fighting (while conversely, the Russian Whites hoped that the French would do it), the French lack of tact and failure to understand Russo-Ukrainian social issues—all, says Gukovski, combined to create political bankruptcy.

To prove that the French High Command was itself thoroughly aware of its failures, Gukovski refers to a White general's secret report to a superior, based on evidence allegedly received from a third person who had it from a "reliable political figure." According to this report, Franchet d'Esperey advised his government after his inspections of March 19–21 that "80 per cent of the population supported bolshevism; that . . . the remaining 20 per cent—were purely reactionary elements, striving for the revival of the old regime from purely egotistical convictions and for the acquisition of power."<sup>49</sup> If d'Esperey did in fact make such

48. Gukovski, p. 228, quoting Denikin, 5, 69; Xydias, pp. 228–37.

49. Gukovski, pp. 227–28; for extensive evidence of the dissatisfaction of the Volunteer Army command with the French, see "Oranzhevaya kniga," pp. 234 ff. More convincing evidence of the distressing confusions of French policy and of the awareness of the military authorities of their failure to win support from Russians and Ukrainians is given in the debates of the Chamber of Deputies, when Messrs. Franklin-Bouillon, Mayeras, and de Chappedelaine discussed the lack of a French policy for Odessa, and the latter read from letters in which General d'Anselme begged for help; *Annales de la Chambre des Députés, 11<sup>e</sup> Législature*, pp. 1278, 1284–85, 1304.

an accounting, this evaluation of the situation must indeed have contributed to the French decision to leave southern Russia.

Finally Gukovski posits French domestic and international difficulties as a major cause of the evacuation.<sup>50</sup> Although he is extremely vague about the nature of these difficulties (Gukovski used no French sources), his assumption was correct. France was indeed overburdened with its international responsibilities; it was deeply involved in the Peace Conference, in the Middle East, in Polish affairs, and in the Hungarian Revolution. In the Chamber of Deputies, the attack of radical socialists upon the intervention policy found general support late in March among representatives of other political groups. The economic situation, the general feeling that France had suffered more than its share of dead and wounded, and indications that the situation at Odessa made France vulnerable to grave humiliation at the hands of the Bolsheviks led the Senate to slash 10,000,000 francs from the military budget. On March 29 the government officially renounced its policy of intervention.<sup>51</sup>

Although Gukovski's composite explanation of the French evacuation is generally excellent, his failure to assign significant influence to Grigorev is a serious omission. It would be an error to argue that Grigorev's partisan army, by virtue of its superior strength, training, leadership,

50. Gukovski, p. 213.

51. *Annales de la Chambre*, pp. 1276-78, 1284-85, 1302-07; see also *Annales du Senat, débats parlementaires, session ordinaire de 1919, tome XC, première partie— du 14 janvier au 13 juin 1919* (Paris, 1920), pp. 504-07. For newspaper comment on events in both Chamber and Senate, and France's concern with international affairs, see: *Journal des Débats*, March 9-April 2, 1919; *Le Matin*, March 25-30, 1919; *Le Figaro*, March 21-April 7, 1919; *L'Humanité's* pro-Communist account of events is presented in N. V. Kuznetsova, "Borba frantsuzskogo naroda protiv otkrytoi antisovetskoi interventsii Antanty vesnoi 1919 goda" (The Struggle of the French People against the Open Anti-Soviet Intervention of the Entente in the Spring of 1919), *Vo-prosy istorii* (Nov. 1957), pp. 109-26.

etc., was the sole cause of the hurried French evacuation; yet Grigorev's presence before Odessa, his stubborn refusal to halt or slow the advance, his manifestoes, negotiations, tricks, and fights combined to exert an influence considerably greater than Gukovski or later Soviet students have cared to admit.<sup>52</sup> Partly, perhaps, this reluctance to give the devil his due may be explained by the fact that in the Soviet Union it has never been either wise or tactful to suggest that a renegade, anti-Communist Cossack was responsible for what is still considered by Soviet historians to be one of the civil war's more important "victories." In Gukovski's case, however, the scholar apparently found the claim that a mere Cossack influenced the conduct of a major Western power quite beyond belief. Possibly Gukovski's judgment was the consequence of the intellectual's high regard for organization and orderliness, little of which may be perceived in the onrush of Grigorev's horde; possibly it was a consequence of the professional scholar's distaste at granting important significance in human affairs to the military man, particularly to the unwashed and semiliterate military man; or perhaps the compulsion to write "Marxist history" prevented his recognition of the obvious.

Actually, Grigorev played a decisive role in persuading the French to evacuate Odessa. If there were demoralization and fear among Allied troops who had come to the Ukraine determined not to endanger their lives, Grigorev's stubborn assault upon Kherson and Nikolaev, his advance on Odessa,

52. Recent Soviet scholars of the Ukraine grant Grigorev no influence and even refuse to use his name. When the victory at Odessa is discussed, the "Red Army" is given credit; see *Istoriya Ukrainskoi RSR* (History of the Ukrainian SSR), ed. S. M. Belousov, P. S. Zagorsky, M. I. Suprunenko, F. P. Shevchenko (2 vols. Kiev, 1958), 2, 141-44; Likholat, *Razgrom natsionalisticheskoi kontrrevolyutsii na Ukraine (1917-1922 gg.)*, pp. 261-63; Babi, *Mistsevi orhany derzhavnoi vlady Ukrainskoi RSR v 1917-1920 rr.*, pp. 154-55; Rybalka, *Vidnoulennya radyanskoi vlady na Ukraini (1918-1919)*, p. 68.

and his persistence in forcing the fight undoubtedly intensified both the growth of civil panic and the breakdown of military discipline, which were so influential in bringing about the French withdrawal. So it was with the provisioning problem. Granted an Allied policy of too little and too late and the French lack of foresight or interest which delayed their taking measures to solve the basic economic problems at Odessa, still Grigorev's influence was decisive. By seizing Kherson and Nikolaev, he completed the isolation of Odessa from its grain supplies and from all possibility of obtaining coal from the Don region; thereafter, by moving rapidly to cut other lines of communication to Odessa (with Antonov's help in the area west of the city), he made the provisioning task insoluble. The French had either to get out or to starve and take the blame for the city's starvation.

Concerning the French failure to win friends, it is true that much of the blame should be laid upon their own ill-advised policies, but here too Grigorev played an important role. His victories east of Odessa encouraged anti-French resistance among native underground groups in every town and city of the area. His forward movement, seemingly irresistible, accompanied by the flood of bluntly worded threats against the Allies, stimulated these groups to overt agitation, giving them the courage to challenge French authority. It was the exciting news of Grigorev's victories and the promise of his attack that aroused the Odessa Bolsheviks to organize the workers and make their demands upon the French. This influence is demonstrated in the course taken by the Odessa Bolsheviks. Although these men and women were to insist, after the French were gone, that they had driven out the enemy, in reality they became active only after Grigorev's capture of Kherson; and though they organized themselves for a seizure of power in the first days of April, they neither asked the French to get out nor dared to declare themselves in authority until

April 6—*after* the French had departed.<sup>53</sup> Grigorev's victories and manifestoes had a similar effect upon the countryside. *His* fearlessness drove the Allies from Kherson and Nikolaev; *he alone* dared to call all partisans to the "festivities" and then demonstrated at one town and railroad crossing after another that the French either would not or could not stand up to a fight. It was this proof, accompanied by his verbose salvoes of chest-thumping boasts about what he would do next that drew thousands of peasants, Cossacks, ex-soldiers, and even Allied deserters into his motley "Bolshevik" brigade.

For the French, Odessa did not become a serious problem demanding immediate solution until Grigorev's troops drove at the city with the expressed intention of killing as many Frenchmen as possible. Had Grigorev not been advancing so rapidly through March, would Berthelot have taken sick? Would d'Anselme have dispatched desperate reports about the distressing condition of his troops, the shortages of provisions, and the attitudes of the native population? Had d'Esperey not been compelled to take command, by Grigorev's advance and Berthelot's illness, would he have visited Odessa as he did on March 20? And without d'Esperey's swift comprehension of the desperate situation, would the Quartermaster General of the Eastern Army have made his personal inspection of the city, as he did on April 1? Finally, without Grigorev's impatience to be inside Odessa, would the French have transformed their "partial evacuation" so rapidly into a rout? Odessa was cleared within 72 hours, but at Sevastopol, where evacuation began about April 10 and where there were fewer Allied forces but *more patient* Red troops, the evacuation continued until the end of the month. All these incidents suggest that, although Gukovski's multiple "causes" were indeed determining factors in the French evacuation, Grigorev's influence was much more important than Gukovski or other

53. Gukovski, p. 212.

Bolshevik and Western historians have cared to admit. At Odessa Grigorev forced the issue. In doing so he set in motion a series of developments which were to have important consequences for the whole course of subsequent military and political events in the Ukraine and in Great Russia.

From his first contacts with Grigorev, Antonov's central problem had been the development of a command mechanism strong enough to bring the ataman and his partisans under some semblance of control. He had failed. All through the Odessa campaign Grigorev had contemptuously disregarded every directive or obligation that conflicted with his own intentions. He obeyed only when he chose, and then with arrogance and condescension; deliberately ignoring not only Antonov but Kiev and Moscow as well, he prevented his subordinates from contacting Bolshevik authorities except through him, thus isolating his units from Bolshevik influence. He refused to restrict his voluminous telegrams, though repeatedly ordered by Antonov to do so; nor did he alter his autonomous recruiting of new sections, his system of supplying himself by plundering, his pose as independent leader and liberator. The victories he won, he insisted, were *his* victories.

Through the swiftly moving days of late March and early April, Antonov had tried all possible measures short of arrest or assassination to bring Grigorev to order; but the paucity of political workers and Communist officers, the inability of Skachko to do more than admire the ataman and hope for the best, and Antonov's very real need to use Grigorev rendered futile every effort to build an effective administrative system. At the end of the Odessa campaign the organizational problem was worse than before. Victory, which was the product not of the Bolsheviks' strength in the Ukraine but of their weakness, now further strengthened Grigorev.

Antonov's superiors at Kiev failed to comprehend this all-important weakness in the military command system. Although they were painfully aware of disorders and confusions in military affairs, they were far more conscious of the Odessa success, and by their conduct they helped to worsen the situation. Thus, frequently receiving messages directly from Grigorev, high civil officials made the serious error of replying in kind. In their eagerness to congratulate Grigorev, for example, they sent their messages directly to the ataman, ignoring the commander of the Ukrainian Front, whose control of military channels to his subordinates was an integral part of his power to command.

As early as April 6, Antonov tried to set his superiors on the right track. In a message to Rakovski and Podvoiski, he wrote: "Certain of your papers, as for example, Telegram No. 317, you send with copies to Comrade Antonov and to Comrade Grigorev. You thus accomplish a completely inadmissible exaltation of the brigade commander, Grigorev, and you harm extremely the circumstances of normal relations in the Red Army. I propose that the government send copies of its decisions directly to Grigorev, but should address his commanders."<sup>54</sup> Podvoiski objected. According to him, the telegram in question "had not the least relationship with operational affairs." Further, he argued, for the sake of "greater authority and swiftness" the government had to reserve to itself the right "to turn directly to the authority on the spot." His argument was logical, but Antonov's position was the correct one: either he was the commander of the Ukrainian Army or he was not. He tried to explain the issue to Podvoiski: "The question does not concern the representatives of power. It does concern the hierarchical subordination of military people. This is especially important in relation to Grigorev and Makhno. Dealing with them as if they were my equals places me in a false

54. Antonov, 4, 71-72.

situation. It will be sufficient to deal with me, and I will issue the necessary orders. Among the military this is discipline. It is not fitting to strengthen the prestige of the adventurer, Grigorev."<sup>55</sup>

So far as the military issue was concerned, Antonov was right. Grigorev's conduct posed a problem in military administration for which the only acceptable solution was more effective control by the commander. Yet there was another and more important consideration. Curbing Grigorev and bringing the area he controlled under firm Communist authority were crucial to the continued existence of the Soviet Ukrainian Government. This was a political issue, and the full weight of Rakovski's government should have been brought to bear upon it. In effect, however, Antonov successfully waved the government away from Grigorev, and thus he arrogated to himself complete responsibility for the ataman's conduct.

55. *Ibid.*, 4, 72.

## CHAPTER 7

### *Party Meetings, Resolutions, and Uprisings*

WHILE GRIGOREV ADVANCED on Kherson and Nikolaev, captured them, and moved on to Odessa, significant developments of another sort were taking place at Kharkov and Moscow. During March three major party meetings were held, each of which reached decisions fully as influential for the Bolsheviks in the Ukraine as were Grigorev's victories. Indeed, the resolutions of these congresses, for their effect upon party policy, government administration, and the evolving dissatisfactions of the Ukrainian people, were of decisive importance.

In the first week of March the Third Congress of the KP(b)U opened its sessions at Kharkov with an acrimonious quarrel about the policy which the Rightist Central Committee had followed since October 1918. Pyatakov and his followers, seeking revenge for their humiliation at the Second Congress, when they had been pushed from power by the Rightists, sharply criticized Emmanuil Kvirring's Central Committee for its lack of initiative, its failure to comprehend the Ukrainian situation, its inability to gain rapport with the masses, and its dispatch of troops away from the Ukraine to the Donbass. In spite of the Rightists' claim that they "had brilliantly executed their mandate,"

Pyatakov managed to force through a resolution (99 to 92) condemning them.<sup>1</sup> On the following day, debate continued to eddy around the way affairs had been conducted during the preceding months, but the greatest cleavages between KP(b)U factions were already in the past. When the Kievians' hurt egos had been salved by Pyatakov's resolution and by the relief of voicing long-suppressed criticisms, and when all members recognized the danger of moving further along this road of mutual recrimination, Right and Left settled down to work out policies for the immediate future, proceeding with surprising harmony.

Undoubtedly the men of the Left and Right did not forget their earlier disputes, but experience had taught both sides. By March, Kievians were prepared to accept the urban worker as the real mainstay of revolution, and Ekaterinoslavs had come to understand that the Ukraine could not be made Bolshevik without strong peasant support. In addition, Lenin's systematic packing of the Ukrainian government with men loyal to himself and his ostentatious displeasure with the Left wing of the KP(b)U had gone far toward building a docile Ukrainian party. Finally, the continuing military successes presented the Ukrainian party with immense political and economic tasks; these responsibilities prompted Lefts and Rights alike to put aside old quarrels and to cooperate in seeking answers to their common problems. After the first days of the Third Congress, therefore, the earlier dissensions of Left and Right were relegated to the background; and though there were disagreements at the congress and during subsequent weeks, the contestants faced one another in new coalitions, with arguments and attitudes evolved to fit the current situation.

At the Third Congress the Ukrainian party's increasingly submissive relationship to the RKP was clearly demon-

1. *Komunistichna partiya Ukrainy v rezolyutsiyakh i rishennyakh zizdiv i konferentsi 1918-1956*, p. 32.

strated by the Rights' habit of frequently quoting the authority of their important protectors at Moscow, by the presence of Yakov Sverdlov, chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Government and secretary of the RKP, who constantly threw his weight to the side of complete subservience to the RKP, and by repeated statements by the Right that the Ukrainian party line should be that of the RKP. Though sharp dissent was expressed by the Left, the very lack of extensive debate over this question provided good evidence of the degree to which Moscow had established its authority over Ukrainian politics.<sup>2</sup>

In the treacherous field of land policy a resolution, adopted unanimously, announced the end of private property and proclaimed the chief aim of the party to be the "transfer from individual to social farming." The commune and "the common cultivation of the land" were declared "the best means for the attainment of socialism in agriculture." As for the temporary expedient then being pursued—equal distribution of the land among the peasants—the resolution called for continued use of *bednyak* (poor peasant) committees "joined with the *srednyak* [middle peasant]" for the party's attack against the kulaks, with the purpose of breaking up the latter's big farms. Most noteworthy was the failure to give serious consideration to the dangers involved in this policy of abolishing private property and individual farming. Although the poor peasants *and* the middle peasants were expected to carry on "merciless war" against the kulaks, the party overlooked the very thorny fact that almost all peasants violently opposed socialistic agrarian reforms and in this respect sided

2. Barannyk, Mishkis, and Slobodsky, eds., *Istoriya KP(b)U v materialakh i dokumentakh (khrestomatiya), 1917–1920 rr.*, 406–07; Ravich-Cherkasski, *Istoriya Kommunisticheskoi partii (b-ov) Ukrainy*, pp. 110–11, 117–19; N. N. Popov, *Ocherk istorii Kommunisticheskoi partii (bolshevikov) Ukrainy*, pp. 200, 204.

with the kulaks. Averting its attention from these difficulties, the party formally adopted an agrarian program that, in effect, drove the peasants toward rebellion.<sup>3</sup>

The resolution on the provisioning question, also adopted unanimously, further complicated the sensitive agrarian situation, for Shlikhter's proposal not only required the establishment of partial monopolies, along with the development of more energetic collection techniques, but likewise insisted upon the importance of *bednyak* committees as the active agents of his collection policy in the villages. Like the agrarian resolution, Shlikhter's spoke of combining *bednyak* with *srednyak* in the war against kulak, but made no effort whatever to explain how the already hostile middle peasant could be won to the support of a policy that spelled his own destruction.<sup>4</sup>

The party confirmed its earlier stand opposing cooperation with other Ukrainian parties, and refused to allow representatives of these parties to hold responsible posts in

3. *Komunistichna partiya Ukrainy*, p. 41; Ravich-Cherkasski, pp. 123, 222-24. The terms *bednyak*, *srednyak*, and *kulak* defy accurate definition in such absolute terms as numbers of acres owned or sown, for these varied widely from one locality to another. V. Kachinski (*Ocherki agrarnoi revolyutsii na Ukraine* [Outline of the Agrarian Revolution in the Ukraine] [Kharkov, 1922-23], 1, 42, 46) considers a kulak in Kherson Province to be a peasant holding 80 or more acres, but in Poltava Province, peasants holding 40 acres were accounted kulaks. M. A. Rubach (*Ocherki po istorii revolyutsionnogo preobrazovaniya agrarnykh otnosheni na Ukraine* [An Outline of the History of the Revolutionary Reform of Agrarian Relations in the Ukraine] [Kiev, 1957], pp. 9, 20-21) estimates that poor peasants on the Right Bank held from 0 to 5.4 acres, while those of the Left Bank and the Steppe held from 0 to 8.1 and 10.8 acres respectively. Kulaks on the Right Bank held 16.2 or more acres; on the Left Bank, 24.3 or more, and in the Southern Steppes, 32.8 or more. Using Rubach's figures: *srednyaki*, depending upon their location, might hold from about 6 to 30 acres.

A more serviceable formula defines as kulaks those peasant farmers who were considered wealthy in their region and who hired labor. According to Rubach's estimates, about 12.2 per cent of the 4,011,000 peasant households of the Ukraine in 1917 were kulak, while 29.9 per cent were *srednyak*, and 57.1 per cent were *bednyak*.

4. *Komunistichna partiya Ukrainy*, p. 37.

the Ukrainian Soviet Government. On other vital problems, the Third Congress was singularly quiet, as if its members had been warned by Sverdlov that Moscow would deal with these. Nothing was said, for example, about Ukrainian nationalist and cultural aspirations, although in this connection Rakovski expressed his conviction that the Ukrainian language should *not* become the official language of the Ukraine. This failure to deal openly and intelligently with Ukrainian nationalist demands laid the groundwork for many future troubles. Similarly, army affairs were largely ignored except for Rakovski's emphasis upon the necessity of pursuing party work more effectively among the troops.<sup>5</sup>

The Third Congress of the KP(b)U was followed by the All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets (March 6–10), which assembled at Kharkov. This congress confirmed the decisions just taken by the party congress, and by adopting a constitution patterned closely after that of the Russian Soviet Republic, it also confirmed the Soviet political system established during the previous months.<sup>6</sup>

While the Third Congress of the KP(b)U debated at Kharkov, Moscow was the scene of another assembly, which received far more attention and publicity from both the Soviet and foreign press. The founding of the Third International by a congress of Communists from many countries was, above all, an extravaganza staged for a world audience and was presented as the conjunction of the world's Communists under a powerful executive staff that would direct the strategy of international revolution. Actually this newly organized Comintern had little in common with the Comintern of later decades; at birth it was small, weak, and poorly organized. Owing its existence to the enthusiasm of Lenin, N. I. Bukharin, Trotsky, Grigori Zinovev, and Karl Radek, the first congress had a predominantly Russian

5. N. N. Popov, pp. 198–99.

6. Ravich-Cherkasski, p. 119.

membership, with a light sprinkling of foreign representatives, most of whom simply happened to find themselves in Moscow at the time. German representatives, sent by Rosa Luxemburg to oppose the formation of a new International, joined the congress only with reluctance.<sup>7</sup>

But if its program and organization were overambitious in view of its actual strength, the propaganda effect of the new International was immense both at home and abroad. With revolutions threatening or erupting in Central and Eastern Europe there was a strong feeling that a Communist general staff might greatly assist, by coordination and support, the victory of international socialism. The fervent internationalism of many Russian Communists was heightened and made explicit by the ardent speeches of Lenin and Zinovev, first president of the Comintern, both of whom prophesied the spread of their own revolution around the world. At a time when the Russian Bolsheviks' isolation from the rest of the world was at its zenith, the Third International provided an illusion that close ties existed with workers everywhere; and because the Soviet system of government appeared to them to be immediately applicable all over the world, the Russian leaders persuaded themselves more completely than ever before that they were on the verge of leading the march toward a worldwide federated republic of soviets. Undoubtedly, the party stood much in need of this stimulating dream in March 1919, and the passionate declarations of faith made at the congress and in following days must have had much to do with the profound dedication of many men and women in the rank and file.<sup>8</sup> But acceptance of the obligations of world

7. F. Borkenau, *The Communist International* (London, 1938), pp. 161-63.

8. V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniya* (Works) (3d ed. 30 vols. Moscow, 1935-37), 24; 5-22, 30-31; Borkenau, p. 165; Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923*, 3, 146; see also Zinovev's report on the Comintern in E. Yaroslavski, ed., *Vosmoi sezid RKP(b) 18-23 marta 1919 g.: Protokoly sezidov i kon-*

leadership, involving the provision of political tacticians, propagandists, military advisers, and even armed support to the countries west of Russia, placed heavy responsibilities upon the party at an awkward time.

Moscow was also host to the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist party, which met from March 18 until the 23rd. This congress, one of the party's most momentous, was the scene of fierce debates on questions so fundamental that the very unity of the party depended upon their solution. Here, representatives from all the RKP's branches (including 25 members from the Ukraine) met to consider a proposed party program—the first carefully organized statement made since the Bolsheviks had come to power—outlining their party's philosophy, its organizational and operational objectives, and its official position on important current issues.<sup>9</sup> Various articles of the proposed program brought the differences between leading party members into clear focus, and speakers on every side expressed themselves corrosively, tearing open doctrinal wounds which would heal only in later years when Stalin applied the cautery of death to men who could not forget the past. In addition, because the founding congress of the Third International had stimulated Lenin and his closest associates to develop new concepts of the party's role in the international revolutionary movement, these concepts now had to be discussed at length in the effort to adjust internationalist dreams to the grim realities of Soviet foreign policy and events in Central Europe.<sup>10</sup>

Administrative policies and techniques, the relationship of the Center to its agents, the practices of the Central

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*ferentsi Vsesoyuznoi kommunisticheskoi partii (b)* (The Eighth Congress of the RKP[b], 18–23 March 1919: Protocols of the Congresses and Conferences of the All-Union Communist Party [B]) (Moscow, 1933), pp. 119 ff.

9. For the proposed program and the accepted draft, see Yaroslavski, pp. 365–400.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 119, 141–45.

Executive Committee, Trotsky's military leadership—all these areas of divergent opinion at the Eighth Congress can be subsumed under the general heading of a broad struggle between “Left” Communists and Lenin's centralism and bureaucratism. Violently resenting their loss of authority, their relegation to the lowly position of obedient servants, their displacement from high military positions by Trotsky's spetsy, the “Left” opposition members posed, and meant to pose, a very real threat to Lenin's fast-growing autocracy. Properly studied, the congress should be examined from the point of view of this clash of the “democratic” and “utopian” elements with the “bureaucrats” and “centralists”; or perhaps it should be viewed as the laboratory where Lenin crystallized into concrete policies the rules of thumb and the experience gained during the previous two years.<sup>11</sup> The following paragraphs, however, do not represent an effort to examine every twist and turn of the RKP in March 1919, nor to analyze the deep-lying roots of the many-sided conflicts which seemed to threaten the party's life at the Eighth Congress. Instead, attention here is concentrated upon the resolutions which were to have immediate influence in the Ukraine.

Of very great significance was the decision that there should be one and only one Communist party in the whole territory under Soviet authority. It was further affirmed that “all the resolutions of the RKP and its directing institutions” should be “unconditionally obligatory for all parts of the party, regardless of their national composition.” Like other national parties, the KP(b)U became a subordinate party committee, having as its primary function the execution of orders from above. The force of this decree was such as to deprive the KP(b)U of even the right to disobey, for branch parties were directed to execute the RKP's commands at once and without question. Complaints against

11. See Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution*, pp. 93-94, 96-97, 105-07, 111-12.

unjust or incorrect orders were permissible only after those orders had been carried out.<sup>12</sup> Thus the Ukrainian party lost the little independence it had enjoyed since its birth; the Kievians' dream of a federation of equals in a Communist International was laid to rest; and the RKP became the acknowledged ruler of the Ukraine. Lenin had long demanded absolute authority; now he had it.

The agrarian policy evolved at the Eighth Congress, while failing to make allowances for the unique conditions prevailing in the Ukraine, was in several respects far more realistic than the policies just approved by the Third Congress of the KP(b)U. Lenin clearly comprehended the stresses provoked by his social warfare against the kulak, and his efforts, along with those of the men who served on the agrarian committee, were aimed toward creating a program that would alleviate these stresses and bring more agricultural produce into the markets. Essentially bolshevism's greatest agrarian failures in the past had stemmed from its blanket condemnation and persecution of the large, productive body of middle peasants. In thrusting the srednyak, willy-nilly, into the kulak group, the Communists had literally compelled the numerous middle peasants to oppose Bolshevik policies. The resulting opposition expressed itself most dangerously in decreased sowing of crops, noncooperation, and refusal to give up or trade farm produce.<sup>13</sup>

Given Russia's famine-stalked cities and hungry Red armies, winning the srednyak's friendship was a vital necessity for the Bolsheviks. Somehow this group had to be placated. The agrarian resolution, therefore, demanded a change in policy. Standing firm on its principle that land should be national property cultivated by socialistic means, the party nevertheless surveyed certain major causes of srednyak hostility with a view to removing them. It was decided that an effort must be made to attract the srednyak

12. Yaroslavski, p. 414.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

by "more careful attention to his needs, the elimination of arbitrariness on the part of local authority, and the desire for agreement with him." The point was made emphatic with these words: "to confuse the middle peasants with the kulachestvo, to extend to them in one or another degree the measures directed against the kulachestvo, means to violate in the most crude manner not only all the decrees of the Soviet power and its policy, but also all the fundamental principles of communism which prescribe the agreement of the proletariat with the middle peasants." Classifying the srednyak carefully as an economic type that would inevitably continue to exist for some time, the resolution went on to explain that since the middle peasant did not "profit from the labor of others," he could not be considered an exploiter.<sup>14</sup> Thus it became obligatory for party men to work with and for a strata of the peasantry defined by Communists both earlier and later as ardently anti-Communist and petty bourgeois.

Specific and effective-seeming measures for establishing close, friendly relations with the middle peasants followed up these basic decisions. Representatives of the Soviet power working for the expansion of socialistic or communal farming among middle peasants were prohibited from applying pressures of any sort; those disobeying this regulation, even indirectly, were to be called to account and removed from work in the villages. Communist workers who made requisitions beyond those permitted by law were to be prosecuted, and the heavy taxes (grain requisitions) laid upon kulaks were to be lightened for the srednyak, "even if the total of the tax is decreased." The government was instructed to assist this newly welcomed group by supplying it with "better agricultural implements, seed, and other materials for raising the level of village cultivation and for improving the work and lives of the peasants." And since

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 417-18.

shortages in manufactured goods prevented easy implementation of these measures, the party demanded extraordinary efforts for assisting the poor and middle peasant, called for the allocation of adequate state funds, and asserted that only through such concrete and direct assistance could the *srednyak's* trust be won. Then, seeking to clear its skirts of past errors, the party insisted that cooperation with the middle peasant had *always* been its policy.<sup>15</sup>

As a supplementary method of strengthening party work in the village, special measures were envisaged in the field of education. Several paragraphs outlined a broad program embracing Communist propaganda, general education, and agricultural training, to be enriched by films and exhibits, traveling instructors, plays, and concerts. The social aim of the agrarian program thus devised was to separate the *srednyak* from the kulak, "to draw him to the side of the working class by careful attention to his needs, fighting his backwardness by means of ideological action . . . striving, in all affairs which touch his vital interests, for a practical agreement with him."<sup>16</sup>

The question of the party's stand on the nationalities problem was furiously discussed during the Eighth Congress. Lenin stubbornly defended a principle the party had developed earlier, the right of national groups within the area of the former Tsarist empire to self-determination, including the right of secession from the Soviet state. The distinguished Bolshevik theoretician, Bukharin, led the opposition, seeking to replace the old formula with another—the right of the *proletariat* of each national group to self-determination. According to Bukharin, Lenin's principle of national self-determination would allow bourgeois or other anti-Communist groups to break the Soviet federation into many separate, anti-Soviet states.

Pyatakov, though favoring the Bukharin formula, offered

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 419, 420.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 396, 420-23.

a third variation by insisting that self-determination of any sort was a false doctrine. In his opinion, no revolutionary proletariat was capable of working out its own state order alone—that is, without forceful guidance from the Russian Communist party (through the Third International); nor did he consider that each national proletariat within the Soviet federation should be permitted to set up whatever political order it chose. He therefore adjured the party to reject both Lenin's and Bukharin's proposals "and stand firmly on the road to strict proletarian centralization and proletarian unity." If Lenin were not sincere in guaranteeing the right of national self-determination, Pyatakov pointed out, then his formula was "simply a diplomatic game."<sup>17</sup>

Lenin, in rebuttal, charged that Bukharin's approach failed to give proper weight to the undeniably powerful nationalistic emotions still ruling many societies. To thus ignore nationalism was to ride roughshod over non-Russian nationalities in the manner of the Great Russian chauvinists of bygone days. The inevitable consequence of such a policy would be the intensification of resentment among powerful nationality groups in the Soviet state. Pyatakov's approach Lenin considered imperialistic, and he pointed out that it would make the RKP an aggressor in all eyes.<sup>18</sup> Ultimately, because Lenin's formula combined the best points of the others without explicitly saying so, and because discretion made excellent, if somewhat obscure, tactical sense, Lenin was able to persuade the party to agree with him.

In general, the Eighth Congress somewhat reluctantly

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-83.

18. For Bukharin's formula, see *ibid.*, pp. 48-49, 111-13; for Pyatakov's, pp. 78-83, 102; for Lenin's, pp. 54-58, 102, 107; for further discussions and the completed program, see pp. 70-71, 88, 91-99; 387, 413. Excellent and brief analyses of the many years of party conflict over nationalities principles are presented in Carr, *1*, 260-85, 410-28; and Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, pp. 34-49.

approved Trotsky's military policies, with their emphasis upon centralization, discipline, and extensive employment of ex-Tsarist officers as commanders of Red units. Trotsky, grimly aware of the widespread party enmity toward his policies, prepared his report carefully, only to be called away from Moscow by Kolchak's successful offensive on the Urals Front. Therefore, G. Ya. Sokolnikov, Trotsky's assistant, presented the military report, which contained a strangely unrealistic thesis very pertinent to the Ukraine. With Trotsky's theses before him, Sokolnikov not only defended the use of the military spetsy and the ruthless efforts to regularize partisan forces, but also, repeatedly, spoke of partizanshchina as if it were a thing of the past. The year 1918 he dubbed the "partisan period of the war." "Comrades," he said early in his report, "the partisan army was the army of the period when the state power actually could not direct the army, when the state apparatus, which was created by the proletariat, was still so weak that the military organization showed itself independent from us and not infrequently went against us. But the period which we are now going through is different." The difference, claimed Sokolnikov, was due to the fact that by March 1919 political authority lay firmly in the hands of the proletariat; "the same is true of the Red Army." This line of reasoning, running throughout the military report, was retained in the ensuing resolution on military affairs.<sup>19</sup>

Though it is probable that Trotsky, through Sokolnikov, consciously exaggerated the degree of military organization achieved, endeavoring to put off the expected arguments of the opposition group, the eloquence with which this view was presented had the ring of conviction. It would appear that Trotsky, notwithstanding his close association with military affairs, had, by his own eloquence, convinced himself that chaos was order, or else had simply failed to under-

19. Yaroslavski, pp. 146-47, 150, 154-55, 403, 410-11.

stand the complicated military-political situation in the Ukraine.<sup>20</sup> There, all too obviously, partizanshchina still ruled and would continue to rule for months.

Efforts to implement the resolutions of the party congresses were, in the Ukraine, hemmed about by the resolutions' inherent contradictions, by their inapplicability to local conditions, and by the usual shortages of competent personnel. Moreover, the decisions that made the KP(b)U and its instrument, the Ukrainian Soviet Government, mere executive agencies of the RKP lessened the pressures upon the Ukrainian party to perfect policies that would hasten the consolidation of Bolshevik political authority in the Ukraine. This was unfortunate, for though Moscow had established its right to an absolute dictatorship over the Ukraine, it still lacked the administrative machinery and the men needed to make the dictatorship work. Lenin's centralism, however, cannot be made to bear all the blame. The KP(b)U remained insensitive to Ukrainian needs and stubbornly reluctant to adapt itself to Ukrainian realities. Despite Lenin's repeated demands, for example, the KP(b)U persistently refused to work with the Borotbisty and other pro-soviet Ukrainian parties; thus it ensured its own continued failure to win a wide mass following.<sup>21</sup>

20. Other materials ("The Trotsky Archives") indicate that Trotsky very well understood the military problems of the Ukraine. Nonetheless, he was quite susceptible to his own eloquence; the orderly analyses he was accustomed to write sometimes appear to be much more real to him than the chaos of reality. In this instance, the Sokolnikov-Trotsky report gives a strong impression that its author actually believed the army to be far better organized than it was; see Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, p. 428.

21. The All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets in March elected the chief government body, the "All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee," of 90 members of the KP(b)U and 10 Left SRs (Borotbisty). The Borotbisty appear to have been elected despite the KP(b)U's decision against party cooperation and because of their own interest in participation. Despite this

Although the Eighth Congress had recognized the crucial importance of the middle peasant, diligently spelling out methods for attracting his sympathies, both aims and methods were doomed in the Ukraine. As early as March 11 the Ukrainian government had published its decree on land redistribution, confirming its own earlier decisions and those of the Third Congress of the KP(b)U. Since these decisions were in complete accord with the subsequent resolutions of the Eighth Congress, they were not thereafter significantly changed. As previously mentioned, however, these policies created major obstacles to winning the middle peasants' friendship (and that of the rich and poor as well). The redistribution of land, which left many estates and their inventories in the hands of the government, was completely unacceptable to almost all Ukrainian peasants. So, too, the peasants violently rejected the Bolsheviks' explicit abolition of private ownership and their demand for the establishment of communal farming.

Knowing the peasants' attitude toward communal farming, the Eighth Congress had ordered that membership in such farms should be wholly voluntary; but in the Ukraine overzealous local Communists continued to force peasants into the farms. Where this occurred, the peasants took up arms. In mid-April Lenin signed a new directive, threatening with dire punishment Bolsheviks who used compulsion of any sort in establishing communal farms, but his order was slow to reach local party workers in the Ukraine. Besides, only a few errors, a few pitched battles, sufficed to create a widespread conviction among the peasants that the Communists meant to steal their land and drive them all into communal farms. Once that conclusion was reached,

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election, the KP(b)U refused to give any Borotbist a responsible post in the government and had to be forced to do so by a telegram from the Central Committee of the RKP (April 8, 1919) signed by Stalin; Barannyk et al., *Istoriya KP(b)U*, pp. 459-60; Majstrenko, *Borot'bism*, pp. 124-26; Ravich-Cherkasski, pp. 119, 220-21.

the Bolsheviks were unable to change it. Here were some of the rocks upon which the agrarian program broke up.<sup>22</sup>

The Eighth Congress had also recommended winning over the middle peasants by extensive assistance in the form of agricultural implements, seed, and technical advice, but neither party nor government possessed the goods and equipment necessary to persuade the middle peasant that Communist intentions were good. Nor was it possible to step up propaganda and education efforts, as the congress had directed. Nowhere could there be found the innumerable agitators, teachers, and agrarian specialists needed to convert the thousands of peasants who were solidly opposed to all that they understood of the Communist agrarian program.<sup>23</sup>

Instead of goods and educators, Shlikhter's food collectors were sent to the peasants. And Shlikhter's utopian schemes for appeasing Russia's hunger simply worsened the situation. Within his commissariat Shlikhter diligently worked out subsistence norms "on the basis of the most complete scientific facts," defining, as one unsympathetic colleague later reported, "how much bread, meat, grits, butter, sugar, tea, and so forth, should be allotted to each factory worker, intellectual, or farmer, to the comrade-messenger, the comrade-pregnant-woman, the comrade-typhoid-victim, and the comrade-one-year-old-child." Norms were similarly determined for livestock and poultry, and still others for the distribution of nonexistent textiles, footwear, jewelry, and buttons.<sup>24</sup> Seeking to collect food and other supplies from

22. *Sobranie zakoneni i rasporyazheni Raboche-krestyanskago pravitelstva Ukrainy* (1st ed.), no. 25, art. 271, pp. 369-79; *Istoriya KP(b)U*, pp. 446, 449, 465-69; O. Slutsky, *Treti zizd KP(b)U* (The Third Congress of the KP[b]U) (Kiev, 1957), pp. 80-81; Ravich-Cherkasski, p. 125; Kachinski, pp. 18-20, 42-44.

23. *Istoriya KP(b)U*, pp. 447-48; Slutsky, pp. 43-46; Babi, *Mistsevi orhany derzhavnoi vlady Ukrainskoi RSR v 1917-1920 rr.*, p. 176.

24. Yu. K. Rapaport, "U krasnykh i u belykh" (With the Reds and the Whites), *Arkhiv russkoi revolyutsii*, 20 (1930), 221.

areas and villages without soviets, and from bednyak committees where such committees were numerically and intellectually overwhelmed by middle and rich peasants, Shlikhter ultimately fell back on some 3,000 urban workers sent to him from Petersburg and Moscow. These Great Russian collectors were distributed across the Ukraine, where their presence illustrated much too graphically the point being hammered home by agents of the Directory and other anti-Bolsheviks, that the Katsapy were systematically robbing the Ukraine to feed themselves.<sup>25</sup>

Fine-sounding as were the words of the RKP's resolution on national self-determination, they did not mean that Ukrainian national independence was about to be achieved. Just the reverse. Despite any and all promises, the Ukraine was such an integral part of Russia in the minds of the Russian party leaders, and Moscow's destiny was so dependent upon Ukrainian mines, factories, and grain fields, that genuine self-determination could not be countenanced. True, the Soviet state was organized as a federation, but the Eighth Congress had completed the formation of a party autocracy. By establishing the absolute authority of the RKP Central Committee over all branch parties, as described above, Lenin had gained absolute control over the "federated" governments, which were the instruments of the party. In effect, while posing as a champion of nationalist aspirations, he dealt them a fatal blow.

Always the practical politician, Lenin advised Rakovski to be more sensitive to the nationalist feelings of the Ukrainians and to do everything possible to tone down the look of Great Russian chauvinism in party actions in the

25. Shlikhter, "Borba za khleb na Ukraine v 1919 godu," *Litopys revolyutsii*, no. 2 [29], pp. 117-18, 135; N. N. Popov, pp. 197-98; K. Gulevich and R. Gassanova, "Iz istorii borby prodovolstvennykh otryadov rabochikh za khleb i ukreplenie sovetskoi vlasti (1918-1920 gg.)" (From the History of the Struggle by the Workers' Provisioning Sections for Grain and for the Strengthening of Soviet Authority, 1918-20), *Krasny arkhiv*, 4-5 [89-90] (1938), 131-32.

Ukraine. If there was to be no real autonomy, no real respect for Ukrainian culture, there should be a great deal of seeming. But Rakovski's refusal to declare Ukrainian the official language automatically gave Russian that status. The rampant Russianism of Shlikhter's food collectors, the brutalities of the Cheka sections, the presence of alien Communists sent to govern cities and villages and enforce hateful policies by dictatorial methods—all combined to make the Ukraine more conscious of itself as a nation distinct from the Russians. Hrushevsky, Vinnichenko, and other Ukrainian nationalists had planted the idea among the village intelligentsia, but the harsh tactics of Bolshevik policy made it grow. In March and April a chauvinistic resentment of the Katsapy-Bolsheviki and their infuriating policies and methods spread everywhere.

Aroused by the conviction that they were being tricked, swindled, and driven unmercifully, Ukrainian peasants fell back on the only effective method of protest they knew. Through March, with steadily growing forcefulness and in ever-increasing numbers, peasants and Cossacks, groups the Bolsheviks identified as "bandits," and partisan sections which had successively served the Hetman, Petlyura, and Antonov, began to go out against the Communists, celebrating their resistance by one or another form of armed demonstration. Groups numbering anywhere from ten to several thousand men attacked local soviets, shot Communists, Jews, and Cheka agents, set up ephemeral governments, raped, robbed, and, when occasion demanded, even fought pitched battles against Antonov's troops.

By late March a whole gallery of partisan leaders had made themselves famous for their local rebellions. There was Zeleny, a moderately well-educated ex-ataman of Petlyura, living at Tripol, west of Kiev, who collected some 2,500 men and attacked the Bolsheviks. Sokolovski, from the village of Gorbulev, son of the village deacon, led his bands in the district of Radomysl, west of Kiev. Angel, one

of Skoropadski's former officers, led a band around Bakhmach, northeast of Kiev. Klimenko operated near Uman, south of Kiev; Mordylev in the area near Brusilov; Yatsenko and Golub near Tarashcha; and Grudnitski west of Kiev. Struk, a former teacher who organized his followers in the Chernobyl region, north of Kiev, commanded at least 500 men early in April and raised that number to several thousand before the month ended. These are the better known leaders whose deeds were either successful enough or bloody enough to command wide attention, but they were not alone.<sup>26</sup>

Numerous smaller uprisings occurred in the interior of the Ukraine, near the fronts, even within the ranks of the Soviet Ukrainian Army. Rakovski reports 93 uprisings from April 1 to May 1. Listing these according to the guberniya where they took place (the guberniya taking its name usually from its chief city), there were, in April, 38 in the Kiev area, 19 in Chernigov; Poltava had 17, Kharkov 6, Kherson 8, Podolsk and Ekaterinoslav 4.<sup>27</sup> It is significant that in the southern provinces, where the very powerful partisan sections of Grigorev and Makhno still nominally supported bolshevism and preserved a semblance of order in the villages, risings were few.

It would be much less than accurate to ascribe this spread of rebellion solely to the elemental dissatisfactions of the Ukrainian peasants and to their rejection of Bolshevik land and food policies. Both the Directory's followers and party groups that had separated from it (Nezalezhniki and

<sup>26</sup> Khrystyuk, *Zamitky i materiyaly do istorii Ukrainskoi revolyutsii, 1917-1920 rr.* 4, 131-33; B. V. Kozelsky, *Shlyakh zradnitstva i avantur (Petlyurivske povstanstvo)* (The Path of Treason and Recklessness [The Petlyurian Rebellion]) (Kharkov, 1927), pp. 19-20, 26; Heifetz, *Slaughter of the Jews in the Ukraine in 1919*, pp. 65-66; Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution, 1917-1921*, 2, 224; Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski o grazhdanskoi voine*, 4, 161-72.

<sup>27</sup> Shlikhter, p. 106, quoting from Kh. Rakovski's *Borba za osvobozhdenie derevni* (The Struggle for the Liberation of the Village) (Kharkov, 1920).

Ukrainian SRs of the Center) worked diligently to provoke anti-Bolshevik feeling. For months Bolsheviks and others had preached rebellion against Rada, Germans, Skoropadski, and Petlyura, as though rebellion itself were a sacred duty. Such teachings were readily assimilated by a culture which for centuries had glorified the Cossacks and the haidamaky for their resistance to every would-be conqueror. Moreover, leaders of the rebelling partisan sections usually belonged to one or another of the many political parties now violently opposed to bolshevism. Thus, Zeleny, leading dangerous anti-Bolshevik forces on the Right Bank, was a member of the Nezalezchnik SD faction which had splintered away from Vinnichenko's Social Democrats in January. He worked closely with a "Central Revolutionary Committee" formed in late March by a coalition of Nezalezhniki, Ukrainian SRs of the Center, and Ukrainian SDs.<sup>28</sup>

In his published manifestoes Zeleny called for a Ukraine that would be independent in its cultural and economic affairs; though he approved of the idea of a federated Russian state, he demanded free federation "without any compulsion or pressure from the side of other nations." And though he favored soviet government, he used this term in its primitive and popular sense, meaning genuine, local self-government and central representative government without dictatorship. The communal farm he was prepared to accept only for those who wanted it. Other rebel leaders followed variations of this formula, supported one or another of the Ukrainian SR factions, or created their own turgid doctrines out of eclectic borrowings from several theories.<sup>29</sup> Thus, each rebel group had its political leaders who provided intellectual justification for rebellion and violence

28. Khrystyuk, 4, 131-33.

29. Antonov, 4, 160, 171-72; Ravich-Cherkasski, p. 122; Podvoiski, *Na Ukraine*, p. 19.

and persuaded their fighters that opposition to bolshevism was morally imperative.

As the rebellions increased, so increased the number and brutality of pogroms. As has been indicated before, profound anti-Semitism was almost endemic to the Ukraine. "Sons of shopkeepers, kulaks, priests, and Christians," Vinnichenko once wrote, speaking of the Ukrainian atamans, "they had from childhood been infected with the spirit of anti-Semitism."<sup>30</sup> His characterization applies to Ukrainian peasant and townsman alike, as well as to Russians living in the Ukraine. Some of Petlyura's officers and atamans began their anti-Semitic activities in the Western Ukraine during December, and spread their pogroms into the Kiev guberniya in January and February. As such partisan leaders left Petlyura to join the Bolshevik side, they brought the fever and excitement of pogromism into the Red Army, and the damage was done.<sup>31</sup> Though Antonov made fearsome threats against pogromists in the ranks of the army, the madness could not be halted.<sup>32</sup> In February and March pogroms took place at "Belaya Tserkov, Elisavetgrad and its suburbs, at Berdichev, Proskurov, Zhitomir, in the small town of Filshin near Proskurov, in Ovruch, Oleevka, Letichev, Balta, Novomoskovsk, in the Jewish farming colonies, in Chernigov, Golta, Olviopol, Bogopol, Gaisin, Ananev, Birzula, Vygoda, Bobrinskaya, Bakhmach, Kazatin, Znamenka, Vapnyarka, Chernobyl, Sarny, Novomirgorod, Zlatopol, and Novoukrainka."<sup>33</sup> These cities and towns and villages are widely distributed across the Ukraine.

The Ukraine's Jews had long borne the weight of centuries-old frustrations and hatreds; now they became the

30. Vinnichenko, *Vidrodzhennya natsii*, 3, 366.

31. Rafes, *Dva goda revolyutsii na Ukraine*, pp. 132-33; Podvoiski, p. 20; Vinnichenko, pp. 367-69.

32. Antonov, 3, 287-88.

33. Gukovski, *Frantsuzskaya interventsia na Yuge Rossii, 1918-1919 g.*, p. 81.

scapegoats upon whom were unleashed all the dark furies created by civil war, social anarchy, and despair. Zeleny's motto was "Death to the Jews and down with the Communists!" Struk's was the same. Yatsenko announced: "The Jews are all Communists; they defile our churches and change them into stables."<sup>34</sup> Some variation of these slogans appeared in the political platform of almost every plundering band of rebels loose in the Ukraine. The piled-up records of mean and vicious slaughter by local people of human beings who had lived near them all their lives read like the pages of an "Inferno" written by a Dante gone mad.

On April 10 several small bands of rebels coordinated by the partisan leader Klimenko attacked Kiev itself. Various elements in the city joined them in the lower town (Podol), where they began rioting to the cry of "Death to the Jews! For the Orthodox faith!" Shops were destroyed, Jews were killed, efforts were made—apparently with some success—to win over a Soviet regiment in the city, and messages were telegraphed to other groups outside the city ordering the destruction of bridges and rail lines into Kiev.<sup>35</sup> Caught unprepared, Antonov ordered troops to the capital. Meanwhile, he used what he had at hand to suppress the Kiev rebellion. A military supply unit, which in the last days of March had had to drop its supply efforts and move west of Kiev to help stop Petlyura, was again ordered to pick up arms and fight. Even then Communist forces were so inadequate that Antonov was compelled to mobilize his "last reserves; members of the government—Comrades Voroshilov, Pyatakov, Bubnov—were sent to Podol at the head of Communist sections to re-establish order."<sup>36</sup>

Bolshevism's ability to sit on the volcano and pretend to govern and direct its eruptions was nearing an end. With

34. Heifitz, p. 66.

35. Shlikhter, pp. 105-06.

36. Antonov, 4, 162-63; Gulevich and Gassanova, pp. 131-32.

a steadily increasing turbulence the people of the Ukraine were defying the Communist government, rejecting its policies, making a farce of its repeated efforts to use some Ukrainians dressed in ragged soldiers' uniforms to suppress other Ukrainians dressed in like fashion. The administrative apparatus of government at Moscow seemed able to make only the most puny efforts to halt the growing troubles by scattering propaganda and policemen and new circulars concerning the necessity to take decisive action. The KP(b)U and its agencies foundered dumbly, incapable of rising to the danger, unable to galvanize party and government and army into effective action. The Ukraine was preparing for a new explosion.

## CHAPTER 8

### *International Complications and Internal Tensions*

THROUGH MARCH, while Grigorev advanced toward Odessa and internal developments grew more threatening, Bolshevik relations with nations just to the west of the Ukraine's borders posed fresh problems for the Soviet Ukrainian Government. Most important among these were the beginning of hostilities with Rumania and the necessity for sending support to the new Communist Republic of Hungary, born at Budapest on March 21. Each of these developments saddled the Ukraine with serious new military obligations.

As for the Rumanian problem, early in 1917 after the Tsar's government had collapsed, the province of Bessarabia—a crescent-shaped corner of land at the southwestern border of the Russian Empire—had declared itself the autonomous Republic of Moldavia, remaining within the Russian state. Two months after the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia this Moldavian government invited Rumanian troops into the country, and in November 1918, it "spontaneously" renounced its autonomy to become a province of Rumania.<sup>1</sup> For the Bolsheviks Rumania's entry into

1. *L'Ukraine sovietiste*, p. 45.

Bessarabia was outright conquest, but Rumania was strongly supported by the Western Allies, and Red troops were too far from the area to attempt reprisals. Antonov's advance through the Ukraine, however, brought Soviet units close to Bessarabian borders. As early as February 1919, Communist groups were organizing Bessarabia for rebellion; in March, Antonov ordered the formation of military units made up of Rumanian refugees in the Ukraine. By the last days of March opposition parties inside Rumania were being aided by Ukrainian agitators, military advisers, and Soviet money, and Antonov had ordered his staff to prepare plans for the invasion of Bessarabia.<sup>2</sup>

Pressure for the Rumanian campaign was intensified by the Hungarian revolution. In the independent Hungary created after the surrender of Austria-Hungary to the Western Allies in October 1918, republican self-government proved unviable. With Hungary treated as a hostile state by the Allies, its territories whittled away by successive ultimatums from Paris, Hungary's responsible political leaders found themselves in the painful situation of trying to win popular support while accepting humiliating demands for territorial concessions to hated neighbors. On March 19, Michael Karolyi's Moderate Socialist government was ordered by the Allies to cede all of Transylvania to Rumania. Realizing at last that Hungary could win no sympathy from the West, Karolyi formed a coalition with Hungarian Communist leaders (actually a capitulation to the Communists), and, on March 21, Hungary was proclaimed a Republic of Workers', Peasants', and Soldiers' Soviets. Lenin's friend, the erratic and ferocious Hungarian Bela Kun, became Hungary's new leader. His character and politics foretold Kun's opposition to further Allied demands and made war with Rumania unavoidable. Needing time to mobilize and train an army, needing food and moral

2. Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski o grazhdanskoi voine*, 4, 27-32.

support and military assistance, Kun looked toward Moscow.

As the founding of the Comintern had just demonstrated, one of the strongest drives in the Bolshevik ethos was the belief that the Russian revolution was but the first step in a series of conflagrations destined to transform the world into a universal proletarian society. Hourly through 1918 and early 1919, Bolsheviks great and small, including Lenin himself, peered anxiously westward, impatiently searching for some evidence that sparks from their revolution were touching off fires in Central and Western Europe. Late in 1918 Germany seemed on the verge of revolution, and Russian propagandists worked feverishly to bring about the political and social holocaust from which they hoped their former enemy would emerge an ally; but though sailors and workers rioting at Kiel and Berlin and Munich encouraged such hope, they proved to be more restless than revolutionary and their efforts failed to bring new nations into the international Communist fold. When the Hungarian revolution placed Bela Kun in power, the Communist flame seemed to have flared up brightly outside the Russian Republic's borders, changing hope to reality. The march across the world had begun.<sup>3</sup> "We in the Ukraine . . . understood the international significance of our fight," Antonov later wrote. "For us it was clear that the fight was a fight with all the forces of world imperialism, a fundamental part of the world proletarian revolution." Stimulated by news of the revolution, he and his commanders "hurried to complete the mopping up of the Ukraine," because they "recognized the necessity of hastening to the assistance of Soviet Hungary."<sup>4</sup>

With Rumanian units expanding their occupation of

3. Lenin, *Sochineniya* (3d ed.), 24, 180, 183; see Borkenau, *The Communist International*, p. 122; Yaroslavski, ed., *Vosmoi sezd RKP(b) 18-23 marta 1919 g.*, pp. 321-22.

4. Antonov, 4, 17-18.

Transylvania and thus threatening the continued existence of Bela Kun's regime, it was imperative that assistance to Hungary begin at once. But between Hungary and Russia stood the Rumanian forces in Bessarabia and the armies of Petlyura and Poland in Galicia. To aid Hungary it was necessary to break through to it by military action. Tactically, two campaigns offered themselves as alternatives: the first, a vigorous assault against Rumania itself, which might slow the movement of Rumanian troops toward Hungarian territory and give Red troops access through Bessarabia and Moldavia to Hungary; and the second, action against Petlyura and Polish troops in Galicia with the direct purpose of clearing a way to the Hungarians or, at the very least, of establishing rail communications with them. As early as March 26, Vatsetis, favoring the latter plan, proposed that Antonov's preparations against Rumania be halted, that troops from the southwest be moved northward for a campaign to the borders of Galicia and Bukovina, which would establish "direct, close relations with the Soviet troops of Hungary."<sup>5</sup> But this was a tentative proposal, and because neither Vatsetis nor the Supreme Council of Defense had as yet clearly defined Bolshevik intentions in this direction it was not put into effect. Instead of following Vatsetis' suggestion, Antonov, whose First Army was engaged with Petlyurian forces west of Kiev and whose personal attention was centered for the moment upon Gri-gorev's race toward Odessa, directed his staff to draw up plans for a Rumanian campaign. As soon as Odessa had fallen, he proceeded to set this campaign in motion "for the support of Soviet Hungary."<sup>6</sup> Antonov was now motivated by an ambition to complete the Ukrainian campaign by recapturing the last bit of "Ukrainian soil" in foreign hands, and this irredentist ambition seems to have persuaded him that the drive against Rumania was also the best way to

5. Kakurin, *Kak srazhalas revolyutsiya*, 2, 90; cf. Antonov, 4, 16, 330.

6. Antonov, 4, 30-33.

save Hungary. For the moment, Vatsetis' more cautious plan fell into the background.

Antonov's new commander on the Odessa Front, the Bolshevik Khudyakov, took over from Skachko on April 7, allowing Skachko to turn his attention once again to his Kharkov Group (now the Second Army) and to affairs in the Crimea and the southeastern regions of the Ukraine. Khudyakov, blunt and forthright, a commander who knew how to give orders and to enforce them, demanded and received obedience from his subordinates. Quick-tempered, aggressive, somewhat harsh and unresilient in his fierce determination to get the job done, he was in many ways just what Antonov's southwestern force (now called the Third Army) needed. Hotheaded zealot and cold-blooded martinet, there was strong possibility that he might prove an effective antidote for Grigorev. At Antonov's orders, Khudyakov immediately launched the attack against Bessarabia. This campaign rapidly gained momentum, so that by April 14 Khudyakov reported his troops engaged in a major battle with the entrenched enemy a few miles northeast of Tiraspol.<sup>7</sup> Thereafter through the rest of April, the Third Army and Antonov's First Army, west of Kiev, struggled to move westward, without support from Vatsetis. As always, however, Vatsetis had good reasons for his failure to help the Ukraine, for in March Admiral Kolchak had begun his supreme effort to advance on Moscow from the east, while on the Southern Front, the situation had steadily deteriorated.

The Southern Front was to have immense significance not only for the Ukraine but for the whole RSFSR as well. Each failure here threatened the very life of the Bolshevik order and thus directly intensified every Ukrainian crisis,

7. *Ibid.*, 4, 36-37.

with the consequence that before the struggle was over, the KP(b)U, its government, and its armies had been drawn almost wholly into the vortex of the struggle to halt Denikin. For both the KP(b)U and the Soviet Ukrainian Government the consequences of this involvement were disastrous; they were to be heaped with the reproaches of their Russian comrades and superiors; and their military commander, Antonov, was ultimately to be accused of betraying the cause by refusing to send adequate reinforcements to the south and by stubbornly continuing his military operations in the west. The facts about these developments are intricate and involved, obscured by many charges and countercharges; they can be understood best by analyzing the complex issues and forces that clashed around the Ukrainian and Southern Fronts from January through June. As a basis for such analysis the principal events on the Southern Front must be set in their proper order.

At the beginning of 1919 the Southern Front still ran just south of Voronezh, describing a great arc that stretched from Kupyansk to Tsaritsyn (see map, p. 244). This brought General Krasnov's Don Cossacks far too close to Moscow for Bolshevik comfort and raised the possibility that a coordinated attack against the capital might be mounted from the south and from Kolchak's front to the east. Moreover, the vast area south of the battle lines and under the political control of Krasnov and Denikin deprived Russia of grain, oil, and much of the industrial might of the Donbass, threatened the whole Ukraine from the east, and offered Allied interventionists an immense beachhead. It was imperative that this front be pushed southward and destroyed. Vatsetis, demanding aggressive action on the Southern Front in January, compelled his commander there to begin a major offensive along the entire front, designed to push General Krasnov's Don Army southward out of the Don region and the Donbass. At the beginning of this campaign, Red forces held a numerical superiority; Kozhevnikov's



Group, and the Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Red Armies had assembled some 120,000 troops against Krasnov's 76,500; but Krasnov's strong Cossack cavalry gave him superior maneuvering power and enabled him to strike repeatedly at the flanks and rear of the slow-moving Red infantry.<sup>8</sup>

Neither side started the 1919 campaign in good fighting condition. Despite Vatsetis' efforts, the Southern Front's Red armies were incorrigibly partisan, their morale was low, and they were suffering badly from typhus. Krasnov's troops, too, were exhausted by long and steady campaigning, and were hard hit by typhus and cold.<sup>9</sup> In the first weeks of the campaign Red forces seized the initiative all along the line, except for the stubborn Tsaritsyn sector, and through February they advanced swiftly, suffering heavily from the elements and a typhus epidemic, as well as from combat. But if the Reds suffered, Krasnov's Don Army collapsed; its demoralized units fell back helplessly and surrendered by whole regiments.

Repeatedly Krasnov begged for support from General Denikin, but the latter had his own problems far to the south where a Red army in the Northern Caucasus engaged the bulk of his forces. This fact, and Denikin's ambition to be recognized as the supreme political and military leader of the White forces in Southern Russia—an ambition which Krasnov opposed—led Denikin to delay sending aid to the Don Army. In January there were no more than 3,000–4,000 of Denikin's Volunteer Army troops in the

8. V. Krasnov, "Iz vospominani o 1917–1920 gg." (From Memoirs about 1917–20), *Arkhiv russkoi revolyutsii*, 8 (1923), 312; Kakurin, 2, 50–51, 53; some Red sources estimate that Krasnov had only 35,000 men, but Kakurin accepts Krasnov's own estimate of 76,500.

9. N. Lyamin, "Operatsiya yuzhnogo fronta protiv gen. Denikina vesnoi i letom 1919 g." (The Operation on the Southern Front against General Denikin in the Spring and Summer of 1919) in *Sbornik trudov Voenno-nauchnogo obshchestva pri Voennoi akademii RKKA* (Collection of Studies of the Military Science Society at the Military Academy RKKA) (Moscow, 1922), 2, 12–13; Krasnov, pp. 302–03; Kakurin, 2, 49–51.

region around Mariupol; however, victories in the North Caucasus and Krasnov's resignation on February 15 encouraged Denikin to transfer units northward. By March he had moved some 18,000 men into the area north and west of Rostov-on-the-Don. In addition to these transfers, Denikin aggressively recruited new units from the local population, thus adding still more strength to his forces. These reinforcements stiffened White resistance, slowed the Red advance, and then brought it grinding to a halt.<sup>10</sup>

While Red forces continued to wear themselves out in a series of limited attacks, Denikin conserved his strength. Early in March, with Vatsetis demanding the quickest possible destruction of all White forces in the south, General Gittis, Commander of the Southern Front, decided to shift his forces westward, aiming to bring the Eighth Army's strength to Kozhevnikov's support for the defense of the Donbass. This transfer of troops from the center of the long front put a decided strain upon the Ninth Army, which now had to stretch its lines until they formed only a thin screen; even worse, this westward shifting of troops was delayed by melting ice, swollen rivers, and an inadequate rail network. When Gittis finally had his armies in position for the attack he intended to launch on March 29, Denikin beat him to the punch. On March 27-28 Denikin's General Pokrovski knifed through the screening Ninth Army, putting the Eighth Army's left flank in jeopardy.

At the western end of the battle line the heaviest fighting was borne by Kozhevnikov's Group (renamed the Thirteenth Red Army) and by Makhno's Ukrainian partisans, who fought on Kozhevnikov's right (southern) flank.<sup>11</sup> Makhno's anomalous position in this struggle deserves particular attention, for it well illustrates both the incredible confusion of the political and military administrative sys-

10. Kakurin, 2, 52, 55-57; Bubnov et al., *Grazhdanskaya voina, 1918-1921*, 3, 229-31; Krasnov, pp. 317-20.

11. Bubnov et al., 3, 232; Kakurin, 2, 144.

tems operating in southern Russia and the dangerously fragile nature of Communist control over major partisan units. In Makhno the Communists had a wily, strong-willed ally, who was guided by a fanatic belief in freedom and the ability of men to govern themselves, and who enjoyed the enthusiastic support of the inhabitants of several villages. But like Grigorev, Makhno, though indispensable, could not be trusted. While he joined forces with the Bolsheviks against their common enemies, he and his unruly followers repeatedly demonstrated their dedication to a kind of anarchistic social and economic order the Bolsheviks would never accept, and made it perfectly clear—in their newspapers, manifestoes, and locally organized governments—that they considered the Bolshevik Soviet government an alien dictatorship.<sup>12</sup>

In February Antonov had assigned Makhno to Dybenko's Zadneprovskaya (Trans-Dneprian) Division, as the Third Brigade. Late in March, Vatsetis ordered that in "operational matters" Makhno's brigade should be transferred to the Southern Front. This was a reasonable decision, since Makhno had for sometime been engaged against White forces around Mariupol and was therefore the anchor of the whole western flank of the Southern Front, but the administrative disorders arising from this partial transfer were almost endless. General Gittis was unable to establish and maintain communications with Makhno. The Thirteenth Army (with its headquarters at Kupyansk) also failed to establish contact; consequently, the Southern Front learned about the military action of the Third Brigade through the Ukrainian Front's daily communiqué to Vatsetis. Further, although the Ukrainian Front was formally relieved of responsibility for Makhno's operational activities, Antonov, Skachko, and Dybenko were still held to account for the anarchist unit's discipline and organiza-

12. P. Arshinov, *Istoriya makhnovskogo dvizheniya (1918-1921 gg.)* (History of the Makhno Movement) (Berlin, 1923), pp. 93-103, 216-18.

tion, and the Military Department of the Ukrainian government remained in charge of Makhno's supplies. Thus, while Antonov looked to Odessa and then toward Bessarabia, Galicia, and Hungary, while Skachko struggled to govern Grigorev, and Dybenko moved troops into the Crimea for a campaign isolated from the main stream of Ukrainian events—all were held responsible for Makhno, who was, in his turn, accountable to the commander of the Southern Front.<sup>13</sup>

Because the supplies the Bolsheviks promised were not forthcoming, Makhno supplied himself, sometimes by commandeering entire Bolshevik supply trains meant for the Southern Front. In the vast area centered at his home at Gulyai-Pole, he and his lieutenants made it quite impossible for Communists to collect food or to set up local governments, and drove out the hated Cheka sections. But though he defiantly ran his portion of the front in his own way, the indomitable anarchist and his some 10,000 followers—Cossacks, peasants, and workers from the Donbass—fought stubbornly and well.<sup>14</sup>

When Kozhevnikov and Makhno attempted to advance toward Taganrog and Rostov in the first days of April, they met a tough Volunteer army led by General Mai-Maevski and supported by the cavalry of the daring General Shkuro. The Red advance was halted. Makhno's brigade, almost shattered by its long weeks of action, now braced itself against the onslaughts of fresh and powerful forces. Exhausted and confused, Kozhevnikov's Thirteenth Army began to fall to pieces. According to the competent Soviet military historian, Nikolai Kakurin, "by mid-April the Thirteenth Army was incapable of fighting and had become a passive witness of events."<sup>15</sup>

Thereafter, catastrophe followed catastrophe for the

13. Antonov, 3, 246; 4, 98-101.

14. Buhnov et al., 3, 232.

15. *Ibid.*, 3, 237.

Bolsheviks. In the Don region, behind the front, a great Cossack rebellion compelled Gittis to pull back some 14,000 men for the restoration of order. The former member of the Imperial General Staff, Vsevolodov, who commanded the Ninth Army, betrayed the Bolsheviks, either through incompetence or treachery, by misdirecting and sacrificing his troops. Denikin, now possessing numerical superiority over the Red forces, struck hard at the Eighth and Thirteenth Armies in an effort to break through to the north.<sup>16</sup> At this moment, defense of the Southern Front, or more correctly the life of Bolshevik Russia, boiled down to whether the Bolsheviks could throw massive reinforcements to Kozhevnikov and Makhno and to the Eighth Army.<sup>17</sup> With Lenin's blessing, Trotsky and Vatsetis had sent almost all available reserves to the Eastern Front. If Denikin was to be halted the Ukrainian Soviet Army would have to shift troops eastward at once.<sup>18</sup>

As in every complex military situation the gravity of the developments on the Southern Front was not immediately obvious to all the participants. Borne up by some false report or misguided sense of optimism, Trotsky announced on April 12 that the fight on the Southern Front was going well, and he blandly promised: "Within the next few weeks our Red regiments will finish the work."<sup>19</sup> But Antonov, who had been watching the situation closely and transferring units to the south on orders from Vatsetis, now took steps to reinforce Makhno without new orders from above. Lenin too had been reading the communiqués from the south with his accustomed perspicuity. A telegram from Podvoiski to Antonov the day before Trotsky's optimistic forecast signaled the beginning of the Ukraine's next agony:

16. Kakurin, 2, 150-51.

17. Lyamin, p. 18; Bubnov et al., 3, 231-32, 237; Kakurin, 2, 144.

18. "Doklady I. I. Vatsetisa V. I. Leninu (fevral-mai 1919 g.)," *Istoricheski arkhiv*, no. 1, pp. 43-44; "The Trotsky Archives," T-164.

19. Antonov, 4, 50.

"Comrade Lenin demands the immediate transfer to the Southern Front of two divisions," Podvoiski wrote. "If you begin the transfer at once, we can . . . brilliantly execute this order from Vladimir Ilich."<sup>20</sup> Podvoiski's good intentions and easy assumption that Antonov could pick up two full divisions for immediate transfer to the south betrayed an amazing lack of understanding of the Ukrainian military situation on the part of the man who headed the Ukrainian government's Military Department.

The troops of the Ukrainian Red Army were scattered everywhere. They were fighting in the Crimea, west of Kiev, at the Bessarabian borders, and some 20,000 of them were busy in the rear areas suppressing pogroms and rebellions. But now orders from Moscow and Serpukhov became increasingly insistent; demands were enlarged and reiterated daily, accompanied by the direst of threats. For the Ukrainian military commander there was no course but to continue operations already in progress, to raise and train and arm new units as rapidly as possible, and to transfer to the Southern Front every organization that could be disengaged from other action.

Skachko, whose lines stretched from the Crimea to a juncture with Makhno's forces near Mariupol and whose whole eastern flank was endangered by Denikin's successes, brought into sharp focus the significance for the Ukraine of the Southern Front's changed situation. On April 12 he advised Antonov that he was pulling troops out of the Crimea in order to strengthen his left flank. The Second Army Commander begged for reinforcements. Declaring that Dybenko's Crimean units which he was transferring were themselves "exhausted," and that the breakthrough on the Southern Front was continuing, he insisted that without help he could do nothing to forestall disaster. And he hastened to fasten the blame for the anticipated defeat to Antonov: "I consider that the responsibility for the fur-

20. *Ibid.*, 4, 55.

ther worsening of the situation lies not only on me, but also on the Commander of the Front."<sup>21</sup> Antonov, while placing the responsibility squarely back on Skachko's shoulders, nevertheless proceeded to scour up whatever help he could. On April 13 a cavalry regiment and a brigade of infantry were transferred from Kiev to Ekaterinoslav, Skachko's headquarters, and the 15th Infantry Regiment, then engaged in the fighting under Khudyakov, was also ordered to the east. But nothing would calm the Commander of the Second Army. While Antonov sent troops and tried to stiffen Skachko's backbone with arguments, threats, sarcasm, and hard common sense, the latter's panic turned to hopelessness and insubordination. During the following week, as telegram followed telegram, Skachko's military messages became maudlin "man to man" soliloquies condemning Antonov's refusal to throw everything in the Ukraine to the Second Army.<sup>22</sup>

Vatsetis, too, applied extraordinary pressures to speed support to the front that was to be his own Waterloo. In an order to Antonov dated April 16, countersigned by both Lenin and Trotsky, Vatsetis said: "For the conclusive liquidation of the opposition on the Southern Front where the enemy has developed his maximum strength, the most energetic support is necessary for the brigade of Makhno, which attacks in the direction of Taganrog extremely slowly and with hardly any success. I propose that you immediately send one brigade from the Zadneprovskaya Division for the support of this brigade."<sup>23</sup> Of the Zadneprovskaya Division, which was the major unit in Skachko's Second Army, the First Brigade was already on its way to the southeast; the Second Brigade (Dybenko) was engaged in active operations in the Crimea (from this brigade Skachko had already ordered to the east every unit he could disengage);

21. *Ibid.*, 4, 52-54.

22. *Ibid.*, 4, 61-63.

23. *Ibid.*, 4, 56.

the Third Brigade was Makhno's. It was hardly possible to send more from the Zadneprovskaya Division.

Antonov responded negatively to Vatsetis' demands, listing the units he had already given up to the Southern Front—a front not under his command and for which he was not responsible. He described the strenuous measures being taken to send armored trains, infantry, cannons, and cavalry, but he argued vigorously against the practice of transferring partisans to the south. Insisting that these units were useful only in the areas where they had been formed, since their men were interested only in local defense, he stated bluntly that transfers "would not work." Furthermore, he was overextended with his own missions. There were the Petlyurian forces west of Kiev and the Poles at Kovel, who opposed the Soviet march to Hungary. If Moscow were to arrange a peace with these western enemies, Antonov suggested, then he might deliver more troops to the Southern Front and also carry out his Rumanian and Hungarian missions. But even if his troops were successful in Rumania, there were still kulak rebellions to be suppressed within the Ukraine.

"It is felt that you exaggerate our strength," Antonov wrote to Vatsetis. "We have been undermined by incessant fighting, we are badly supplied, the men long for home. Food, uniforms, and cartridge supplies are horrible. There are no cannon; horses, because of the kulak uprisings and the [spring] field work, are difficult to obtain; political workers are terribly inadequate; the growing influence of the nationalistic parties and the anarchists is extremely strong."<sup>24</sup> His was the tale of a realistic commander who felt that he knew what his exhausted and unreliable troops could and could not do; it was the tale of a man with too many responsibilities, who remained firmly dedicated to his Ukrainian missions and profoundly unsympathetic to the

24. *Ibid.*, 4, 56-57.

general needs of his commander in chief. He firmly believed that his stand was completely justified by the facts; first, he was not responsible for the Southern Front, and second, he was executing several previously assigned and important missions, which he was obligated to prosecute as aggressively as possible until they were accomplished or until he was relieved.

But Vatsetis was too hard pressed to debate the question. A second message on April 16 increased the previous demands of that day: "Send to the Southern Front one division and one brigade. The designated units must be completely battleworthy, with the best artillery. Their arrival according to orders must take place swiftly and you are personally responsible."<sup>25</sup> When Trotsky followed up this message by reproaching Antonov for his delays, Antonov pugnaciously replied that there had "not been one minute of delay," and he went on to defend his Ukrainian units. These men, he declared, had repeatedly taken impregnable positions. Makhno and his shoeless followers, who had fought without rest for months, "had yielded to the enemy only after the 9th Division [of the Southern Front] had fled." Furthermore, Ukrainian units were "as good as the best on any front"; nonetheless, they would "lose half their fighting ability if they were transferred out of the Ukrainian Front." Antonov earnestly tried to make Vatsetis understand that he was speaking "with knowledge of the local conditions and an understanding of their influence for Makhno and the Ukrainian units," and he begged Vatsetis not to "throw in a heap our military and political organization." The culmination of all these arguments was Antonov's own solution for the problems of the Southern Front: Give him specific objectives in the Donbass, let him command his own units in that direction, and success would be guaranteed.<sup>26</sup>

25. *Ibid.*, 4, 58.

26. *Ibid.*, 4, 59.

To Vatsetis, Lenin, and Trotsky, Antonov appeared to be insisting that Ukrainian troops would fight well only under his leadership. This sounded like a Ukrainophile's unwarranted egotism or the special pleading of an ambitious commander trying to hoard troops for his own glory. In the circumstances, and these were being drastically worsened by Denikin's assault, Antonov's effort to preserve the Ukrainian command also smacked of a deliberate refusal to comprehend the overall military picture. To the men above him Antonov's recent history of outspoken willfulness gave adequate reason for suspecting that his slowness to transfer divisions to the south was motivated by pique and personal ambition, a narrow attachment to the western Ukrainian missions, and personal resentment of Vatsetis and General Gittis.

But Antonov considered that by arguing for the preservation of the Ukrainian command he was only doing what any responsible commander would do to prevent the breaking up of organized formations into leaderless packets of replacements for assignment to new units and strange officers. He was convinced that he could not bring major forces from the west without fatally weakening operations there, and he was positive that Ukrainian units would fall apart without proper handling. In mid-April the struggle between the obstreperous commander of the Ukrainian Front on the one hand and on the other the combined wills of Lenin, Trotsky, and Vatsetis was joined in earnest over this question of aid to the Southern Front. Its further development is an important theme here and in succeeding chapters.

Despite his arguments on April 16, during the next four days Antonov ordered additional units to the south. But paper units could not be fleshed out overnight, stores of arms captured at Odessa and in the Crimea had disappeared into the hands of thieves and partisans, weapons did not arrive from the north, and rebellious units refused to be hurried by weak commanders. Antonov reported to Vatsetis

on April 20 that fighting was in progress in Bessarabia and that the kulak uprisings within the Ukraine were pinning down many of his troops. "Besides this, more than half my forces are local formations which will disperse with transfer," he said. "In addition to what has been given I can give nothing."<sup>27</sup> On the same day he received an ominous inquiry from Lenin's Supreme Council of Defense. Had he received the order to transfer his Second Army to the Southern Front? He had not, but the Center's intent was clear. Antonov at last understood that he was about to be instructed to stand quietly by while the military machine he had organized was cut to pieces by his superiors.

Because it seemed to him that the Center was making a serious error, he once more stepped into the lion's mouth with suggestions for Vatsetis. "I ask you to keep in mind the fact that at this moment the Ukrainian Front cannot give up more without extreme sacrifices. Thirty versts from Kiev there is a kulak uprising (up to 3,000 well-armed people with eight cannon); at Shepetovka the enemy has not yet been broken; the Poles attack from Kovel and Rovno." He explained again that the Petlyurists were still dangerous, and continued: "Hungary begs for assistance. Shattered units are being reformed; they are weakly supported with artillery, almost barefooted, inadequately disciplined." Such troops could not be sent to other commands, but—and here he repeated his earlier suggestion—if Vatsetis would give the Ukrainian Front the mission of saving Taganrog, that fight could be won.<sup>28</sup>

Antonov and Vatsetis had again reached an impasse. When, on April 21, Vatsetis categorically demanded support for Makhno, Antonov just as categorically expressed his opinion that help from him would be useless unless the Eighth Army of the Southern Front made an attack. On

27. *Ibid.*, 4, 60.

28. *Ibid.*, 4, 66-67.

April 22 Lenin broke the stalemate with a telegram to Antonov:

Sokolnikov telegraphs me that Denikin in the Donets Basin splendidly profits from [our] delay, strengthening himself, and that he has collected a fresher force than ours. The danger is tremendous. *The Ukraine is obligated to acknowledge the Donets Basin unconditionally as the most important Ukrainian front, and whatever happens, must immediately execute the task of the Glavkom—to give solid support in the Donets Basin-Mariupol sector.* From the materials of Podvoiski I see that there are masses of military matériel in the Ukraine, even not counting Odessa; it is necessary not to hoard it but to form units immediately for the taking of Taganrog and Rostov. Have you mobilized all of the officers in the Ukraine? No matter what else happens, it is necessary significantly to increase the forces against Denikin. Telegraph details.<sup>29</sup>

From this message Antonov drew the very obvious conclusion that he had been given a new mission: to support the Southern Front in whatever fashion Vatsetis demanded. Lenin, determined to do everything possible to move Antonov's troops, proceeded to make his point again and again. To the Ukrainian government on April 24 he urged: "No matter what happens, with all your strength and as swiftly as possible, assist us to defeat the Cossacks and to take Rostov, even though the cost be temporary weakening in the western Ukraine, otherwise ruin threatens."<sup>30</sup> Another message, dispatched to Antonov the following day, demands some explanation here. On about the 20th, Antonov had sent Lenin word that a tank captured at Odessa

29. Ibid., 4, 67; cf. Lenin, *Voennaya perepiska, 1917-1920*, pp. 55-56 (my italics).

30. Lenin, *Voennaya perepiska*, p. 56; cf. "Trotsky Archives," T-176.

was being forwarded to Moscow for the Eastern Front, and he had followed this news with his plea that Ukrainian troops act on the Southern Front under his own command. On April 25 Lenin replied brutally: "There is no separation between the Southern Front and the Ukrainian Front. For the first [message] I thank you, for the second I curse you. I will punish independence. Transfer the Ukrainian troops for the taking of Taganrog. The obligation is immediate, no matter what the situation. Telegraph."<sup>31</sup>

Antonov had been given a new mission and he had received a criterion for deciding which of his many obligations was most important; yet he had not been relieved of responsibility for the others. Indeed, neither Vatsetis nor the Supreme Council—themselves facing the awful dilemma of too many enemies and too little strength—ventured to relieve the Ukrainian Army of its Hungarian mission, despite their demands for Ukrainian troops on the Southern Front. On the contrary, Lenin demanded the swift movement of troops into Galicia and Bukovina in order "to establish a firm railroad connection with Soviet Hungary."<sup>32</sup> Thus Antonov was required to face both west and east, and though his leaders took little cognizance of the fact, he was deeply involved as well in maintaining order inside the Ukraine. Ukrainian forces were now impossibly overextended.

All through these middle weeks of April Antonov clung to one hope—Grigorev; he was compelled now to rest his ability to give the Southern Front effective aid upon the

31. There are several variations of this message: See "Trotsky Archives," T-176, and Bertram D. Wolfe's translation in "The Influence of Early Military Decisions upon the National Structure of the Soviet Union," *American Slavic and East European Review*, 9 (1950), 174 (from the "Trotsky Archives"); cf. Lenin, *Voennaya perepiska*, pp. 57-58; and V. I. Lenin, *V. I. Lenin pro Ukrainu* (V. I. Lenin on the Ukraine) (Kiev, 1957), p. 532; Antonov's version, quoted here, is unique for its first sentence; otherwise it varies in wording but not in meaning; Antonov, 4, 59, 188.

32. "Trotsky Archives," T-169, T-170.

ataman's willingness to cooperate. To understand the bitter unrealism of this hope and the role it played in Antonov's feverish planning, we must retrace our steps and examine Grigorev's conduct following his victory at Odessa.

From the gubernii of Kherson and Taurida, where Grigorev's influence was greatest, information of an increasingly disturbing nature flowed in to the Communist leaders at Kharkov and Kiev. High-ranking Communist officials were dispatched to Kherson, Nikolaev, and Odessa, where strong Bolshevik groups and sizable populations of urban workers made consolidation of the Soviet regime relatively easy. But out in the villages, Soviet and party workers sent to organize revkoms and soviets, to collect provisions, levy recruits, and transform partisans into Red Army units, found themselves pushing against thick walls of sullen but obviously well-organized peasant resistance. In some of the villages, Grigorev's orders, whether political or military in content, had the force of supreme law, and Grigorev's aides quietly but firmly fended off Communist attempts to gain influence. Almost daily, one or another of the Bolshevik groups working in the villages or with partisan units reported new evidence that Grigorev was shrewdly and systematically blocking every effort to consolidate Soviet civil authority. Even more worrisome were indications that while the ataman masqueraded as a defender of communism, he was actually plotting an anti-Bolshevik rebellion.<sup>33</sup>

The nature of the information on which Communist leaders were basing their thinking about Grigorev in the middle of April is well illustrated by a report from the Communist party committee working at Aleksandriya, Grigorev's home village. According to this group, the Left SRs, having lost all influence with the peasants and the petty

33. Kubanin, *Makhnovshchina*, p. 70.

bourgeoisie, had gone over to sheer adventurism; they had become "a party of madmen, playing irresponsibly with fire." Their greatest power lay in the fact that they were associated with commanders like Grigorev, who opposed the world proletarian revolution. Unless preventive measures were taken at once, the report declared, Grigorev would establish a military dictatorship, for his policy was "the policy of masked counterrevolution, of secretly allying workers with White Guards." To support these contentions, the party committee listed the White Guard officers filling important positions on Grigorev's staff, it recounted threats by Grigorev to shoot Communists and to lead a fight against the Bolsheviks, and it described his arbitrary suppression of proceedings instituted by local Communist party and Cheka agencies. He had told the young SRs joining his units "that to him Communists were unnecessary in the army and that there would come a time when he would separate the Communists from the army." What was true of Grigorev himself, the committee members added, was even more true of his commanders, who were "unconditionally pharisaical about the revolution." All were violently anti-Semitic, all permitted their troops to agitate for pogroms, to drink too heavily, to fire at the passing public.<sup>34</sup>

This report was forwarded to Antonov by Pyatakov on April 14, together with others in the same vein. In a covering letter, Pyatakov noted that the Central Committee of the KP(b)U was continuously receiving "information that Ataman Grigorev and the command staff of his units are political elements to the highest degree untrustworthy." There was more than enough evidence for a forthright decision. "The opinion of the Central Committee," Pyatakov wrote, "is that as soon as possible Grigorev ought to be liquidated, and the Black Hundred [reactionary] officers indicated in the report should be pulled out at once."<sup>35</sup>

34. Antonov, 4, 75-76.

35. *Ibid.*, 4, 74; cf. Kubanin, p. 69.

Bubnov, in his capacity as a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Ukrainian Front, replied for Antonov that the commander of the front would look into the matter immediately and take all possible action; but liquidation, he cautioned, was "a complicated problem . . . impossible to carry out at once without difficulties."<sup>36</sup>

Grigorev's liquidation was indeed a complicated problem, especially so in the light of the imperative demands of Lenin and Vatsetis for action in Galicia and assistance to the Southern Front. The Central Committee's desire to solve the problem that Grigorev posed by getting rid of him helped not at all. Grigorev was needed, and Antonov, fully understanding the dangers, stubbornly opposed his now frightened superiors by adhering to the belief that he could control the ataman. Unfortunately, in the milieu of political, social, and economic license in which Grigorev's units lived and fought, success was not likely.

Meanwhile, Grigorev did his worst to upset Antonov's plans. On April 13, when Antonov first sent detailed instructions to Khudyakov concerning the attack on Rumania, he also directed that Grigorev's unit be sent into the Crimea. The "brigade," which had grown so rapidly during the attack on Odessa, was now reconstituted as the 6th Ukrainian Sharpshooters' Division, with Grigorev as divisional commander. But on the following day, when Khudyakov reported from Odessa that his troops were making an "heroic attack" toward Tiraspol on the Dnestr, his dispatch included bad news. Ataman Grigorev, without anyone's authority but his own, had withdrawn his troops from Odessa and was sending them back to their familiar "stamping grounds," the villages of Aleksandriya and Verblyuzhka. Despite orders to move to the Crimea and join Dybenko, Grigorev was retiring to his "rest camp." Once again, with an arrogant aplomb that challenged all authority, he had followed his own dictates.

36. Antonov, 4, 74.

The ataman had several reasons for getting out of Odessa. The city was not his element; both he and his followers were uneasy in it, neither capable of establishing an orderly government nor interested in doing so. Instead, Grigorev had permitted his followers to plunder the city, and for several days peasant carts and freight cars loaded with manufactured goods of every kind moved out of Odessa toward Aleksandriya and other loyal villages. Meanwhile, the city's Bolsheviks, grown bold with the departure of the French and strengthened by the arrival of Communist officials from Kiev, put their soviet government in order, mobilized their own militia, and made it known to Grigorev that he was an unwanted outsider.<sup>37</sup> He chose neither to fight the Bolsheviks nor to restrain his troops; the only alternative was to withdraw.

There were other reasons for leaving Odessa. The new commander of the Third Army, Khudyakov, showed a forthright determination to give orders and be obeyed; Grigorev developed an instant dislike for the man. It was also true enough that the partisans were tired, but probably more compelling for them was the desire to take their booty home and get in a few days of spring plowing.<sup>38</sup> Finally, the political situation in the Ukraine had become more dangerous than before for the ataman. Soviet authority in the Ukraine had been immensely strengthened by his victory at Odessa and by the general triumphs of the Ukrainian Soviet Army elsewhere. It was time either to submit completely to the Soviet government or join with its opponents and destroy it. Probably without being fully aware of the urgency of his decision, but quite certain that he

37. V. T. Krut, "Do istorii borotby proty hryhorivshchyny na Ukraini," *Litopys revolyutsii*, no. 5-6, pp. 135-37; Anulov, "Soyuzny desant na Ukraine," in Shlikhter, *Chernaya kniga*, pp. 205-09; Vladimir Margulies, *Ognennye gody*, pp. 43-50; Bubnov et al., 1, 74-75.

38. V. Margulies, pp. 59-60; Shlikhter, "Borba za khleb na Ukraine v 1919 godu," *Litopys revolyutsii*, no. 2 [29], p. 123.

could not stomach the Bolshevik dictatorship, Grigorev pulled back into the rural area, where he was still the all-powerful "Ataman," to think out his future.

As soon as Antonov learned of Grigorev's departure from Odessa he wired to Khudyakov: "I order categorically that no troops at all shall be sent to rest from Odessa. Transmit this command to all unit commanders."<sup>39</sup> Undoubtedly Khudyakov did so, since he had no personal liking for disobedient Cossack partisans, but his order had no effect: Grigorev and his troops had already left. Two days later Antonov's military communications chief reported that for several days echelons of Grigorev's troops had been arriving at Aleksandriya and Kutsovka, where they announced their intention of remaining in their freight cars until the tenth of May. With other echelons expected, the communications chief was becoming perturbed over his cluttered tracks, for as each new partisan train arrived, clearing the way for through traffic was growing more difficult. "The soldiers of the arriving echelons are undisciplined," the communications chief reported; "they have dispersed the pre-front committees, and they threaten the railroad agents with weapons. They have arrested some of the members of the pre-front committee." In other areas too, Grigorev's retrograde movement was accompanied by frantic cries to Antonov for help. From Elisavetgrad came a report that more than three thousand of Grigorev's partisans had arrived. These troops were openly anti-Semitic and conducted themselves so provocatively that Elisavetgrad soviet and party authorities considered serious trouble inevitable.<sup>40</sup>

Antonov's estimates of the strength of these forces which were scattering themselves through the central Ukraine explain his reasons for alarm. Grigorev's 6th Division was now a formidable organization, containing some 15,000

39. Antonov, 4, 36-37.

40. Ibid., 4, 78.

officers and men and supported by artillery (26 howitzers and 18 light guns) and about 3 squadrons of cavalry.<sup>41</sup> Secret agents reporting from inside Grigorev's camp presented additionally disturbing information. Grigorev was said to have contacts with Zeleny, then operating with considerable success near Kiev; moreover, Grigorev had allegedly seized at Odessa "a mass of arms—up to 30,000 rifles, which were sent to Aleksandriya." And at Aleksandriya itself were concentrated "up to 300 machine guns, more than 40 cannon, of which 18 are heavy guns." He had carried off from Odessa "10 carloads of manufactured goods, several carloads of leather, up to 20,000 sets of uniforms, and masses of cloth." And he had provided himself with "around 30 carloads of naphtha, kerosine and benzine."<sup>42</sup>

The briefest glance at the other forces under Antonov's command makes the comparative significance of Grigorev's division only too clear. Antonov's First Army, located west of Kiev, was responsible not only for resisting Poles and Ukrainian Nationalists but also for supporting the invasion into Hungary and suppressing internal peasant risings. This, his greatest force, was capable of mustering some 45,000 officers and men in mid-April before transfers to the Southern Front began to weaken it. On the southwest, Khudyakov's Third Army, engaged in Bessarabia, contained about 13,863 officers and men; Skachko's Second Army (the Kharkov Group) held around 10,300. Grigorev's division, therefore, rivaled in strength both the Second and Third Armies, and after Vatsetis and Lenin began to draw reinforcements for the Southern Front from the First Army, Grigorev's division, with its hoards of arms and equipment, became a vital factor in all of Antonov's calculations. During the crucial days following mid-April, Grigorev's division appeared capable of weighting the balance in favor of

41. *Ibid.*, 4, 79, 131; Bubnov et al., 1, 77.

42. Antonov, 4, 78.

bolshevism either in Rumania or on the Southern Front—if only Grigorev would move.<sup>43</sup>

Planning to be in Odessa on April 18, Antonov tried to arrange a meeting with Grigorev. He dispatched a telegram to Aleksandriya inviting the latter to Odessa, but on arriving there with Rakovski, he learned that the ataman had not deigned to come in. Impelled by necessity, Antonov took another step, well beyond the limits his colleagues thought advisable. He sent a message to the truculent Cossack that was a lesson in Bolshevik humility and determination: "In the name of the Red Ukrainian Army, I express regret that your absence from Odessa prevented the President of the Ukrainian Workers' and Peasants' Government and me from expressing to you personally [our] acknowledgement of your military brilliance, and from congratulating you for your military promotion to Chief of Division. I will come to Aleksandriya to see you and to transmit responsible commissions to you. The Ukrainian Red Army is proud of you and of the military units directed by you."<sup>44</sup>

To visit Grigorev was to enter the camp of a crafty antagonist. The decision to do so was a bold step by a desperate man, determined to bring Grigorev into the fight for communism at any cost. Antonov was neither ignorant of the danger to himself nor ill-informed about the ugly temper of Grigorev's partisans. On the contrary, he knew far better than most of his superiors the mood of the Ukrainian partisan-peasants, for though Communist to the heart, he understood the profound reasons for partisan disaffection. He had been intimately involved in Ukrainian affairs for too many months to be capable of deceiving himself with the slogans of party agitators and the eloquently worded resolutions of party congresses and government decrees.

Only the day before his arrival at Odessa Antonov had sent Lenin a carefully prepared analysis of the policy errors

43. *Ibid.*, 4, 128-31.

44. *Ibid.*, 4, 79.

which in his opinion were making rebellion inevitable; his reasoning in this message showed him to be sensitive—in fact, far too sympathetic for the Center's taste—to Ukrainian realities. Offering his analysis in response to the Center's demands for assistance to the Donbass, Antonov bluntly pointed out to Lenin the shortcomings of policy and practice that were destroying not only Ukrainian military efforts but also the Bolsheviks' political future in the Ukraine. He damned the government for the "inadequacy of rifles, shoes, uniforms"; for "the weakness of cadres (especially in the artillery)"; for "bureaucratism in the institutions of the Military Department (Podvoiski has developed an unbelievably complicated machine of military committees—uezd, guberniya, three oblast [military committees], and finally, the People's Commissariat of War; all this 'counts,' 'brings into order,' 'computes,' and so forth, but it is more paper work than real)." He condemned the "inactivity of the sections organized for military provisioning," the "almost complete absence of political workers both in the army and, in particular, among the population (whole important raions, especially Kievskaya guberniya, Volynskaya, yes, and even Khersonskaya have been given over . . . to the Left SRs, or simply to the shepherd's staff)."

Most of all Antonov focused his criticisms upon what he considered to be the government's erring policies, and it is here that his picture of the situation becomes clearest. "Our almost-wholly peasant army," he said, "is unsettled by politics, by the mixing of srednyaks and kulaks . . . by the operation of the Provisioning Dictatorship supported by the Moscow Provisioners, by the almost complete absence of soviet power in the localities." Food collecting groups and Cheka groups working on the Right Bank of the Dnepr "arouse nationalism and call to the struggle against the 'occupiers' [Bolsheviks] all the population without exception." The clumsy land policy, refusing to adapt itself to local peculiarities, encourages "that hatred of com-

munism which our many enemies assiduously sow." The Soviet Army of the Ukraine, composed not of Communists but of Ukrainian SRs, Left SRs, and anarchists, was infuriated by these land policies. "I see how our army is swollen with an unhealthy swelling," Antonov wrote; "and I see how its ruin is coming to a head."

To halt the processes of disintegration and save the Ukraine, he said:

It is necessary: 1) to bring into the Ukrainian government representatives of the parties which represent the middle and poorer peasants (the Nezalezhnik SDs and Ukrainian SRs); 2) to change the land policy to conform with the interests of the middle peasantry; 3) to force the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs to work through the soviets in the localities; 4) to compel foreigners, "Great Russians," to adjust themselves with the greatest tact to local peculiarities and local people; 5) to halt the plundering of the Ukraine's bread and coal; 6) to persuade the party to throw two-thirds of its strength into the villages and the army; 7) to reduce by two-thirds all Soviet institutions, throwing [party and soviet] workers into practical affairs; 8) to bring the Donets [urban] workers into the ranks of our peasant army; 9) in the provisioning policy to carry out not a provisioning but a production dictatorship.<sup>45</sup>

Above all, Antonov insisted, it was necessary to hurry. There can be little doubt that he understood the land he was trying to win.

Immediately following Antonov's decision to visit Gri-gorev, word reached Odessa that the ataman "had begun an uprising against Soviet authority," but the report lacked

45. *Ibid.*, 4, 148.

reliable confirmation.<sup>46</sup> Although the special sections placed around Grigorev with orders to assassinate him in the event of such a rising were alerted, Antonov did not consider canceling his trip. Before he set out for Aleksandriya, however, he spoke with the experienced Communist, Shafranski, a man known both for his devotion to the cause and for his courage. Antonov urged Shafranski to serve as Grigorev's political commissar. Delivered personally to Shafranski at the railroad station, the request was difficult to refuse, but Shafranski managed to avoid giving a positive answer. Only recently relieved of his duties as commissar of the Twelfth Army on the Southern Front, he begged for a short rest before accepting a new assignment and saw Antonov off without committing himself.<sup>47</sup> He was soon to prove how very clear it was in his mind, as in the minds of other unquestionably brave and intelligent men, that Grigorev was a traitor who should be shot.

The trip to Aleksandriya was beset with forebodings of evil. Antonov's train met units reporting acts of violence by Grigorev's men, who were allegedly "disarming and plundering railroad guards" and killing Red Army soldiers. Upon investigating these accounts Antonov discovered the trouble had been caused by, as he put it, "only the Third Battalion of the Kherson Regiment." Clinging to his determination to trust in Grigorev, he managed somehow to persuade himself that the misdeeds of a battalion should not be laid at the feet of its regimental commander, nor at those of the divisional commander to whom the regiment belonged. He was prepared to believe also, as he said in a telegram to Rakovski, that "the railroad workers in all the raion—Left SRs—are provoking the Grigorevians against the Communists." In regard to Grigorev's rumored revolt, he told Rakovski: "There is exaggeration, as always."<sup>48</sup>

46. *Ibid.*, 4, 80.

47. Kozelsky, *Shlyakh zradnitstva i avantur*, p. 17.

48. Antonov, 4, 80; cf. Bubnov et al., 1, 76.

At Aleksandriya Antonov was shown every courtesy. An honor guard was drawn up to meet him at the station, a military band played at a parade, and Grigorev made a "deferential" report. An inspection of Grigorev's troops reassured Antonov, and he observed with approval the friendly relations between Grigorev and the "enthusiastic" citizens of Aleksandriya. As for Grigorev himself, he was "reserved"; he "led an unassuming life"; and it was quite evident that "he had not enriched himself, for his family was settled in a little Ukrainian cottage."<sup>49</sup> But to counter these hopeful signs, there were reports from the secret workers the party had sent out "and the confused mumblings of Ratin," the politkom. E. Trifonov, another feckless party man assigned to assist Ratin, Antonov sent off to the staff of Skachko's army. Comrade Savitski, the Borotbist recently appointed assistant chief of staff, ardently begged to be relieved of his duties, because, as he complained, Grigorev would not let him work.

Carrying in his mind these most recent impressions, as well as the pressures from his superiors for aid to the Southern Front, Antonov arranged a "face-to-face discussion with Grigorev." During this tête-à-tête, he showed Grigorev a "series of reports about the disorders created by his sections," for which Grigorev "gave clever, plausible explanations." According to Antonov, while he set forth his complaints Grigorev twisted and turned; "sometimes, angry, he promised to correct his men with the sword."<sup>50</sup> He readily admitted that he had taken stores of manufactured goods from Odessa, but insisted that the Odessa Executive Committee had permitted him to do so, a fact Antonov knew to be true. He explained that these goods had been distributed to the inhabitants of Aleksandriya "through a citizen's committee," adding that he had "personally, in ataman fashion," distributed some of the largess. Then Gri-

49. Antonov, 4, 80, 83-84.

50. Ibid., 4, 80-81.

gorev countered Antonov's criticisms with his own. The Cheka sections, he complained, acted arbitrarily and unjustly, overriding even Communist party men. Army supply sections worked poorly, he said, and he "supported these complaints with reports from his commanders, countersigned frequently by political commissars." What especially incensed the population were abuses arising from the interference of Russian and Jewish Communists. Antonov, all too familiar with the difficulties Grigorev complained of and personally sympathetic to the Ukraine, needed little convincing. He must have kept himself stern with difficulty.

Grigorev also objected to the central government's encroachment upon local soviet authority. The centralizing tendencies of Lenin's Central Committee, crystallized into resolutions by the Eighth Party Congress, were bearing fruit. Grigorev spoke of the way the elected executive committee of the Kherson guberniya had been "replaced by appointed Muscovites." He grumbled that rather than carry on "agitation for the support of the north by food," the Produce Army people "tried to seize the grain by force," and, of course, "they were opposed by armed peasants." Another of the fundamental difficulties was the way "representatives of the land organs mercilessly agitate for the incomprehensible commune." Carrying his points one by one, and supporting them with illustrations drawn from personal experience, Grigorev wound his way to conclusions surprisingly similar to those Antonov had expressed in his April 17th message to Lenin. It is a striking commentary on the nature of Bolshevik policy that both the ardent Communist and the hostile Cossack so clearly perceived the fundamental party errors and objected to them for the same reasons. And it is noteworthy that the loyal Communist's complaints to Lenin were couched in words far stronger than Grigorev's. Antonov had blamed Bolshevik policy for the weakness of his military forces. Grigorev, emphasizing that he was "a

warrior, not a politician," made the same telling point. "Soviet policies are destroying my forces," he insisted; because of them he was doubtful whether he could keep the troops "within the necessary boundaries."<sup>51</sup>

Recognizing the justice of these charges and "internally vexed" by their truth, Antonov nonetheless cut short Grigorev's fulminations. He attempted to justify the mistakes of Soviet institutions by pointing out their newness, and he insisted that the inefficiency of the administrative apparatus could neither "justify the disorders in Grigorev's units, nor remove the responsibility of the Division Commander." As Antonov tells the story, Grigorev carefully preserved his self-control through this discussion, promising to suppress the disorders and report back when he had done so. Then Antonov went on to operational affairs. He outlined the strategic situation, managing to make it appear quite favorable, told Grigorev that the "sole serious enemy was Denikin," and explained the battle plan against Denikin. His description of the mission he had in mind for the ataman made it sound like a choice military plum, a splendid opportunity to win new glory: Grigorev would rapidly concentrate his division in the south, and "together with the brigade of Makhno he would develop a swift attack, cutting through to the Donbass." Grigorev, however, did not like the sound of the plan. He "became pensive and scowled." Possibly, like Antonov, he was wondering if his units would hold together when transplanted from their home grounds; possibly he was calculating the glory that might come to him—or be stolen from him by his competitor, Makhno. He may have been trying to weigh the probability of success against Denikin, or perhaps his mind was already set upon rebellion and he only continued to dissemble until he was ready to act. Whatever the thoughts passing through his clever brain, Grigorev replied "ir-

51. Ibid.

resolutely, that his units were in rest camps; to begin their movement before the end of the week would be impossible."<sup>52</sup> Thus ended the first interview. Antonov had not yet succeeded in bringing the ataman back inside the Bolshevik fold.

Reflecting on this first conference, Antonov felt that he had gained a much better understanding of Grigorev's motives than he had previously possessed. The man, he decided, was "a type—an ambitious adventurer. Recognizing the strength of Soviet authority, he would remain loyal as long as he could satisfy his ambitions; on the other hand there was no assurance that he would not disrupt the movement into the Donbass, where Makhno would rival him in military successes. Obviously it was necessary to increase political control over him and to check back on his execution of orders." On the basis of this inconclusive interview Antonov informed Rakovski: "Grigorev and his units—are trustworthy fighting reserves; his willfulness is atoned for by his fighting courage and his undoubted military talents. He will not undertake any rising against us while his ambition is satisfied. He has agreed to go into the Donbass, but after this week, because the units are dispersed in their homes on leave."<sup>53</sup>

To strengthen Bolshevik authority in this division Antonov decided to give Grigorev a thoroughly responsible political section by replacing Ratin with co-chiefs Shafranski and Savitski. Unfortunately, others were more cautious than Antonov. Savitski was already trying to wriggle out of his assignment. Antonov sent a message to Shchadenko at Odessa requesting him to send Shafranski out to Aleksandriya, but Shafranski now obdurately declined the honor. He "flatly refused to go," announcing that he would "sooner submit to an order for arrest." Then he left Odessa under the protective wing of Rakovski and escaped to Kiev.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*, 4, 81–82.

In a subsequent attempt to execute Antonov's order, Shchadenko contacted Bubnov at Kiev, asking him to negotiate with Shafranski, but the latter would not budge.<sup>54</sup>

It was while Antonov was at Aleksandriya that Vatsetis bombarded him with orders to send more troops to the Southern Front; there also, after his first interview with Grigorev, he received Lenin's inexorable command to consider the Donbass his most important front. Skachko's whining criticisms, too, reached him at Aleksandriya, and while Antonov struggled to put iron into Skachko's backbone and to round up units from the west for the south, he also watched Dybenko's campaign in the Crimea, studied the pleas for help from Hungary, and directed efforts to suppress peasant rebellions on the Dnepr's Right Bank. His obligations were becoming unendurable, his nerves were wearing out, his temper had grown brittle. The messages he sent to Rakovski and Podvoiski, to Vatsetis and Lenin, were becoming more and more irascible. Antonov was near the breaking point. Weighted down by the multiple demands upon his attention and the constant need to make too many important decisions, exhausted by his own irritation with subordinates and superiors, and torn by the dilemma of his two chief missions, the one to the west, the other to the Donbass, he had still to devise some argument persuasive enough to win Grigorev.

Even to be in the presence of Grigorev and his partisans created delicate problems for Antonov. The former Borotbist, Aleksandr Shumski, now a member of the Ukrainian Soviet Government and its representative in a special committee investigating various charges against Grigorev, was also at Aleksandriya. On April 23 he and Antonov accompanied Grigorev to the village of Verblyuzhka "for a celebration of the 1st Verblyuzhski Regiment." Their automobile was met by a big crowd from the village that had given

54. *Ibid.*, 4, 82.

Grigorev 4,000 fighting men, and Grigorev was lionized by the people. During an inspection of the troops, Antonov found them to be a "healthy assortment," with worn-out boots. "There was a tour of the organization and a parade that marched to the music of a regimental band"; "a meeting under the open sky"; "a report in Ukrainian by a stubby, bushy-whiskered commander, about the exploits of the regiment." Then Antonov gave an address and stressed the fine "revolutionary discipline of the regiment and . . . the victories of the Red Army on all fronts." The troops gave him a long "Hurrah!" and "Grigorev offered a toast to the Commander of the Ukraine." Antonov, waxing enthusiastic, "replied with a toast to Soviet power" and there was another triumphant "Hurrah!" Then Shumski spoke, and the mood of the meeting suddenly turned black and dangerous.<sup>55</sup>

Speaking in the Ukrainian tongue, Shumski "at first had obvious success," but when he "turned to the Soviet land policy and pronounced the word *commune* the rear ranks began rumbling." This was "joined by the whole crowd and became a roar." The kulaks' faces distorted with anger, and Grigorev himself had to screen Shumski and protect him. Then Grigorev patiently reasoned with the people, but the anger was not soon smoothed away, and Antonov spoke again, "cautiously explaining . . . that the Soviet power was not carrying out a policy of forced collectivization, that it only summoned the poor peasants and middle peasants to be united in a comradely fashion, in order jointly to master their needs, to improve their economy." But the unpleasant mood, it seemed to Antonov, was not even dispersed with "the beginning of games for prizes." He was deeply impressed. Shumski, he realized, might have been torn to pieces had not Grigorev shielded him. He saw that Grigorev himself rode a wild horse which might throw him

55. Ibid.

at any moment, or, perhaps more accurately, that Grigorev fled before a wave of pent-up fury, calling himself its leader. The distorted faces, the roars of the enraged peasants—and of their sons dressed in worn boots and new English uniforms seized at Odessa—compelled the commander of the Ukrainian Army to reflect deeply upon the issues embarrassing his military affairs.<sup>56</sup>

After the public ceremonies, Antonov, Shumski, and Grigorev, with “several of the most important men of Verbluzhka, went off to the hut of the president of the village soviet. There the leading villagers gave free rein to their accumulated dissatisfactions.” Grigorev stepped into the conversations to add his own bitter testimony. Shumski listened and took notes, and later in the day personally investigated some of the complaints. Under the influence of these impressions and in sympathy with most of the complaints that he had heard, Antonov sent Rakovski new recommendations:

I was today in the village of Verblyuzhka. The population has been provoked by the actions of the Produce Sections. First, organize local authority; then with its assistance the grain can be pumped out. Grigorev and his units are extremely aroused. He is with the peasants always; now he is tied with untrustworthy ones, exclusively of the Ukrainian SRs. Shumski told me this just now. Grigorev, externally, is submissive, but obviously will undermine the dispatch of troops to the Donbass. I declare categorically to you as head of the government: the policy now going on in local areas creates damage; there is anger against the violators of authority, not just among the kulaks, but precisely at all levels of the population. Comrade Shumski will bring material to you.<sup>57</sup>

56. *Ibid.*, 4, 83; cf. Anulov, p. 208.

57. Antonov, 4, 83; dated April 23.

Antonov had laid bare for Rakovski the social dissatisfactions underlying Grigorev's perversity, but it was too late to begin trying to solve the social problems as a means of obtaining Grigorev's cooperation. Furthermore, although Antonov's immediate need was for Grigorev's division, it was clear to him that Grigorev could not be trusted in the Donbass. During the first interview the ataman had muttered words about the need he felt for coming to "an understanding with the Don Cossacks." To send him there might simply strengthen the powerful uprising in the rear of the Southern Front. Antonov faced a familiar problem. On the one hand, a coalition of Makhno or the rebellious Don Cossacks with Grigorev would mean the creation of a third force of great military strength. Whatever its political tendencies, such a force was certain to be unmanageable and anti-Bolshevik. On the other hand, if Grigorev did not join Makhno but worked near him, jealous as he was of the batko's power and popularity, he would undoubtedly try to undermine the anarchist forces. Either alternative spelled new confusions and dissensions.

After discussing the alternatives with Shumski, Antonov decided that it was impossible to send Grigorev to the south; instead, he must go "into Bessarabia, against the Rumanians." Thus Antonov made an important change of plan. If he could persuade Grigorev to accept the mission in Bessarabia, he might then pull reliable units from the western borders and transfer them to the Donbass. This appeared to be an almost perfect solution of the Grigorev problem, for the campaign would take the ataman and his unruly followers completely out of the Ukraine. Armed with this plan, on the evening of April 23, Antonov went to his second interview with Grigorev.<sup>58</sup>

Once again the Commander of the Ukrainian Red Army "listened to Grigorev's passionate attacks on the Soviet

58. *Ibid.*

Power's land and food policies." And again he tried to demonstrate that the worst abuses did not represent general policy, but were only temporary and local shortcomings.<sup>59</sup> However, his main purpose was to persuade Grigorev to accept the Rumanian mission, and he concentrated on this.

"Staring eye-to-eye with the 'Ataman,'" Antonov said:

Look, Comrade Grigorev, you are on a dangerous road. Around you roam dark influences. They pull you into adventure. Look—in union with the Soviet Power you have obtained victories of worldwide significance, glorifying your name. You prize this name. Do not succumb to the treasonous slanderers. With great new works you can go down in history. But only with the Soviet Power—under its banner.

Observe. All of Europe is in ferment. There is an uprising of workers in Austria. The Soviet Power is in Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey, and it is about to be thrown into Rumania. The Bessarabian peasants await us in order to arise as one. I know that you do not wish to go into the Donbass. You will receive another order—a campaign through Bessarabia against the Rumanians.

Antonov's enthusiasm carried him away. All of his considerable knowledge of men and politics went into this effort to persuade the ataman. "Here is a map," he said. "You will go the route of Suvorov. You, with your glorious fighters will revive the memory of the miracle-working *bogatyri* of ancient campaigns."<sup>60</sup>

59. *Ibid.*, 4, 83-84; in the following paragraphs the material within quotes, including the dialogue, is taken from Antonov's verbatim report of the interview.

60. Count Aleksandr Suvorov, one of Russia's greatest military men, brilliantly commanded the armies of Catherine the Great. In 1799, under Paul I, he led the allied armies of an anti-French coalition into Italy and Switzerland; *bogatyri*: the valiant heroes whose exploits on the steppes and in the forests of early Russia are the subject of many legends and fables.

Antonov "fixed the usually shifty eyes of Grigorev. The ataman's eyes burned feverishly and he trembled." But he obviously hesitated, and Antonov pressed him more hotly.

"Comrade Grigorev!" he declared. "We know all. We know in what direction you are inclined. But I reply to the conspirators: 'Grigorev cannot tear himself away from the affairs of the workers; Grigorev is too intelligent; he knows how great is the strength of the Soviet Power.' It sweeps everything before it. Whoever betrays it betrays the working peasants and the workers, and will be crushed unconditionally and will perish, scorned by the hands of the workers. Here are two roads, Comrade Grigorev. One summons you along the way of honorless treason and destruction; we call to you to continue your road of honor and glory. You will go to new victories for which your name will thunder forever."

Needless to say, the Commander of the Ukraine did not "know all." But he had touched the sensitive nerves of Grigorev's ambition and pride.

Meanwhile, Grigorev played his part fully as well as Antonov. Antonov saw the ataman's chest heave convulsively. Then "with tears in his eyes," Grigorev pressed Antonov's hand with both his own.

"I have decided," Grigorev said. "Believe me! I am with you to the end! I will go against the Rumanians. I will be prepared in a week. I will clear away all the rascals; there will be order. Only give me more workers and boots."

The decision was made.

## CHAPTER 9

### *Rebellion*

BY SECURING GRIGOREV'S promise to campaign against the Rumanians, Antonov had found at least a theoretical solution for his main difficulties. But promises are easily broken, and Antonov took immediate steps to ensure that Grigorev's would be carried out. Once again he ordered Shchadenko to send Shafranski out to Grigorev as political commissar, threatening dire punishment if Shafranski refused to move. To Khudyakov, he explained that Grigorev would begin moving his troops toward the Bessarabian Front in three or four days and would complete this operation in about a week. He directed Khudyakov to designate Shafranski and Savitski as first and second political commissars in Grigorev's division; then for good measure he emphasized the fact that Grigorev's forces were still a part of the Third Army and subject to Khudyakov's orders.

Another military-political fence had to be inspected before Antonov could return to Odessa and Kiev. Persistent rumors linked Grigorev with Makhno, and, at the moment, Makhno was exhibiting more than his usual truculence. Soviet food collectors and political institutions found it impossible to function in the region under his domination. In addition, Makhno had just arrested and declared outside the law all the Communist political workers assigned to his brigade. His thin line of partisans, faltering in the effort

to withstand the assaults of Denikin's lieutenants, needed all the help it could be given. Moreover, it was imperative to bolster Makhno's will to fight, and if possible to draw him further into the Bolshevik camp. From Aleksandriya, therefore, Antonov traveled to the big village of Gulyai-Pole, home and headquarters of the batko.

A troika took the commander of the Ukrainian Front to the village, where a band played the "International." A "small, young-looking, narrow-eyed man, with a fur cap aslant on his head," saluted and welcomed him. Blond, blue-eyed, and fanatically dedicated to his own peculiar brew of anti-Bolshevik ideas, Batko Makhno was adept at hiding his thoughts and biding his time. He conducted Antonov along the front where the main part of the brigade was engaged in the fighting, and Antonov was favorably impressed by the Makhnovist fighters, the well-ordered staff, and the soft-spoken commander. But when they discussed the military situation, Makhno was full of complaints about the government's failure to supply him with money and weapons, cartridges and uniforms. A typical frustration was the recent shipment of 3,000 Italian rifles which had included such a small quantity of cartridges that the supply was already exhausted.<sup>1</sup>

When their talk turned to Makhno's wholesale arrest of Communist political commissars, Antonov posed the issue bluntly. "If you arrest them," he said, "then you must arrest me."<sup>2</sup> Just what there was about Antonov or about the confused political and military situation that caused Makhno to reverse his stand, it is difficult to say; whatever his reasons, he freed the commissars and permitted them to return to their posts, with the proviso that they work "as honorable revolutionaries and not spies."<sup>3</sup> The batko also

1. Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski o grazhdanskoi voine*, 4, 110-11.

2. V. S., "Ekspeditsiya L. B. Kameneva dlya prodvizheniya prodgruzov k Moskve v 1919 godu," *Proletarskaya revolyutsiya*, no. 6 (1925), p. 138 n.

3. Ibid.

convincingly denied any close tie with Grigorev. Admitting that he had sent one of his aides to the ataman, he claimed he had done so in order to suppress a counterrevolution if that were Grigorev's intention. Antonov allowed himself to be persuaded, and after sending out peremptory orders to various supply officials that money, goods, and guns be delivered to Makhno at once, he turned back toward Odessa.<sup>4</sup>

Two important developments related to the Grigorev affair had followed Antonov's last interview with the ataman at Aleksandriya. The first was a change in Antonov himself. After April 23 his conduct can only be characterized as that of a man who deliberately refused to face the truth about Grigorev's division. He had determined in his own mind that those wild, undisciplined units must go into Rumania, where there was certain to be enough fighting and plunder and fair Rumanian women to satisfy them all. Grigorev *had to go*. So obsessed was Antonov with this decision that he seems to have lost much of his clear perception of reality. He refused to believe the reports, piling up in every headquarters, of growing disturbances; he would not see what all around him saw—that rebellion was virtually inevitable. As for the second development—a steadily increasing tumult in the areas under Grigorev's sway—its causes were numerous. Grigorev's restless, Jew-and-Communist-hating peasant-soldiers were running out of patience with communes and commissars. Defying even the ataman himself, they went out of control, not in any planned fashion but unit by unit, as the situation or the provocation coincided with the mood. When he could, Grigorev suppressed the disorders in separate units, but he played a losing game, for sporadic violence in one locality "spattered" to other areas, creating an endless chain of incidents. In and through this ominous atmosphere moved representa-

4. Antonov, 4, 112, 115.

tives of various political groups who sought actively to incite the partisans to rebel against the Bolsheviks—Petlyurist agents, Left SRs, the Nezalezhniki, monarchists, and those village intellectuals who were nationalists or haters of the Jews. During these days Grigorev himself appears to have been of two minds, at one moment contemplating and moving toward revolt against the Communists, at another assiduously and repetitiously assuring himself and all Soviet officials that he would be loyal to the Bolshevik cause until death.

Almost every message from Communist officials stationed in and around the areas frequented by Grigorev's partisans brought new evidence of irregular plundering expeditions; reports were peppered with news about small pogroms, shootings of station agents, commissars, and members of the Cheka. In answer to the angry inquiries sent to him from various Bolshevik headquarters, Grigorev composed eloquent telegrams disclaiming responsibility, promising immediate disciplinary action, professing ignorance, complaining of Bolshevik excesses, and denouncing the punitive forces sent in to suppress his marauders. From the villages he controlled came word that all party work was being stifled; political workers and Cheka agents alike were in hiding; partisan gangs requisitioned supplies, horses, and household articles, so paralyzing local government that the Plenary Food Commission in Kherson guberniya was forced to bring its work to a halt. This failure, according to the head of that commission, doomed "to death . . . precious Great-Russian and Latvian Red Army units, the families of the workers, and all the proletariat."<sup>5</sup>

While one of Antonov's commissars, Shchadenko, brutally accused his superior of blindly refusing to face the inevitability of betrayal, Antonov cultivated a calm demeanor and tried to quiet his worried colleagues by scolding them

5. *Ibid.*, 4, 193.

for their "alarmism" and provocation.<sup>6</sup> Even Antonov, however, could not remain utterly insensitive to the signs. On his way back to Odessa from Makhno's camp, he halted again at Aleksandriya on April 29 to talk with the ataman. At this meeting Grigorev charged local Communist groups with deliberately carrying on provocational activities to create disturbances among his own people. He justified his failure to get his troops started toward Bessarabia by asserting that he was trying to re-establish order in the troublesome units.

Antonov sensed a change—a new bustle and liveliness in the village. It was evident that the promise of plunder in Rumania was attracting new recruits by the hundreds. Definitely something was in the wind. Rebellion? The "special group" introduced by the Bolsheviki for secret surveillance and action in case Grigorev went off the track had nothing suspicious to report. Shafranski had not yet arrived; Ratin, the incumbent commissar, "stupidly lay around" and had no suspicions to communicate. But Antonov's searching eyes marked small discrepancies: though everything seemed to be in order, things were "too much so." Grigorev himself was nervous and jumpy. When one of Antonov's aides stepped into the railroad car to make a report, walking with his hand resting on the butt of the Mauser pistol at his belt, Antonov saw Grigorev start and shudder, and he added this "incident to the contradictory information arriving from various sides."<sup>7</sup>

Despite these personal observations, Antonov's determination to believe the best of Grigorev was not softened. "I have cleared up the situation by personal acquaintance with it," he advised Rakovski on April 30; and he went on to reaffirm his conviction that Grigorev was friendly and would fight in Bessarabia, particularly if his backbone were stiffened with additional commissars and political workers.

6. Bubnov et al., *Grazhdanskaya voina, 1918-1921*, 1, 76.

7. Antonov, 4, 193-94.

It is noteworthy that both Rakovski and Podvoiski approved the military commander's report, although Podvoiski "insisted upon the development of a plan 'for putting the bands of Grigorev and Makhno into a regular order, or the gradual disbandment and dispersion of the personnel into trustworthy units.'"<sup>8</sup> As usual, Podvoiski's suggestions were not marked for their practicality. It was not the moment for transforming the partisans into regulars, nor were forces available to make the partisans disband; moreover, spreading the independent warriors of Grigorev and Makhno through "trustworthy" units was almost sure to transform the reliable units into partisan rioters.

Rakovski voiced his failure to comprehend the partisan problem in a message to Antonov that was almost naïve. "Concerning Grigorev and Makhno," he said, "they cannot be as personally terrifying as they seem, but they are in the hands of those who surround them. The first, owing to his drunkenness, can pull something about which in a sober condition he might be sorry, but later."<sup>9</sup> He was wrong on several counts. To those who had met Grigorev and Makhno and appraised their qualities with perception, both men *were* personally terrifying; it was impossible to exaggerate their potential danger to the Soviet regime. To characterize the Grigorev threat as a simple question of Grigorev's penchant for vodka was to ignore entirely the social turmoil of the Ukraine and the glaring failures of Communist policy and practice. That Rakovski could speak as he did demonstrated both his contempt for the Ukrainian people and his ignorance of their condition.

Given the circumstances, there was little the government at Kiev could do but approve Antonov's recommendation and hope that he could push Grigorev into the Bessarabian action. At the very least this plan promised to delay direct conflict with the ataman until more immediate external

8. *Ibid.*, 4, 195–96.

9. *Ibid.*

dangers were disposed of. Therefore, the Ukrainian Council of Defense "completely approved the line of conduct" taken by Antonov.<sup>10</sup>

In the first days of May, Grigorev's departure for action in Rumania became all the more necessary because of new developments in Russia's international relations. On May 1 the Russian and Ukrainian Soviet Republics issued an ultimatum to the Rumanian government: within 48 hours it was to clear Bessarabia of Rumanian troops, gendarmes, and officials, and give Bessarabian workers and peasants the right to organize their own government. In addition, the Rumanian government was directed to turn over to people's courts all who were guilty of crimes against the people of Bessarabia and to return matériel "belonging to Russia and pillaged by Rumania."<sup>11</sup> On the same day Rakovski wrote Antonov: "With whatever forces we have, we must begin the invasion of Rumania."<sup>12</sup> The Ukrainian government followed up the first ultimatum with another delivered on May 3, demanding that the Rumanians withdraw from Bukovina within 24 hours.<sup>13</sup> Rumania ignored both demands, and on May 4 the Central Executive Committee of the Ukrainian Soviet Government publicly pledged itself to go to the assistance of Soviet Hungary (through Rumania). Meanwhile, Vatsetis began to press for action in support of Hungary at the earliest possible moment.<sup>14</sup> To tighten the screws still further, a representative of the Communist Hungarian government made a desperate flight to Kiev on the 7th, bringing news that Hungary, branding unacceptable the terms Rumania of-

10. *Ibid.*, 4, 197.

11. *L'Ukraine soviétique*, pp. 62-64.

12. Antonov, 4, 196.

13. *L'Ukraine soviétique*, p. 64, Document no. 14.

14. Antonov, 4, 46.

ferred, had resolved to fight to the last drop of blood.<sup>15</sup> Help was imperative.

Khudyakov, already engaged in operations in the southwest and anxious to get on with them, planned to hold Grigorev's division in reserve and advance with other units in the leading echelons, but Antonov quickly interposed with an order that Grigorev be placed in the front lines. Since Khudyakov's main force was ready to move, and delay might mean failure, the commander of the Third Army objected, refusing to alter his plans. But Antonov persisted: "It would be better to slow down the operation a day or two than to risk the rear. . . . Grigorev will go in every direction but forward. It is essential that you push him forward personally."<sup>16</sup> Poor Khudyakov was between the devil and the deep blue sea. When he sent out an unusually peremptory dispatch to Grigorev, he met once again with Antonov's interference. This time, owing to the "tone" of his dispatch, he was directed to apologize and "be more tactful with Grigorev."<sup>17</sup>

Khudyakov, however, was driven by his own particular misgivings, for he had but recently acquired evidence which he regarded as conclusive proof that Grigorev was plotting a rebellion. On May 2 his signal units had intercepted a cipher message sent out by Mosenko, commander of one of Grigorev's brigades, to the assistant commander of the 5th Tiligulski Regiment, a unit which Grigorev had organized late in March but which had somehow been pulled away to serve Khudyakov on the Bessarabian Front. "Comrades!" this message read. "Telegraph immediately to whom you are loyal—to the commune-building commander, Khudyakov, or to the honorable socialist of the Ukraine, Ataman Grigorev, who, standing firmly upon the platform of soviet authority does not trust the people who come from the

15. *Ibid.*, 4, 48.

16. *Ibid.*, 4, 45.

17. *Ibid.*, 4, 197.

North. If you acknowledge the ataman, then you are entrusted to me, the Second Brigade, and you will execute my orders. Advise me where you are, in what situation."<sup>18</sup> The intention to rebel could hardly have been expressed more clearly.

For several days, apparently, Khudyakov withheld from Antonov this evidence of incitement to mutiny; then, on May 7, angered by Antonov's interference and Grigorev's continued insubordination, the Third Army Commander sent down his own ultimatum to Grigorev: "If, within 24 hours, the disorders of your three regiments are not cut short, I will declare you outside the law and will proceed against you as if you were a counterrevolutionary. You must, within 24 hours, cut short the disorders or, if you are helpless, go to Odessa and give up your command."<sup>19</sup> Here was no Anatole Skachko, but a man who knew how to demand and enforce obedience.

Antonov immediately upbraided Khudyakov for having "demolished the line of conduct of the Council of Defense," but fortunately for Khudyakov, the 7th was also the date of the Hungarian emissary's arrival at Kiev, an event which served to heighten Antonov's concern over the worsened Hungarian situation. "It is impermissible to delay the attack," he informed Khudyakov. "Move swiftly with Dmitriev, with Grigorev behind him. Tomorrow I will come to Odessa."<sup>20</sup> Antonov also composed other messages that day, coaching Khudyakov in the handling of Grigorev, instructing him not to speak in the language of ultimatums. Then, to shore up what was fast becoming but a pious hope, he sent the following message to Grigorev: "In the name of the glory, honor, and welfare of the Ukrainian village people and the workers, gather your regiments into iron

18. *Ibid.*, 4, 197-98; for the history of the Tiligulski Regiment, see *ibid.*, 3, 248; 4, 79, 125.

19. *Ibid.*, 4, 198.

20. *Ibid.*, 4, 48.

hands and go forward to new victories. The Commander of the Army of the Ukraine expresses trust in the Red Regiments of Kherson and their invincible leader."<sup>21</sup>

In the face of the little tempest roused by Khudyakov's ultimatum of May 7, Grigorev was the very essence of innocence. His message to Rakovski, Antonov, Skachko, Khudyakov, and the Military Commissar of the Kherson guberniya exuded sweetness and light. Professing to be "extremely surprised" by what he termed Khudyakov's "provocation," he reported that "all the political workers and the best representatives of the command staff" had been sent out to suppress the troubles within his division. "I hope to have mercy on all," he said grandly, "and on May 8 all units of the division will move." He further declared that the movement of his artillery was already underway, that the units still being organized would soon follow. Except for boots, which he had promised his troops, he had "everything else in adequate quantities."<sup>22</sup>

Despite these model sentiments expressed by a model commander, other sources provided evidence that the situation was fast becoming uncontrollable. Viller, chairman of a military inspection group sent out from Kiev, reported that Grigorev's Verblyuzhski Regiment had carried out a pogrom at Znamenka. Twelve Jews were dead, Jewish homes and stores had been destroyed, and forty hostages had been dragged off to Elisavetgrad, where another pogrom was in progress. According to Viller, local groups were inciting the soldiers to acts of violence against the Jews, the pogromists were increasing in number, and there was danger that they would join with other anti-Soviet groups in the Ukraine to form a united front. "We have summoned Grigorev and the political commissar of the division for a joint trip by train to Elisavetgrad to liquidate the Verblyuzhski," Viller reported. "As yet he is not here;

21. *Ibid.*, 4, 198.

22. *Ibid.*, 4, 199.

if he does not arrive we shall go to Aleksandriya. Take resolute measures while it is not too late."<sup>23</sup>

Unable to devise any new strategem, Antonov decided that he must once again play his only trump. He would go out to Grigorev again, "in order to get him to execute the operational orders—the departure of the division for the campaign against Rumania." If Grigorev would not move, Antonov was now determined "to liquidate the obstinate ataman." Arriving at Odessa at 11:00 P.M. on May 8, he was halted by an urgent message from Rakovski. The uncoded first sentence warned: "Do not go further until decoded." When the rest of the telegram had been deciphered, Antonov read: "Grigorev has raised a rebellion; he has arrested the political commissar and also Savitski. Be cautious."<sup>24</sup>

Rakovski's message signaled the beginning of a period of intense confusion and suspense, for there was little reliable information to support his announcement that Grigorev had rebelled. Much of the time an eerie silence hung over the telegraph wires leading to the ataman's headquarters, and efforts to contact him for explanations were ineffectual. Rakovski's message was based upon two sources; the first information came from Savitski, who on May 7 had sent in his resignation as political commissar with Grigorev, "in view of Grigorev's suspicious behavior." The next day Savitski managed to reach a telegraph apparatus at Elisavetgrad, contacted Shumski at Kiev, and informed the latter that he had been arrested and that Grigorev was rebelling. A second bit of information came into Odessa at dawn on the 9th, in the form of a telegram from the commissar of the telegraph station at Elisavetgrad. The commissar, a man named Ivanov, reported that Grigorevians, having already

23. *Ibid.*, 4, 199–200; cf. Heifetz, *Slaughter of the Jews in the Ukraine in 1919*, pp. 69–70.

24. Antonov, 4, 200.

seized political control of Elisavetgrad, had proclaimed a universal, signed by Grigorev, which denounced Rakovski and the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukraine as "adventurists."<sup>25</sup>

Accustomed to hysterical reports from panicky civilians, Antonov refused to be dissuaded from his intended visit to Grigorev. Yet even Antonov was beginning to suspect the worst, for the short telegram he now sent Rakovski had an air of the last will and testament about it. "I will strive to smooth out the affair peacefully, forcing Grigorev to go to Bessarabia. A guarantee that the Kherson Government Military Commissar will not send out punitive sections is necessary. In case of need, I recommend my assistant, Voroshilov." His trip was abruptly canceled, however, by word from Grigorev that the latter was on his way to Odessa, where he would arrive on May 10. In his message the ataman bluntly denied having anything to do with the universal published in his name, adding that he was sending troops to Elisavetgrad to suppress the troubles there. Antonov immediately replied, "I wished to come to you. Having learned that you will be in Odessa on May 10, I shall wait for you at Odessa."<sup>26</sup> Whatever Grigorev's true purpose may have been, by promising to come to Odessa he succeeded in immobilizing the commander of the Ukrainian Front and the entire Ukrainian government for another 24 hours.

On the basis of the ataman's categorical denial of responsibility for the events at Elisavetgrad, Antonov now decided that authority in the city had "obviously been seized by Left SRs, who had issued the universal." He advised Rakovski that Grigorev was moving troops to Elisavetgrad to quiet disturbances there. Already, it seemed to him, his earlier analyses of Grigorev's character were proving to be accurate: chortling a little, he asked Rakovski for confirma-

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 200-01.

26. *Ibid.*

tion of the information that Savitski was in trouble. Savitski himself confirmed the rebellion in a telegram to Odessa, declaring that he had been in house arrest since noon on May 7. "All other political workers are also under arrest," he reported; "including even the supreme military inspection group under Comrade Skitalets [Viller]." "The uprising is directed against the commune," Savitski said. "They issue the slogan: 'All power to the soviets, but not to the party.'" Even this positive assertion was balanced by a denial just as emphatic, for Grigorev addressed a new telegram to Rakovski and Antonov, reasserting his innocence: "There are no limits to the provocateurs. They throw my name around as they wish; in Krivoi Rog they have published a provocative universal in my name. The division is now on campaign [presumably to Rumania]; the regiments are going to Pomoshchnaya, and one . . . to Balta. I go to Odessa tomorrow."<sup>27</sup>

Grigorev's messages apparently came from Aleksandriya, but already jumbled bits of information were reaching Odessa telling of partisan concentrations in unexpected places. In sudden perplexity, late on the 9th, Khudyakov's chief of staff turned on Kiev with anxious questions. Had Kiev given Grigorev orders to move on Poltava and Pyatikhatki? (These cities are northeast and southeast of Aleksandriya, definitely not in the direction of Rumania.) If not, then the Kharkov Okrug Military Commissar intended to halt such movements, even if this meant fighting. Had Kiev ordered Grigorev to move on Ekaterinoslav? Khudyakov's chief of staff had an unconfirmed report that such a movement was in progress. He added that Odessa, disturbed by the rumors and worried about the imminent visit of Grigorev, was taking measures to ensure that the ataman would enter the city without his troops. "In general," he said, "there is much about the affair of Grigorev that is not

27. *Ibid.*, 4, 201.

understood." And he concluded: "We have called Grigorev at Aleksandriya, but he isn't here. There are no connections with Elisavetgrad and Ekaterinoslav. We will take measures."<sup>28</sup> Given the vagueness of the situation, it was not at all clear what measures were necessary.

In effect, Grigorev's messages protesting his innocence blurred and confused the picture of his actions, screening him behind a communications system that worked well only when he wished it to. The difficulties of penetrating this screen were fully explored by the famous Old Bolshevik, Leo Kamenev, who tried to arrange a meeting with Grigorev during the 8th and 9th of May. Kamenev, one of the leaders of the Russian Communist party, member of the Politburo, and Lenin's deputy chairman of that body, had arrived at Kharkov on April 19, armed with plenipotentiary authority from the All-Russian Council of Defense for the execution of several pressing missions. Chief among these were the need to smooth out the administrative frictions between Kiev and Moscow, to improve the provisioning and transportation systems, to rush provisions to the Donbass industrial workers and the famine areas of the north, and to get reinforcements to the Southern Front.<sup>29</sup>

Attempting to carry out these missions, Kamenev moved about the Ukraine in a special train, accompanied by an entourage of nearly fifty people, including Klimenti Voroshilov, Commissar of Internal Affairs in the Ukraine, and Valeri Mezhlauk, Assistant Commissar of Military Affairs. At Kiev, learning that Dybenko and Makhno were blocking both civil and military supply operations, Kamenev resolved to straighten out these recalcitrants on the spot; in the first days of May his train took him to the Crimea, then to Makhno, and, in both cases, he secured verbal assurances of cooperation. Completing his visit with Makhno, he then set out for the city of Lugansk, but was stopped short of

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 4, 202.

<sup>29</sup> V. S., "Ekspeditsiya Kameneva," pp. 124, 133.

this destination by news that Lugansk had fallen to Denikin's forces. As his return route to Kiev lay through Grigorev's territory, the supreme plenipotentiary decided to visit Grigorev and clear up the provisioning difficulties in this area. Apparently no one forewarned Kamenev, and he moved straight into the calm eye of the storm center before he was aware of trouble.<sup>30</sup>

Early on the afternoon of May 8 Kamenev's secretary established contact with Grigorev at Aleksandriya and announced that Kamenev would reach the village that evening. Grigorev brusquely replied that he was just leaving for Znamenka, where important work demanded his attention. But, he said, he was anxious to talk with Kamenev. Why didn't the plenipotentiary go to Skachko's headquarters at Ekaterinoslav and wait until about eleven o'clock that evening, at which time the Grigorev train would arrive there. Kamenev agreed. At the appointed hour, however, Grigorev had not arrived; nor was there any news of his train at the Ekaterinoslav station. The patient Kamenev resolved to wait until the next day.

When daylight arrived, but not Grigorev, Kamenev's secretary got busy, trying to locate the partisan commander. About nine o'clock in the morning the secretary succeeded in reaching the station commandant at Pyatikhatki (roughly mid-way between Aleksandriya and Ekaterinoslav), only to be informed that the commandant had no knowledge of Grigorev's train; from this evidence it seemed that Grigorev was not even *on his way* to Ekaterinoslav.

Two hours later, however, the commandant of Kamenev's train managed to get a line through to Grigorev's chief of staff at Aleksandriya and obtained contrary information. Their telegraphed conversation was recorded thus.<sup>31</sup>

30. Ibid., pp. 125-27; Bubnov et al., 1, 81.

31. The following telegraph conversations between officials of Kamenev's train and various people at Aleksandriya and along the railroad are quoted from V. S., "Ekspeditsiya Kameneva," pp. 144-45.

*Commandant:* I am the commandant of Kamenev's train. When did your ataman go to Ekaterinoslav?

*Reply:* This morning at eight o'clock.

*Commandant:* You lie. We asked Pyatikhatki and they know nothing at all about any train. If you do not give me accurate information, then we will come to you at the staff. We can wait no longer.

*Reply:* Suit yourself. It's your business.

*Commandant:* I demand categorically that you give me exact information on where the train of Grigorev is.

*Reply:* Ataman Grigorev in the morning went toward Pyatikhatki and said that he was going to Ekaterinoslav, but where he is now I don't know.

*Commandant:* You affirm that he has left Aleksandriya?

*Reply:* Yes. Yes.

*Commandant:* Good.

So the ataman *was* on his way. Kamenev decided to wait another two hours. When these had passed, still without a sign of the ataman, the train commandant again called Pyatikhatki:

*Commandant:* I am the commandant of the Kamenev train. I earnestly beg you to give me accurate information about where Grigorev's train is at this moment.

*Reply:* I am the commissar of Pyatikhatki. I questioned Aleksandriya half an hour ago by semaphore and they replied that he has not yet departed. But I will investigate immediately. If I learn anything I will communicate at once.

*Commandant:* I beg you to connect me with Aleksandriya, with the Grigorev staff, along this special wire.

*Reply:* The Aleksandriya staff is cut off from us . . .

*Commandant:* Then call the Aleksandriya commandant to the apparatus.

*Reply:* We have no connection with Aleksandriya.

And so it went all through the day. At three o'clock in the afternoon Pyatikhatki reported that "some trains" were moving, but the connection was broken before further details could be requested. About nine in the evening the station master in Ekaterinoslav reported vaguely that a train *might* be coming from Aleksandriya; Kamenev's secretary, trying to verify this report managed once more to get a connection only as far as Pyatikhatki. From the following conversation Kamenev could draw one of two conclusions: either the man at Pyatikhatki was exceedingly surly and stupid, or the station was already in the hands of Grigorev's partisans:

*Secretary:* I am Kamenev's secretary. I want to speak with the commandant.

*Reply:* Why?

*Secretary:* I demand [that you call] the commandant to the apparatus.

*Reply:* He's not here. I am the station guard.

*Secretary:* Where is Ataman Grigorev's train?

*Reply:* I don't know.

*Secretary:* Has any kind of train gone through since morning?

*Reply:* Yes. They have gone through.

*Secretary:* Military [trains] have gone through?

*Reply:* One armored train. And seventeen echelons [trains].

*Secretary:* To where?

*Reply:* To Ekaterinoslav.

*Secretary:* When?

*Reply:* The last one just now.

*Secretary:* Give me details.

*Reply:* I don't know anything.

*Secretary:* Where is the commandant?

*Reply:* I don't know.

*Secretary:* In the name of the Extraordinary Plenipotentiary of the Council of Defense, I demand that you search for the commandant or give exhaustive details!

The connection was broken off and the secretary was unable to regain contact. Finally, at eleven o'clock, after trying to see the ataman for a day and a half, Kamenev thoughtfully considered those eighteen trains reported to be rolling toward Ekaterinoslav and sent a message to Lenin announcing that Grigorev had rebelled. At midnight, prudence being the better part of valor, the Kamenev train was at Kremenchug, out of immediate danger.

At the very hour when Kamenev was reaching his decision about Grigorev's revolt, Antonov was making preliminary arrangements to halt the ataman and to lay the issues of the struggle before the people. Station commandants were ordered to prohibit all military movements by rail unless approved by the commander of military transportation.<sup>32</sup> A manifesto was sent out to the "staffs of the First, Second, and Third Armies of the Ukraine; to all chiefs of divisions, editors of Soviet newspapers; to all executive committees; to all echelon commanders on the Left Bank railroads, to all Chekas, copies to Kiev, to the President of the Council of Defense, Rakovski." It presented as excellent a statement of the Bolshevik view of the situation as was to be written during those tense days:

Around the staff and the troops of Chief of Division Grigorev, there is disgraceful provocational work.

32. Antonov, 4, 202.

White Guard swine strive to destroy the strength of the Red Army, to incite it against the peaceful population and to throw its regiments against one another. The golden epaulettes [White officers] and the cut-throat Cossack riff-raff still tear at the workers in the Donets mines; they threaten the Ukraine and Russia with weapons obligingly slipped in by the French and English occupation.

From the west the Polish pans attack, the Rumanian boyars plunder Bessarabia to prepare a campaign against the Ukraine. Representatives of the Directory instigate our brothers, the Galicians, against us.

In this grave time, firmness and order are especially necessary for us; any disturbance is particularly impermissible. The man who stirs up trouble, who disunites our ranks is a foul betrayer of the fatherland, a vile betrayer of the peasantry and the workers. The man who raises revolt against Soviet authority is the base servitor of our enemies, a secret traitor of labor in the Ukraine.

The Third Congress of Workers, Peasants, and Red Army Deputies selected the Central Executive Committee of Soviets and commissioned it to create the Government of the Soviet Ukraine. This government is the sole legal power in the Ukraine. Whoever rises against it is an enemy of the working people and must be destroyed—like a rabid dog. Hundreds and hundreds of thousands of fighters stand under the banners of the Soviet Ukraine. Traitors will not escape their bayonets anywhere; they will be dealt with like maggots, in the land of the Ukraine, which is defiled by its traitors. 9 May, 2300 hours. Odessa. Signed by the Commander of the Armies of the Ukrainian Front, Ovseenko-Antonov.<sup>33</sup>

33. *Ibid.*, 4, 202–03.

The Bolsheviks waited through the night. In Kiev, Rakovski and his officials pondered incoming telegrams, anxiously wondering which to believe; and in Moscow, Lenin and his colleagues watched the Southern Front with divided attention, hoping for clarification of the news from the Ukraine.

Grigorev had said that he would be at Odessa on the 10th, but he did not arrive during the morning of that day, and no one at Kiev or Odessa knew where he could be found. His troops were moving; that much was certain; but no one could say definitely whom they moved against, nor whether they marched as rioting gangs of partisans or as a powerful Communist division. And because the information was so fragmentary, because there remained the slimmest of possibilities that Grigorev might yet be loyal, that he might suddenly appear in good faith at Odessa, no really decisive suppressive measure could be taken. Upon the ataman's actions depended the campaign in Rumania, the life or death of Communist control in Hungary, the ability of the Soviet Republics to defend themselves against Denikin. And if Lenin's view of the importance of withstanding Denikin was correct, then, for this instant in history the Cossack Grigorev seemed to hold the destiny of bolshevism in his hands.

At last, several minutes after the noon hour on the 10th, a line was cleared to Aleksandriya. Immediately an order from Antonov was transmitted to the ataman: "The 6th Division, less the 3rd Khersonski and the 5th Regiments, which will remain in their previous assignments, is transferred to the reserve of the front, and is directly subordinated to me."<sup>34</sup> Grigorev was being permanently shorn of two of his regiments, and Antonov was making himself the ataman's immediate superior.

Then Grigorev came on the wire. His dramatic and awk-

34. *Ibid.*, 4, 203.

ward conversation with Antonov is set down verbatim in the following pages, for it magnificently presents the views of these two men—the hard-pressed Bolshevik on the one side, the determined and defiant Grigorev on the other. It is significant, above all, not as an expression of Grigorev's mind and character, but as a remarkable synthesis of the jumbled, obscure, but nonetheless passionately held aspirations and beliefs of thousands, perhaps millions, of Ukrainian peasants, workers, and members of the Ukraine's village intelligentsia.<sup>35</sup>

To Antonov's order, Grigorev replied caustically:

Very pleasant. Very happy [to talk with you]. I report to you that I consider deposed the government of the adventurist Rakovski. In two days I shall take Ekaterinoslav, Kharkov, Kiev, Kherson, and Nikolaev. An assembly of Soviets of the Ukraine will be created, which will give us a government of the people and not a government of political speculators—of adventurers.

Respecting you as an honorable revolutionary, I earnestly beg you to undertake measures for the suppression of bloodshed and the preservation of the front. Is it convenient for you to listen to the universal?

*Antonov:* I must know that Grigorev talks with me.

*Grigorev:* This is that Grigorev with whom you traveled to Verblyuzhka. [A reference to their inspection of the Verblyuzhski Regiment on April 23.]

35. This dialogue is translated from the copy forwarded to Andrei Bubnov at Kiev immediately after the telegraph conversation had taken place (Antonov, 4, 203-08); for other texts of the universal presented here, see Kozelsky, *Shlyakh zradnitsva i avantur*, pp. 23-25; and Krut, "Do istorii borotby proty hrihorivshchyny na Ukraini," *Litopys revolyutsii*, no. 5-6, pp. 146-47. I have corrected Antonov's version slightly by comparison with those of Kozelsky and Krut, since it is probable that the latter were taken from the printed copies distributed by Grigorev, while Antonov's version displays minor faults which may have been created by the process of transmittal through telegraph operators.

*Antonov:* Very well, transmit your message.

*Grigorev:* Ukrainian people! Exhausted people! The cruel war with the German coalition and with the Entente States tore from your villages the best sons of the land. Civil war, war with the Hetmanate and with the Petlyurists' regime drove your best sons into the grave and the prisons. When you possessed no more power to suffer, you left the plow and the work bench, dug from the earth the rusty rifle and went to defend your right to freedom and land; but here, precisely, the political speculators deceived you and, with clever methods, took advantage of your trustfulness. In place of land and freedom they pinned you by force to the commune, to the Cheka, and to the commissars from the Moscow eating stalls, from the land where they crucified Christ.

You work yourselves day and night, you light the night-lamps, you go about in shoes made of bark and breeches of burlap. In place of tea you drink hot water without sugar, but those who promise you a brilliant future exploit you, make war on you. With guns in their hands they collect your grain, requisition your cattle, and brazenly persuade you that all this is for the good of the people. Holy Toiler! Man of God! Look at your calloused hands and look around! Injustice! Lies and injustice! You are Tsar of the land, you are the nourisher of the world; but you are also a slave, thanks to your holy simplicity and goodness. Peasants and workers, you are 92 per cent of the Ukraine, but who governs you? All those who desire the blood of the people. Ukrainian people, take the power in your hands! Let there be no dictators, neither of person nor party! Long live the dictatorship of the working people!

Long live the calloused hands of the peasants and workers! Down with the political speculators! Down

with the violence of the Right! Down with the violence of the Left! Long live the power of the soviets of the people of the Ukraine! Before you stands a new struggle. Fight it—win it! I, Ataman Grigorev, and my staff have prepared ourselves to stand for the rights of the working people. The final effort! For ourselves we want nothing. Support us and thus save your rights!

Here is my command: Within three days mobilize all of those who are capable of bearing arms and immediately seize all railroad stations, and at each station place your commissars. Each volost, each settlement, form sections and go to your uezd town; from each uezd town send four-hundred-man sections of the best fighters against Kiev, and send two-hundred-man sections against Kharkov. If there are arms, send them with arms; if there are no arms, send them with pitch-forks. But I beg you, carry out my order, and victory will be ours. All the rest I will do myself.

Our chief of staff will be with my staff. Only with your support will we win the rights of the people. Immediately organize the power of the people; in each village elect a village soviet; in each volost, a volost soviet; in each uezd, an uezd soviet; and in each guberniya, a guberniya soviet. To the soviet may be elected representatives of all parties which stand on the soviet platform, and those who confess themselves to be without a party but accept soviet authority.

Representatives of all nationalities may enter into the soviets in proportion to their numbers in the Ukraine: 80 per cent of the places are reserved for Ukrainians, 5 per cent for Jews, and 15 per cent for all other nationalities. With such an arrangement there will be no violation of party or nation. I profoundly believe that this will be the true power of the people. Long live freedom of speech, press, conscience, assembly, the right to organize and strike, the freedom

of workers and the professions, inviolability of the person, of thought, of habitation, of religious worship!

People of God! Love one another; do not spill brothers' blood! Forget party enmity and bow before the power of honorable labor!

Long live honorable labor! Down with all violence and the power of capital! Railroad workers, post and telegraph workers, you wear yourselves out; join us and our victory will be yours! Having conquered their land, the Ukrainian people will not go beyond its borders, but they will always assist their laboring brothers, wherever they are, with their rusty rifles and with their last crust of bread. We beg the government of the adventurer Rakovski and his protégés to leave us and not violate the will of the people. The All-Ukrainian Congress of the Soviets will give us a government, to which we will submit, and we will strictly execute its will. I go forward because thus commands the conscience of the people. My reserves are you, the people of the Ukraine, and upon you depends your fate.

All killing without a people's court, marauding, thieving, disorderliness, incursions into strangers' homes, illegal requisitions, agitations against separate nationalities, will be halted by force of arms. Order is necessary. Down with insubordination! As my assistants I designate Comrades Tyutyunik, Gorbenko, and Mosenko, to whom I confide this difficult task. Signature: Ataman of the Partisans of Kherson and the Crimea, Grigorev. Assistant Atamany—Gorbenko, Tyutyunik, Tereshchenko, Mosenko, Yasinski, Bondar, and Pavlov.

When he had finished reading the universal, Grigorev added, "This universal was signed in the spirit of the wishes and hopes of the people. What do you say in reply?"

*Antonov:* When was the universal signed?

*Grigorev:* Three days ago. [The 7th.]

*Antonov:* Why didn't you come to me at Odessa?

*Grigorev:* Because there was a conspiracy against me.

*Antonov:* This is a rumor.

*Grigorev:* A conspiracy with Anton Chaly at the head. Their letters were intercepted by me. Here is the beginning of one letter: "Comrade Luxemburg: Great events are expected here—the complete and final liquidation of Ataman Grigorev . . ." And there are two more letters, written by the secretary of the political commissar of the division.<sup>36</sup>

*Antonov:* This does not prove conspiracy. I know nothing about this, but now listen to my reply . . . [Break in the transmission.]

*Grigorev:* I am convinced that you did not know anything about the conspiracy. Of all the communists whom I know, I count as honorable people Comrades Shafranski, Bazarov, Comrade Antonov-Ovseenko, and several others.<sup>37</sup> The representatives of my party and other communists, too, I consider to be political speculators.

*Antonov:* Which is your party? The Ukrainian SRs?

*Grigorev:* The UPSR [Communists].<sup>38</sup>

36. Anton Chaly, the Old Bolshevik who had been sent out as the head of a special group which was to take "extreme measures" should the need arise, apparently grew careless. He was killed by Grigorev, as were the members of the Viller inspection group; Antonov, 4, 109, 194; Bubnov et al., 1, 78; Mikhail V. Kiselev, *Gody ognenye* (The Fiery Years) (Moscow, 1958), pp. 66–67.

37. Shafranski, who finally reached Aleksandriya in the first days of May, very quickly gained considerable influence over Grigorev, influence which was skillfully countered by Tyutyunik. The reluctant, but nonetheless brave, commissar was able to save the lives of several of his Bolshevik colleagues, as well as his own; Kozelsky, p. 17.

38. Antonov's text gives Grigorev's reply: "UPRS (communisty)"; I have reversed the last two letters, since he refers to the Borotbist party, which at its Fifth Congress at Kharkov in early March took the name, "Ukrainian

*Antonov:* My reply—you have fallen under the influence of people who are in contact with the White Guards . . . [break]

*Grigorev:* Comrade I know the situation perfectly, and no campaign by a counterrevolutionary could be successful. We are so powerful that we can conveniently smash any attack. I report this to you as an honorable revolutionary—we do not have anything in common with White Guards and Petlyurists. I personally wrote the universal, weighing all the circumstances for and against. My comrades agree with me in everything, and we have come to this united conclusion—in order to save the revolution from Rakovski and Company. Our people will destroy enemies, no matter where they come from. Understand, Comrade, that before this [decision] we thought about the Rumanians, the Poles, Denikin, and even Kolchak. Be calm, we see through them. Yesterday, we sent two thousand poods of fat and ten wagons of grain for Moscow. If troops are necessary against Kolchak, we will give them. I have formed the Umershinno-Kamenski Regiment from one volost, which came to me with its machine guns and little cannon. Enthusiasm is tremendous. Come to us to inspect us and you will see that there are no White Guards or Poles here.

Today Shafranski and all the political workers left. The political organizations and the executive committee are being kept in place until the elections.

During the past twenty-four hours order has nowhere been infringed, and there has been no armed conflict. For you there is free passage to wherever you wish.

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Party of Socialist Revolutionaries (Communist-Borotbisty)"; see Khrystyuk, *Zamitky i materiyaly do istorii ukrainskoi revolyutsii, 1917-1920 rr.*, 4, 129-31.

*Antonov:* The government, with Rakovski at its head, was elected in the Third Congress of Soviets of the Ukraine. Arms are not necessary for creating a new congress of soviets. Such a congress can be created swiftly. Very soon the congress of soviets of the guberniya of Kherson will meet. The situation in the Ukraine is extremely difficult. Internal trouble will place it at the edge of ruin, and will facilitate the work of all the foreign occupiers . . . [break]

*Grigorev:* Comrade, this is Petlyurist thinking. I report to you as a son of the Ukraine, that whoever enters the Ukraine with the purpose of exploiting it will be destroyed. I am very sorry that you have no information about the strength and the power of the Ukrainian people. We will triumph.

*Antonov:* I repeat—the present government was created by the will of the peasants and workers.

*Grigorev:* With the assistance of machine guns.

*Antonov:* And you do not have them? With what will you act?

*Grigorev:* They will not be used at elections.

*Antonov:* Have the firmness to listen to me: Only [break] a new session of the soviets can provide a new government. The government permits freedom of agitation to all soviet parties and will permit the will of the people to be expressed. [break]

*Grigorev:* I congratulate you. Only the free participation of all soviet parties will give us a government.

*Antonov:* In order to achieve this it is not necessary to take up arms. Our military tasks are, first, to recapture all the land of the Ukraine, to secure internal freedom for the worker, and to dispose of counter-revolution. I believe you should send a delegate to me, if you are afraid to come personally. I cannot lose time which ought to be spent on organization of the fight with the external enemies, against whom you have re-

fused to go because of your intention to undermine our external front by a blow at our bases.

The question is—do you conclusively sever [your] tie with the Red Army and do you refuse to be subordinated to me? I propose that you send from the dissatisfied villages a delegation to the Central Executive Committee at Kiev. In this committee are proportionately represented all the soviet parties. We must not come to blood-letting and the dissolution of the front. Reply to my question and to my proposal.

*Grigorev:* To send a delegation to those who violate the will of the people and its hopes? I will not quarrel; I only ask that the government, which stands so far from the people and which has given itself up to political speculation, leave us immediately. And we, together with you, under your command, we will easily withstand any shock. The people will be delivered from the Cheka and the dictatorship of the Communists; its spirits will rise and it will go forward, without halting before any enemy position. Here, Comrade, is my reply for you.

*Antonov:* Allow me to finish. The present government enjoys the complete trust of all of the First Army, all of the Third, all of the Second, and also, all of the garrisons of the Right Bank of the Ukraine. They will come . . . [break]

*Grigorev:* I report to you that the First Army will not fight against me; a part of the Second Army is on my side; a part of the Third Army is in contact with me through Brigade Commander Makhno; delegates from the Bogunski [Regiment] are with me at this moment; the population is on my side; the railroad workers are on my side. In Kharkov itself are around eight hundred armed people with my man at their head; and in Kiev they have already assigned quarters for me.

*Antonov:* It is necessary to see your delegate; I must cut off this discussion. Reply! Will you send him to me?

*Grigorev:* I would be glad to send him, but all the responsible workers have been sent in all directions—I am here only with my chief of staff, chief of supply, part of the artillery, and part of the infantry. Comrade, whom can I send to you for such important negotiations?

*Antonov:* Even Shevchenko, who, in my opinion, is very irritating.

*Grigorev:* Shevchenko is not with us.

*Antonov:* The chief of supply, Tereshchenko.

*Grigorev:* Tereshchenko sits here with me now, and he declares that he is afraid to go because there was an attempt on his life simultaneously with [the attempt] on mine; and yesterday they fired on the wagon of the chief of staff.

*Antonov:* There have been ten attempts against me, but I was not afraid to come to you and Makhno. I guarantee that Tereshchenko will have nothing to fear from the side of the Soviet troops. Your people here eat and receive medical supplies, artillery and military supplies.

*Grigorev:* Comrade, if you have plenipotentiary authorities who can speak for the party and the government, send them here; we shall be very happy. We have no one to send—we are poor people, but we have brave spirits.

*Antonov:* I speak for myself. I do not have any plenipotentiaries from the party and the government. I will present your proposition to the party and to the government, for their decision. But one thing—if you undertake military action against the points occupied by troops faithful to me, then you act against me. I propose that you wait for the delegation that is coming and that you do not embark upon military activities

until the end of negotiations. I promise to use all my influence in order to smooth out the affair without bloodshed.

*Grigorev:* Dear Comrade, you speak as if you think exactly as we do. We do not desire bloodshed; but in order to talk with the government, I have ordered the occupation of Kiev, Poltava, Ekaterinoslav, and Khar'kov; and I even ask you, personally, to permit me to occupy Nikolaev and Kherson without fighting. I will deny myself the occupation of Odessa, if I am permitted (with an order through your staff) to send my people into the raion for control of the units faithful to me. [My people will be instructed] not to fight [you] but to carry out all of your orders. Khudyakov, in my opinion, is not fit to command an army.

*Antonov:* My word still remains in force: I cannot permit the attack on Ekaterinoslav and other points; consequently bloodshed will come. Await the arrival of a delegation. I can say no more by telegraph. This is my last word. I must go at once to other affairs.

*Grigorev:* I cannot renounce the attack. I beg you to send the delegation. I expect to take Ekaterinoslav without fighting.

*Antonov:* Farewell.

*Grigorev:* All of the best.

The Bolsheviks had failed to hold Grigorev. No course remained but to destroy him.

The Ukrainian Council of Defense immediately declared the ataman and his followers outside the law, directed every Soviet citizen to shoot the partisans on sight, warned that assistance to the rebels would be regarded as treason, ordered the Cheka to turn its special attentions to the Left SR *aktivisty* and the *Nezalezhniki aktivisty*, who were sus-

pected of being Grigorev's strongest supporters, and called on Antonov for Grigorev's immediate suppression.<sup>39</sup> In a series of orders all responsible officials, military men, and executive committees were ordered to form local councils of defense and were given "full power to take measures to quell the uprising."<sup>40</sup> During the following days, good Bolsheviks vied with one another in finding new ways to denounce the ataman; the Ukrainian people were assured that Grigorev was variously a Petlyurist, a drunkard, a traitor, that he had declared himself Hetman, and was working for the French. Allegedly, he won followers by plying them with wine; his purpose was to stab the worker and peasant in the back; and his army contained not one peasant, but "White officers, kulaks, and other hirelings of the pomeshchiki and bourgeoisie."<sup>41</sup> Members of the Communist party were told: "Everyone will bear arms. Arm the workers swiftly. This is a serious moment."<sup>42</sup>

While Red troops were being alerted to the rebellion and told that they must act mercilessly against the traitors, Antonov and his officers stayed close by headquarters, awaiting more information. With many communication lines cut, the most immediate necessity—reliable intelligence concerning Grigorev's military movements and intentions—was difficult to obtain; in consequence every possible conjecture was considered and debated. From his position at Aleksandriya, several alternatives lay open to the

39. The Left SR and Nezalezhniki groups called "aktivisty" were characterized by their rejection of the Bolsheviks and underground opposition to them, a position which differed from Left SRs (*Borotbisty*) and the Nezalezhniki USDs who collaborated with the Bolsheviks. Majstrenko (*Borot'bism*, pp. 127–28, 135 n.) recalls that the term "aktivisty" was not generally used, but was probably a term employed in government circles.

40. Antonov, 4, 209–10.

41. V. S., "Ekspeditsiya Kameneva," p. 145; Vladimir Margulies, *Ognennye gody*, pp. 127–32, 164; Barannyk, Mishkis, and Slobodsky, eds., *Istoriya KP(b)U v materialakh i dokumentakh (khrestomatiya), 1917–1920 rr.*, 453.

42. Antonov, 4, 210; cf. "Grigorevskaya avantюра (mai 1919 goda)" (*The Grigorev Adventure, May 1919*), *Letopis revolyutsii*, no. 3 (1923), pp. 156–58.

ataman, each of which could create a serious threat for Soviet power. No one yet knew how closely he and Makhno were allied, but the map made it clear enough that the two partisan hordes nearly touched one another at Ekaterinoslav, and Grigorev had boasted that Makhno was supporting him. It was true that if the two were united, all might be lost for the Bolsheviks in the Ukraine. But the same could be prophesied if Grigorev chose to strike east to join the rebel Don Cossacks, or south to seek support from Denikin and the French ships in the Black Sea, or straight west, where he could unite with Directory forces and a host of minor partisan groups. With so many Bolshevik enemies close at hand, it was hardly credible that Grigorev would fight long alone. The main question was: Toward which of his potential allies would he turn?

Shafranski, having escaped from Aleksandriya, dispatched a telegram which Antonov received just before his last conversation with Grigorev, and which contained the first concrete information about Grigorev's operations. According to Shafranski, Grigorev was moving two regiments against Ekaterinoslav, one toward Kharkov, another through Bobrinskaya toward Kiev, and a fifth toward Khereson and Nikolaev. In other words, Grigorev appeared about to execute a most unorthodox tactic, by fighting in all directions at once. From the hub at Aleksandriya, his forces were moving out like spokes from an axle toward all the chief cities of the Ukraine. Obviously these movements could disperse the ataman's strength and even reduce him to helplessness, unless they brought him into contact with new allies.<sup>43</sup> After Shafranski's telegram, as other incoming reports brought piecemeal confirmation, it became fairly clear that Shafranski was correct: Grigorev's units were moving in several directions. Plans were immediately set in motion to block their progress.

43. Antonov, *4*, 212.

For the action against Grigorev, the Ukrainian Council of Defense arrived at two somewhat puzzling decisions on May 11. First, it proclaimed all armed forces of the Soviet Ukraine subordinate to Antonov-Ovseenko. The purpose of this statement of what had been fact for several months is not clear. It may have been meant to reaffirm Antonov's authority, deemed a necessity perhaps in light of the council's next decision, which was to designate Voroshilov, until this moment Ukrainian Commissar of Internal Affairs, as temporary commander of the Kharkov Military Okrug, with all the armed forces of that okrug subordinate to his command. The story behind this decision was typical of the Bolshevik tendency to set up a new organization for every crisis, and it hinged upon the actions of Anatole Skachko, commander of the Second Army, whose headquarters were at Ekaterinoslav. From the time he became convinced that Grigorev had rebelled and was advancing on Ekaterinoslav (11:00 P.M. on May 9), Skachko began to panic. Through May 10 he made preparations to evacuate Ekaterinoslav, certain that the city was beset from all sides by irresistible partisan units.<sup>44</sup> This response was especially unfortunate for the Bolsheviks because Skachko should have been the chief organizer of defense against Grigorev, just as Ekaterinoslav should have been the Communists' central bastion.

On May 11 Antonov advised the Second Army commander that Ekaterinoslav could not be abandoned under any circumstances. "You are giving an example of inexcusable panic and this is criminal," he said. "In no case can the city be given up to Grigorev. Reinforcements are coming to you from Kharkov."<sup>45</sup> From Kharkov, Kamenev, whose plenipotentiary authority Lenin had now extended to include military affairs, also warned Skachko that the evacuation of Ekaterinoslav would be considered a criminal

44. "Grigorevskaya avantyura," p. 152.

45. Antonov, 4, 218.

act, and Kamenev ordered the shaky commander to mount an offensive against the partisans.<sup>46</sup> Skachko, however, had already left the city when these messages found him; persuading him to go back and fight was out of the question. In the meantime, something had to be done.

Into this breach stepped Voroshilov and Mezhlauk, who, on Kamenev's orders, now took upon themselves the direction of operations against Grigorev from the east.<sup>47</sup> The Ukrainian Council of Defense quickly approved the decision taken by Lenin's deputy and its own Commissar of Internal Affairs, and on May 12 Antonov directed Voroshilov to act without further instructions from Kiev. Specifically, Voroshilov was made responsible "for the struggle against counterrevolutionary forces appearing inside the Kharkov Okrug." (In general this included the Left Bank of the Ukraine from Kharkov to Bakhmach and Cherkassy, and from Kharkov south to the rear areas of the Southern Front.)<sup>48</sup> Voroshilov himself interpreted his mission to be to destroy the bands of Grigorev as quickly as possible.<sup>49</sup>

Although the need for immediate, resolute action from the east against Grigorev was imperative, from an administrative point of view the establishment of a second independent command in the Ukraine was unfortunate. Instead of aiding united action against Grigorev, the establishment of the new command further complicated Ukrainian military administration, including all the subsidiary problems of recruitment, supply, and coordination, and made additional confusions inevitable.

Following the appointment of Voroshilov, Antonov proceeded to issue orders from Odessa, and then from Kiev,

46. V. S., "Ekspeditsiya Kameneva," p. 146.

47. Ibid.

48. Antonov, 4, 211.

49. Likholat, *Razgrom natsionalisticheskoi kontrrevolyutsii na Ukraine (1917-1922 gg.)*, p. 341; cf. E. A. Shchadenko, "Grigorevshchina" (The Grigorev Movement), in Bubnov et al., 1, 88.

for his part of the campaign against Grigorev. And though the Ukrainian Council of Defense had expressed the hope that no troops would be withdrawn from the fronts and that the Rumanian operation would be vigorously prosecuted, Antonov's reassignment of troops was considerably more realistic. Each of his armies was soon fighting in two directions—front and rear. Khudyakov moved units north-east from Odessa against Znamenka and Elisavetgrad, among which was the division of Dmitriev, earmarked earlier as the spearhead of the Rumanian invasion. Lengovski, of the First Army's 2nd Division, was pulled out of the lines west of Kiev, moved to Fastov, and then almost at once thrown into the fight at Cherkassy, where Red troops had gone over to Grigorev. From the east, Voroshilov's subordinate, A. Ya. Parkomenko, clashed with the partisans at Poltava and Ekaterinoslav, and Dybenko (also under Voroshilov's direction) brought forces up from the south to help.<sup>50</sup> Grigorev was encircled. Yet, as his partisans smashed into the cities that were his targets, few Red commanders would have argued that he was caught in an iron ring. The bitter truth was that the encircling Red armies were themselves rimmed by external enemies, and their efforts to march, countermarch, and destroy the partisans were mired deep in the mud of administrative inadequacy and social chaos.

50. Antonov, 4, 213-17; "Grigorevskaya avantura," pp. 158-59.

## CHAPTER 10

### *Bolshevik Administrative Breakdown*

THE GRIGOREV REBELLION was much more than an isolated rising touched off by the whim of an irresponsible adventurer. Despite the contentions of Soviet historians, it was also much more than an expression of the hatred of one class (the kulak) for communism. It was, rather, an exceedingly important manifestation of the elemental political and social aspirations of millions of peasants, village folk, and townspeople—workers and intellectuals alike. It was also, in part, a product of ceaseless efforts by several Ukrainian nationalist political parties: its slogans and formulas for earthly salvation were theirs. Born of passions and ideas which ranged from the murky disaffections of the least politically conscious peasant to the sophisticated theories of the Ukrainian SDs and the Borotbisty, this rebellion was to have immense significance for the Ukraine, and thus for all Russia. For a clearer understanding of this significance we must look more closely at the ideological and social roots of the rebellion, its immediate impact upon affairs in the Ukraine, and its implications for Bolshevik policy in the Ukraine.

What were the sources of the weirdly phrased but compelling ideas in Grigorev's universal? Who were his intellectual and emotional backers? Contrary to Grigorev's asser-

tion to Antonov that he had composed the universal himself, the conglomeration of ideas presented in that document had been eclectically drawn from many places with the assistance of others. Yuri Tyutyunik, Grigorev's chief of staff, an ardent SR and advocate of collaboration with Petlyura, helped Grigorev compose the universal, as did a certain Tytarenka, former editor of a pro-Directory newspaper. These two assistants, the Soviet writer B. V. Kozelsky asserts, urged Grigorev to join with Petlyura in defense of the democratic and nationalist ambitions which the Directory then represented. While Grigorev refused thus to subordinate himself (from prideful independence more than anything else), the character of the government he proclaimed in the universal reflects the thinking of the Directory.<sup>1</sup>

Other party groups sought to influence the ataman. Among these were the Ukrainian nationalist parties that had repudiated the Directory's bourgeois-democratic goals. Early in April, these parties—the Ukrainian SRs of the Center (not the Borotbisty) and the Ukrainian *Nezalezhniki*—concluded an agreement with representatives of the official Ukrainian SD party for the purpose of uniting their forces to drive the Bolsheviks from the Ukraine. As their central executive organ they set up an All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee. Petlyura and other members of the Directory refused to support this new committee because it stood for soviet government, but the SRs and *Nezalezhniki* went ahead with their plan. Ataman Zeleny was enlisted as one of the military chiefs of this committee, and efforts were made to secure the participation of Grigorev.<sup>2</sup>

1. Kozelsky, *Shlyakh zradnitstva i avantur*, pp. 16–17; Krut, "Do istorii borotby proty hrihorivshchyny na Ukraini," *Litopys revolyutsii*, no. 5–6, pp. 142–44; Khrystyuk, *Zamitky i materiyaly do istorii ukrainskoi revolyutsii, 1917–1920 rr.*, 4, 57–68, 135.

2. Khrystyuk (4, 131–33) presents the text of the agreement and discusses the conditions which produced it; cf. Kozelsky, pp. 26–28.

And though Grigorev refused, largely because he would not accept a minor role, he at least heard the arguments and theories of this active political coterie. Actually he had long since adopted some of the main ideas of the SDs, ideas common to Ukrainian SDs, Bolsheviks, and SRs alike. Like the Nezalezhniki, he was communist but not Bolshevik, as his universal attests. ✓

The Borotbisty's relations with Grigorev in late April and early May were complicated by the growing rapprochement of the former with the Bolsheviks. Although the Third Congress of the KP(b)U had refused to accept Borotbist participation in party work, the Third Congress of Soviets at Kharkov in March had elected Borotbisty to the Central Executive Committee of the Ukrainian Soviet Government, thus granting the members of this party prestige and the hope of further success. In early April the Central Committee of the RKP peremptorily ordered the KP(b)U to admit Borotbisty to high government office, and, while this order was obeyed grudgingly, Lenin's interest in the matter seemed to presage an improved future for the Borotbisty.<sup>3</sup> As the Borotbist party moved closer to the Bolsheviks, its leaders must have become increasingly aware that their ties with the mercurial Grigorev could prove embarrassing.<sup>4</sup> Up to the last minute, however, the influential Borotbist leader, Vasil M. Blakitny, maintained contact with the ataman and apparently acted as his adviser.

During the decisive hours between the 7th and 10th of May Grigorev held at least one lengthy telegraph conversation with Blakitny at Kiev.<sup>5</sup> Speaking to Blakitny as though

3. Barannyk, Mishkis, and Slobodsky, eds., *Istoriya KP(b)U v materialakh i dokumentakh (khrestomatiya)*, 1917-1920 rr., 447-48, 459-60.

4. Majstrenko, *Borot'bism*, p. 80. As early as August 1918 the Borotbisty ceased to be wholly dedicated to populism (oriented toward the peasant), and moved to the Marxist, class-revolutionary theories of the SDs.

5. This telegraph exchange is from Antonov (*Zapiski o grazhdanskoi voine*, 4, 208-09), who clearly states that it occurred about two hours after his own last conversation with the ataman. However, the internal evidence

he had not yet raised the flag of rebellion, Grigorev touched on the shortage of boots in his units, the troubles at Elisavetgrad, the efforts of various groups to provoke uprisings. And the Borotbist leader, slipping easily into his role as adviser, urged the ataman to withstand the provocative acts of others and to press forward against the Rumanians. He also explained that he and other Borotbisty were negotiating for entry into the Soviet Ukrainian Government's Council of People's Commissars. "Today," said Blakitny, "we proposed to the Communists that responsible representatives both from us and from the Communists should go out to local regions, principally to you and the staff, in order, there, in close touch with the masses, to explain certain questions and to render assistance both to the organization of the front and to the organization of life in the Ukraine."

Blakitny explained further that Borotbist relations with the Communists were excellent. His next words must have been even more sobering for Grigorev: "Here we have close contact with the Left Nezalezhniki, who have condemned the reckless escapades of their bosses. Also a close contact with the Left Ukrainian SR groups of Naginski and Alekseev." In effect, Blakitny was saying that the Borotbisty were uniting with the Bolsheviki; and worse, the most radical factions of the Nezalezhniki and the Left SRs were following suit. If these groups were really knuckling under, Grigorev must have asked himself, who would be left to fight on his side?

Continuing his explanation of events over the telegraph wire, Blakitny added somewhat enigmatically: "It is possible to hope for the resolution of the most important prob-

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of the message leads me to believe that the conversation took place about May 8. There is, of course, the possibility that Grigorev was demonstrating a truly inspired virtuosity in his lying here, but there is no apparent reason for suspecting such to be the case.

lems in the immediate future. At the same time this has a connection with the train delegation. You understand me. A newspaper of the Left Nezalezhniki has already been permitted at Kiev. *Generally the question of other ways of influencing policy cannot be considered now.*" (Emphasis added.)

If Grigorev had ever expected the Borotbisty to provide him with political leadership, Blakitny's words must have sounded like those of a Judas, for the Borotbist was only too clearly warning him away from rebellion. Nevertheless Grigorev continued to seek instructions:

Comrade Sh— [probably Aleksandr Shumski, a leading Borotbist and member of the Soviet government] communicated with me just now that at the moment Elisavetgrad is calm. In two days I will visit with Kamenev and will have a conversation about the delivery of grain. What am I to tell him?

*Blakitny:* I do not know what to tell you. Orient yourself. Do not carry on a discussion with me about shoes and supplies if you have questions of a general character.

*Grigorev:* Pardon me, you do not understand me. These questions smell of blood. I have had serious discussions with Comrades Antonov and Khudyakov, and in the villages the matter has gone from grain to guns. At Yavkino Station, near Nikolaev, the people fight with the troops of Narkomprod, opposing the requisitioning of grain and horses. And today there were representatives from Moscow with me.

*Blakitny:* Comrade, all this misunderstanding must be smoothed over without bloodshed. The extraordinary delegation from the central committees [of the KP(b)U and the Borotbisty] to the localities will put an end to the disorders. The chief thing now—do not succumb to provocation.

Although this conversation suggests much, it leaves much unexplained about Grigorev's ties with the Borotbisty. But two points are clear: first, Grigorev was in close touch with the Borotbisty, and, in this instance at least, conducted himself as if he were their agent; and second, at this crucial moment the Borotbisty repudiated the role of leadership Grigorev offered them, opposing his rebellion. Further, although this conversation does not in itself imply great ideological influence by the Borotbisty, it does supplement evidence presented in previous chapters that Grigorev was most strongly influenced by the populist-Marxist thought of the Borotbisty. The appeal of his universal to the idealized Ukrainian peasant in his "simplicity and goodness," the references to the "Holy Toiler" and "nourisher of the world," and the expression of strong faith in popularly elected peasants' and workers' soviets as the institutional means of bringing the "Holy Toiler" to power—all these reflect the mystique of the Borotbisty.<sup>6</sup>

A number of popularly felt emotions also helped to motivate the rebellion. Grigorev's own undisciplined ambitions and hates drove him, and it is evident that many of his followers were of a similar character. Some of the partisans were moved by a desire to plunder the cities and towns, and this was a strong incentive not only for tough, unprincipled fighters, but also for the ordinarily peaceful men, women, and children of the villages, who hungered for the goods that could be stripped from homes, shops, and warehouses in the cities. Others who joined Grigorev wanted to kill Jews and Bolsheviks or to protect their land and property from food collectors and Cheka sections.

6. The role of the aktivisty, the radical, underground, anti-Bolshevik splinter groups from the SDs and SRs, alleged by Soviet historians to have been very important, has not been demonstrated in the materials available to me. Although it seems evident that the more radical splinters would have supported Grigorev, a well-documented study by a Soviet scholar would be most useful in this area. See Kubanin, *Makhnovshchina*, p. 73.

The White general, Anton Denikin, who observed the consequences of these events at first hand, suggests that life had at last become unbearable for the peasant. In his judgment, the years of disorder and suffering had finally roused to action the massive and destructively anarchistic tendencies rooted deep in the Ukrainian culture, persuading the peasants that the only acceptable way of life was their own.<sup>7</sup> Elias Heifetz, a Red Cross investigator of the pogroms, found that the presence of Jews in the Bolshevik executive committees of the villages had led the peasant to assume that the Jew intended to dominate the Christian; inevitably, as the peasant came to regard all Jews "as members of the Soviet regime," the Jews were blamed for all the abuses of the Communists. Thus the pogroms were simultaneously religious and political.<sup>8</sup> Finally, as the perceptive SR Pavlo Khrystyuk argues, Soviet policy in the village weakened the very class struggle the Bolsheviks had hoped to intensify, for it turned peasants at all levels against the Bolsheviks in defense of their property. The most discerning Soviet students of these events concur with Khrystyuk.<sup>9</sup> All these factors drove Grigorev to rebellion and motivated those who joined him.

The subterranean social fires in the Ukraine had long been fanned by many clever demagogues. When Grigorev proclaimed his universal, calling his followers to a war against the Bolsheviks, he stirred up the hottest of the embers provided both by the demagogues and by the conditions of life. Once the flames were lighted, he and his propagandists did all they could to keep the fire burning hotly. On May 13, for example, in an appeal to the villagers

7. Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, 5, 130-33.

8. Heifetz, *Slaughter of the Jews in the Ukraine in 1919*, pp. 8-9.

9. Khrystyuk, 4, 130-31; cf. Ravich-Cherkasski, *Istoriya Kommunisticheskoi partii (b-ov) Ukrainy*, pp. 122-27; N. N. Popov, *Ocherk istorii Kommunisticheskoi partii (bolshevikov) Ukrainy*, pp. 196-97; for a more extensive analysis of Bolshevik criticisms of their own policy, see Chap. 12 below.

and workers of the Ukraine, he boldly proclaimed the inevitability of swift victory. At Moscow, he declared, workers were already expelling the Bolsheviks; at Kharkov a rebellion against the Communists had begun; at Nikolaev workers were killing Communists. Many units were coming over from the Red Army, "over eight battalions of infantry and five squadrons of cavalry." Allies were joining up: "Comrade Zeleny attacks Fastov . . ." More exciting to the partisans, and certainly more encouraging, was the assertion that "Lenin, Trotsky, and Kamenev have fled from Moscow and are united with Rakovski; they had hoped to be passed through Kremenchug to Odessa in order to scamper away by the route used by the other suffocators of the people—the Hetman, the Germans, and the French. Right now the company is at Leshchinovka Station, 11 versts from Kobelyak. Here are the consequences of the commune. Whoever pokes his nose into the Ukraine will leave with it broken."<sup>10</sup>

Did Grigorev believe his own declarations? Perhaps not, but once such statements were published he worked feverishly to make them come true. Skillfully he manipulated the Ukraine's grievances. Boldly he promised an independent Ukraine, self-government, land for the peasant, the personal freedoms. Idealists and intellectuals in the villages, plunderers and angry chauvinists, haters of Jews, of Russians, and of rich men—Grigorev touched them all in some degree with the chords he struck.

Lest it be thought that all peasants and partisans in the central Ukraine approved Grigorev's actions, the views of another Ukrainian political actor, Batko Makhno, should be considered, for Makhno's response to the rebellion throws much light on a complex situation, and his actions sharply restricted the ataman's area of operations and the

10. Antonov, 4, 255. Kobelyak is about 40 miles south of Poltava.

degree of the latter's success. Like Grigorev, Makhno led fervently anti-Bolshevik peasants, but Makhno's singular position in early May was that of an armed neutral between two camps, for basically he opposed both Grigorev and the Bolsheviks.

As soon as the rebellion was an established fact, Bolshevik authorities turned to Makhno to prevent the coalition about which Grigorev had boasted. Leo Kamenev first sought to settle the issue by sending a telegram from Kremenchug on the 9th of May, soon after his somewhat precipitous departure from Ekaterinoslav:

The traitor Grigorev has betrayed the front. Refusing to execute a military order, he has turned his weapons around. The decisive moment has arrived—either you go with the workers and peasants of all Russia, or you open the front to the enemy. There is no room for vacillation. Report immediately about the location of your troops, and issue a declaration against Grigorev, sending me a copy at Kharkov. Failure to receive a reply will be considered a declaration of war. I believe in the honor of the revolutionaries—yours, Arshinov's, Veretelnikov's, and others. Kamenev.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, from Aleksandriya, Grigorev tried to sway the anarchists to his side. One telegram quoted by Makhno's assistant, P. Arshinov, read simply: "Batko! What do you see in the Communists? Kill them. Ataman Grigorev."<sup>12</sup> Antonov's communications men intercepted another, more lengthy message, in which Grigorev explained his motives to the batko: "As a consequence of the commissars and the Cheka, there was no living. The Communists were dicta-

11. V. S., "Ekspeditsiya L. B. Kameneva dlya prodvizheniya prodgruzov k Moskve v 1919 godu," *Proletarskaya revolyutsiya*, no. 6, p. 145; Arshinov, *Istoriya makhnovskogo dvizheniya (1918–1921 gg.)*, p. 107.

12. Arshinov, p. 112.

torial; my troops could not endure it, and they began themselves to kill Cheka men and to drive out the commissars. All my declarations to Rakovski and to Antonov usually ended in the dispatch of commissars." With his characteristic sense of timing Grigorev went on to explain that when 42 of these commissars had collected, he simply drove them out and he was then declared outside the law. He concluded: "Is it not time for you, Batko Makhno, to speak significant words to those who, in place of the people's authority, install the dictatorship of a single party?"<sup>13</sup>

But Makhno continued to play the truculent fence-sitter, convinced that he alone had the correct solution to the Ukraine's problems. To reassure the Bolsheviks, he issued a forthright order to his subordinates to hold the line against Denikin. But, as though to warn both Bolsheviks and Grigorevians against cherishing false hopes, his message ended: "While we have not yet definitely and firmly won freedom with our weapons . . . we shall stand on this front fighting for the freedom of the people, but not for the [Bolshevik] power nor for base political charlatans."<sup>14</sup>

In reply to Kamenev's telegram Makhno took his stand firmly and openly. He promised that he and his brigade would carry out their "revolutionary duty to the workers and peasants of Russia and of all the world." But he continued in a less encouraging vein: "In my turn, I declare to you that my front and I will remain enduringly firm to the workers' and peasants' revolution, *but not to institutes of violence in the person of your commissariats and Chekas*, which deal arbitrarily with the workers' population." He agreed that if Grigorev had done what Kamenev charged, he was indeed a criminal, but he declined to declare himself openly against Grigorev until he had obtained more accurate information about the affair. Meanwhile, he assured Kamenev, with words of cold comfort, he could not

13. Antonov, 4, 254.

14. Arshinov, p. 109; cf. Antonov's version, 4, 214.

“in any way support the seizure of power by Grigorev or by anyone. I will, as before, with my comrade-rebels, drive out the Denikin bands, fighting at the same time in order that the rear, which we have freed, may be covered by free workers-peasants unions, having all power themselves; and in this regard, those organizations of compulsion and violence, such as the Chekas and the commissariats, bringing the dictatorship of the party—violence even in relation to the anarchist organizations and anarchist press—will meet in us the most forceful opponents.”<sup>15</sup>

Having thus clearly defined to the Bolsheviks the limits of his support, Makhno proceeded to dash Grigorev’s hopes. This was accomplished by the publication of a lengthy and provocative document entitled, “Who Is This Grigorev?” which was published in anarchist newspapers and printed separately for distribution among the peasants. Dubbing Grigorev a “new bird of prey,” Makhno attacked the ataman’s universal at considerable length:

In the first words of his “Universal” he says that the people who govern the Ukraine are the crucifiers of Christ and people from the “eating stalls of Moscow.” Brothers! Do you not hear in these words a somber summons to Jewish pogroms? Do you not sense the aspiration of Ataman Grigorev to cut off the vital brotherly contact between the revolutionary Ukraine and revolutionary Russia? Grigorev talks about calloused hands, about holy labor, and so forth. But who now does not speak about holy labor and about the good of the people? Even the White Guardists, while violating us and our lands, say that they fight for the working people. But we shall know what sort of good they give to the people when they put it into our hands.

Grigorev says that he is fighting against the com-

15. Arshinov, p. 110 (my italics).

missars, for the genuine power of the soviets. But in the same universal he writes: "I, Ataman Grigorev . . . here is my order for you—elect your commissars!" And further, declaring that he is against the spilling of blood, Grigorev in the same universal orders a mobilization and directs a section to Kharkov and to Kiev; and he writes: "I ask you to execute my order; all the rest I will do myself." What is this? The true power of the people? But even Tsar Nicholas considered his authority the true power of the people. Or does Ataman Grigorev believe that his orders will not be power over the people and that his commissars will not be commissars but angels? Brothers! Don't you feel how the hand of adventurers, inciting you against one another, confuses your revolutionary ranks and strives imperceptibly behind your backs and with the assistance of your hands to sit on your necks? Be on guard! The traitor Grigorev, delivering a blow against the revolution from within, in time will bend his knee to the bourgeoisie. Using his pogrom movement he is already striving to aid Petlyura in Galicia and Denikin from the Don to break through. Woe to the Ukrainian people if it does not at one stroke cut short all these internal and external adventures.

Brother peasants, workers, and rebels! Many of you will be asking yourselves the question—how must you conduct yourselves with the many rebels who have fought for the revolution honorably, and who now, thanks to the treason of Grigorev, find themselves in his shameful ranks. Do you count them as counter-revolutionaries? No. These comrades are the victims of deceit. We are convinced that the healthy instinct of these revolutionaries will tell them that Grigorev has deceived them and they will leave him to rally again under the flag of the revolution.

We must say here that the causes creating the move-

ment of Grigorev include not only Grigorev himself, but to a great degree that disorder which has been established here in the Ukraine during the most recent times. With the arrival of the Bolsheviks here, the dictatorship of their party was established. As the state party, the Bolshevik party has everywhere constructed state organs for the government of the revolutionary people. All must be purified by them and live under their watchful eyes! Any opposition, protest, or even independent undertaking is strangled by the Cheka sections. In addition, all these organs are composed of people isolated from labor and revolution. In this fashion a situation has been created in which all the working and revolutionary people have fallen under the surveillance of a government of people foreign to labor, inclined to tyranny and violence toward them. Thus has the dictatorship of the party of Communist-Bolsheviks been manifested. In the masses this has created irritation, protest, and a hostile attitude toward the existing order. Grigorev takes advantage of this in his adventure. Grigorev is a traitor to the revolution and an enemy of the people, but the party of the Communist-Bolsheviks is no less an enemy of labor. By its irresponsible dictatorship it created the anger in the masses which Grigorev is making use of today, and which tomorrow will be used by some other adventurer. Consequently, condemning Ataman Grigorev for treason to the revolution, we at the same time hold the Communist party responsible for the Grigorev movement.

We again remind the working people that liberation from the oppression, violence, and misery encircling them can only be attained by the forces of the people themselves. No shifting of power can assist them in this. Only through their free worker-and-peasant organizations can the workers reach the shores of social

revolution—and complete freedom and genuine equality. Death and ruin to the betrayer and enemy of the people! Down with nationalistic hostility! Down with the provocateurs! Long live the universal solidarity of the workers and peasants! Long live the universal free workers' commune.<sup>16</sup>

If Makhno's stand improved the Bolshevik position, or Grigorev's, it was not obvious to them. Actually he weakened all three groups by creating a balance which would help to destroy the position of each. Yet it should not be overlooked that Makhno and Grigorev *were agreed* in their hostility toward Rakovski's government. Both virulently denounced the exclusiveness and dictatorial techniques of the Communist party, the tyranny of Cheka agents and food collectors; and both drew much of their strength from the peasants' aversion to Bolshevik agrarian policies.

Although Makhno had a more conscious set of political advisers than did Grigorev, and held more firmly to his political theory, there was also much in the batko's antagonism toward the ataman that was purely personal. Grigorev was Makhno's rival in fame and strength; if the rebellion were successful, Grigorev would undoubtedly expand his dominion over people and lands Makhno intended to "liberate," and would probably try to subjugate the batko himself. Without greatly distorting the facts, Makhno's devious mind could tailor the truth to his liking; though Grigorev fought the common enemy, his motives were wrong. Thus Makhno added his share of confusion to the tangled maze of Ukrainian politics while the Grigorev rebellion flared from Cherkassy to Kherson.

The failure of the KP(b)U and the RKP to devise and implement administrative techniques that would work

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 112-15.

under pressure in the Ukraine was one of the great tragedies for the Bolsheviks in early 1919. Grigorev's rebellion, while underlining the organizational shortcomings of government and party, also presented the Communists with difficult new burdens that contributed to the ultimate breakdown of Soviet authority in the Ukraine. Emergency measures to shore up the weak spots were immediately taken by agencies both at Moscow and in the Ukraine. However, contradictions within the administrative systems in operation made satisfactory solutions impossible.

One of the most obvious causes of weakness in both party and government was the refusal of the KP(b)U to work with other political parties despite Lenin's insistence that they do so. The Borotbisty elected to the Central Executive Committee of the All-Ukrainian Soviet in March were not given very important positions, nor had they been made welcome.<sup>17</sup> Grigorev's rebellion, however, brought an immediate reversal of this policy of exclusiveness. In order to strengthen the central government of the Ukraine, representatives of all pro-soviet parties were admitted to the Central Executive Committee; and several non-Bolsheviks were given high places on the presidium of that body or named to the Council of People's Commissars. The RSDRP (Russian Social Democratic Labor party [Menshevik]), the communist portion of the Jewish Bund, *Nezalezhniki*, and Left SRs—all joined with the Bolsheviks in the crisis. Borotbisty became commissars of Education, Finance, and Justice. A Borotbist was made chairman of the Ukrainian Supreme Council of National Economy; another, Yakovlev, became deputy head of the Cheka; while still others accepted positions as deputy commissars of Food, Internal Affairs, and Communications.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, these

17. *Istoriya Ukrainskoi RSR*, ed. Belousov, Zagorsky, Suprunenko, Shevchenko, 2, 149.

18. F. Taran, "Blakytyny (Elansky), Vasyl Mykhailovych," *Chervony shlyakh*, no. 2 (1926), p. 62; Majstrenko, pp. 126-27.

changes came too late to win the popular support they might have received had they been instituted in March or April. Moreover, the disorders produced by such major changes of personnel and policy at a time of emergency only increased the turmoil of May.

A second weakness emphasized and worsened by the rebellion was the existence in the Ukraine of two capitals, Kiev and Kharkov. In April, as the realization grew among officials at Kiev that Kharkov was usurping much of their authority, a tug of war for power developed in which Kharkov had the advantage. The eastern capital was nearer the imperiled Southern Front; hence those sections of government most concerned with strengthening the Southern Front established their headquarters at Kharkov. In addition, Kharkov was the industrial hub of the Ukraine. Since factories and workers, as well as railroads, fuel, and metal industries, were concentrated in the central and eastern portions of the Ukraine, for the sake of convenience Moscow commissariats demanded that their counterparts in the Ukraine establish branch offices at Kharkov.<sup>19</sup> Kiev, the historic capital, off in its hinterland of farms, was left on the sidelines, jealous but helpless, a spectator of the operations in the eastern sector of the Ukraine. This split, an administrative monstrosity, given the faulty communications of the time, was widened still more by Grigorev's rebellion, which further isolated the two capitals from one another and gave rise to the establishment of the Kharkov Military Command under Voroshilov. Kamenev, one of whose jobs was to rationalize Ukrainian administrative organization, succinctly stated the problem when he told Rakovski on May 11: "It is impossible to direct from Odessa, Kiev, Ekaterinoslav, and Kharkov."<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless

19. Barannyk et al., *Istoriya KP(b)U*, pp. 435-36; V. S., "Ekspeditsiya Kameneva," p. 150.

20. V. S., "Ekspeditsiya Kameneva," p. 146.

this was precisely what was being attempted, and Kamenev did not improve the system.

In truth, Kamenev himself represented a most important disruptive element. As Supreme Plenipotentiary of the Russian Council of Defense—literally Lenin's alter ego in the Ukraine—he exercised decisive authority in whatever political, military, or economic matter he decided to rule upon. Though he personally recognized the need for a single center, his conduct made clear his presumption that *he* should be that center. During the last days of April and on through May, he roamed from place to place making top-level decisions of his own on such varied topics as food collection, the discipline and loyalty of Grigorev and Makhno, military arrangements for Grigorev's suppression, the drafting and transport of troops to the Southern Front, and so forth.<sup>21</sup>

Had Kamenev been the sole plenipotentiary in the Ukraine, the matter might not have been unduly complicated, for in a sense there would then have been only three Ukrainian government centers, one at Kiev, another at Kharkov, and a third, the itinerant Kamenev. However, the proliferation of plenipotentiaries did not end here. At fault was the principle of assigning plenipotentiary power to random individuals and agencies. While Kamenev operated in the eastern and central portions of the Ukraine, Adolf Ioffe was given plenipotentiary powers at Kiev. Ioffe, a former Menshevik who had joined the RKP in early 1917 with Trotsky, was a physician by profession, a revolutionary by choice. Well educated, and familiar with Western Europe, he had already served the Bolsheviks well as a diplomat at Brest-Litovsk and, until November of 1918, as Soviet ambassador to Germany; he lacked, however, the dominating and forceful nature needed to whip the Ukraine's government and army into shape. Leon Trotsky, too, moved

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 123-54.

in and out of the Ukraine through May, spewing orders in all directions—imperative orders which cut across many offices. Less renowned men circulated between Moscow and Kharkov working to secure the immediate execution of Moscow's demands regarding railroads, fuel transportation, industrial operations, and food collection. Moscow agencies concerned with these matters continuously interfered with and overrode the decisions of Ukrainian officials by means of these lesser plenipotentiaries. Moreover, each of Lenin's commissars at Moscow was a plenipotentiary in his own right; when there was need, any commissar might send down categorical orders for immediate execution, now to Rakovski, now to Pyatakov or Antonov, now even directly to the pertinent middle-level official. The result of such administrative techniques was chaos.

Nor was the principle of plenipotentiary power abused only by men sent in from Moscow. Podvoiski, head of the Commissariat for Military Affairs in the Ukraine, rode roughshod over other commissariats of the Ukrainian government, disrupting everyone's business in his frantic efforts to keep the armies supplied, armed, and paid. The frictions he produced were so excessive that on May 22 Lenin advised Trotsky of the complaints of several Ukrainian officials who accused Podvoiski himself of causing "nineteenths of the disorders" in the Ukraine, by his "interference in everything."<sup>22</sup> At this same level Voroshilov's relationship with the Ukrainian government—as commander of the Kharkov Okrug—made him almost an autonomous political-military center. Besides all these, there was the Cheka, an agency which made and followed its own rules in the most highhanded fashion and which sometimes appeared more hostile to Ukrainian government officials than to the counterrevolutionaries it was supposed to destroy; Antonov, describing the Cheka as "a state within a state,"

22. "Trotsky Archives," T-221.

called for its destruction. Yet, while some high officials openly deplored the independence and arbitrariness of the Cheka, and while no high official at the time could have been unaware of the resentments this agency of terror provoked among the people of the Ukraine, it continued to function almost independently under the direction of its fanatic chief, M. Ya. Latsis (Sudrabs).<sup>23</sup>

With so many independent centers of power, some of them moving about on trains, and with faulty communication and transportation systems made even more unreliable by the capture and recapture of towns and cities by Gri-gorev and his pursuers, effective administration at the higher levels was incredibly difficult. Trotsky waited long hours at Kharkov for men at Kiev who were too busy to visit him.<sup>24</sup> Orders were delayed, lost, or duplicated by several offices, and contradictory instructions were piled upon a recipient from several different sources.

All through these difficulties ran the Red thread of Moscow's continuing but inconsistent efforts to centralize all operations and make every important decision in the Kremlin. As the Ukrainian crisis intensified, and the Southern Front grew more threatening, these efforts were increased. And as it became more and more apparent at Moscow that the Ukrainian government could not adequately perform its duties, a series of piecemeal efforts to correct the situa-

23. Antonov, 4, 154; V. S., "Ekspeditsiya Kameneva," pp. 134-35, 138. There is little reliable information available concerning the operations of the Cheka in the Ukraine during April and May. Due to the Cheka's independence and tendency to arrogate to itself the work of other Soviet agencies, which created widespread and determined opposition throughout Russia, government and party leaders repeatedly tried to restrict the Cheka's powers. For documents explaining the purposes and operations of the All-Russian Cheka and for accounts of the efforts to restrain it see: Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923*, 1, 169-74; and James Bunyan, *Intervention, Civil War, and Communism in Russia, April-December 1918: Documents and Materials* (Baltimore, 1936), pp. 232-39, 258-66.

24. "Trotsky Archives," T-200: May 14, Trotsky to Lenin, copies to Serpukhov and to Sokolnikov; cf. V. S., "Ekspeditsiya Kameneva," p. 151.

tion gnawed away the sovereignty of the Ukrainian government. The Ukrainian Director of Railroads was subordinated to the Russian Commissar of Roads late in April; in mid-May discussions began, aimed at unifying the armies of all the Russian republics under one command; Lenin proposed that all questions of finance be decided at Moscow, and so on.<sup>25</sup> The Ukrainian government was being destroyed by its own creators, who were themselves unable to organize it for the effective execution of the tasks they gave it.

At the middle levels of government—guberniya, uezd, city, and district—administrative collapse was even more sharply marked than at the upper levels, but for different reasons. Decrees had been issued quite early in the year calling for the preparation of elections to local soviets and for the assembling of congresses of soviets. Subsequently in March, the All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets had met to adopt a constitution and formally elect its government. But it soon became quite evident that true soviet government, that is, government by elected committee, was incapable of working well in the Ukrainian civil and military chaos. In many outlying areas soviets were never set up at all. They functioned best in the big cities, where urban workers were loyal to bolshevism and military protection was adequate; yet even in the cities the soviets were overelaborate, slow-moving; they required many competent workers and peaceful conditions. Dependent upon popular support, inclined to debate questions overlong, these were hardly the agencies to satisfy the demands of the military men; they were not designed to carry out the sharp, brutal missions of the food collectors, or to suppress revolts.<sup>26</sup>

Often, when Grigorev's troops approached a city, its so-

25. "Trotsky Archives," T-233: May 22, 1919, Lenin, Krestinski, Kalinin to Rakovski; Barannyk et al., *Istoriya KP(b)U*, pp. 435-36 (April 24, 1919).

26. Lidiya L. Potarykina, *Revkomy Ukrainy v 1918-1920 rr.* (Kiev, 1957), pp. 38-39, 146.

viet collapsed and the members dispersed. Where Bolshevik rule managed to survive, power tended to fall into the hands of the small, tough revkomy (hard knots of Communist authority controlled by a few zealots appointed by the party), who were afraid neither to make decisions nor to carry them out ruthlessly.

Separate instances of political collapse in the cities suggest the general pattern of events during Grigorev's insurrection. At Nikolaev about May 16, sailors and Red Army men destroyed the Cheka and, calling a general meeting, elected their own military commissar, a sailor. When Grigorev's representatives reached the city, the Communists had already departed. At Kherson, about May 14, a congress of peasants met and created a non-Bolshevik revkom, drove out the Bolshevik executive committee and all Communists, and joined Grigorev.<sup>27</sup> At Odessa, the Communists Shchadenko and Khudyakov declared the city in a state of siege and took extraordinary measures to prepare their partisan forces to fight Grigorev, while anti-Bolshevik groups in the city planned internal disorders and hoped for Grigorev's success.<sup>28</sup>

Communist power at Ekaterinoslav vanished with Skachko on May 11. To the militia chief's question, "What shall we do?" put to Bulgakov (Skachko's chief of staff), as he was on his way out of the city, the answer was: "Do what you like." On the 12th, with Grigorev's troops moving toward Ekaterinoslav, a Red Army unit (the Black Sea Regiment, sent to the city earlier for rest) sided with the ataman and seized power. Prisons were opened, and for a few hours the city was ruled by the partisan Maksuta, a Makhnovist only recently arrested by the Bolsheviks. Maksuta's reign ended when the bold Communist Aleksandr Parkomenko entered the town and personally shot him. By May 14 much

27. Antonov, 4, 222.

28. Bubnov et al., *Grazhdanskaya voina, 1918-1921*, 1, 79; Vladimir Margulies, *Ognennye gody*, p. 147.

of Ekaterinoslav was back in the hands of the Bolsheviks, though mopping up continued through the next day and rumors of a new attack by Grigorev persisted. With Red troops in the streets and more trouble expected, a general mobilization of citizens was ordered. Neither routine nor effective civil government was possible under such circumstances.<sup>29</sup>

Grigorev's summons to the Ukrainian people to rise with him against the Bolsheviks found willing listeners in other areas, where "sympathy" rebellions were carried out by men who had no personal ties with him but shared his ideas. Thus in the region between Vinnitsa and Proskurov, well to the west of Grigorev's operations, a band of rebels repeated Grigorev's slogans: "Down with forced communes! Down with the Jewish-commissars. Defend freedom of religion and free soviets—without Communists, and with Jews proportionately represented!" Here, the local leader of the rebels, Tishchenko, sent a telegram to the commissar of the guberniya soviet requesting him not to send troops but to send good agitators—if they were Christian and not Communist. Tishchenko further declared that he had ordered all soviet institutions to resume operations—but of course his new soviet government was non-Communist. His troops and his people were opposed not only to the commune but also to antireligious regulations and to the "dictatorial swarm of swindlers, for the most part Jews," who had tried to rule without being elected. Like Grigorev, Tishchenko branded untrue all allegations that he was connected with Petlyura. On the contrary, he insisted, his was a workers' program. Also like Grigorev, Tishchenko ordered immediate elections for a new soviet, depriving "pomeshchiki, capitalists, speculators, traders, and other people" of the right to vote. For the volost and for local

29. "Grigorevskaya avantюра (mai 1919 goda)," *Letopis revolyutsii*, no. 3 (1929), pp. 152-54, 159; V. S., "Ekspeditsiya Kameneva," p. 135; Bubnov et al., 1, 91.

towns, revkomy were to be set up at once; armed sections were mobilized in the villages, and Tishchenko called for the "development of agitation and the spread of rebellion through the region."<sup>30</sup> Typical of the many smaller actions mushrooming around Grigorev's, Tishchenko's rising and the local reforms it attempted underscored the Bolshevik failures. Unquestionably local leaders considered soviet and revkom organizations effective means of government, satisfactory to the peasant. What they could not stomach was the commune, the Communist party's exclusiveness, the officials appointed from above, and the enforcement of obedience by Cheka terror. The peasants were simply seizing the right to govern themselves, a right which the Bolsheviks had promised them but had withheld.

Down in the villages, where firm government was most necessary, it was most noticeably absent. The kombedy had not worked well, precisely because of the high percentage of middle and wealthy peasants in the Ukraine and because of the policies by which the Bolsheviks had so consistently turned peasants at all levels against communism.<sup>31</sup> Only the bolstering of Cheka agents and militant revkomy enabled the kombedy to function against the majority of the peasants.<sup>32</sup> When such support faltered or withdrew, or when angry peasants and local atamany ran amuck, it became impossible to carry on Communist business in the villages without the protection of heavily armed sections. "In consequence," according to Kozelsky, "the Soviet power was unable to work effectively, not only in the remote villages but even in many district centers."<sup>33</sup> By May, the peasant had the worst possible impression of the Bolsheviks,

30. Antonov, 4, 252-54.

31. P. M. Ponomarenko, "O politike partii v ukrainskoi derevne v 1919-1920 gg." (On the Policy of the Party in the Ukrainian Village in 1919-20) *Voprosy istorii* (Aug. 1956), pp. 105-06; Ravich-Cherkasski, pp. 123-25.

32. Potarykina, p. 111.

33. Kozelsky, p. 22.

for he had seen their most objectionable agencies—the provisioning sections, the Red Army units in pursuit of rebels, the Cheka units in search of counterrevolutionaries and saboteurs, and the revkomy, who helped unmask peasants hoarding grain.<sup>34</sup>

The danger of the village situation was recognized on May 14 by the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee in a decree on the kombedy which declared that *both* poor and middle peasants could be elected to these “committees of the poor.” Though embodying a contradiction in terms, this decree represented a most extreme effort to persuade the middle peasants that they were recognized as friends.<sup>35</sup> This decision was followed on May 25 by an “Instruction to Village Kombedy,” issued jointly by the Ukrainian Commissariat of Internal Affairs and the Commissariat of Produce, which pointed out that “the organization of the kombedy is the most important and principal task of the moment in connection with the sharp provisioning crisis and the necessity to suppress the bandit-kulak movement, demanding the heroic force of soviet executive committees.”<sup>36</sup> The “Instruction” clearly extended the privilege of serving on the kombedy to farmers who held up to 27 acres.<sup>37</sup> Like so many other measures discussed in preceding pages, however, these changes came too late. Indeed, even allowing for the Ukraine’s turmoil, it is hard to understand the ex-

34. Cf. Potarykina, p. 111.

35. Babi, *Mistsevi orhany derzhavnoi vlady Ukrainiskoi RSR v 1917–1920 rr.*, p. 189, says peasants holding from 5–10 dessiatines were eligible; Likholat, *Razgrom natsionalisticheskoi kontrrevolyutsii na Ukraine (1917–1922 gg.)*, p. 303, insists that only poor peasants, i.e., holders of less than 5 dessiatines (13.5 acres) could participate; P. M. Ponomarenko, “K voprosu o soyuze rabocheho klassa so srednim krestyanstvom na Ukraine v 1919–1920 godakh” (On the Question of the Alliance of the Working Class with the Middle Peasantry in the Ukraine in 1919–20), *Voprosy istorii* (Dec. 1958), p. 56, simply states that middle peasants could belong.

36. Likholat, p. 304.

37. Babi, p. 189.

cessive lapse of time from the decision to befriend the middle peasant (taken at the Eighth Party Congress, March 18–21) to the publication of these directives.<sup>38</sup>

As the power behind the government, as the creator of policy and the life force of all Soviet government, the party—the RKP with its branch, the KP(b)U—was, in the last analysis, the responsible agent in the Ukraine. And just as it must be recognized that the Soviet government failed to establish an effective administration, so it must also be recognized that the party failed to establish itself as the “senior partner” and friend of the Ukrainian people or even as its ruler. The Eighth Party Congress in March had created new internal problems for the KP(b)U. The Ukrainian branch subsequently was so hard pressed fulfilling the congress’ directives (to work out new relationships with the RKP and to purge its ranks of joiners and careerists) that it could hardly find time to work in the field.<sup>39</sup> But some tardy efforts were made to rectify this shortcoming. On May 6, for example, the dismal state of party organization in the villages was frankly admitted by a conference of the party members of the Kiev guberniya. Noting that the peasant was poorly informed about the Communist program and probably irritated by the errors of Soviet representatives in implementing land, nationality, and provisioning policies, the conferees decided to “create” a network of party organizations among the peasants. The word “create” was well chosen. But the decision came too late, for Grigorev’s uprising prevented further develop-

38. For evidence of the delays in getting the decisions of the Eighth Congress implemented in the Ukraine, see Ponomarenko, *Voprosy istorii*, pp. 52–55, and Likholat, pp. 306–07. Typical of this delay is the fact that the first news of the congress—Lenin’s opening address—appeared in the official paper *Kommunist*, at Kiev, on March 30, while the resolutions of the congress were not discussed in *Kommunist* until April.

39. Likholat, p. 331; Barannyk et al., *Istoriya KP(b)U*, pp. 415–18, 425; Antonov, 4, 136.

ment of village party work by compelling the party to throw its workers into the military effort.<sup>40</sup>

Two documents from the files of the KP(b)U illustrate the blighting effect which the rebellion, combined with Denikin's assaults on the Southern Front, had upon the party's constructive political work. In the first—the report of the Central Committee of the KP(b)U on its work through April and May—the influence of Grigorev was openly acknowledged. Not only did the Central Committee find it necessary to organize a special military section, but even the Politburo itself “was compelled to give three-fourths of its attention to the kulak movement, to the adventures of Grigorev, and to questions tied with these events.” During the uprising the Central Committee sent along some of its own members, as well as other important Communists, with groups of agitators to the regions where the Grigorev forces were most threatening.<sup>41</sup> The second document, an appeal of the Central Committee, probably issued late in May when Denikin's advance had accelerated, was addressed to all party committees. In this appeal the Central Committee announced that new and extraordinary measures were imperative. “We at Kiev have reduced to the minimum all soviet institutions. Do the same yourselves. Now is not the time to be occupied with the building of soviet institutions, when immediate danger threatens the very existence of Soviet power. We will organize the building of soviets after the victory over Denikin. Now, first of all, it is necessary to build the Red Army, to organize the repulse of Denikin.” Therefore, the instructions read: “Direct all your work to the repulse of Denikin, to the smashing of Petlyura, to the immediate merciless destruction of the kulak bands, to political work in the army, to supplying

40. Khrystyuk, 4, 82; Barannyk et al., *Istoriya KP(b)U*, pp. 451–52; cf. Ponomarenko, *Voprosy istorii*, p. 55; and Podvoiski, *Na Ukraine*, p. 21.

41. Barannyk et al., *Istoriya KP(b)U*, p. 416; cf. Ponomarenko, *Voprosy istorii*, pp. 58–59; Ravich-Cherkasski, p. 127.

the army, to the struggle against desertion." For the accomplishment of these tasks the party centers were told to assign three-fourths of their membership, and to put aside "all other matters."<sup>42</sup>

In the economic as in the political sphere, government and party alike suffered catastrophic breakdowns. It was the pronounced failure of Narkomprod—Shlikhter's provision-gathering commissariat—that spurred Lenin to send Kamenev and Ioffe to take emergency remedial measures. In late April Kamenev defined the collection system as it worked in the Ukraine with cynical realism: "Whoever controls a big armed force receives grain."<sup>43</sup> Patiently he extracted promises of assistance from Makhno and Dybenko, but such were the frictions between the various civil and military supply agencies that, as he acidly remarked at a three-day conference of collecting agencies in Kiev, "before we can conclude an agreement with Makhno and Gri-gorev, I presume there should be agreement between Podvoiski and Shlikhter."<sup>44</sup>

In order to unravel the difficulties and coordinate these different agencies, Kamenev set up a number of commissions and recommended to Moscow a series of personnel changes in the All-Russian Narkomprod, further centralization of its operations in the Ukraine, and subordination of the army supply organization to Shlikhter. Just here, in this easy ability of the plenipotentiary to recommend "changing everything," lay one of the major shortcomings of the system. Though changes were undoubtedly necessary, they could not be executed without compounding administrative confusions. "Deliver us from seventeen different organi-

42. Barannyk et al., *Istoriya KP(b)U*, pp. 494-95; the editors of this valuable collection believe that this undated document was published in May; the emphasis upon Denikin would indicate publication very late in the month.

43. V. S., "Ekspeditsiya Kameneva," p. 144.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

zations," supply people at Melitopol begged him. But Kamenev's reforms produced more muddle than food. On May 4 he expressed the hopelessness of the situation during a conversation with Dybenko's chief of staff: "Makhno," Kamenev said, "has wagons watched over by three guards—Makhno's, Narkomprod's, and the army supply section; and no one will yield to the other."<sup>45</sup> Bolshevik inability to organize a unified supply system could not have been summarized more succinctly.

With Grigorev's rising, the supply situation worsened immeasurably. On May 22 Trotsky informed Lenin that to obtain grain and coal from Mariupol and to discipline Makhno's bands he would need "a trustworthy Cheka battalion, several hundred Baltic Fleet sailors interested in coal and grain, a provision section of Moscow or Ivanov-Vosnesenski workers, and about 30 serious party workers."<sup>46</sup> The lamentable results of Shlikhter's efforts are reflected in a party source published early in June which reported that only 768,000 poods of grain had been sent to Russia from the Ukraine (as opposed to the 50,000,000 Lenin had demanded in March).<sup>47</sup> Later Soviet evidence indicates that, by June, Shlikhter's provisioning organization had collected only 10,500,000 poods of grain, much of which went to consumers in the Ukraine. This did not satisfy even the minimal needs of the working population and the army in the Ukraine.<sup>48</sup> New decrees issued in May for the further reorganization of the Narkomprod structure helped very little, and in June the Ukrainian commissariat was made an adjunct of the RSFSR organization.<sup>49</sup> The Bolshevik party historian, N. N. Popov, frankly acknowledges the

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 131–32.

46. "Trotsky Archives," T-220: May 22.

47. Barannyk et al., p. 457.

48. *Istoriya Ukrainskoi RSR*, 2, 155; N. N. Popov, p. 197; cf. Likholat, p. 316.

49. Likholat, p. 296.

extent of the failure to obtain food in the Ukraine and identifies its causes. In his opinion, the Ukraine lacked "an organized civil apparatus," and this deficiency was "accompanied by a lack of firm discipline in the execution" of the provisioning policy. Consequently, given the other factors influencing the Ukraine, a provisioning policy which Popov considers *more moderate* than that applied in Great Russia "called forth [in the Ukraine] a significantly more resolute resistance from the middle peasant masses."<sup>50</sup>

Mention has been made previously of Podvoiski's disruptive influence and highhanded tactics in the realm of army supply. So great were the disorganizing effects of his efforts to grab supplies that on May 22 Lenin recommended his removal.<sup>51</sup> Trotsky's response remains a classic summary of the situation: "Concerning Podvoiski, the trouble is that no other organization but the military one exists in the Ukraine, that the mild character of Rakovski prepares the ground for despotism."<sup>52</sup> Despite Podvoiski's efforts, the war commissariat very poorly provided for units at the front. Antonov endlessly berated his superior for doing nothing to provide his troops with supplies, and Podvoiski himself admitted to Kamenev that he made no pretense of controlling the supply organizations of Dybenko, Makhno, Grigorev, or other forceful commanders.<sup>53</sup> As for Kamenev's efforts to establish a central supply organization for both civil and military components of the Soviet government, these came to an end abruptly, when, about May 9, Lenin ordered him to Kharkov with a new mission—to get Ukrainian troops to the Southern Front.

Events at Odessa after Grigorev began his rebellion illustrate the awful seriousness of the military supply situation. There, Shchadenko and Khudyakov tried to prepare

50. Popov, p. 197; his italics.

51. "Trotsky Archives," T-221: Lenin to Trotsky.

52. Ibid., T-222.

53. Antonov, 4, 136, 151-52; V. S., "Ekspeditsiya Kameneva," p. 125.

simultaneously for Odessa's defense and for the push northward against Grigorev that Antonov demanded. The problem at the big port was much the same as elsewhere—the troops at Khudyakov's disposal around Odessa were as much partisan in temper and training as were the men who followed Grigorev; even their commanders were partisans of doubtful loyalty. The chief of Khudyakov's 5th Division reported that his units were hungry, barefooted, and envious of their enemies, who, they understood, were warmly dressed. Linen and uniforms were needed, this commander reported, lest the troops desert.

To meet the emergency, Shchadenko, along with the city's executive committee and a representative from the government at Kiev, devised a "Day of Peaceful Uprising," during which the good people of Odessa were ordered to give up underclothing, boots, and outer garments for the troops. According to one unfriendly observer, the first such day resulted in failure because the city's laborers, not told that they were exempted from the levies, left work to protect their homes and fight off the expected collectors. But the second try was a huge success. Shchadenko obtained 30,000 suits of underwear, 18,000 pairs of boots and shoes, and 15,000 pieces of outer garments—jackets, trousers, and overcoats.<sup>54</sup> In all likelihood, this singular collection saved Odessa, for after the wavering commander of the 5th Division was replaced by the partisan Tkachenko, Shchadenko learned that Tkachenko was carrying in his pocket a telegram from Grigorev. Moreover, Tkachenko frankly admitted that he was seriously considering Grigorev's proposal, which is admirably rendered in a free translation by William Henry Chamberlin: "Why do you stand up for the hooknosed commissars? Stop being a fool. Let's take Odessa again and rob so that the place will be pulled to pieces.

54. Shchadenko, "Grigorevshchina," in Bubnov et al., 1, 77-78; V. Margulies, pp. 134-41, 145.

Warm greetings. Your brother, Grigorev."<sup>55</sup> Shchadenko's courage and persuasiveness, coupled with the issue of clothing, won Tkachenko and warmed the troops, who stayed with the Bolsheviks.

In mid-May a telegram from Voroshilov and Mezhlauk to Lenin and Kamenev graphically described the supply picture on the internal front. "Front line units are compelled to carry out their own supply," Voroshilov reported. "Units attacking Grigorev are going hungry; their horses die." He bitterly condemned Narkomprod for the promises made months before and still unfulfilled. His solution, offered in the thick of the struggle against Grigorev, was typical. He requested authority to set up a new provisioning agency by putting his own "energetic" workers to the job of collecting food. Another plenipotentiary was in the making.

Chaos in the political and economic institutions was paralleled by a social phenomenon accompanying the military action which must have made dedicated intellectuals of every stripe writhe in pain. Throughout the military struggle with Grigorev, both sides suffered woefully from an identical complaint—defection. Individual men, small bands, and whole units, caught up in the turmoil and forced to decide for themselves where they stood politically, found that they were not sure; accordingly, peasant groups, military sections, regiments, and entire towns swayed back and forth from one side to the other in what was a commander's nightmare and sheer agony for the men and families involved.

The reasons for the defections, the betrayals and counter-betrayals, the constant shifting of opinion are in some cases quite clear, in others—indecipherable. Soldiers on both sides of the invisible lines which made them enemies were

55. Bubnov et al., 1, 83; Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution, 1917-1921*, 2, 217.

of the same stock. If the partisans were kulaks, as most Communist sources aver, then Ukrainian Red Army troops were kulaks also, a fact they frequently demonstrated by joining their fellows across the line. Actually men on both sides were drawn from all levels of the peasant population; their many common convictions united them despite the fact that as soldiers they were at one another's throats.<sup>56</sup>

The ideological entanglements were too compelling for any man closely involved in the struggle to escape, and it would be difficult to say which side possessed the most politically conscious followers. In the absence of adequate numbers of trained political workers, the Red troops were poorly indoctrinated, therefore weakly dedicated to Bolshevik ideals; on the other side, many partisans who were also anti-Bolshevik considered themselves "true communists" or "communists by instinct," as Podvoiski phrased it, and some even had sufficient perception to guess that Grigorev might betray them for his own interests.<sup>57</sup> And, of course, during the attack upon every town both attackers and defenders were impelled by danger to think furiously on the issues involved, often with the result that men who found themselves fighting on the wrong side quietly slipped over to the other.

Neutralism, too, played an important role. Far more people than the leaders of either side could admit did not care who won but were primarily concerned with keeping themselves alive. As local victories occurred, the winning unit swelled in size, the civilian populace offering its bread and salt to the victor and actively joining in his pogroms. Civil war, invariably indiscriminate in its brutalities, quickly teaches the people who live in villages to welcome the most recent conqueror and to support him up to the point necessary for survival without committing themselves so

56. Podvoiski, pp. 20-26.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

deeply that they cannot turn and welcome the next victor. Ukrainian village folk had acquired a vast experience in such tactics.

In the fighting of May 1919, the tactics of both sides made it difficult for the peaceful man to support either side. An "International Regiment" made up of Rumanians, Hungarians, and Chinese, organized by the Bolsheviki for action in Rumania, was turned from the west to suppress the rebellion; its commander, Fekete, slashed through the western Ukraine like any foreign conqueror. The commander of the First Army's 2nd Division, Lengovski, roused even Rakovski's ire by ordering the destruction of a whole village (Germanovka) for its part in supporting the "bandits." The Red commander of a flotilla on the Dnepr, an angry sailor named Polupanov, who took a completely personal attitude toward his opponents, announced that "persons inciting the dark masses against the sailors, or infiltrating its organization, will be shot on the spot without trial. . . . Understand, Dark Forces of the Counterrevolution, that the sailors have given many lives for the work of the revolution, and their living brothers will not consent to your tricks, and will not let go their weapons until complete victory over you."<sup>58</sup> How could the peaceful man choose between these Reds and the wild pogromists of Grigorev, who made little distinction between Jew and Christian, rich and poor?

Discipline and morale, almost nonexistent on both sides, nonetheless fluctuated according to the current rumor, the supply of food and drink, or the number of new replacements. In every unit there were malcontents, men with batons or copies of Marx under their sheepskins, anxious to seize a command or advance the revolution. And as May wore on, the news of Denikin's successes filtered through

58. Antonov, 4, 264.

the countryside, stimulating new waves of unrest.<sup>59</sup> This was an ugly war, carried on by men so accustomed to being trapped in the business of fighting and dying for purposes only dimly perceived that they hardly thought of escape.

On Grigorev's side, the rebellion got off to a poor start when several of his units refused to follow him. The Crimean and Tiligulski Regiments remained loyal to the Bolsheviks; soon after, the Verblyuzhski, the 2nd Znamenski (at Elisavetgrad), and the 4th Khersonski (at Zolotonosha) surrendered to the Bolsheviks and joined Antonov's troops. Later, on May 21, the 2nd and 6th Regiments simply refused to show resistance to the Bolsheviks, the soldiers dispersing to their homes. But the trend was by no means all one way. A commissar of the Second Red Army, serving on Dybenko's staff, reported so many people rushing to join Grigorev that the ataman had insufficient arms for them.<sup>60</sup> Though this was probably an exaggeration, it is worth recalling that at the time of his rebellion Grigorev possessed at least 15,000 surplus rifles.<sup>61</sup>

On the Bolshevik side, Antonov's troops at the fronts facing Rumania, Petlyura, and Denikin remained relatively firm. But the situation among the forces turned about to suppress Grigorev proved entirely another matter, for they flipped from one side to another like fish out of water. The International Brigade, mentioned above, did not at all relish the idea of fighting inside the Ukraine, and some of its members clamored for transfer to a rest area.<sup>62</sup> Losses by desertion weakened the 3rd Regiment of the 1st Division, which had been formed from men of the Chernigov district. The Chigirinski Regiment was openly anti-Semitic,

59. Kozelsky, p. 26; Trotsky, *Kak vooruzhalas revolyutsiya*, 2, 456 n.; Antoli Anishev, *Ocherki istorii grazhdanskoi voiny, 1917-1920 gg.* (Outline of the History of the Civil War) (Leningrad, 1925), p. 173.

60. Antonov, 4, 256-61; Kubanin, p. 71.

61. Bubnov et al., 1, 71.

62. Antonov, 4, 261-62.

members of its command staff carried on anti-Soviet agitation, and the ranks plundered wherever they went. Sailors at Znamenka, Popov's section at Nikolaev, units at Ekaterinoslav and Kherson, all deserted. At Cherkassy the troops went over to Grigorev. In other units disorders were so great that it was difficult to keep up the pretense that they were actually Bolshevik troops. Rakovski later commented that the Red Army had provided the rebels' reserves.<sup>63</sup>

Dissatisfaction among Red units was well illustrated by the troubles of the 1st Regiment of Red Cossacks, a unit that was already celebrated for its exploits on the side of the Bolsheviks and destined in the future to form the cadre of the Bolsheviks' most famous cavalry army. Considered one of the most reliable of Soviet regiments, the 1st Red Cossacks was pulled out of the line west of Kiev and sent against Grigorev's forces in the Kremenchug region. On the road it plundered, attacked Cheka units, halted passenger and freight trains, and was attacked in turn by the Cheka. Antonov, presuming that war had broken out between his unit and the Cheka, telephoned Latsis, head of the Ukrainian Cheka, demanding that the latter halt its provocation; he also issued a message to "all executive committees and Chekas" lauding the 1st Red Cossack Regiment as "brilliant and glorious." "All rumors about its disorders, and so on," he declared "are vile provocations. This regiment has never, anywhere, permitted any disorder. Take measures for the suppression of provocation; arrest the provocateurs, and present them to the courts as black traitors."<sup>64</sup>

Once again, Antonov was in error. The Red Cossacks were out in force mutinying at Lubny. They opened the prison and freed the prisoners, they stole property and drove out Soviet workers, their command staff organized a

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 221-22, 237; Heifetz, 244-45; Ravich-Cherkasski, p. 127; Igrenev, "Ekaterinoslavskiya vospominaniya," *Arkhiv russkoi revolyutsii*, 3, 242.

64. Antonov, 4, 265.

pogrom and disarmed both militia and Cheka to the tune of the familiar slogan: "Death to the Jews and Communists." A day later, May 21, the political commissar of the regiment reported the troubles at an end. A few men had been tried and shot; the command staff was calm again; the true cause of the "mutiny" had been the panic of local authorities and the failure of the command staff to take firm repressive action against the troublesome members of the regiment. Despite these assurances, when the unit arrived at Kremenchug two days later its temper had clearly improved very little. Receiving new orders to transfer the regiment to the Donbass, its temporary commander (acting for the regular commander, Primakov, who was on leave) complained to Antonov that his men were worn out and could not be entrained for further movement until his demands for supplies were filled. Primakov had to be recalled to duty and ordered to move his regiment at once to the Donbass. A loyal and forceful commander, he duly promised that his "heroes" would carry out the order.<sup>65</sup>

Antonov rationalized the scandalous conduct of the 1st Cossacks as a by-product of civil panic and Cheka violence. There were other contributing factors: bad administration, chaotic communications, faulty supply, plus the moral and mental confusion and sheer physical exhaustion of the troops sent to put down the rebellion.

65. *Ibid.*, pp. 266-68; *Chervonoe kazachestvo*, pp. 52-53.

## CHAPTER 11

### *Defeat*

IN THE MILITARY SPHERE Grigorev's rebellion had consequences all out of proportion to the partisans' actual fighting strength, for it came at a moment when concurrent developments had brought Communist Russia to the brink of catastrophe. There can be no doubt, for example, that the ataman's revolt facilitated Denikin's advance by heightening administrative, social, and military disorders in the Ukraine. However, while the uprising must be recognized as an event of key importance for the immediate destiny of Russia, it would be an error to attempt to explain subsequent events in the Ukraine without acknowledging the important influence of other factors.

Bolshevik successes against Kolchak on the Eastern Front in late April and subsequent heavy fighting on that front all through May increased the Russian Central Committee's feeling that this front should be very strongly supported, and thus hampered Vatsetis' efforts to buttress the Southern Front. During these same weeks, the White general, N. Yudenich, sallied forth from Estonia bent on capturing Russia's second city, Petrograd (Leningrad). His campaign was so successful that Stalin was sent to the northern capital with plenipotentiary powers and instructions to take the necessary "extraordinary measures" at which he was so

adept. Stalin's demands for ammunition and his contemptuous criticisms of Trotsky's commanders in the north added new strains to the military organization.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, behind the Red troops on the Southern Front, the Don Cossacks, who had been in rebellion since March, were still in the field, and on the front lines Denikin's forces stubbornly wrested victories from ineffective Soviet forces.<sup>2</sup>

In May General Denikin was the Bolsheviks' most dangerous enemy. To back up his announced intention of clearing the whole country of Bolsheviks, he had an army outnumbering the Red troops facing it and the promise of extensive aid from England and France. Vatsetis, thoroughly conscious of the danger, had for some time been quietly disobeying a directive of the Central Committee by systematically transferring as many units from the Eastern Front as he dared.<sup>3</sup> But these reinforcements were inadequate, and, since men could not be spared elsewhere, the supplying of troops to the south became the Ukraine's primary mission.

Demands for reinforcements from the Ukraine were sharply increased on the 2nd of May, when Vatsetis prefaced his orders to Antonov with a carefully worded summary of the All-Russian situation. Vatsetis outlined conditions on the Eastern Front, mentioned the threat of attack from Finland, the growing strength of the Poles, and Denikin's increased strength. The Ukrainian Front, he pointed out, had now more or less resolved all the tasks previously assigned to it. Henceforth its chief mission was "to give the closest support to the Southern, Eastern, and Western Fronts." For the proper execution of this mission, he ordered Antonov to create a strategic reserve of three divi-

1. Lenin, *Voennaya perepiska, 1917-1920*, pp. 62-63; Trotsky, *Stalin*, pp. 306-07.

2. Trotsky, *Kak vooruzhalas revolyutsiya*, 2, 174, 455 n.

3. "Doklady I. I. Vatsetisa V. I. Leninu (fevral-mai 1919 g.)," *Istoricheski arkhiv*, no. 1, p. 44; no. 2, pp. 39-44.

sions, to be concentrated in the northern part of the Ukraine "in such a way that the units of this strategic reserve, in the event of necessity, could be transferred by direct routes either against the Southern, Eastern, or Western Fronts." The new reserve was to be placed directly under Vatsetis' command.<sup>4</sup>

Antonov replied brusquely that the new directive had put him at his wit's end. Fulfilling its demands, he complained, would mean halting action against Rumania and Petlyura; it would destroy any effort to support Hungary and would simply "strip the Ukraine." Apparently he made his point, for on May 5 Vatsetis emphasized that the main problem was the Southern Front. The numerical inferiority of the Red armies facing Denikin must be remedied, he explained, but the utter depletion of reserves on the Eastern Front left only the Ukraine as a source of reserves. Therefore, the commander in chief ordered: "You must move to the Southern Front all those forces which remain after the allotment of an adequate force for action in the direction of Bukovina-Budapest and for the defense in the southwestern direction, which at the present are of secondary importance."<sup>5</sup>

Lenin, watching and fuming, out of patience with his Ukrainian colleagues and intensely concerned about the south, presently swung his own heavy club at Rakovski, Podvoiski, and Antonov, en bloc. In a telegram on May 5 he said:

Up to this time there has not been one factual, accurate reply from you about which units move to the Donbass; how many rifles, swords, cannons; at which stations are the leading echelons. The capture of Lugansk proves that those who accuse you of independ-

4. Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski o grazhdanskoi voine*, 4, 299-300.

5. *Ibid.*, 4, 300.

ence and ambition to go into Rumania are right.<sup>6</sup> Remember that you will be responsible for the catastrophe if you delay serious assistance to the Donets Basin.

I beg you to send me information: what has been sent, the hour, and the minute. Lenin.<sup>7</sup>

Although Lenin continued hammering in like manner at Ukrainian party and government leaders throughout the month, he was apparently losing hope that these men could manage their business. Thinking ahead and searching in all directions for effective expedients he had applied one of these on the night of May 4-5, after learning of the fall of Lugansk. It will be recalled that Leo Kamenev had come into the Ukraine earlier as plenipotentiary of the Council of Defense with the primary mission of expediting the collection and delivery of grain. Lenin now expanded his mission, abruptly ordering Kamenev, "along with Ioffe if necessary," to assume personal responsibility for getting reinforcements to "Lugansk and generally to the Donbass, because otherwise there is no doubt that the catastrophe will be enormous and almost irreparable." Lenin's contempt for the Ukrainian government was expressed in his suggestion of the method by which Kamenev might formalize his new military authority: "If necessary, compose a mandate for yourself from the Kiev Council of Defense." His lack of respect for the military organization of the Ukraine was reflected in the latter part of the telegram. "About Makhno," he advised Kamenev; "temporarily, while Rostov

6. Passing through the lines of the Eighth Army in early May, Shkuro's cavalry attacked and badly defeated an isolated Red division, forcing the Eighth Army to pull back to protect its rear. One consequence of this withdrawal was the temporary abandonment of Lugansk, an important industrial city in the Donbass, on May 5. As indicated above, Lenin saw fit to blame this minor calamity upon the men of the Ukraine. (N. Kakurin, *Kak svazhalas revolyutsiya*, 2, 152; V. S., "Ekspeditsiya L. B. Kameneva dlya prodvizeniya prodlgruzov k Moskve v 1919 godu," *Proletarskaya revolyutsiya*, no. 6 [1925], p. 133.)

7. Lenin, *Voennaya perepiska*, p. 60; cf. Lenin, *V. I. Lenin pro Ukrainu*, p. 536.

is not yet captured, it is necessary to be diplomatic. Send Antonov there personally and lay on him the responsibility for the troops of Makhno."<sup>8</sup>

That Makhno had for several weeks been under the operational direction of the Southern Front, and that Antonov was still, in name at least, Commander of the Ukrainian Front and not a brigade commander or military policeman, was disregarded. Lenin's attitude seemed to imply that for him the Ukrainian government and its front had ceased to exist, that the officials in the Ukraine were chessmen to be moved at his dictates, without regard to previous assignments or obligations. This attitude was further illustrated by a telegram of May 8 sent over Lenin's signature from the Central Committee to Rakovski, Podvoiski, Kamenev, and Ioffe, with a copy to Antonov, which ordered them to assign the best party workers in the Ukraine to the job of getting troops to the Southern Front. These "best" workers were to secure the needed reinforcements by mobilizing the laborers of Odessa, Ekaterinoslav, Nikolaev, Kharkov, and Sevastopol. This message made *both* Podvoiski and Antonov "personally responsible for Makhno's group." On this same date Antonov was halted at Odessa by Rakovski's report that Grigorev had begun his rebellion. If Lenin was aware of this development, he apparently failed to comprehend its significance. "Remember," his message concluded, "without the swift capture of Rostov the ruin of the revolution is inevitable."<sup>9</sup>

The following evening (May 9), while Leo Kamenev sat at Ekaterinoslav waiting for Grigorev's promised visit, he received more specific instructions from the Russian Central Committee about the special mobilization he was to effect. He and Ioffe were ordered to concentrate their energies in mustering 20,000 workers, for service as Southern Front replacements, within 14 days. Ioffe was to carry out

8. V. S., "Ekspeditsiya Kameneva," p. 133.

9. "Trotsky Archives," T-192; cf. Lenin, *Voennaya perepiska*, p. 61.

the work at Kiev, Kamenev at Ekaterinoslav and Kharkov. They were told to "saturate the minds of party workers with the idea that the destiny of the revolution depends upon a successful mobilization." "Wide agitation and energetic, swift organizational measures" were demanded, with party committees and trade union personnel alike to be drawn into the work. Whether or not the mobilized laborers had uniforms was to make no difference: the goal was simply to get men to the Southern Front at once.<sup>10</sup> These plans, excellent as they may have been, foundered during the Grigorev uprising.

In the meantime, even before the struggle to quash the rebellion was well under way, Denikin had won his first great victories. Red attacks begun around May 14, after recapturing Lugansk and pushing southward, were contained by the White forces. Between May 16 and 19, Denikin started his countermove, aiming his blow at the right flank of the Southern Thirteenth Army where Makhno's partisans held the line. Pressed beyond their endurance the partisans fell back on May 20–23, opening the front to the cavalry of Shkuro. This was the beginning of the end, for Denikin's vigorous exploitation of Shkuro's breakthrough, combined with the simultaneous advance of White troops toward Millerovo, placed the whole Bolshevik line in jeopardy. From May 24 onward, Soviet troops pulled back to the north, as the Volunteer Army relentlessly advanced. The tide of battle had turned.<sup>11</sup>

While Denikin pushed northward and Lenin begged for some kind of forceful counteraction, the Bolsheviks struggled grimly to rid themselves of the rebellion. Suppressing

10. "Trotsky Archives," T-193: May 9, 1919, from Lenin, Trotsky, Krestinski, Stalin, to Kamenev, Ioffe, Rakovski (signed by Trotsky); Lenin, *Voennaya perepiska*, p. 61, presents the same letter without an accurate address and with Lenin and Stalin shown as co-signers.

11. Kakurin, *Strategicheski ocherk grazhdanskoi voiny*, pp. 102–04; Trotsky, *Kak vooruzhalas revolyutsiya*, 2, 456 n.; Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, 5, 104.

Grigorev's division was neither a major operation nor a time-consuming one; the worst aspect of this affair, from the military point of view, was that troops had to be withdrawn from other crucial tasks and exhausted in fighting on the internal front. Voroshilov's energetic and aggressive direction of operations brought every sort of armed detachment in upon the partisans, so that despite the confusions, defections, and desertions that accompanied the fighting, despite even the enervating effect of troop transfers to the Southern Front, Grigorev's partisan division as a significant military force was soon destroyed. Ekaterinoslav fell to Soviet troops on May 14; Kremenchug on the 19th. Grigorev's home village, Aleksandriya, was invaded by armored trains on the night of May 21–22, and those partisans not captured were dispersed. Elisavetgrad, after changing hands through several days of hard fighting, fell on the 23rd, and Aleksandrovska (Zaporozhe) on the following day. Although fighting continued at Nikolaev until the 27th, and Grigorev himself somehow evaded Voroshilov's troops and "scampered away," Rakovski had already pronounced the rebellion at an end on May 23.<sup>12</sup>

But while the actual fighting was neither massive nor prolonged, the rebellion and its suppression had very serious consequences. Its contribution to the breakdown of Bolshevik political and economic apparatus has already been discussed; its influence upon the further collapse of party and government agencies will be examined in later sections of this chapter. First, however, the immediate human, social, and military consequences must be considered. In terms of human suffering the rebellion left a long and terrible record of lives lost, homes sacked and burned, villages and cities ravaged. The depositions of pogrom survivors, collected immediately after the events, present a tale of villages and cities literally drenched in the blood

12. Antonov, 4, 220–21, 237–39; Vladimir Margulies, *Ognennye gody*, pp. 176–77; Shchadenko, "Grigorevshchina," in Bubnov et al., 1, 88–94.

of their Jews.<sup>13</sup> Local populations caught up by the ugly passions of anti-Semitism joined with the partisans, usually following the dictates of some half-literate bully who for a few days terrorized his village or volost and played the hero for rural riffraff and Jew-hating intellectuals. The horrors of the pogroms and the counter horrors of repressive operations by Red troops left the people dazedly counting their dead, nursing their wounded, and picking over the ashes of ruined homes. Thus during the second half of May the Ukraine reached a peak of social anarchy and individual suffering that baffled Bolshevik efforts to restore order and carry forward emergency measures for defense.

The splitting of the Ukrainian Front between Voroshilov and Antonov was but the beginning of the military disruption Grigorev provoked. Owing to the rising, Antonov was forced to recall troops from his First and Third Armies in the west and southwest for action on the internal front. Other units from these fronts, already entrained for transfer to the Southern Front, were diverted to oppose Grigorev. Voroshilov's main forces for the Kharkov okrug were taken from Skachko's Second Army and from the Crimea. Because of the crying need to strike quickly and clear the Ukraine of its troublemakers, units were thrown together from every imaginable source. Thus Parkomenko's attack on Ekaterinoslav was executed by a composite force of army units, Cheka sections, militia men, groups from party and worker organizations, and members of local government offices.<sup>14</sup> Dybenko's division, belonging technically to the Second Army but placed under Voroshilov's control for the fight against Grigorev, weakened Makhno's force by drawing off the Crimean shock regiment which should have gone to support the batko.<sup>15</sup> Such siphoning off of troops

13. Heifetz, *Slaughter of the Jews in the Ukraine in 1919*.

14. "Grigorevskaya avantyura (mai 1919 goda)," *Letopis revolyutsii*, no. 3, p. 153.

15. Antonov, 4, 304.

for the suppression of the internal turmoil not only rendered impossible the dispatch of Vatsetis' three-division strategic reserve and the 20,000 workers Lenin had demanded for the Southern Front, but also further weakened the troops already facing Denikin, thus contributing to the circumstances which forced Makhno's withdrawal under fire on May 23.

There were other troublesome consequences. The swift suppression of the military phase of the rebellion did not mean that the troops which had destroyed Grigorev's division could immediately be transferred to the Southern Front. Though Lenin himself seemed unaware of the fact, the Ukrainian military units were not tireless numbered squares to be pushed back and forth across colored maps, but groups of weary human beings. Painfully shattered units had to be reformed; exhausted men needed rest; units that had served Grigorev or switched back and forth between Reds and partisans during the fighting required careful purging of their unreliable elements. Units needed to collect and train new levies, to replenish their stocks of supplies and ammunition. But there was no time for such essential work. Under pressure from above, Antonov desperately tried to sort out which of the units chasing Grigorev's rebels could be disengaged and sent at once to the south. Just as desperately, his subordinates pleaded for rest, for replenishment of men and arms.

Furthermore, though Grigorev's organized military strength was soon broken, the rebellious spirit of the Ukraine was not. Instead, this spirit was dispersed, driven underground. Tyutyunik escaped to the west, where he joined other partisans more or less loyal to Petlyura and continued to lead an active band of some 2,000 partisans.<sup>16</sup> Grigorev skulked in the villages of the mid-Ukraine, leading remnants of his division in local raids and in attacks

16. Kozelsky, *Shlyakh zradnitstva i avantur*, pp. 21-22.

upon small Bolshevik detachments. Other partisan bands, after having been smashed by Red troops, dispersed quietly through the villages, only to form anew when Red forces departed. Embittered men carried their weapons home, hating bolshevism even more virulently than before and waiting sullenly for the next opportunity to express their feelings. Thus the suppression of the rebellion expanded and intensified the war between the peasants and the Bolsheviks.

Against this background, Lenin hotly adjured Rakovski not to lose one minute in getting troops to the Southern Front. As for the people, he ordered: "Decree and carry out the complete disarming of the population; mercilessly shoot on the spot anyone hiding a rifle."<sup>17</sup> But nationwide repressive measures called for many more Cheka sections than could possibly be organized, for many reliable military units trained in the patient pursuit of rebel partisan groups. It was simply not possible to mount the time-consuming guerrilla war which had become the Bolsheviks' only answer to Ukrainian rebelliousness. While categorical orders were issued by Lenin, Rakovski, Voroshilov, Trotsky, Antonov, and their subordinates, demanding the resolute and final destruction of all "bandits," Denikin's armies advanced northward. The catastrophe had begun.<sup>18</sup>

Early in May Lenin and his Central Committee had begun to ponder the question of how to improve the unwieldy political and military machinery of the Ukraine. As they hit upon various expedients they tried them out, usually lopping away some of the authority of the Ukrainian party and government in the process. Kamenev and Ioffe represented one such expedient, of doubtful efficacy since the combined efforts of the two men hardly budged the slug-

17. "Trotsky Archives," T-233: May 26, 1919.

18. Antonov, *4*, 250-52.

gish administrative apparatus at Kiev and Kharkov. Another such effort was a proposal by the Russian Central Committee that the Soviet Republics of the RSFSR, the Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, and Belorussia unite their army, railroad, financial, economic, and labor commissariats, so that these affairs could all be managed from Moscow.<sup>19</sup> On May 18, dutifully responding to this prodding from above, the Central Executive Committee of the Ukraine formally requested such unification. Thus began the lengthy process of working out a new, more centralized system of government. A further step would be taken in June, when the Russian Central Executive Committee approved the Ukrainian request.<sup>20</sup>

Lenin wanted action rather than promises; Vatsetis saw clearly that if there ever had been a valid reason for a Ukrainian Front it no longer existed; Trotsky, who agreed vociferously with both, considered the Ukraine a dangerous nest of self-willed partisans who deliberately refused to submit to discipline or to display the administrative ruthlessness needed for victory. The correspondence of these men with one another and with the Ukrainian Bolsheviks clearly reflects the determination of the Center to do something about the Ukraine. As early as May 13, advising Lenin that he was on his way to the Ukraine, Trotsky expressed grave doubts that the Ukrainian Revolutionary Military Council—Shchadenko, Bubnov, and Antonov—was capable of providing the required leadership.<sup>21</sup> Four days later he submitted specific recommendations for radical changes:

19. Lenin, *Lenin pro Ukrainu*, pp. 552–53; Lenin, *Voennaya perepiska*, pp. 72–73.

20. Lenin, *Sochineniya* (3d ed.), 24, 811–12 n.; Babi, *Mistsevi orhany derzhavnoi vladly Ukrainskoi RSR v 1917–1920 rr.*, pp. 210–11; Likholat, *Razgrom natsionalisticheskoi kontrrevolyutsii na Ukraine (1917–1922 gg.)*, pp. 264–65, 363.

21. "Trotsky Archives," T-197.

On the basis of discussions with Mezhlauk and Kamenev, the absolute necessity of discharging Antonov, Podvoiski, and Bubnov from military work has become clear. There are two solutions for the problem: the first—creation of a new Revolutionary Military Council of the Ukraine, with the military specialist [Sergei] Kamenev, or Glagolev, or Gekker, as commander, and two members; they recommend Mezhlauk as one of them and Voroshilov, who has become an ardent adherent of a general, national military policy, as the other. The second solution—to abolish the Ukrainian Front, subordinating the eastern part of it to the Southern Front and introducing into the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front one or two Ukrainians. In addition, there should be a special army of the Hungarian direction. For a more detailed proposal it is necessary for me to go out to Kiev. But I can already say that disorders, recklessness, dissoluteness, and separatism transcend the most pessimistic expectations.<sup>22</sup>

Continuing in the same vein, Trotsky emphasized that any changes made should also accomplish “a radical and merciless liquidation of partizanshchina, independence, hooliganism, and leftism,” and should “transfer the center of attention to the Donets Basin.” He favored a thoroughgoing annihilation of the partisans’ ideological leaders as well as of men like Grigorev who wielded political power; on the positive side he wanted discipline, order, and a united proletariat. Citing Leo Kamenev’s agreement with these recommendations, Trotsky concluded: “I shall need the complete, explicit, categorical support of the Central Committee in this question. Then I will go to Kiev to carry out the decision. I will communicate supplementary in-

22. *Ibid.*, T-204: May 17, 1919.

formation through Ioffe's visit to you."<sup>23</sup> Girding for the fight to reform the Ukrainian army command, Trotsky obviously wanted all the support he could muster. Later the same day, after discussing the problem with Ioffe, he advised Lenin that Ioffe "considers it impossible, as we do, to keep Antonov and Bubnov any longer in the Revolutionary Military Council of the Ukraine." By the time he sent this message he had also definitely decided that the best alternative would be to abolish the Ukrainian Front by dividing it between the Western Front and the Southern Front.<sup>24</sup>

Trotsky's suggestions found favor with Lenin, and the decision was taken to carry them out, but because of the developments on the Southern Front reform in the Ukraine had to wait. Shkuro's breakthrough, following hard upon the most dangerous phase of Grigorev's rebellion, called for the creation of stopgap measures to close the front opened by Makhno. In this new crisis Trotsky turned to Voroshilov, in whom he had a new-found faith. On May 23 Skachko lost his command; Trotsky gave Voroshilov responsibility for getting the Ukrainian Second Army into fighting shape and for halting the disorder in Makhno's units. In a message to Vatsetis and Lenin, Trotsky explained that putting command into the hands of Voroshilov and his friend, Mezhlauk, was the only possible way to get results from the Second Army. That the Ukrainian government cluttered up the decision-making process is indicated by the fact that Trotsky had to ask the Russian Council of Defense to request the Ukrainian government to reassign Voroshilov and Mezhlauk. It is also of interest that Trotsky, trying now to strengthen a Ukrainian army, found himself begging (though in arrogant phrases) for the sort of help Antonov had so many times demanded earlier. Trotsky's telegram concerning Voroshilov's reassignment ended with the words: "Simultaneously with the above, I insist on the

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*, T-205: May 17, 1919.

dispatch to the disposition of the Commander of the Second Ukrainian Army, that is, Voroshilov, of trustworthy political workers, march companies of laborers, and an armed section of Baltic sailors."<sup>25</sup>

These changes in the Second Army's command group did not solve the main problem of getting troops from the Ukraine to the Southern Front. As he had done at irregular but frequent intervals all through the month, Lenin took time on May 26 to abuse the Ukrainian officials for their failures. Reminding them that he had repeatedly asked for accurate information about the support given the Donbass, he emphasized that he had received none. Now he demanded information, reiterating his general theme: "The primary question of the moment is swift victory in the Donbass."<sup>26</sup> Two days later, he tried again. Seemingly convinced that Rakovski, Podvoiski, and Antonov were deliberately remiss, he summed up their failures for them. Only two of the regiments promised to the Southern Front had arrived, and these were incapable of fighting; mobilization of the 20,000 workers he had ordered had not been carried out. Makhno "rolls away to the west, opening the flank of the Thirteenth Army. Therefore . . . Antonov and Podvoiski . . . bear criminal responsibility for each minute of delay." Once again he ordered the dispatch of plenipotentiaries, this time to Ekaterinoslav and Kharkov, "for the universal mobilization of workers for the Southern Front under their personal responsibility." For Antonov he set a time limit of "three days" in which to fulfill the accumulated requests for Southern Front reinforcements which Vatsetis had sent down.<sup>27</sup>

The next day Lenin composed still another directive. Commanding Ioffe to "read the enclosed message to Rakovski, Mezhlauk, Voroshilov, Pyatakov, Bubnov, Kviring, and

25. *Ibid.*, T-227.

26. *Ibid.*, T-233; May 26, 1919.

27. *Ibid.*, T-239; May 28, 1919.

other outstanding workers," he declared: "Not one promise is fulfilled; there is no support to the Donbass; the mobilization of workers proceeds with shameful slowness. You will answer personally for the inevitable catastrophe. It is necessary without exception to select leading [party] workers; send them to Kharkov and Ekaterinoslav for universal mobilization of the workers; then, with one famous worker in each unit, move them to the Donbass." Owing to the crisis, he went on, "it is necessary to throw off routine in the Ukraine, to work in revolutionary fashion, to arouse everyone and everything, to accompany personally each military unit, each step of the workers, to throw aside everything but the Donbass."<sup>28</sup>

Under Lenin's ruthless goading, others obediently lowered their heads and tried to work harder, but Antonov had not yet learned to hold his tongue. Lenin's three-day ultimatum enraged him. "To execute your order," he informed Lenin, "to give within three days everything demanded by the Glavkom for the Southern Front—I cannot." He catalogued what he had given, what remained to be done for the exhausted, demoralized units in the Ukraine before they could be transferred; he mentioned the internal troubles still violently disturbing the countryside; and he concluded: "Consequently, in full consciousness of my responsibility for the defense of Soviet Power in the Ukraine, I declare: 'I cannot execute your command. I will do all that I can do. Spurs are not necessary. Either trust me or dismiss me.'"<sup>29</sup> Though he did not know it, he had been tried and found wanting. He was no longer trusted, and orders had already been issued for his dismissal.

Meanwhile, Trotsky's efforts to bring order to the Second Army were not meeting with success. Voroshilov and Mezhlauk had discovered that this "army" amounted to little more than Makhno's brigade, a brigade now in full retreat,

28. *Ibid.*, T-240: May 29, 1919; cf. T-241: May 29, 1919.

29. Antonov, 4, 311, May 31, 1919.

commanded by a man hostile to bolshevism and accustomed to having his own way. The fact that the Second Army's lines were overrun by White troops as well as retreating sections of the Southern Front's Eighth and Thirteenth Armies contributed mightily to the general confusion. There was little that a man at Voroshilov's level could accomplish. In this situation his actions followed a familiar pattern: boldly, he and the members of his revolutionary military council fought to increase their authority. Thus Trotsky soon found himself faced by a new team of ambitious men who audaciously argued that Russia's only possible hope lay in granting them virtually plenipotentiary authority over the eastern Ukraine.

Specifically, Voroshilov and Mezhlauk proposed the swift establishment of a completely new military organization—a Donbass Front—to be created *between* the Ukrainian and the Southern Fronts, subordinate to the latter. Into this new organization, they suggested, should go the Ukraine's Second and the Southern Front's Eighth and Thirteenth Armies—all under Voroshilov's command. A new revolutionary military council should be established, to include a representative of the Southern Front and another from the Ukrainian Narkomvoen (Mezhlauk). This council would control the Kharkov okrug, that is, all of industrial eastern Ukraine. Such an organization, its advocates maintained, would halt the further breakup of the Southern Front, permit unified action and the introduction of planned supply measures. It would facilitate effective political work in the units being corrupted by Makhno's partisans, and would ease the problem of transferring units back and forth within the area under its control.<sup>30</sup>

To justify their recommendations Voroshilov and Mezhlauk cited the chaos on the Southern Front and in their own area. In a blunt passage to Trotsky and Lenin, soundly

30. "Trotsky Archives," T-245: May 30, 1919.

condemning the mobilization policy so enthusiastically supported by Lenin, Mezhlauk provided a sharp picture of the degree of disorganization which had accompanied Denikin's breakthrough. "Replacements without weapons and food," Mezhlauk said, "provide assistance to the Whites. Six thousand such replacements are mutinying right now at Kupyansk, in the rear of the army."<sup>31</sup> Antonov, too, came in for damning criticism. Sarcastically referring to him as a "supreme commander," the would-be plenipotentiaries charged that he had arbitrarily divided "all of the Ukraine into the Left and the Right Banks," and had designated A. Egorov and Dybenko commanders of Left and Right respectively, "subordinating all the rear units to them." Obviously neither Antonov nor his willful commanders were showing any eagerness to share their troops with Voroshilov. Moreover, it was alleged that Dybenko, loyal to a separate Crimean Soviet government established early in May, was "transferring with both hands to the Crimea all that had fallen to him after the defeat of Grigorev from our own supplies." Giving their demands a desperate urgency the new leaders of the Second Army literally pleaded for Antonov's removal and for the immediate establishment of their Donbass Front.<sup>32</sup>

Trotsky's reaction to the Donbass proposal was set forth in a laconic telegram to Lenin on June 1: "The idea of a military and provisioning dictatorship under Voroshilov is the result of Donets independence [Voroshilov's home was Lugansk] directed against Kiev and the Southern Front." Furthermore, Trotsky went on, "the realization of the plan would only increase the chaos and completely destroy operational direction. I request that the Central Committee require Voroshilov and Mezhlauk to execute fully the real mission given them: to create a firm Second Army." Trotsky also reported that he was scheduling a meeting with

31. *Ibid.*, T-254: May 30, 1919, the eighth message of this series.

32. *Ibid.*

the commander of the Eighth Army, with Voroshilov, Mezhlauk, and some provisioning officials, but had no intention of creating "a Donets Military Republic."<sup>33</sup>

Lenin carried out Trotsky's requests in this instance with something resembling delight, for unlike Trotsky he still considered Voroshilov one of the most unruly members of the old Tsaritsyn gang. His message to Voroshilov bluntly advised that commander to forget his project and "create a powerful Ukrainian army." It also demanded a report on how much in the way of goods and supplies Voroshilov had seized from Grigorev. This message was underscored on the following day by another, which rudely ordered the new commander of the Second Army to forget his grandiose projects, stop holding meetings, and get to work.<sup>34</sup>

In the last days of May Antonov found time to work out new plans for improving the Ukrainian military system. Critical of the divided command created for the struggle against Grigorev, which he accounted a major cause of confusion, he devised a scheme for a new Council of Defense of the Ukraine, which would have Podvoiski as its president; and he made much of taking "extraordinary means," demanding "immediate execution of orders," "precise obedience," and so forth. On June 4 he handed Trotsky a list of recommendations embodying his principal ideas about the needed reforms. But Antonov's sun in the Ukraine had set. The decision which Moscow had taken in mid-May, to get rid of him and of Podvoiski, was not to be changed.

Lenin's attitude on this question was uncompromising: In a reproving message to Trotsky on June 2, he said: "I am exceedingly surprised and, speaking mildly, distressed, that you have not carried out the directive of the Central Committee and have not pulled out Podvoiski and Antonov. It is imperative now to finish unconditionally: no

33. *Ibid.*, T-255: June 1, 1919.

34. Lenin, *Lenin pro Ukrainu*, pp. 555-56.

People's Commissariat of War in the Ukraine, only two okrugs—Kiev and Kharkov.”<sup>35</sup> Trotsky's reply was symptomatic of the times. He explained that although he had obtained Ukrainian party and government approval for the changes, he had not yet received the formal order of the Central Executive Committee of the RSFSR. This he must have before he could actually abolish the Ukrainian Front. Furthermore, it was necessary to put something in place of the Ukrainian command structure he had been instructed to demolish. True, he had discussed with Lenin several military specialists qualified for assignment to the Ukraine, but where were these specialists? Natsarenius, Semashko, Mekhonoshin, Semenov—all were possibilities, but where were they? Trotsky did not know. “To leave the army without a commander is impossible,” he said. “Here is the obstacle to carrying out the resolution of the Central Committee.”<sup>36</sup>

Despite these difficulties, an order removing Antonov from command was finally written on the 4th of June and delivered to Antonov on the 6th, and during the next few days the Ukrainian Front went out of existence. The Ukrainian Second Army, augmented with a variety of lesser units, was renamed the Fourteenth Army and transferred to the Southern Front. Within this army, the brigade of Makhno suffered a change of commanders. During the first days of June, Trotsky, paraphrasing Napoleon's famous epigram, “Scratch a Russian and you find a Tartar,” publicly announced that if one scratched a Makhnovist he would find a Grigorevian. On June 8 he directed Makhno to relinquish his command. The latter, his position within the brigade badly weakened by the recent defeats, dutifully turned over his units to one of Trotsky's commanders and wandered off toward Aleksandrovsk with a small handful

35. “Trotsky Archives,” T-261.

36. *Ibid.*, T-263; June 3, 1919; A. K. Mekhonoshin and N. A. Semashko were important Bolsheviks; Semenov, an ex-Tsarist staff general.

of followers.<sup>37</sup> The western armies of the Ukrainian Front, the First and Third, were combined as the Twelfth Army of the RSFSR and shifted to the command of the Western Front. The staffs of the First and Third Armies were also placed under the Twelfth Army Commander. Henceforth that commander was to be responsible for the defense of the western and southwestern areas of the Ukraine.

In typical fashion all these changes designed to wipe out the Ukrainian Front were executed piecemeal. On June 5, Trotsky, who had already set the changes in motion, worriedly telegraphed Moscow: "Neither Semenov, nor Natsarenus, nor Semashko have arrived. I don't know where they can be found. Consequently the liquidation of the Ukrainian Front, resolved upon in principle, cannot be carried out in practice. The so-called 'final execution' demands workers, of whom I have none at all." In spite of this difficulty he asked the Central Committee to announce the following assignments: "1. Revolutionary Military Council of the Fourteenth (former Second): Voroshilov, Mezhlauk, Natsarenus; 2. Revolutionary Military Council of the Twelfth: General Staff General Semenov, [S. I.] Aralov, Semashko, or one of the Ukrainians."<sup>38</sup> Two days later he happily advised Lenin that General Semenov had arrived at Kiev and had begun familiarizing himself with his new duties. Other men he needed were still missing.<sup>39</sup>

As always, Antonov could not take the condemnation of his own efforts silently. Remaining in the Ukraine until at least the 16th, when he formally handed over the troops, he prepared a final report for Vatsetis about the state of his units. The nature of this report, submitted on the 20th, moved the commander in chief to administer one last reprimand to his erstwhile subordinate. On June 22 Vatsetis sent down a very harsh message, certainly one of the most

37. Kubanin, *Makhnovshchina*, pp. 77-78.

38. "Trotsky Archives," T-269: June 5, 1919.

39. *Ibid.*, T-287: June 7, 1919.

vicious in the long series of mutual reproaches these two men had fired at one another since the previous November.

First Vatsetis quoted Antonov's message:

The front entrusted to me is given up in a very propitious condition. The Sarny area [northwest] has been strengthened. The efforts of the Petlyurists to split our dispositions at Shepetovka and through Zhmerinka by allying with the bands of Volynets, Zeleny, and Gri-gorev, who are united with the Directory on the bases of the struggle with the Poles and Muscovites for an independent Soviet Ukrainian Republic, have been cut off. The Petlyurists are now almost encircled. On the internal front the [partisan] bands have been destroyed. There appears to be full possibility of more energetic assistance to the Southern Front. No. 0204 LK, June 20, etc., etc. Antonov.

Having presented the text for his sermon, Vatsetis proceeded to a line-by-line exegesis:

This telegram of yours is full of misunderstandings. . . . Its contents do not correspond to reality in any of the situations you mention. Only the first . . . words, "the front entrusted to me is given up," correspond to reality. After this statement should have followed the reservation that the front on the Left Bank of the Dnepr was given up to the enemy, and that the Right Bank of the Dnepr still remains in our hands. Instead you continue with the words that the front given up by you is "in a very propitious condition." Can the situation of the Ukrainian Front that actually existed on June 20 be called "very propitious" when the enemy has already seized Pavlograd, cut off the road of retreat from the Crimea, threatened Kharkov and campaigned to Belgorod? I consider that the front on the

Left Bank of the Dnepr was given up in a catastrophic situation.

Concerning the front on the Right Bank of the Dnepr, there is no military action of a serious character in it. There is no need to create and puff up its significance. Concerning the internal front, the uprisings there have not been crushed, and the Ukraine has no troops for this purpose.

Your last declaration in the words, "there is a possibility of more energetic assistance to the Southern Front" is like issuing a promissory note on blank paper drawn to the account of the new commander of the Ukrainian armies. The sole division on which we may reckon and which according to the reports of Podvoiski can be taken from the Western Front, is the division of Shchestka. To take it is impossible, according to the report of the Commander of the Twelfth Army. There are no other troops, in the full sense of the word, on the Western Front.

Thus, your communication, cited above, proves that in reality even now you still do not understand what goes on in the fighting units of the former Ukrainian Front. The last paragraph about the possibility of more energetic assistance I see only as a belated gesture of self-justification . . . for all your actions during your period of command of the Ukrainian Front, in the course of which the Southern Front did not receive any real support from the many thousands in your formations. On the contrary, the brigade of Makhno, which you sent to the Southern Front, played a traitor's role, withdrawing to Gulyai-Pole in the most critical moment and opening the Southern Front for a distance of 80 versts for the free passage of the enemy cavalry to the rear of the Thirteenth Army.

I would not have considered it necessary to comment on the telegram above, but the circumstance which

forced me to do so was that your telegram was addressed, not only to me, but also to the President of the Council of Defense, Lenin, and to the President of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, Trotsky.<sup>40</sup>

Thus ended the Ukrainian Front. And though Antonov was not as thoroughly to blame as Vatsetis made it seem, he had at least been sufficiently stubborn about refusing to face the facts, and sufficiently ineffective overall, to deserve a fair share of reproach.<sup>41</sup>

The military changes made in early June concerned not only the Ukrainian Front but also the armies of the other, lesser Soviet republics. In sum these changes marked the end of "national armies," for all Soviet forces were now brought under the direct command of Vatsetis. As Trotsky explained the new system, regardless of the nationality composition of military units, henceforth they would be sent wherever they could be used "with greatest profit" to the whole.<sup>42</sup>

Along with the military transformation went other, more far-reaching changes. The request made by the Ukrainian government on May 18 for the unification of its principal commissariats with those of the RSFSR was formally ap-

40. *Ibid.*, T-304: June 22, 1919.

41. After his removal from the Ukrainian command, Antonov carried on a heated literary debate in defense of his policies in the Ukraine. In 1920 he became a member of the College of the All-Russian Commissariat of Labor, and was later a member of the College of the Commissariat of Internal Affairs. From 1922-24 he headed the Political Bureau of the Military Revolutionary Council of the Republic. After 1925 he held various diplomatic posts in Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, and Poland. In 1936 he was named Consul General of the USSR at Barcelona. Recalled from Spain in early 1938, he disappeared, a victim of Stalin's purge system. His name came to public attention again in February 1956, when A. I. Mikoyan at the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist party mentioned Antonov as a former Communist unjustly disgraced by Stalin's regime.

42. Trotsky, *Kak vooruzhalas revolyutsiya*, 2, pt. 1, 194.

proved on June 1, 1919, by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and adopted on June 14 by the Ukrainian government.<sup>43</sup> These decisions did more than implement the military reforms; they made the Ukrainian government an humble subordinate of Russia. The Council of National Economy, the Commissariat of Labor, and the management of railroads and finance, all became branch offices of the corresponding Moscow headquarters. What this did to Ukrainian independence is well illustrated in a brusquely worded telegram from Lenin to Rakovski and to the head of the Ukrainian Provisioning Commissariat, Shlikhter. The telegram is dated June 12: "On the fourteenth of June the question of the subordination of the Ukrainian Narkomprod in financial and organizational-political relations to the All-Russian Provisioning Commissariat will be introduced into the plenum of the Central Committee of the party, without being published. It is necessary to have your conclusions on the question not later than ten o'clock on June 14." At least the Ukrainian chiefs were being consulted, but obviously they were expected only to advise how to facilitate the Russian take-over.

The hastily contrived reorganizations of May and early June did not accomplish their purposes. The nearly total breakdown of both government and party administrative machinery in the Ukraine, along with the diversion of troops to crush Grigorev and the extraordinary efforts to contain Denikin, had brought on irreparable complications. Errors and shortcomings long crying for correction could

43. Likholat, p. 366; M. A. Rubach, I. P. Voloshchuk, M. I. Suprunenko, and V. I. Sheludchenko, eds., *Radyanske budivnytstvo na Ukraini v roky hromadyanskoi viiny, 1919-1920: Zbirnyk dokumentiv i materiyaliv* (Soviet Construction in the Ukraine in the Years of the Civil War, 1919-20, A Collection of Documents and Materials) (Kiev, 1957), p. 985 n.; Lenin, *Sochineniya* (3d ed.), 24, 811-12.

not now be rectified. Indeed, such radical efforts to restore order as Trotsky's abrupt discharge of Makhno only helped to bring the general chaos to an almost incredible perfection.

In this situation Denikin's forward movement was irresistible. The Ukrainian crises had culminated in the catastrophe so insistently prophesied by Lenin, and the waves of the catastrophe spread ever wider, threatening to engulf all of central and western Russia. Despite Red efforts, Denikin seized the Donbass with relative ease, depriving Communist Russia of the coal, iron, and industrial goods it so desperately needed. As Denikin advanced northward, his troops capturing Kharkov on June 25, Ekaterinoslav by the end of June, and Poltava on July 21, Lenin's hope that the Ukraine would provide food for the hungry north dissolved in the smoke of battle. In August the brilliant cavalry generals, Shkuro and Mamontov, audaciously swept behind Bolshevik lines near Voronezh and raided through the rear areas, disrupting Red efforts to mount effective counterattacks. Other White forces marched westward to seize Kherson and Nikolaev on August 18, and Odessa only five days later. On August 30 Kiev fell to a Petlyurian army, which had grown in strength and boldness while the Bolsheviks struggled vainly to stop Denikin. The following day, because Denikin's dream of a united, indivisible Russia had no place in it for an independent Ukrainian national state, Denikin's General Bredov forced Petlyura's army to withdraw, and the Volunteer Army began its reign in Russia's ancient capital.

With most of the Ukraine in his hands, Denikin pushed his tired but hopeful armies further into the provinces of Russia proper. On September 20 he captured Kursk. On October 13 his armies moved into Orel. He was only two hundred miles from Moscow.

But the threat to Moscow could not be sustained. Denikin's strategy—a grim and reckless advance designed to

capture Moscow at any cost—had exhausted his army. When the White forces paused at Orel it was because they could go no further. In the Ukraine behind Denikin's forward lines, his ill-advised agrarian policies, Great Russian chauvinism, and the brutalities of his officers provoked ever greater resentments; partisan risings crippled his supply and communication lines and made recruiting a matter of forced levies. Denikin held Orel for only seven days, withdrawing under fire. Then to the east, Simon Budenny's Red Cavalry won its first great victory, defeating the renowned heroes Mamontov and Shkuro together and reoccupying Voronezh on October 24. Thereafter, Bolshevik troops advanced steadily southward into the Ukraine, the Donbass, and the Don River regions. Kharkov was recaptured on December 12, Kiev four days later, and Ekaterinoslav on December 30. Remnants of Denikin's once-great army, repeatedly beaten in fighting around Rostov, carried out a tragic evacuation from Novorossisk to the Crimea in March 1920.

With Denikin's advance to Orel, the Bolsheviks' second campaign in the Ukraine came to an end. When White troops were driven out of Orel, a new campaign had begun, and the lessons learned by the Bolsheviks during the previous year were about to be applied. Although the Bolsheviks' dramatic struggle after October 1919 with Denikin and his successor, Baron Peter N. Wrangel, is of great interest, it goes beyond the limits of this book. It is the central purpose of the present study to describe the events of the Second Campaign, their influence upon Bolshevik administrative ideas and practices, and their larger significance for the Communists, for Ukrainian nationalist groups, and for the Ukraine itself. If this task is to be fulfilled the narrative of events must be halted here at October, and the consequences of these events must be examined.

Denikin's headlong advances in June brought about the culmination of a great debate over strategy that had raged through high Bolshevik circles for several weeks. The catastrophe in the Ukraine and the breakthrough on the Southern Front were both important factors in this debate, but there were others. In a way it was but a new and more vicious phase of the Trotsky-Stalinist feud; in another sense it was determined by events on the Eastern Front. So closely were the issues intertwined with events in the Ukraine and so general was the significance of the decisions ultimately taken by the RKP's Central Committee and the Supreme Council of Defense that it is necessary to examine both issues and consequences in detail.

On the Eastern Front, where Kolchak's armies had posed one of the great threats in April, the ex-Tsarist general Sergei S. Kamenev, in command of the Bolshevik troops on that front, was strongly supported by a set of political commissars close to Stalin (M. Lashevich, S. I. Gusev, I. T. Smilga). Kamenev broke through Kolchak's lines in the last days of April and rolled the White Army back toward the Urals through the first half of May. Confident of further gains, he hotly argued for an all-out pursuit of Kolchak's forces to the Urals and beyond, into Siberia. The general's commissars, who had great faith in him, bolstered his pleas with their own. But in mid-May Kolchak's strength was unknown; no one could say how many reserves he held in Siberia nor how many Red reserves might be needed to succor a force sent on an adventure behind the Urals. Weighing these uncertainties carefully, Vatsetis, with Trotsky's approval, decided against pursuit, at least until the crumbling Southern Front was brought under control. Furthermore, because Kamenev willfully persisted in advocating his views, Vatsetis and Trotsky removed him from command. Almost at once the matter got to Lenin, probably through the good offices of Stalin, and Lenin brought such pressure to bear upon Trotsky that the latter, on May

21, agreed to Kamenev's return to the Eastern command.<sup>44</sup>

Before long, as Kamenev's armies resumed their successful march toward the Urals, it became apparent that Kolchak did not have the great strategic reserve Trotsky and Vatsetis had feared.<sup>45</sup> So impressive were Kamenev's victories over Kolchak, so powerful were his friends, and so disastrous were Denikin's advances that soon the Politburo was rent with demands for Sergei Kamenev's promotion to commander in chief. Trotsky, with little pertinent factual evidence on which to base his conclusion, was to decide in later years that the move to replace Vatsetis with Kamenev was engineered from behind the scenes by his bitter enemy Stalin. Although this charge may be correct, Vatsetis' own conduct had made him quite vulnerable. Through May and June, ignoring the decision of the Central Committee of the RKP to recognize the Eastern as the most important front, he had systematically transferred some 42 of its regiments to the south.<sup>46</sup> In addition, there was no doubt whatever that he was failing in his efforts to halt Denikin. Whatever the true reasons for the decision, Vatsetis was relieved of command on July 3, 1919, and the Central Committee of the RKP made Kamenev commander in chief.<sup>47</sup>

Trotsky was deeply offended by this interference from above and by the abrupt dismissal of a man in whom he had enormous confidence. His resentment was even greater when the Central Committee reorganized the Revolutionary Military Council, replacing his most trusted Bolshevik colleagues with two of Sergei Kamenev's former commissars,

44. Trotsky, *Stalin*, pp. 312-13.

45. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, pp. 433-34; Kakurin, *Kak srazhalas revolyutsiya*, 2, 236-37.

46. "Doklady Vatsetisa," *Istoricheski arkhiv*, 1, 44.

47. "Trotsky Archives," T-309 shows announcement of the decision on July 3, 1919, although the order for Vatsetis' retirement from command was apparently issued on July 8; see Vatsetis' memoirs condensed in Uldis Ģermanis, ed., *Pa Aizputinātām Pēdām* (Over Storm-Swept Ways) (Daugava, 1956), p. 326; and "Doklady Vatsetisa," p. 44.

Smilga and Gusev.<sup>48</sup> But the conflict which followed went considerably deeper than mere pique. Kamenev had been appointed in part because his victories over Kolchak seemed to promise that he could devise an effective plan for halting Denikin. In substance the plan he produced envisaged an attack down the Don valley to Tsaritsyn and the Kuban, and was an effort to strike Denikin's flank and rear and cut him off from his bases. From the military point of view this was sound enough, since the reinforcements for the Red attack were to come from the Urals and would not have to be shifted very far to strike from the northeast. But Trotsky violently objected. Attacking in this eastern sector, he argued (and he was ultimately proved right), would further rouse the hostility of the Don Cossacks, and force them into Denikin's ranks despite their unfriendly relations with him. Furthermore, Trotsky maintained, by attacking from the northeast Red troops would be compelled to advance through a barren country, away from good supply lines, amidst a hostile population. In short, Trotsky believed that Kamenev's strategy would give Denikin all the advantages, for the White commander already controlled the cities and railroads of the Donbass and the food supplies of the Ukraine; he was, therefore, in a position to advance to Moscow without serious opposition.

Trotsky's counterplan would have moved the Urals reinforcements further westward than Kamenev wished, until they could attack southward against Kharkov and the Donbass. In this region, Trotsky insisted, the Red Army would be fighting among its strongest supporters, the workers of the industrial cities, and Denikin's right flank would be in constant danger because as long as the Bolsheviki did not exacerbate their own relationship with the Don Cossacks, the latter would remain hostile to Denikin. When this debate over strategy was aired in the Politburo immediately

48. Deutscher, pp. 435-36.

after Kamenev's appointment, Trotsky must have used his most impassioned oratory in attacking the new commander's plan, but to the other leading Communists, including Lenin, he appeared to be quarreling out of irritation and dislike for Kamenev or chagrin at having his own policies questioned. Whatever the reasons for the Politburo decision, Kamenev's plan was approved, with all the other members voting against Trotsky. Wrathfully Trotsky proffered his resignation from the Politburo and from his positions as Commissar of War and Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic. But even here he failed to get his own way. On July 5 the Politburo and the Organizationburo of the Central Committee unanimously refused to accept his resignation, and in an attempt to mollify him gave him full power to do whatever he thought best on the Southern Front—short of changing Kamenev's plan.<sup>49</sup>

Trotsky dutifully traveled southward to immerse himself in the problems of the front, only to learn three days later that Vatsetis had been arrested under suspicion of treason. Precisely what brought about this situation, even Trotsky was never to know, though he guessed that Vatsetis may have indulged in some reckless or angry talk after his dismissal. Presumably Trotsky hurried to defend his former commander in chief, for Vatsetis was soon released. The fact that the ex-commander in chief later served as a professor of the War College and held high offices into the 1930s seems to indicate that the accusations against him were not taken very seriously, and this raises doubt that there was any foundation for them in the first place. Trotsky saw the real reason for the arrest in other quarters. "Stalin had a score of old slights to settle with Vatsetis," Trotsky says in his posthumously published biography of Stalin. "Moreover, he derived a sense of impunity and safe-

49. Trotsky, *Stalin*, pp. 314-16; Deutscher, pp. 435-36.

ty from the friendly influence he exerted over the head of the Cheka [Dzerzhinski] and from the support of the leaders of the Eastern Front and of the new commander in chief. He had the added satisfaction of striking an indirect blow at the Commissar of War."<sup>50</sup>

Kamenev's strategy was the wrong one, and in time it was to be recognized as such. But although Trotsky, employing the calmest and most objective manner he could contrive, tried to make Lenin understand the fatal weakness of the strategy that provided Denikin free access to the Ukraine, he had lost too much of Lenin's confidence to win his point. The strategy was changed only when it was almost too late—after Denikin had captured Orel.<sup>51</sup>

As has been seen in preceding chapters, national strategy as well as local tactics had become the regular business of almost everyone in the highest levels of party and government. Trotsky, as Commissar of War and Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the RSFSR, with his commander in chief, made many important operational decisions; but their overall strategy and the operations in progress were regularly scrutinized by Lenin's Supreme Council of Defense. The latter body exercised absolute authority over every matter which concerned defense. In practice, it not only approved or disapproved plans submitted to it, but also energetically devised its own plans (both strategic and tactical) and demanded their implementation. Similarly, because the members of the Council were members of the Central Committee of the party and government officials as well, the highest organs of party and gov-

50. Trotsky, always his own best advocate, furnishes the principal account of this conflict over strategy and the new commander, to which Isaac Deutscher gives more credence than I believe it deserves (Trotsky, *Stalin*, pp. 312–16; Deutscher, pp. 433–36). Additional insights, but scanty information, are provided by the memoirs of Vatsetis in Germanis, pp. 325–26; "Dok-lady Vatsetisa," p. 44; no. 2, pp. 40–41, 50; and "Trotsky Archives," T-309.

51. Trotsky, *Stalin*, pp. 316–21.

ernment were constantly involved in the formulation of military policy. Nor was this the end of the process. Owing to the existence of several fronts and the need for rapid and authoritative decisions made on the spot, a wide variety of military and civil plenipotentiaries, local political committees, and administrative agencies dabbled at strategy and worked out local tactics.

Almost every important Bolshevik, regardless of his origin and training, had become a self-styled military expert. Even such unlikely persons as the scholarly Leo Kamenev and the neurotic Ioffe were recast in this mold. It was only natural that as separate individuals or groups became convinced of their military talents or the correctness of their strategic notions, they would seek to influence the decisions of the Center. Lenin facilitated such efforts by his willingness to take counsel on military problems from all responsible members of the party, with little regard for their professional competence or military experience. Despite Trotsky's emphasis upon the need for professional leadership, which Lenin endorsed in principle and even actively defended, Lenin often appeared to operate on the tacit assumption that dedicated Bolsheviks were better strategists and fighters than non-Bolshevik professional officers could possibly be.

Efforts to influence the Center's military decisions were also facilitated by the innumerable areas of overlapping authority between party and government agencies. One man might be simultaneously a member of the Politburo, a responsible government official, and a plenipotentiary or member of a revolutionary military council at one of the fronts. A man possessing these instruments of power could exert immense pressures upon high party or government agencies; he had only to pull wires in the commissariat subordinate to him, call for assistance from personal friends in high places, or develop a bloc of adherents among his equals.

It was inevitable that there would be intense compe-

tition for influence in military affairs, for the man who made or backed the correct military policy automatically enhanced his authority in all affairs. So, too, given the fiercely ambitious character of the men involved, it was inevitable that the most violent personal hostilities would make themselves felt at the highest levels. Of far more lasting significance, however, is the clear evidence that the civil war was strengthening the military characteristics of the party, transforming its members from utopian dreamers, talkers, and revolutionaries into tough military administrators, accustomed to discipline and hierarchy, to the exercise of ruthless authority and to warlike aggressiveness even in interparty squabbles. These hardly subtle changes would mark the party for life.

Affairs in the Ukrainian Soviet Government and in the KP(b)U precipitously worsened during the months of Denikin's success. We have already observed the manner in which authority was hacked away from the government in May and early June. The Ukrainian Council of Defense, which had come to the fore as the principal responsible agency of government in May, with Rakovski, G. I. Petrovsky, and Ioffe as its members, accepted new members—Bubnov, Voroshilov, and Dzevaltovski—in June; but it could not fulfill the demands put upon it.<sup>52</sup> Through July, as the situation became more and more serious, new expedients were introduced. Ya. Kh. Peters, the Latvian assistant head of the All-Russian Cheka, came to Kiev in late July to act as the commander of the city, with Latsis, chief of the Ukrainian Cheka, as his subordinate.<sup>53</sup> In late July the

52. Ravich-Cherkasski, *Istoriya Kommunisticheskoi partii (b-ov) Ukrainy*, p. 131; Dzevaltovski had replaced Podvoiski—"Trotsky Archives," T-320: July 26, 1919.

53. Goldenveizer, "Iz kievskikh vospominani (1917-1921 gg.)," *Arkhiv russkoi revolyutsii*, 6, 257.

KP(b)U established a new organization, the Transfront Buro, for the direction of underground resistance in the Ukraine behind Denikin's lines. Even as this agency began its work, the evacuation of government and party apparatus from Kiev went forward.

In the last days of July the advance of Petlyurian troops from the west and Volunteer troops from the east forced the removal of all party and government agencies from Kiev. At Chernigov, where a number of these migrant Communist agencies halted, the Central Committee of the party was reorganized in an effort to strengthen its political and organizational work, a step made necessary by the extraordinary emphasis placed upon military affairs which were engaging the attention of so many members of the committee that other matters were being ignored. But the efforts of the Central Committee to retain control over party and government were feckless. With the loss of Kiev, the Transfront Buro became the principal agency of Ukrainian government, for most of the Ukraine was in enemy hands.

In mid-August, while the various offices and committees of the Ukrainian party and its government fled into Russia and dispersed in its cities, Voroshilov was given the task of suppressing the numerous partisan risings that were making impossible any sort of effective military action against Denikin.<sup>54</sup> Such was the state of administrative ruin that, on August 13, Lenin ordered the virtual dissolution of the Ukrainian political apparatus in a message to the Council of People's Commissars in the Ukraine, saying: "We strongly recommend that you close all commissariats except the military, roads, and provisioning. Mobilize everyone primarily for war work, and put the job of holding on into one institution. Unite the Council of People's Commissars, the Council of Defense, the Central Executive Committee

54. Trotsky, *Stalin*, p. 318.

of the government and the Central Committee of the KP(b)U."<sup>55</sup>

Through the growing crescendo of defeat, evacuation, and panic, individual Bolsheviks found it more and more difficult to believe in the inevitability of Communist victory. As the agencies and units they belonged to dissolved or departed, these people were faced with the problem of what to do next. Many went to work for the Transfront Buro and the Cheka, acting as underground agents in the Ukraine; many moved north, to seek assignment on some other front or in some agency of the Russian party. For others, the loss of the Ukraine was justification for desertion and despair. The dispersion of embittered men from the Ukraine through Russia did much to spread widely the impact of defeat.<sup>56</sup>

For the KP(b)U the catastrophe was too great to endure. Never strong enough to make its policies work effectively, it had been hampered from the first by its own inexperience, by the constant military action within the borders of the area it sought to govern, by the interference of the RKP, and by the unrelenting pressures of political and economic crises. The brunt of all blame for the misfortunes in the Ukraine fell on the KP(b)U. Its leaders were openly condemned by Moscow as wrongheaded, inefficient, and too weak to obey orders or to compel obedience to their own directives. Without a land to govern after July, without an army to direct, with the Transfront Buro at Serpukhov acting as a Russian center for underground activity in the south, and with several of its leaders and some 70 per cent

55. Lenin, *Voennaya perepiska*, p. 88.

56. R. Kurgan, *Stranitsa grazhdanskoi voiny* (A Page from the Civil War) (Kharkov, 1925), pp. 3-12; Goldenveizer, 251-58; "Dnevnik i vospominaniya kievskoi studentki (1919-1920 gg.)," *Arkhiv russkoi revolyutsii*, 15, 217-29; Z. Yu. Arbatov, "Ekaterinoslav 1917-22 gg." (Ekaterinoslav, 1917-22), *Arkhiv russkoi revolyutsii*, 12, 90-91; G. Lapchinski, "Gomelskoe soveshchanie (vospominaniya)" (The Gomel Conference [Memoirs]), *Letopis revolyutsii*, no. 6 [21] (1926), pp. 39-40.

of its members mobilized for the front, the KP(b)U had little justification for continuing its existence. Most of the Bolsheviks at Moscow could not understand why it existed at all, and only a few of its own leaders were seriously interested in keeping it alive. On October 2, 1919, probably at Lenin's demand, the Central Committee of the KP(b)U abolished itself.<sup>57</sup>

For the small body of men in the KP(b)U who were devoted to victory in the Ukraine, the dissolution of the Central Committee was a profound blow. No longer was there a common center around which to organize their work; no longer were there official channels for the discussion of ways to solve the special problems of the Ukraine. All former members of the KP(b)U were automatically transferred to the RKP, where they performed a wide variety of tasks. Some went to work for Rakovski, who now directed a newly organized agency responsible for all political work in the Red armies. The majority went off to serve with the Transfront Büro or the Red Army, and still others entered various bureaus in the government of the RSFSR. Petrovsky became president of the Moscow Guberniya Executive Committee. Skrypnyk was assigned to work in Penza (Siberia); Antonov-Ovseenko went to Tambov; and Shchadenko appears to have been made the leader of the Cheka in the Don region.<sup>58</sup>

These were dark days for the men who believed that they understood the Ukraine's problems better than did Moscow's "experts," and who felt that their party was being unjustly blamed for the loss of the Ukraine. And even though the KP(b)U was abolished, the membership dispersed, the apparatus destroyed, these men found ways to keep alive the idea of a special party for the Ukraine.

57. Lapchinski, pp. 45-49; Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, p. 144; Ravich-Cherkasski, pp. 135, 150.

58. Ravich-Cherkasski, p. 136; "Trotsky Archives," T-269; Lapchinski, P. 37.

Throughout the months of the catastrophe they boldly and openly discussed the Ukraine's problems, making this topic one of the central issues of the day in the capital cities of Russia. By November, small groups dared to assemble without the permission of the Central Committee of the RKP, to press for the formation of a new Ukrainian party. The party had been abolished, but it was not dead; indeed, because the zealots persisted, it would rise again, though with a new leadership and an altered perspective.

A third significant and immediate consequence of Denikin's advance, so obvious that it is easily passed over, was the effect that losing the Ukraine had upon Bolshevik dreams of fostering communist revolution in Eastern Europe. Grigorev's rebellion had halted aggressive action toward Rumania and prevented positive support to Bela Kun in Hungary. Denikin's onslaught canceled all Bolshevik hopes of moving westward. Without aid, the Hungarian revolution tottered and collapsed.

## CHAPTER 12

### *Conclusion*

THE PRINCIPAL REASONS for the Bolsheviks' failure to hold the Ukraine in the first half of 1919 are quite clear. One useful category of "reasons for failure" might be termed *conditions in the Ukraine*. Social chaos and a rapidly disintegrating economic system made Bolshevik success very nearly impossible. Similarly the Ukraine's inheritance from the past—the numerically small urban proletariat and massive peasant society, the Cossack traditions of insurrection and anarchic freedom, the peasants' dimly perceived class rivalries and hatred of townsmen and Jews—helped to create a milieu inimical to Bolshevik ambitions. Again, the Second Campaign opened at the moment when an awakened nation was fast learning the passionate slogans of Ukrainian chauvinism and when the intransigent masses were rising in a war against foreign and native exploiters alike; this, too, militated against Bolshevik success.

A second category of "reasons for failure" might simply be called *enemies*, and the obvious fact is that there were too many of them. The concurrent struggles against nationalist forces, the French, Grigorev and other partisans, and Denikin immensely complicated the struggle to win and hold the Ukraine. Military necessity influenced almost every political decision, and defense became the first

thought of every responsible Bolshevik working in the Ukraine.

A third category may be suggested—*the time factor*. The concatenation of many forces drove the Bolsheviks to labor always with inordinate haste, denying them the time to complete their conquest, to carry out their social revolution, and to build a firm political system. Russia's desperate need for food made violent exploitation of the Ukraine's granaries essential; the Hungarian Communists' cries for support made swift and ruthless suppression of local rebellions imperative; the urgent need to set troops against Denikin in order to preserve Communist Russia made disregard for the Ukraine's interests necessary.

A fourth category—*Bolshevik errors and shortcomings*—is concerned with questions of policy and administration. By attempting to implement policies poorly suited to the Ukraine the leaders of the KP(b)U contributed to their own failure. Their exclusivist refusal to work with pro-Bolshevik nationalist parties deprived them of essential support and multiplied their difficulties. Their contempt for Ukrainian culture, flaunted in the faces of ardent nationalists, provoked fierce resistance, as did their agrarian policies; and their indiscriminate use of force and terror created new enemies faster than the old were destroyed.

It was the same in the field of administration. While the KP(b)U must be credited with remarkable achievements in its organization of administrative machinery, its members made grievous administrative errors. Instead of recruiting and training the thousands of practical and tough-minded Ukrainians needed for political and administrative work in the villages, they imported ill-suited Russian industrial workers for village assignments. They introduced utopian plans and administrative techniques, debated endlessly and indecisively in their collegial commissariats, and repeatedly made lamentable errors of judgment, which were corrected with difficulty or not at all.

To the handful of Communist leaders of the RKP who shared Lenin's faith in organization, the administrative failures seemed especially disgraceful. These most influential Bolshevik leaders knelt before the idols of administrative efficiency—centralization, hierarchical organization, and discipline—quite as often as they bowed to Marx's bearded image. Persuaded that with Marxism-Leninism *and with proper organization* they could achieve almost anything, they found themselves balked in the Ukraine; shaken, they bitterly censured the KP(b)U; but in the last analysis, they were themselves responsible for the conduct of the KP(b)U. When the pot calls the kettle black one must look for shadings. In this case, the deeper causes of the administrative failures must be examined before one sides with the RKP against the KP(b)U or concludes that the RKP itself was at fault.

A fundamental fact to be noted is that the KP(b)U and its Ukrainian Soviet Government were directly subordinate to the RKP and the RSFSR. As early as the First and Second Congresses of the KP(b)U in July and October 1918, Lenin had made it quite clear that the RKP would make all important decisions for the Ukrainian party. Thereafter, through January and February of 1919, he systematically subverted any possibility of independent action on the part of the KP(b)U by sending in his own men to carry out his policies. If any doubts still existed in mid-March that the KP(b)U was only an instrument of the RKP, they were wiped out when the Eighth Party Congress explicitly declared the Ukrainian party to be a branch party, absolutely subordinate to the RKP.

Given such authority, why did Lenin fail to compel the KP(b)U, the Ukrainian government, and the armies of the Ukrainian Front to do his bidding? Since he was the supreme power in the hierarchy of party and government, why did he fail to secure efficiency and obedience? Why did he not punish or dismiss those subordinates who failed

to execute his orders? It is, of course, obvious that early in 1919 many crucial problems demanded Lenin's attention. Innumerable pressures and tasks prevented him from giving adequate time and thought to the Ukraine. But while this is a partial explanation of Lenin's lack of attentiveness to the Ukraine, it does not explain the administrative failures. The problem remains: Lenin exhorted and threatened, the Central Committee of the RKP and the Eighth Party Congress published resolutions demanding efficiency and obedience, and the Central Executive Committee of the RSFSR issued directives with similar intent; yet the KP(b)U and the Soviet Government of the Ukraine either failed or refused to get things done. Why did Lenin tolerate this situation?

Any close examination of the RKP and the KP(b)U in 1918–19 reveals that the vaunted ideological unity of the two parties did not actually exist. In the Ukraine the swift growth of party membership had brought about the acceptance of individual Bundists, SRs, SDs, anarchists, and representatives from other parties, as well as large numbers of the opportunists found in every society who link their destinies to any movement that promises to be victorious. Each addition to the party membership brought in new theories and attitudes, until the multiplicity of viewpoints was legion. Comprehension or even awareness of Lenin's ideology among various groups within the KP(b)U was shockingly slight; indeed many of the new "Bolsheviks" were so ignorant of Marxist-Leninist thought that they did not even know what precepts could *not* be questioned. Thus, while these new Bolsheviks were happy to share the Communist faith that they held a monopoly on truth, they displayed an astonishing variety of notions about the nature of that truth. Though they were sure they belonged to the one legitimate revolutionary party, they were in violent disagreement with one another and with the party leaders about the nature of the revolution they stood for; and

though they were positive that they had a right to rule, they had many ideas about how it should be done. In the presence of such hotly defended diversity, the intellectual dictatorship that Lenin claimed did not actually exist.

Nor was the RKP's party machinery so tough and efficient that all members had to fulfill every word of Lenin's directives whether they wished to or not. Indeed, the party apparatus, both in the RKP and the KP(b)U, fell far short of the ideal. Administrative machinery could not be organized fast enough to keep up with the numerical growth of the parties, and the channels of authority and communication between the RKP and the KP(b)U were hopelessly clogged. As a result, through the vast crowd of the Ukrainian party, Lenin's voice was heard only dimly, if at all, and sometimes when he spoke most clearly various sectors either could not understand or chose not to listen. Thus, it was never a question of Lenin's "permitting" the KP(b)U to execute his orders poorly. The ideal of an absolutist dictatorship enforced by a ruthlessly efficient party machine was simply not within the realm of the possible, given the conditions of early 1919.

A second difficulty in which the Russian party found itself also contributed to the faulty administration of the Ukraine. Despite its efforts, the RKP was never able to define precisely the specific rights and duties of the Russian and Ukrainian parties and governments. And where such definitions were attempted, they were soon changed, seldom honored, or proved too general to be useful.

The RKP's inability to develop the rules and regulations necessary for the proper mutual functioning of related bureaucracies had its roots in the complexities of the political situation of 1918. The constitution of the RSFSR, published in July 1918, was worked out at a time when Bolshevik authority ran through only the centermost regions of Russia proper. At that historical moment it was actually impossible to anticipate what meaning such words

as "centralism" and "federation" might take in the future, after additional areas of the former Russian Empire were absorbed. The party's thinking about the form of the future all-Russian government was further complicated by the still undecided question of the role to be played in the government by non-Russian cultural groups. Centralized rule or federation? Would each nationality establish a separate state, only nominally a part of the Soviet super-state? Lenin, adamantly centralistic in his thought, considered federation a form of weakness, yet readily acknowledged that the demands of nationalist groups might make exceptions necessary. With such questions unsettled, it was impossible in early 1919 to decide which powers and responsibilities should be enjoyed by Kiev, which retained by Moscow.<sup>1</sup>

The absence of satisfactory definitions prolonged administrative confusion in the Ukraine. Lenin insisted upon the right to give categorical orders at any moment by virtue of his position as leader of the RKP and chairman of both the Council of People's Commissars and the Supreme Council of Defense of the RSFSR. Simultaneously many of the men running the Ukrainian Soviet Government operated on the assumption that their government exercised sovereign power in the Ukraine.<sup>2</sup> Lenin himself sometimes appeared to share this assumption, for while he demanded immediate execution of his orders, thus systematically undermining local authority and initiative, he also expected each Ukrainian commissariat to formulate its own policies and solve its own problems. Compounding the disorganization, he made his own dictatorial technique of arbitrary

1. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923*, 1, 124-40; Walter R. Batsell, *Soviet Rule in Russia* (New York, 1929), pp. 80-95.

2. See, for example, the Ukrainian constitutions published on March 14, and other documents published by Ukrainian Soviet Government offices; *Sobranie uzakoneni i rasporyazheni Raboche-krestyanskago pravitelstva Ukrainy* (1st ed.), pp. 275-82 et passim; cf. Borys, *The Russian Communist Party and the Sovietization of the Ukraine*, pp. 209-11.

interference legitimate for other high officials of the RKP and the RSFSR and for the plenipotentiaries who served as his deputies in the Ukraine.

The members of the Ukrainian government and party were bewildered by the constant infringement on their authority. They considered themselves responsible for the effective operation of their party and governmental machinery, yet they could hardly turn in any direction without colliding with their superiors. And Moscow's piecemeal efforts to lessen the confusion only worsened it. With each new indication that the Ukrainian administrative machinery was not functioning properly, new directives were dispatched from Moscow, the authority of this or that bureau was redefined, and plenipotentiaries were sent down to tinker with the system or to override it.

The administration of military affairs provides the fullest demonstration of the consequences of this failure to define and distinguish the powers and responsibilities to be exercised by Moscow-Serpukhov and Kiev. Trotsky, Vatsetis, and the Supreme Council of Defense, bypassing official military channels as often as they used them, sent down their commands variously—through Rakovski, Podvoiski, or directly to Antonov. Lenin, Kamenev, Ioffe, and a variety of civil-military organizations superseded the Ukrainian military administration in each crisis, often making direct contact with subordinate officers. Thus the political officials and military commanders in the Ukraine were reduced to the status of messengers and whipping boys, though they were not actually replaced by an effective command system until June.

The men commissioned at the start of the Second Campaign to win the Ukraine and organize Soviet power there very swiftly realized that one of their worst enemies was the authority that had sent them. In the face of Moscow's contradictory and often inapplicable directives, they aggressively tried to define their own powers and responsibil-

ities and to carry out policies they formulated themselves. For their pains they were denounced as self-willed Ukrainians and partisans. Ultimately, they were blamed for the failure of the Second Campaign. In fact, however, the partizanshchina in the Ukrainian party and government was both prolonged and strengthened by conditions which the RKP itself was unable to master.

Through the latter part of 1919 and well into 1920, both Russian and Ukrainian party and government circles argued vehemently about what should have been done in the Ukraine and how future policies might be improved. The records of these discussions and the subsequent formal proclamation of policies for the future provide good evidence that the Bolsheviks arrived at an understanding of their principal errors and devised means of correcting them.

All through 1919 the KP(b)U's exclusiveness came under attack from many sides, and while the party did not abandon its faith in its unique rightness, it was forced to acknowledge its error and absorb elements which brought in new ideas. Grigorev's rebellion had broken a sizable chink in the party's élitist armor when it compelled the KP(b)U to admit several Borotbist leaders to influential government positions and to welcome the cooperation of other parties. The subsequent loss of the Ukraine brought greater pressures in this direction. In late November some of the men who had worked in the Ukraine met at Gomel, without the RKP's permission, to seek a revival of the KP(b)U and its Central Committee. There, a small but vigorous group of zealots, who became known as the "Federalists," boldly called for a union of the KP(b)U with the Borotbisty. Their speeches revealed the influence of Borotbist ideas, for they argued that any new Soviet authority in the Ukraine should be sovereign and independent and should exercise full power in all internal and external matters, including mili-

tary and economic affairs. The Federalist G. Lapchinski, an Old Bolshevik and former member of the KP(b)U, advocated a central government in which representatives of all the member states would participate as equals. He voiced his hostility to Moscow's accustomed monopoly of power in a resolution presented to the Gomel Conference which stipulated that no organ of the federal government should coincide with any Great Russian administrative office. As for the new KP(b)U, which would rise from the ashes of the old, he believed that it should be completely independent of the RKP, with the work of the two parties to be coordinated through the Comintern.<sup>3</sup>

Although the Federalist proposal that the KP(b)U join with the Borotbisty was voted down by the more orthodox Bolsheviks at Gomel (Zatonski, D. Z. Manuilski, and S. V. Kossior), the Federalists' radical expression of the need to broaden the party base was significant and influential. Zatonski, Manuilski, and Kossior, who were soon to play leading roles in a reconstituted KP(b)U and a new Ukrainian government, recognized the need, while rejecting the Federalists' extreme method of satisfying it. Moreover, even before the conference at Gomel, the Federalists had forwarded a statement of their views to the Central Committee of the RKP. Lenin, who was also of the opinion that the Borotbisty should be brought into the party, and who was in these weeks of catastrophe perhaps a little too ready to take the most extreme criticism of Ukrainian policy as the most accurate, must have felt his own position strengthened.<sup>4</sup>

The chief obstacle to acceptance of the Borotbisty was

3. Lapchinski, "Gomelskoe soveshchanie (vospominaniya)," *Letopis revolyutsii*, no. 6 [21], pp. 38-46; Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, pp. 144-46; N. N. Popov, *Ocherk istorii Kommunisticheskoi partii (bolshevikov) Ukrainy*, pp. 218-21; Ravich-Cherkasski, *Istoriya Kommunisticheskoi partii (b-ov) Ukrainy*, pp. 136-38, 144-49, 155-65.

4. Lenin, *Sochineniya* (3d ed.), 24, 577-78; Barannyk, Mishkis, and Slobodsky, eds., *Istoriya KP(b)U v materialakh i dokumentakh (khrestomatiya), 1917-1920 rr.*, p. 550 n.

their insistence upon the establishment of an independent Ukrainian army. But protracted negotiations at last brought about a Borotbist agreement to work for a unified armed force. Consequently, in mid-December, when a new All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Military Council was established, the Borotbisty were officially accepted as co-workers, with the approval of a revived Central Committee of the KP(b)U. Despite numerous conflicts during the following months, the Borotbist party formally joined the KP(b)U at the Fourth Congress of the KP(b)U in March 1920.<sup>5</sup> If this was a major triumph for the Bolsheviki, who absorbed the enemy, it was also a victory of sorts for the Borotbisty. Not only had the latter persuasively argued their Ukrainian nationalist views for many months, thereby altering the thought of many Ukrainian Bolsheviki, but by their entry into the KP(b)U they gained a position which gave their ideas significant influence.

During the critical examination of their months in the Ukraine, the Bolsheviki identified a second general error: they had failed to study the unique economic and social realities of the Ukraine and to implement policies in conformance with those realities. Authoritative party and government documents of December and the early months of 1920 spelled out new policies based upon careful evaluation of the Ukrainian environment. The class war with the kulak was to continue, but the poor and middle peasants were to be won over by major concessions. The commune was to be made wholly voluntary. State farms would be constructed "only in strictly necessary measure," and provisioning policies were to be carried out with the "greatest regard for the conditions of the Ukrainian village."<sup>6</sup>

5. Rubach, Voloshchuk, Suprunenko, Sheludchenko, eds., *Radyanske budivnytstvo na Ukraini v roky hromadyunskoi viiny, 1919-1920: Zbirnyk dokumentiv i materiyaliv*, pp. 22-26, 40-45, 986 n.; Majstrenko, *Borot'bism*, pp. 172-96, 203-22; Barannyk et al., p. 542, editor's note.

6. Lenin, *Sochineniya*, 24, 552-54, 811-13 n., 169-71; *Vsesoyuznaya kommunisticheskaya partiya (b) v resolyutsiyakh ee sezdov i konferentsi*

The importance of Ukrainian cultural aspirations was also recognized. In an emphatic resolution of the RKP and the RSFSR, "On Soviet Power in the Ukraine," written by Lenin in November, all party members were enjoined to destroy every hindrance to "the free development of the Ukrainian language and culture," to be patient and cautious in their relations with people displaying nationalist tendencies, to be respectful toward Ukrainian literature, art, and history, and to carry the message of communism to the Ukrainian masses in the Ukrainian tongue. All Soviet institutions were ordered to employ workers capable of using the native language.<sup>7</sup> Lenin also published a long letter in *Pravda* promising to prosecute "the least mani-

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(1898-1926 gg.) (The All-Union Communist Party [B] in the Resolutions of its Congresses and Conferences, 1898-1926) (3d ed. Moscow-Leningrad, 1927), pp. 252-53; Rubach et al., *Radyanske budivnytstvo na Ukraini*, pp. 26-30; Kh. Rakovski, "Ilich i Ukraina," *Letopis revolyutsii*, no. 2 [11], pp. 8-10; Ponomarenko, "K voprosu o soyuze rabochego klassa so srednim krestyanstvom na Ukraine v 1919-1920 godakh," *Voprosy istorii* (Dec. 1958), pp. 58-66.

7. Lenin, *Sochineniya*, 24, 552-54, 577-78, 815 n.; Lenin's concessions to nationalism and the Borotbisty were opposed by Rakovski, Bubnov, and Manuilski, and the debate over these issues was extremely sharp. The decisions expressed by the resolution "On Soviet Power in the Ukraine" were repeated as instructions in directives subsequently issued by various Bolshevik and Soviet organs. See Rubach et al., pp. 12, 26-30.

The editors of the Ukrainian party journal *Letopis revolyutsii*, in a footnote to Lapchinski's article in 1926, state very emphatically that "On Soviet Power in the Ukraine" was prepared in conjunction with the Central Committee of the KP(b)U, which would mean apparently that Rakovski had important influence in preparing the corrected plans for the future. They also say that it was at the insistence of the leaders of the Ukrainian party that the resolution was presented to the Eighth All-Russian Party Conference, citing Rakovski's declaration to this effect at the Fourth Conference of the KP(b)U. This, if true, would indicate a general willingness on the part of the leadership of the KP(b)U to make major program changes in the Ukraine. However, the very sharp opposition by Rakovski, Bubnov, and Manuilski to several aspects of the resolution makes it evident that, despite the approval of the conference, the Ukrainian leaders held serious reservations concerning the new program.

festation of Great Russian nationalism in our midst." And he publicly counseled Russian Bolsheviks to be "yielding in dissensions with Ukrainian Communists, Bolsheviks, and Borotbisty, if these disagreements concern the political independence of the Ukraine, the form of the union with Russia, or the national question."<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, major concessions were made in the political field, at least on paper. In the resolution "On Soviet Power in the Ukraine," apparently issued to the public in good faith, both the RKP and the RSFSR formally recognized the independence of the Ukraine, announced that the temporary relationship between the Russian and the Ukrainian Soviet Republics should be that of federation, and explicitly promised that the final form of the union would be decided, after Denikin's defeat, by the Ukrainian workers and peasants themselves, at an all-Ukrainian congress of soviets. Meanwhile, a strenuous campaign was set in motion to secure the fullest possible participation of workers and working peasants in the Ukrainian government so that they could effectively direct it at every level.<sup>9</sup>

In the field of practical administration much had been learned. In preparation for the establishment of the third Soviet government in the Ukraine, realistic and useful instructions were issued to party and soviet workers. Before attempting to influence peasants, they were directed to familiarize themselves with all the local conditions, the class relationships in the specific village, the local morale, special dissatisfactions, "the shortcomings of the soviet and party apparatus, outstanding events of a local character, the situation at the front." Reports, they were told, should be tailored to the audience; topics should be selected for their special interest to the local worker and peasant; all questions should be put "simply, comprehensibly, and above

8. Lenin, *Sochineniya*, 24, 655-60.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 552-54.

all, practically."<sup>10</sup> In late December schools for training competent village workers were ordered established, under Zatonski's direction, to be staffed by instructors who knew village life and the conditions of work among peasants.<sup>11</sup>

Certainly Bolshevik experience in the Ukraine had not indicated that concessions and pleasant manners alone would guarantee Communist success. Indeed, the Bolshevik leaders had learned so well the necessity for strong, centralized government that this principle ultimately overrode the concessions. In December, with Red armies advancing once again into the Ukraine and the newly formed All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Military Council acting as a provisional Ukrainian government, the RKP and RSFSR actively extended their authority. The above-mentioned protestations of the recognition of Ukrainian independence and the right of the Ukrainian people to make their own decisions on the form of relationship to be established in the future were jettisoned. In late January the Ukrainian Revolutionary Council revived the decrees of the previous Ukrainian government; but a few days later the RSFSR announced that all decrees issued by the Ukrainian SSR concerning military affairs, the economy, provisioning, labor, post, telegraph, and finance, *were annulled and would be superseded by the decrees of the RSFSR*. Moscow's control of these key commissariats, gained in May and June of 1919, was not to be surrendered.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, central command and the transformation of the armies of the Ukrainian Front into units of the All-Russian Red Army had been achieved in May and June of 1919. In December and the early months of 1920 Moscow did not even contemplate reviving a Ukrainian army, despite the insistent demands of Bolshevik deviators and

10. Rubach et al., pp. 31-38, 53-55; cf. Barannyk et al., *Istoriya KP(b)U*, pp. 414-15.

11. Rubach et al., pp. 23-24, 39-40.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 55-56.

of the Borotbisty, who reneged on their agreement to support a united army. The absolute necessity of military centralization had been learned once and for all. So, too, the dangers of partisan military forces were not forgotten. As they moved back into the Ukraine, the Bolsheviks issued unbelievably fierce orders for disarming the kulak and suppressing every form of partisan organization. If partisans continued to flourish it was because the Bolsheviks were too busy fighting off organized military forces to suppress the atamans.<sup>13</sup>

Although Lenin and his colleagues had developed clear concepts of the relationship they hoped to establish between the RKP and the KP(b)U, the KP(b)U of early 1920 remained a hotbed of factions, torn by differences of opinion on the question of Russian centralism. So violent and general was the resentment of Moscow's forceful interference that in March 1920 a central committee with a majority hostile to the RKP was elected. In response, the Central Committee of the RKP exercised its own authority in an extremely highhanded fashion by summarily dissolving the newly elected Ukrainian Central Committee and appointing another.<sup>14</sup> If some members of the KP(b)U still dreamed of an independent Ukrainian party, this arbitrary act of the Russian party should have awakened them once and for all.

The complex forces of war and the fundamentally authoritarian character of bolshevism doomed to oblivion the reform programs developed at the end of 1919. In the last analysis the ruling Bolsheviks meant to hold the Ukraine

13. Barannyk et al., pp. 497-501; Trotsky, *Kak vooruzhalas revolyutsiya*, 2, 24, 306 n.; cf. Lenin, *Sochineniya*, 24, 811-12; Rubach et al., pp. 14, 38, 49-50.

14. Ravich-Cherkasski, pp. 149-65; N. N. Popov, pp. 236-43. Popov, writing in 1928-29, called the RKP's dissolution of the newly elected Central Committee of the KP(b)U "the most outstanding formal infringement of internal party democracy in the whole history of our party."

at any cost. Given the economic and social conditions of the Ukraine, the invasion by the Poles under Marshal Pilsudski in April, and General Wrangel's assault from the Crimea in June, the projected reforms were not feasible. Although Lenin and his closest colleagues spoke seriously of concessions, their determination to rule compelled them to use the most forceful administrative techniques. In the Ukraine of 1920, this meant the establishment of one-party rule and Muscovite dictatorship.

For the Ukrainian nationalists represented by the remnants of the Directory, the groups that had split away from it, and the anti-Directory parties that were also anti-Bolshevik, the temporary Bolshevik success of early 1919 was fatal. Although the indomitable Petlyura continued his active struggle into 1921, the Directory had fumbled and lost its great opportunity. All parties involved with the Directory reaped the harvest of their inexperience, inability to agree among themselves, and failure to create a firm and effective governing authority, whether democratic or socialist. By the time the Bolsheviks had been driven out by Denikin, though Petlyura once more moved his troops to Kiev, the anti-Bolshevik nationalist parties had ceased to be a determining factor on the Ukrainian scene. The great influence they had enjoyed early in 1919 was never revived inside the Ukraine.

With the suppression of Grigorev's rebellion in late May, the possibility of effective native military opposition also came to an end. Other men tried to raise armies during Denikin's advance and occupation of the Ukraine, but after the return of the Red Army and Denikin's defeat, the political-military situation was far different from what it had been in early 1919. The interventionist powers had gone home. Moscow's rule was being consolidated. With the exception of Poland, and the Japanese in the Far East, the

Bolsheviks' enemies remaining in the field were few and weak.

Failing to prevail in the political climate of early 1919, the Bolsheviks were never again to have the chance to win friends among a politically primitive and innocent Ukraine. When they returned later to establish the third Soviet government, they came back to a country which had reflected on its agonies and which under fierce compulsion had thought long on its aspirations. The Ukrainian people had heard the siren songs of nationalism. They had experienced the keen pleasures of feeling superior, of being *Ukrainian*, and they had debated with guns about the kind of political and economic systems they preferred. To the extent that the nationalist parties and the partisans helped to rouse and educate the nation, theirs was a lasting victory. Its consequences were to be seen in the growing nationalism of Ukrainian thought after 1919, in the changes wrought in the attitudes and ideas of important members of the KP(b)U, even in such recent phenomena as the nationalist oppositionist movements of the Second World War.

The alarms and excursions of 1919 did not significantly change the Ukraine's destiny. The nation was to be ruled by Moscow; its policies, even when nationalized by the demands of Ukrainian Bolsheviks, were to be determined in the Russian capital. Eventually, when the Ukraine's ambitions became too troublesome, even its Bolshevik leaders would be destroyed by purge, exile, and execution. The centralized dictatorship Lenin had dreamed of would be brought to momentary perfection in the thirties by his practical lieutenant, Stalin.

## *Epilogue*

WHEN HIS MAIN FORCES were crushed in late May, Grigorev slipped off with a small band and continued to lead limited partisan operations in his familiar haunts. Shortly after Makhno was dismissed by Trotsky in early June, the two partisan leaders met near Elisavetgrad. Because both were outlaws opposed to bolshevism and accustomed to making their own way, for a short period they managed to join what forces they had. Makhno acted as the government chief of this strange alliance and Grigorev served as head of the military forces.

But this partnership was doomed by the extreme differences between the two men and their followers. Grigorev was the unprincipled adventurer, Makhno the anarchist dedicated to the defense of freedom. Grigorev was openly anti-Semitic, the perpetrator of pogroms; Makhno protected Jews and in fact had many serving on his own staff. While Grigorev was prepared to work with any ally, including even General Denikin, Makhno and his advisers trod a carefully chosen revolutionary path, refusing to support dictatorship of any sort, whether radical or reactionary. Convinced finally that Grigorev was a hopeless case, Makhno decided that the ataman should be eliminated.

The following is the account of an eyewitness, the anarchist Arshinov<sup>1</sup>:

July 27, 1919, in the village of Sentovo, near Aleksandriya, in Kherson guberniya, on the initiative of Makhno there was an assembly of the rebels of Ekaterinoslav, Kherson, and Taurida. In agreement with the agenda, the session had to decide upon the task of all the rebels of the Ukraine relating to the current situation. The assembled mass of peasants, the rebel sections of Grigorev, and the units of Makhno came to about 20,000 people. Grigorev and Makhno and a series of other supporters of this or that movement were designated as reporters. First came Grigorev. He summoned the peasants and rebels to give all of their forces to drive the Bolsheviks out of the country, scorning no allies in this work. Grigorev was not opposed to unification with Denikin for this purpose. Later, when the yoke of bolshevism had been overturned, the people themselves would decide what should be done.

This declaration proved fatal for Grigorev. Chubenko and Makhno, speaking immediately after him, showed that the struggle with the Bolsheviks could be revolutionary only if it were carried on in the name of social revolution. Collaboration with the most evil enemies of the people—with the generals—would be

1. Arshinov, *Istoriya makhnovskogo dvizheniya, 1918–1921 gg.*, pp. 133–34; Kubanin, *Makhnovshchina*, pp. 81–83, presents the text of testimony written by the anarchist Aleksei Chubenko, who claims he killed Grigorev at this meeting. As far as I have been able to learn, there are no better sources on the event and no sure way of determining who actually wielded the weapon that killed the ataman. Cf. Nestor Makhno, "Zapiski Nestora Makhno" (The Writings of Nestor Makhno), *Anarkhicheski vestnik* (Anarchist News) (Berlin), no. 5–6 (Nov.-Dec. 1923), pp. 23–25; Nestor Makhno, "Makhnovshchina i antisemitizm" (The Makhno Movement and Anti-Semitism), *Delo truda* (The Cause of Labor) (Paris), no. 30–31 (Nov.-Dec. 1927), pp. 17–18.

criminal adventure and counterrevolution. "Grigorev calls [us] to this counterrevolution; consequently, he is the enemy of the people." Then Makhno publicly, before all the assembly, demanded that Grigorev immediately pay for the monstrous pogrom perpetrated by him in May 1919, at Elisavetgrad, and for a series of other anti-Semitic actions.

"Such blackguards as Grigorev degrade all the rebels of the Ukraine, and for them there can be no place in the ranks of the honorable workers of the revolution." Thus Makhno concluded his accusation of Grigorev. The latter saw that the affair was taking a terrible end for him. He reached for his gun. But he was too late. Simon Karetnik—the closest assistant of Makhno—drove him to the ground with several bullets from his Colt, and Makhno, triumphantly proclaiming, "Death to the Ataman!" shot him dead. The friends and members of Grigorev's staff would have rushed to help him, but were shot on the spot by a group of Makhno's men previously designated for the task. All this occurred within the course of two or three minutes before the eyes of the assembly.

At first the assembly was somewhat disturbed by the deeds accomplished, but then, after the following reports of Makhno, Chubenko, and other representatives of the Makhnovtsy, the assembly approved these deeds, calling them historically necessary. According to the protocol decreed by the assembly, the Makhnovtsy took upon themselves the responsibility for the deed and its consequences. All the partisan sections that had been under the direction of Grigorev, in agreement with the resolution of the assembly were absorbed into the general army of the Makhnovist rebels.

Thus ended Grigorev.

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OUT OF THE IMMENSE FUND of materials touching upon the Ukraine, the civil war, and Bolshevik-Ukrainian relations, only those found most useful for the present study are listed in the following bibliography. A number of more extensive bibliographies of considerable value are available to the student working in this general area. One of the best is the work edited by S. Rozen, "Opyt bibliografii po istorii revolyutsii na Ukraine. Periodika" (An Attempt at a Bibliography on the History of the Revolution in the Ukraine, Periodicals), in *Letopis revolyutsii* (Annals of the Revolution), 1926, no. 3-4, pp. 231-65; no. 5, pp. 198-208; and no. 6, pp. 190-203. This work lists, describes, and summarizes the contents of materials published in some sixty Soviet journals between 1917 and 1925. During these years Bolshevik writers could speak the truth as they saw it, or remembered it, to a degree far greater than was to be possible in later times; consequently, many of the articles and documents Rozen lists are remarkably valuable. Of similar importance to the American student is the carefully organized work of Jurij Lawrynenko, *Ukrainian Communism and Soviet Russian Policy Toward the Ukraine: An Annotated Bibliography, 1917-1953* (New York, 1953). Lawrynenko presents critical commentaries and brief summaries of the more important works he lists, and supplies (not always accurately) the names of American libraries in which each item may be found.

A special issue of *The Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U.S.* (vol. 6-7, 1957) contains bibliographical aids indispensable for the study of Ukrainian affairs. The first of these, Dmytro Doroshenko's *A Survey of Ukrainian Historiography*, was originally completed in 1923; it provides a masterful analysis of works published prior to that year. In editing this work Olexander Ohloblyn has enhanced its value by adding considerable new data on recent publications. Ohloblyn has also compiled a much-needed chapter, "Ukrainian Historiography, 1917-1956," which lists and evaluates Soviet and émigré scholars and their writings, as well as the best recent works by Western students.

The *Bibliografiya russkoi revolyutsii i grazhdanskoi voiny (1917-1921): Iz kataloga biblioteki R.Z.I. arkhiva* (Bibliography of the Russian Revolution and the Civil War, 1917-21, from the Catalogue of the Library of the Russian Historical Archives Abroad), edited by Yan Slavik, compiled by S. P. Postnikov, and published at Prague in 1938, is very useful. N. N. Golovin's typewritten checklists, available in the Hoover Library at Stanford University, contain many materials not listed elsewhere. The most important of these lists is the lengthy *Bibliograficheski ukazatel knig vyshedshikh na rusском yazyke po istorii voiny 1914-18 gg. na rusском fronte, russkoi revolyutsii, grazhdanskoi voiny i russkogo kontrrevolyutsionnago dvizheniya* (A Bibliographical Index of Books Issued in the Russian Language about the History of the War of 1914-18 on the Russian Front, the Russian Revolution, the Civil War, and the Russian Counterrevolutionary Movement) (c. 1932). A Soviet work, *Oborona SSSR i Krasnaya armiya: Katalog knig* (Defense of the USSR and the Red Army: A Catalogue of Books) (2 vols. Moscow-Leningrad, 1928-29), lists and summarizes the contents of technical military studies.

A familiar and difficult task for every student of Soviet history is the evaluation of his sources. This becomes par-

ticularly difficult when dealing with materials about Bolshevik-Ukrainian relations. Some form of bias or misrepresentation must be suspected at every turn. It may range from the deliberate and systematic falsifications perpetrated by Soviet scholars under the compulsion of Stalinist demands and Communist ideology to the equally unacceptable exaggerations of expatriate Ukrainophiles, Galician chauvinists, and displaced political leaders obsessed with old political battles. Between these extremes lies a host of lesser distortions, from those of the naïve "Left" Bolsheviks of 1919 who opposed Lenin's authoritarian centralizing policies yet could not but see events from the Bolshevik viewpoint to those made by émigré Ukrainian historians who strive mightily to create objective analyses of the past out of minds saturated with a chauvinistic love for the Ukraine and a virtually unquenchable desire to see its people freed from Soviet rule.

The student who walks among these varieties of emotion and conviction searching for the dispassionate interpretation of well-documented facts must often despair. Facts that appear to him to be irrefutably established, others may denounce, deride, or ignore. If he borrows materials from one group, he will surely be castigated by several others. If he employs valuable Soviet materials long since suppressed in the USSR, his work stands condemned by modern Soviet scholars. On the other hand, use of Soviet documents or interpretations opens him to charges that he disapproves the efforts of Ukrainians to achieve national independence, that he opposes the conquest of human liberty by an oppressed nation; and, if he yields to these attacks made in the name of freedom, he must acknowledge within his own conscience that he is sacrificing scholarly integrity to his own political ideals. Finally, much evidence has been provided by complex and intelligent men who themselves had little concern for historical truth and brazenly perverted facts to prove a political doctrine or conceal em-

barrassing events. All these difficulties render the work of evaluation both unending and painful. Such work is supported only by an almost unreasoning faith that some useful degree of accuracy and objectivity can be achieved despite the complex forces favoring one or another school of error.

Certain gross methods of classifying materials provide at least an initial indication of the flaws, tendencies, or biases likely to be found in specific works. In the following pages, all materials are classified, as is customary, under such headings as Documents, Collected Writings, Memoirs, Scholarly Studies, etc. In addition, all materials are identified as Communist or Non-Communist. Although this arrangement does no more than begin the long critical process to which any single work concerned with the events discussed in this book must be subjected, it does give clear and fair warning of the most obvious distortions that may be expected.

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## Index

- Administrative problems, 115-37, 139-42, 144-45, 221-22, 237, 292-95, 313-48, 372-73, 382-83, 386-401; centralization, 14, 45-48, 53-57, 61-62, 115-16, 119, 216-17, 222-23, 228, 231-32, 269, 331-32, 335, 340, 358-59, 371-72, 382-84, 388-90, 394, 398-400; due to non-cooperation with Ukrainian nationalist parties, 120, 124, 218-19, 228-29, 266, 325-27, 335, 387, 393; in land policy, 124, 128-30, 217-18, 223-25, 229-30, 265-66, 269, 273, 299, 319, 326, 335, 387, 395; in local government, 124-28, 258, 265-66, 281, 319, 332-36, 387; in military affairs, 43-45, 51, 53, 57-61, 66-78, 93, 137, 139-45, 157-63, 166-67, 170, 179-81, 184-90, 212-14, 227-28, 246-48, 258-60, 262-65, 269-74, 278, 283, 285-87, 289-307, 310-12, 341-43, 350, 352-54, 356-71, 373, 379-81, 392, 398-99; in nationalities policy, 225-26, 231-32, 387, 391, 396-98; in provisioning policy, 94, 124, 131-34, 218, 230, 265-66, 269, 281, 291-95, 339-41, 386; in relations between Russian and Ukrainian Soviet Governments, 55-64, 116, 291, 330-32, 337, 352, 358-59, 361, 366-67, 371-72, 381, 388-92, 397-98; the lessons learned, 4, 337, 393-99; proliferation of plenipotentiaries, 310, 329-31, 343, 362, 380, 392; related to terror, 94, 134-35, 142, 232, 265, 299, 304, 322-23, 325-26, 330-32, 335-36, 358, 387; shortage of personnel, 115-16, 136-37, 140, 187, 228, 230, 266, 358. *See also* Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Ukraine; Communist Party, Russia; Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic; Soviet Army; Soviets; Ukrainian Soviet Republic
- Akhmetov, 189; report on Grigorev, 163-65
- Aleksandriya, 149, 150, 163-64, 258, 260-64, 267-68, 271-72, 279-80, 282, 288, 290-94, 297, 308-09, 355
- Aleksandrovsk (Zaporozhe), 191, 355, 367; Bolshevik Revolutionary Council in, 155
- Alexeev, Mikhail V. (General), 29
- Allied forces, 37, 40, 50, 84, 96, 141, 176-77, 182-83, 188, 193, 210; French, 95-96, 103, 114, 138, 160, 167-69, 171, 175-80, 182, 193-99, 202-03, 205-06, 210-11, 309; Greek, 96, 167, 171-74, 176-77, 179, 182, 188, 193, 199, 202; Rumanian, 96,

- 193, 199, 202; Senegalese, 96; Zouaves, 188. *See also* French intervention
- Allied intervention, 24-25, 32, 96-99, 169, 243, 400. *See also* Allied forces; French intervention
- Allied Powers, 95, 100, 146, 157, 193, 195, 198, 200, 209-10, 239, 299
- All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee, 314
- All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Military Council, 395, 398
- Andrievski, S., 105
- Angel (partisan leader), 232-33
- Antonov-Ovseenko, Vladimir, 25-43, 59, 65-66, 119, 137, 143, 145-48, 171 n., 232, 236, 239, 243, 247-52, 330, 347-48, 356, 358-61, 365, 368-71, 392; army organization, 66-74, 138-40, 144, 159, 191-92, 366; assumption of command, Second Campaign, 25, 30-32; attitude toward over-all strategy, 36, 145-46, 252-54; biographic details, 26-30, 117, 371 n., 384; characterized by Trotsky, 26-28; criticism of government policies, 264-66, 274, 330-31, 341; dependence upon partisans, 141, 148-49, 166-67, 190-91, 257-58, 262-64, 275; and Grigorev, 157-67, 170, 174, 180-81, 184-92, 203-05, 212-14, 257, 262-64, 267-91, 295-312, 317, 322; Kharkov advance, 40-41, 50, 68, 75-77, 87-89; Kiev advance, 94, 112-14; and Lenin, 26, 28-30, 41-42, 50-52, 254, 256-57, 264-65, 269, 272, 351-53, 362-63; and Makhno, 278-80; "Manifesto of May 9," 295-96; Odessa campaign, 186-92, 200-01, 203-05; removal from command, 363, 366; Rumanian campaign, 239-42, 275-77, 280, 284-88; and Southern Front reinforcements, 147-48, 191, 249-57, 272, 350-51, 357, 362-63; and Stalin, 32-33, 48-49, 62-63, 371 n.; strategy, Second Campaign, 30, 31-38, 40-42, 49-53, 77-78, 114, 241-42, 270. *See also* Antonov-Vatsetis controversy; Soviet Army
- Antonov-Vatsetis controversy, 31-44, 48-61, 71, 74-78, 84-87, 89-90, 114, 145, 147-48, 251-55, 350-51, 368-71
- Aralov, S. I., 368
- Arkhangelsk, 146
- Arshinov, P., 321, *quoted*, 402-04
- Artem, Fedor Andreevich, 65
- Aussem, Vladimir Kh., 143
- Austria, 276
- Austria-Hungary, 5-7, 13, 95, 239; army of, 7, 12-13, 30, 35. *See also* Central Powers
- Averin, V., 118
- Azan, Paul Jean Louis, 198 n.
- Azov, Sea of, 24
- Babi, B. M., on peasants in the *kombedy*, 336 n.
- Bakhmach, 233, 235, 311; Bakhmach-Gomel railroad, 86
- Balbachan, Peter, 82-84, 87-89, 109-10, 152
- Balta, 235, 290
- Bavaria, Soviet Republic in, 200
- Belaya Tserkov, 235
- Belenkovich (Red Army commander), 144
- Belgorod, 40, 84, 369
- Berezovka, 186, 188-89, 196
- Berlin, 240
- Berthelot (General), 194-95, 211
- Bessarabia, 95, 201-02, 238-39, 241, 248, 250, 255, 263, 275-76, 282, 284, 289, 296; campaign into, 239-42, 285, 297, 312
- Black Hundred, 259
- Black Sea, 96, 168-69, 180, 200, 309; littoral, 24, 32, 96
- Blakitny, Vasil M. (Elanski), 155; as Grigorev's adviser, 315-18; negotiations with Bolsheviks, 123, 315. *See also* Borotbisty
- Bogatyri, 276

- Bolshevik forces. *See* Soviet Army
- Bolsheviks: "non-party," 165; underground organizations, 169, 174-79, 183, 197, 203, 206, 210-11. *See also* Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Ukraine; Communist Party, Russia
- Borotba*, 121
- Borotbisty (UPSR [borotbisty]), 164, 187, 268, 273, 302, 313, 399; "Council of Revolutionary Emissaries," 123; Grigorev's relations with, 154-57, 164, 315-18; ideology, 121-23, 315 n.; in control of Ukrainian SR central committee, 121; in Ukrainian Soviet Government posts, 123, 273, 315-17, 327, 393; and the KP(b)U, 121-23, 228, 229 n., 315-17, 393, 394-95; Lenin's appraisal of, 120, 122, 315, 394; Znamenka "Central Revolutionary Committee," 156. *See also* Blakitny Bredov, Nicholas (General), 373
- Brest-Litovsk, 5, 7, 329; Treaty of, 30
- Bryansk, 37
- Bubnov, Andrei, 20-22, 118, 236, 260, 272, 298 n., 359-61, 381, 396 n.
- Budenny, Simon, 374
- Bukharin, N. I., 219, 226; opposed to national self-determination, 225
- Bukovina, 201, 241, 284
- Bulgaria, 276
- Cadets, 173 n.
- Carpathians, 201
- Caspian Sea, 24, 33
- Caucasus: mountains, 33; North, 245-46
- Center. *See* RKP; RSFSR; Soviet Army units
- Central Powers, 5, 7
- Central Rada, 4-5, 7, 16, 100, 234
- Chaly, Anton, 302
- Chamberlin, William Henry, *quoted*, 27, 342-43
- Chekhovski, Vladimir, 100, 104
- Cherednyak (anarchist), 89
- Cherkassy, 311-12, 326, 347
- Chernigov, 37, 87, 93-94, 143, 235, 346, 382; guberniya of, 233
- Chernobyl, 233, 235
- Chicherin, G. V., 55, 99-100
- Chubenko, Aleksei, 403-04
- Clemenceau, Georges, 95, 195, 198, 202-03, 206
- Comintern. *See* Third International
- Commission to Negotiate Peace (Paris), 195
- Communes, 120, 217, 229, 269, 273, 299, 320, 335, 395
- Communist forces. *See* Soviet Army
- Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Ukraine (KP(b)U), 17, 19-21, 61, 92, 99, 115, 126, 155, 232, 237, 243, 315, 325-27, 337-38, 381-84, 388-90, 394, 396, 401; Central Committee, 21-22, 48, 54, 63, 215, 259-60, 338, 349, 368, 382-85, 393, 396 n.; central faction, 119; and class warfare, 125-26, 217-18, 319, 395; Congress, First (Moscow) (*July 1918*), 20, 388; Congress, Fourth (*March 1920*), 395, 396 n.; Congress, Second (Moscow) (*October 1918*), 22, 67, 116, 215, 388; Congress, Third (Kharkov) (*March 1919*), 215-19, 229, 315; and demands for self-determination of national parties, 222, 225-26; factional debate over tactics and ideology, 14-19, 54, 116, 215-16; Gomel Conference, 393-94; independence of Kievian faction, 18, 55, 65, 115-16; and indoctrination, 164, 219, 230, 234, 282, 387; isolation and exclusiveness, 119-20, 122-24, 218-19, 228, 325-27, 387, 393; Left wing, 14, 18-19, 47, 54-57, 62, 64-66, 116, 216-17; Orgburo, 19; Politburo, 338; relations with other Ukrainian parties, 121-24, 156, 228, 315-17, 327, 393-95; relations with RKP, 14, 18-19, 22, 216-17, 222-23, 231, 315, 383,

- 388-90, 393-94, 399; Right wing, 15, 18, 54, 57, 62, 67, 88, 118-19, 215-17; Taganrog Conference, 15-19; and world revolution, 94-95, 98-99, 385. *See also* Administrative problems; Communes; Ekaterinoslavs; Federalists; Kievians; Trans-front Buro
- Communist Party, Russia (Bolshevik) (RKP[b]), 3-7, 9, 13, 16, 26, 54, 222-23, 291, 326-27, 337, 381, 383-84, 388-90, 392, 397; Central Committee, 48, 50 n., 57, 229 n., 231, 269, 315, 350, 353, 358-60, 365-67, 375-76, 378-79, 389, 391, 394, 396, 399; Congress, Eighth (Moscow) (*March 1919*), 221-30, 269, 337, 388-89, 396 n.; debate over centralist theory, 45-48, 221-23; early factions in the Ukraine, 13-19; founding of Third International, 219-21, 240; Left Communists, 19, 222; Politburo, 48, 291, 377-78, 380; relations with KP(b)U, 14, 18-19, 22, 216-17, 222-23, 231, 315, 383, 388-90, 393-94, 399; and Ukrainian nationalism, 14, 44, 101-02, 231-32. *See also* Administrative problems
- Congress of Soviets, All-Ukrainian (Kharkov) (*March 1919*), 127, 219, 228 n., 296, 304, 315, 327, 332
- Congress of Toilers (All-Ukrainian) (Kiev) (*January 1919*), 110-12
- Congress of Workers, Peasants, and Red Army Deputies (Third). *See* Congress of Soviets, All-Ukrainian
- Cossacks, 3, 8-9, 11, 42, 62, 67, 79, 90, 141, 148, 154-55, 162 n., 166, 168, 180, 182, 209, 211, 232, 234, 248, 256, 262, 264, 296-97, 386. *See also* Don Cossacks; Peasantry; Zaporozhian Cossacks
- Crimea, 37, 87, 95-96, 98, 168, 186, 191-92, 200, 248, 250-51, 254, 260, 272, 292, 301, 369, 374, 400; Soviet government of, 365
- Czernin, Count Ottokar, 5
- D'Anselme, Phillippe (General), 102, 104, 182, 192, 196-200, 205, 211
- Denikin, Anton I. (General), 16, 24-25, 30-31, 35, 95, 99, 103, 110, 146, 153, 193 n., 206-07, 243, 245-46, 249, 254, 256, 297, 303, 309, 319, 324, 338, 346, 349-51, 354, 357-58, 365, 372-74, 377, 379, 382, 385-87, 400, 402-03
- D'Esperey, Franchet (General), 96, 194-95, 197, 198 n., 206-07, 211
- Directory, 25, 78, 80, 91-92, 94, 99, 103, 111-14, 132, 140, 143, 231, 233, 296, 299, 309, 314, 369, 400; administrative weaknesses in government and army, 78-79, 80-82, 88, 105-06, 109, 111-12, 400; "Declaration of December 26," 80; establishment of, 23; factions within, 23-24, 79-81, 99-102, 106-12; forces opposing the Red Army, 88-89, 100, 105, 109-10, 112-13, 386; relations with the Bolsheviks, 44, 55, 99-101, 103-04; relations with the French, 98, 102-05, 207; "State Conference," 108-09; union with Western Ukrainian Republic, 105. *See also* Petlyura; Ukrainian People's Republic
- Dmitriev (Red Army commander), 286, 311
- Dnepr River, 93, 110, 115, 150, 160 n., 167, 265, 272, 369. *See also* Left Bank; Right Bank
- Dnepropetrovsk. *See* Ekaterinoslav
- Dnestr River, 96
- Donbass, 7, 15, 24, 32, 37, 86-87, 210, 215, 243, 246, 248-49, 256-66, 270-72, 274-76, 291, 296, 348, 351-52, 360, 363, 373-74, 377, 384; Front, 364-65
- Don Cossacks, 16, 24, 33, 243, 245, 275, 309, 350, 377; Army, 243, 245; region, 7
- Donets River, 42

- Dybenko, Paul E., 28, 94, 160 n., 165, 191-92, 203, 247-48, 250, 260, 272, 291, 312, 339-41, 356, 365
- Dzerzhinski, Feliks E., 145-46, 379
- Dzevaltovski, 381
- Eastern Front, 30, 39, 84-85, 249, 257, 349-51, 375-79
- Ego, 174, 176, 178-79, 181
- Egorov, A., 365
- Eichhorn, Field Marshal von, 9, 12
- Ekaterinoslav, 7, 15, 37, 42, 157, 165, 187, 251, 290-95, 307, 309, 312, 328, 333-34, 347, 353, 355-56, 362, 403; falls to Bolsheviks, 93-94, 374; guberniya of, 233
- Ekaterinoslavs ("Left Bank Communists"), 22, 216; strategy for Communist victory in Ukraine, 15-17, 22. *See also* KP(b)U Right wing
- Elisavetgrad, 235, 287-89, 291, 312, 317, 355, 402-03
- England, 95, 98, 146, 296, 350; ships, 174
- Federalists, 393-94
- Fekete (Red Army commander), 345
- Finland, 350
- Foch, Ferdinand (Marshal), 195
- France, 95-98, 194, 202, 206, 208, 296, 350; Chamber of Deputies, 97 n., 193 n., 198, 207 n., 208
- French forces. *See* Allied forces
- French intervention at Odessa, 96-98, 189-90, 192-99, 386; motivation for, 95-98, 193; relations of French Command with Directory, 98, 102-05, 194, 207; withdrawal from Odessa, 197-99, 202-12. *See also* Allied intervention
- Freydenburg (Colonel), 103-05, 193, 206
- Galicia, 105, 108, 200, 241, 248, 260, 296, 324
- Gekker, 360
- German Army, 7-9, 11-13, 16, 20-24, 30, 35, 37, 42, 44, 67, 71, 78, 91, 132, 149, 152-53, 234; at Kharkov, 83-84, 88; at Nikolaev, 96, 151, 154, 168-71, 176, 178-81; 15th Landwehr Division, 168
- Germanovka, 345
- Germany, 5-8, 13, 22, 95-96, 99, 108, 182, 240, 299, 329; Foreign Office, 13. *See also* Central Powers; German Army
- Gittis (General), 246-47, 249, 254
- Glagolev (Red Army commander), 32-33, 59, 61, 66, 89, 143, 360. *See also* Soviet Army units
- Golub (partisan leader), 233
- Gomel, 37, 394; Conference, 393-94
- Gorbenko (partisan leader), 301
- Great Russians, 105; chauvinism, 226, 231-32, 374, 397
- Greek forces. *See* Allied forces
- Grigorev (Ataman), 148-214, 233, 247-48, 258-59, 261, 264, 266-77, 283-84, 334, 366, 402-04; campaign for Kherson and Nikolaev, 167-84; campaign for Odessa, 181, 186-212; character of forces under, 163-67, 182, 203-04, 259, 262, 268, 272-74, 343-45; criticisms of Bolshevik policies, 274-76, 298-301, 304-05, 319-22; early career, 149-55; importance to Soviet Army, 149-50, 157, 159, 257, 262-64, 283-84, 297; independence of, 152-54, 158, 160-64, 170, 179-80, 183-84, 190, 201, 212-14, 260, 281-82, 285, 292, 297, 341; political ideas, 154-55, 164, 274, 299-302, 304, 313-15, 318, 320; rebellion of, 258, 266-67, 278-312, 327-28, 332-33, 337-38, 341-42, 348-49, 353, 355, 361, 385-86, 400; relations with Borotbisty, 154-57, 315-18; relations with Makhno, 165-66, 203, 270, 275, 278, 280, 305, 309, 321, 323-26, 402-04; Universal of, 289, 290, 298-301, 313, 319, 323-24. *See also* Soviet Army units

- Grishin-Almazov, Aleksei (General), 103, 189, 196
- Group of the Kursk Direction. *See* Revolutionary Military Council of the Ukraine
- Grudnitski (partisan leader), 233
- Gukovski, A. I., 97, 198 n.; on Odessa affair, 205-12
- Gulyai-Pole, 165, 248, 279, 370
- Gusev, S. I., 375, 377
- Haidamaky*, 3, 92, 234
- Heifetz, Elias, 319
- Henno, Emile, 95, 96 n., 103
- Hrushevsky, Mikhailo, 4, 232
- Hungary, 239-42, 248, 252, 255, 272, 276, 284, 351, 385; revolution in, 208, 239-40; Socialist Soviet Republic, 201, 238-40, 284, 297, 387
- Ioffe, Adolf, 329, 339, 352-53, 358, 361-62, 380-81, 392
- Italy, 98
- Japanese, 400
- Jenkins, William, *quoted*, 196
- Jewish Bund (Social Democrats), 111, 327, 389
- Jews, 10-11, 142, 232, 235-36, 280-81, 318-19, 334, 348, 355-56, 386, 402; pogroms, 92, 235-36, 287, 323-24, 403
- Kachinski, V., on the kulak, 218 n.
- Kakurin, Nikolai, *quoted*, 248
- Kaledin, Aleksei (General), 29
- Kamenev, Leo, 291-95, 310-11, 317, 320-21, 328-29, 339-41, 343, 352-54, 358, 360, 380, 392
- Kamenev, Sergei S., 360, 375-79
- Karetnik, Simon, 404
- Karolyi, Michael, 239
- Katsapy*, 10, 231-32
- Kazan, 30
- Kerensky, Alexander, 27
- Kessler, Rear Admiral von, 168-69, 176, 178, 180
- Kharkov, 7, 15, 24, 31, 33, 37-38, 51, 53, 68, 75-76, 82-85, 109, 117, 123, 133, 138, 156, 158, 161, 174, 187, 215, 291, 300, 305, 307, 309-11, 328-31, 354, 359, 362, 369; first Communist government in, 16; guberniya of, 233; Military Okrug, 290, 310-11, 328, 330; pro-Bolshevik workers in, 82-84, 88-89; taken by Bolsheviks, 87-89, 374; taken by Denikin, 373
- Kherson, 7, 150, 154, 167-68, 189, 195, 198, 203, 209-11, 258, 307, 309, 326, 333; battle for, 169, 171-74, 176-78, 180, 182-84; guberniya of, 149, 151, 160, 233, 258, 265, 269, 281, 287, 289, 301, 304, 347, 403; taken by Denikin, 373
- Khrystyuk, Pavlo, 10, 108 n.; on weakening of the class struggle, 319
- Khudyakov (Red Army commander), 192 n., 242, 251, 260-63, 285-87, 290, 307, 312, 317, 333, 341-42
- Kiel, 240
- Kiev, 5, 7, 9, 13, 15-16, 23-24, 30, 32-33, 37, 42, 80-81, 87, 94-96, 98-99, 104, 106-08, 110, 112, 123, 133, 152, 174, 186-87, 190-91, 203, 232-33, 235, 241-42, 250, 252, 255, 263, 271-72, 284, 288, 297, 300, 305, 307, 309, 311, 317, 328-29, 331, 338-39, 354, 359-60, 400; guberniya of, 114, 233, 235, 264, 337; Podol, 236; Red Army takeover, 7, 16, 29, 112-14, 135, 143, 374; taken by Denikin, 373, 382; taken by Petlyura, 78, 373, 382
- Kievians ("Right Bank Communists"), 16-22, 54, 57, 60, 114-16, 118, 216, 223; for independent Ukrainian party, 17-19; strategy for Communist victory, 17-18; unsuccessful uprising, 21-22. *See also* KP(b)U Left wing

- Klimenko (partisan leader), 233, 235  
 Kolchak, A. V. (Admiral), 145-46, 242-43, 303, 349, 375-77  
 Kolosov (partisan leader), 155  
*Kommunist* (Kiev), 14  
 Konovalets, Eugenc, 108-11  
 Kornilov, L. G. (General), 28-29  
 Kossior, S. V., 394  
 Kovel, 252, 254  
 Kozelsky, B. V., 335; on Petlyurist influence upon Grigorev, 314  
 Kozhevnikov (partisan leader), 39, 41, 66, 75-76, 85, 87, 147, 246, 248-49  
 Kozlov, 41  
 KP(b)U. *See* Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Ukraine  
 Krapivnyanski (Red Army commander), 112  
 Krasnov, Peter (General), 16, 24, 33, 35, 39, 51, 62, 76, 243, 245-46  
 Kremenchug, 295, 321, 347-48, 355  
 Krivoi Rog, 15, 290  
 Krylenko, N. V., 28  
 Kuban, 190, 377  
 Kun, Bela, 239-41, 385  
 Kupyansk, 40, 51, 243, 247, 365  
 Kursk, 32-33, 37-39, 42-43, 49, 51, 53-54, 61-63, 71, 373  
 Kutsovka, 262  
 Kviring, Emmanuil, 88, 118, 215
- Land policy. *See* Administrative problems  
 Lapchinski, G., 394  
 Lashevich, M., 375  
 Lashkevych, Vyacheslav, 156  
 Latsis, M. Ya. (Sudrabs), 331, 347, 381  
 League of Landowners, 8  
 Left Bank, 15, 82, 93, 109-10, 113-14, 118, 160 n., 369-70  
 Left Ukrainian Social Revolutionaries. *See* Borotbisty  
 Lengovski (Red Army commander), 312, 345  
 Lenin, Vladimir Ilich, 14, 16, 18, 26, 28-30, 48-49, 61, 87, 102-03, 118, 184, 239, 260, 295, 320, 341, 371, 382-84, 388, 392; advice to Rakovski, 116-17, 119-20, 138; agrarian policy of, 127, 223, 229; centralism of, 21-22, 45, 53, 64, 115-16, 216-17, 222-23, 228, 231-32, 269, 332, 358-59, 372, 388-92, 399-401; concern over Southern Front, 35, 84, 249-51, 256, 272, 297, 341, 351-54, 358, 362-63, 373; concern over Urals Front, 35 n., 145-46; critical of Ukrainian army and government leaders, 48, 56, 115, 145, 254, 351-53, 362, 366; curbing of KP(b)U leadership, 20-22, 55, 115-17, 216, 388, 399; interview with Antonov, 50-52; and military organization, 47, 52-53, 140, 310, 330, 352-53, 357, 359-60, 363-67; and military strategy, 35-36, 55, 85, 249, 297, 375-80; and Narkomprod, 118, 131, 339-40, 343; and Stalin, 22, 48; theory of national self-determination, 14-15, 18-19, 225-26, 231, 391; views on Borotbist participation in KP(b)U, 120, 122, 315, 394; views on Ukrainian nationalism, 14, 64, 231-32, 327, 396-97; and world revolution, 219-21, 240. *See also* Antonov-Ovseenko  
 Lizov, Boris, 171  
 Local government. *See* Administrative problems  
 Lokotosh, I. S., 112-13, 143  
 Lubny, 347-48  
 Lugansk, 291-92, 351-52, 354, 365  
 Luxemburg, Rosa, 220  
 Lvov, 105  
 Lytvynenko, Mykola, 156
- Mai-Macvski (General), 248  
 Majstrenko, Iwan, 157, 308 n., *quoted*, 155-56  
 Makhno, Batko Nestor, 165-66, 191-92, 203, 213, 233, 246-48, 270-71, 275, 278-80, 283, 291, 305, 309, 321,

- 339-41, 352-53, 364, 367, 402-04; attitude toward Bolsheviks, 166, 247-48, 278-79, 321-23, 325-26; military action of, 93-94, 246, 248-51, 253, 255, 354, 356-57, 361-62, 370; political ideas, 165-66, 247, 279, 322, 325-26, 403; views on Grigorev, 321, 323-26, 402, 403
- Maksuta, 333
- Mamonotov (General), 373-74
- Manuilski, D. Z., 394, 396 n.
- Mariupol, 201, 246-47, 250, 340; Mariupol-Taganrog area, 191
- Marty, André, 206
- Marxism, 345, 388-89; and Borotbism, 315 n., 318; repudiated by Ukrainian SDs, 107, 111
- Mazepa, Hetman Ivan, 8
- Mekhonoshin, A. K., 367
- Melitopol, 340
- Melnyk, Andrei, 109
- Mensheviks. *See* Social Democratic Labor party
- Mezhlauk, Valeri, 117, 144-45, 291, 311, 343, 360-61, 363-65
- Military Council of the Kursk Direction. *See* Revolutionary Military Council of the Ukraine
- Military Revolutionary Council. *See* Revolutionary Military Council of the RSFSR
- Millerovo, 39, 354
- Moldavia, Republic of, 238, 241
- Mordylev (partisan leader), 233
- Moscow, 19, 35, 41-42, 44, 48-50, 61, 66, 74, 98, 139, 146, 215, 242-43, 297, 303, 330, 373-74, 377, 384. *See also* Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic
- Mosenko (partisan leader), 178, 285, 301
- Munich, 240
- Muralov, N. I., 50
- Muravev, Mikhail, 29
- Mykhaylychenko, Hnat, 155
- Naginski, 316
- Nashe Slovo*, 26
- Nationalities problem. *See* Administrative problems; Lenin
- Natsarenius, 367-68
- Nazaruk, Osip, 104
- "Neutral Zone," 19-21, 54, 66
- Nezalezhniki* (Independents), 108-09, 111, 233-34, 266, 281, 314, 316-17, 327; *aktivisty*, 307, 308 n., 318 n.; political ideas, 108-09, 315
- Nezhin, 113
- Nicholas II, 8, 29, 324
- Nikolaev, 32, 37, 151, 158, 167-69, 188-89, 195, 209, 211, 258, 307, 309, 317, 355; Bolshevik underground in, 169, 174-79; Duma, 174, 179; occupied by Petlyurists, 78; taken by Denikin, 373; taken by Grigorev, 169-70, 174-76, 178-84, 197, 333, 347
- Novorossisk, 374
- Novy Oskol, 43, 68-70
- Ochakov, 186, 196
- Odessa, 7, 32, 178, 180-81, 185, 212, 248, 254, 256, 258, 260-61, 264, 266, 268, 271, 280, 286, 288-89, 297, 302, 307, 311, 328, 333, 341-42; Bolshevik capture of, 186-212; Bolshevik underground in, 197, 203, 206, 210-11; economic difficulties, 195-96, 206-07; occupied by Petlyurists, 78; taken by Denikin, 373; under Allied occupation, 41, 84, 95-96, 102-05, 168, 182, 189-90, 192-99. *See also* French intervention
- Old Bolsheviks, 20, 45-48, 143, 184, 291, 302 n., 394
- "On Soviet Power in the Ukraine," 396-97
- "Orange Book," 193 n., 198 n.
- Ordzhonikidze, Grigori K., 46
- Orel, 42-43, 58, 144, 374, 379; guberniya of, 43; Military Commissariat, 57, 61
- Osmolov, Ataman, 153-54
- Ostapenko, Sergei, 104

- Paris, 26, 180, 193-97, 202
- Parkomenko, A. Ya., 312, 333, 356
- Partisan leaders, 11, 39, 115, 141, 149 ff., 154, 160, 165, 167, 192, 232-33, 259, 278-309, 314-15, 318, 320-21, 333-35, 357-58, 369, 402-04; political programs of, 233-36; Vinnichenko on, 235
- Partisans. *See* Partisan leaders; Peasantry; Soviet Army
- Peace Conference, Paris, 208
- Peasantry, 3, 125-27, 140-41, 154, 162 n., 182, 203-04, 211, 217, 248, 264-66, 336, 403; anti-Semitism, 9-10, 142, 232, 235, 287, 318-19, 356; and Bolshevik policy, 123-24, 126-35, 142, 218, 223-25, 229-33, 237, 258, 269-70, 273-74, 299, 313, 318-19, 325, 334-37, 341, 358; desire for self-government, 91-92, 165, 319, 334-35; land hunger, 9, 91-92, 128-30, 217-18, 273-74; political sympathies, 10-12, 90, 92, 120-22, 133, 298-307, 313, 319-20, 334; recognized as important political force, 17-18, 31, 107, 111, 216, 337, 397; unrest and violence, 9-13, 19-21, 23, 78-79, 90-92, 127, 131-34, 229-30, 232-37, 255, 280, 313, 317-18, 334-35, 346, 357-58, 386. *See also* *Haidamaky*; Partisan leaders
- Peters, Ya. Kh., 381
- Petlyura, Simon, 4, 9, 31, 37, 78, 88, 94, 99, 103, 109, 111, 114, 149-54, 157, 191, 232, 234, 236, 314, 324, 346, 351, 357, 400; capture of Kiev, 78, 83, 92, 373, 382; and the Directory, 23-24, 78-82; evacuation of Kiev, 112-13; peasant support of, 55, 78-79, 82, 91-92, 232; unacceptable to French, 104, 112; Universal of, 24; and Vinnichenko, 79-80, 107-08; weaknesses of position, 78-79. *See also* Directory; Petlyurist forces
- Petlyurist forces, 37, 78, 82, 88-89, 94, 105, 108-10, 112-13, 141, 169, 186, 235, 241, 252, 255, 263, 281, 303, 369; characterized, 79, 90. *See also* Balbachan
- Petrograd, 27, 49, 231, 349; Military District, 28
- Petrovsky, G. I., 381, 384
- Pichon, S., 157
- Pilsudski (Marshal), 400
- Podol. *See* Kiev
- Podolskaya guberniya, 114, 233
- Podvoiski, Nikolai, 27, 50, 117-18, 137-39, 144-45, 161, 166, 203, 213, 249-50, 256, 265, 272, 283, 330, 339, 341, 344, 351-53, 360, 362, 366, 370, 392
- Poincaré, President Raymond, 202
- Pokrovski (General), 246
- Poland, 26, 400
- Poles, 105-06, 114, 252, 255, 263, 296, 303, 350, 369, 400
- Polish forces, 104, 241
- Poltava, 16, 37, 93, 109, 192, 290, 307, 312, 373; guberniya of, 233
- Polupanov (Red naval commander), 345
- Pomoshchnaya, 290
- Popov (partisan leader), 192, 347
- Popov, N. N., 340-41
- Populist movement, 120
- Pravda*, Lenin statement in, 396-97
- Primakov, Vladimir, 67, 89, 348
- Proskurov, 235, 334
- Provisional Government of Russia (1917), 4, 5, 16, 27
- Provisional Ukrainian Soviet Government, 55, 59-60, 62-63, 73, 75, 98, 114. *See also* Revolutionary Military Council of the Ukraine
- Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of the Ukraine. *See* Provisional Ukrainian Soviet Government
- Provisioning policies. *See* Administrative problems
- Pyatakov, Yuri, 16-22, 25, 30, 36, 49, 65, 75, 77, 99-100, 116-18, 136, 215-16, 236, 259, 330; controversy

- with Moscow, 53-64; views on national self-determination, 18-19, 225-26
- Pyatikhatki, 290, 292-94
- Radaists, 42. *See also* Central Rada
- Radek, Karl, 56, 219
- Rakovski, Christian, 116-17, 119-20, 123-24, 128, 136, 138, 143-45, 147, 157-58, 161, 166, 174, 178-79, 184, 190, 200, 203, 213-14, 219, 232-33, 264, 267, 271-72, 274-75, 282-84, 287-90, 297-98, 320, 322, 328, 330, 341, 345, 347, 351-53, 355, 358, 362, 372, 381, 384, 392, 396 n.
- Ratin, 166, 178, 187, 268, 271, 282
- Red Army. *See* Soviet Army
- Red Guard, 45, 72; Ukrainian, 144
- Republic Revolutionary Military Council. *See* Revolutionary Military Council of the RSFSR
- Revolutionary Military Council of the RSFSR, 25-29, 33, 37-38, 41, 50 n., 73, 76, 371, 376-77
- Revolutionary Military Council of the Ukraine, 25, 32-33, 35, 38, 40-41, 43, 46, 48, 53-54, 74, 76, 77, 89, 156, 260, 359-61; Military Council of the Kursk Direction, 58-61, 65, 74; Stalin's support of, 48-49; struggle for greater independence from Moscow, 35, 47-48, 53-64, 84-85. *See also* Antonov-Vatsetis conflict; Provisional Ukrainian Soviet Government; Pyatakov; Zatonski
- Riggs, E. F., *quoted*, 195-96
- Right Bank, 14, 110, 150, 234, 265, 272, 305, 369-70
- RKP. *See* Communist Party, Russia
- Rostov-on-the-Don, 246, 248, 256, 353, 374
- RSFSR. *See* Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic
- Rubach, M. A., 218 n.
- Rukhimovich, Moisei, 118
- Rumania, 95, 199, 238, 241, 264, 280, 284, 288, 296, 303, 316, 345-46, 351-52; forces of, 238, 240-41, 276-77, 385. *See also* Allied forces
- Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR), 3-7, 9, 24, 56-65, 74, 76, 89, 108, 132, 145, 206, 212, 219, 237-40, 242, 284, 297, 331-32, 359, 371, 384, 389-90, 397-98; Central Executive Committee, 116, 217, 359, 367, 372; Cheka, 145-46, 331 n., 379; Commissariat for Military and Naval Affairs, 28; Council of People's Commissars, 25, 41, 49, 391; Narkomprod, 339-40, 372; relations with Directory, 44, 55, 99-101, 103-04; Supreme Council of Defense, 48, 62, 75, 89, 146, 241, 255, 291, 371, 375, 379, 391-92. *See also* Revolutionary Military Council of the RSFSR
- Ryappo, Ya., 175-76, 178
- Ryndiny (partisan leader), 69-70
- Salonika, 96
- Samokish (Colonel), 94
- Sarny, 235, 369
- Savitski, Sergei, 187, 268, 271, 288, 290
- Schwartz (Governor general of Odessa), 196
- SDs. *See* Social Democratic Labor party
- Second Assembly of Rebels, Peasants and Workers of Gulyai-Pole, 130
- Semashko, N. A., 367-68
- Semenov (General), 367-68
- Sentovo, 403
- Serbka, 196, 202
- Serpukhov, 35, 44, 49-50, 53, 61, 74-75, 383. *See also* Soviet Army units
- Sevastopol, 26, 96, 207, 211
- Shafranski, 267, 271-72, 282, 302-03, 309
- Shchadenko, E. A., 158-59, 160 n., 271-72, 281, 333, 341-43, 359, 384
- Shchestka, 370
- Shchors, Nikolai, 146

- Shepetovka, 255, 369
- Shkuro (General), 248, 352 n., 354, 361, 373-74
- Shlikhter, Aleksandr, 118, 131-35, 218, 230-31, 339-40, 372
- Shumski, Aleksandr (Shums'kyi), 155, 272-75, 288, 317
- Shynkar', Mykola, 155
- Siberia, 95, 375, 384; Army of, 145
- Sichovi Striltsi (Sich Sharpshooters), 108-10, 112
- Skachko, Anatol, 143, 160-61, 166, 184-89, 191-92, 199, 242, 247-48, 250-51, 263, 268, 272, 286-87, 292, 310, 333; on Grigorev, 162-63, 180-81, 204-05, 311
- Sklyanski, Ye. M., 50
- Skoropadski, Hetman Paul, 9, 11-13, 20, 23-24, 30-31, 37, 44, 50, 67, 79, 81-82, 91, 116, 121, 132, 149, 232-34, 299; and German collaboration, 8-9, 13, 23, 78
- Skrypnyk, Mykola, 119, 384
- Slavophiles, 120
- Smilga, I. T., 375-76
- Snegirevka, 160 n., 161-62, 167, 175
- Social Democratic Labor party, Russia (Menshevik), 16, 26, 327, 329
- Social Democratic Labor party, Ukraine (SDs), 4, 23, 101-02, 109, 234, 313, 315, 389; Congress, Sixth, 106-08. See also *Nezalezhniki*
- Socialist Revolutionary party, Russia (SRs), 12, 29, 120-21, 164
- Socialist Revolutionary party, Ukraine (SRs), 12, 101-02, 109, 111-12, 121, 160, 164, 266, 274, 314-15, 389; Left, 69-70, 84, 120-21, 156, 258-59, 264, 266-67, 281, 289, 302, 327; Left *aktivisty*, 307, 308 n., 318 n.; of the Center, 234, 314. See also *Borotbisty*
- Society of Ukrainian Progressives, 4
- Sokolnikov, G. Ya., 227, 228 n., 256
- Sokolovski (partisan leader), 232
- Southern Front, 35, 38-40, 43, 47, 53, 58, 66-67, 69, 75-76, 84-85, 90, 146-48, 165, 185, 191, 242-43, 263, 268, 311, 328, 331, 338, 341, 356, 361-62, 367, 369-70, 378; in early 1919, 243-58, 260, 264, 291, 349-54; and the Volunteer Army offensive, 354, 356-58, 361, 364, 375
- Soviet Army, 3, 5-7, 16, 25, 29, 31, 37, 75, 80-81, 100, 110, 114, 131, 135, 142, 145, 200, 204, 211, 213, 237, 239, 243, 245, 273, 296, 305, 334, 338, 350, 373, 377, 384, 398, 400; anti-bolshevism in, 142, 164-65, 259, 347; anti-Semitism in, 142, 235-36, 346, 348; campaign for Kharkov, 40-41, 50, 77, 83-84, 87-89, 92; campaign for Kherson, 167-69, 171-74, 176-78; campaign for Kiev, 94, 99, 112-14; campaign for Nikolaev, 167-70, 174-76, 178-81; campaign for Odessa, 181, 186-213; campaign into Bessarabia (Rumanian campaign), 239-42, 275-77, 285, 297, 312; conflicting interests of Ukrainian and Southern Fronts, 33-36, 38-40, 49-50, 53, 75-77, 90, 146-47, 242-43, 250-51, 257, 350; defection in, 191, 307, 312, 333, 339, 343-47; disorders in, 232, 233, 267-68, 270, 280-81, 287-89, 347-48, 365; first Ukrainian campaign, 29; independent character of Ukrainian command, 47-48, 360, 363; indoctrination, 93, 140, 142, 164, 282, 344; military specialists, 45-47, 51, 73-74, 85, 222, 227, 380; organization, 39, 43, 53-54, 66-71, 93, 113, 138-40, 310, 360-68; organizational controversy, 45; partisans in, 39, 47, 67, 72-73, 92-93, 138, 140-42, 148-214 *passim*, 233, 245-48, 253, 258-59, 261-312 *passim*, 342-43, 344-45, 360, 364, 367, 399; *partizanshchina* in, 52, 73, 117, 138, 143-44, 227-28, 360, 365; problems of command, 73-74, 141-44, 157-63, 166-67, 170, 179-

- 81, 184-90, 212-14, 246-48, 259-60, 262-64, 267, 270-72, 278-79, 283, 285-88, 290-91, 297; supply problems, 38-40, 43-44, 54, 70-74, 113, 139, 179, 183, 212, 248, 252, 254, 269, 279, 291, 311, 339-43, 348, 365; suppression of Grigorev rebellion, 307-12, 341-43, 346, 349, 354-55, 357, 372. *See also* Antonov-Vatsetis controversy; Grigorev rebellion; Soviet Army units; Trotsky; Tsaritsyn conflict
- Soviet Army units: Eighth Army (Southern Front), 50-51, 245-46, 249, 255, 352 n., 364, 366; First Army, 191, 241-42, 263, 305, 312, 345, 356, 368; 1st Rebel Division (reorganized as 1st Soviet Ukrainian Division), 36, 66-67, 93, 112-13, 143, 146, 191; 1st Red Cossack Regiment, 89, 347-48; 1st Soviet Zadneprovskaya Brigade (Grigorev's), 159, 183, 192, 203; 4th Rebel Division (Orel), 36, 38, 42-43; Fourteenth Army (former Second Army) (Southern Front), 367-68; General Staff Headquarters at Serpuukhov, 36, 40, 73; Kharkov Group (reorganized as Second Army), 143, 158-60, 185, 191, 242; Kozhevnikov's Group (reorganized as Thirteenth Red Army), 41, 68, 243-49; Group of the Kursk Direction, 39, 41, 58-61, 65, 74-76; Moscow Workers' Division, 41, 43, 49, 53; Ninth Army, 245-46, 249; 9th Rebel Division, 36, 38, 42-43, 138; Odessa Group, 192, 202; Reserve Army (Glagolev's), 32-33, 35, 38, 40, 43, 51, 59, 66, 89, 138; Second Army (former Kharkov Group), 251, 255, 263, 305, 310, 346, 356, 361-67; 2nd Orel Cavalry Division, 41; 2nd Rebel Division (reorganized as 2nd Soviet Ukrainian Division), 36, 66, 68, 88-89, 93-94, 143, 157-58, 186-87, 191; 2nd Soviet Zadneprovskaya Brigade (Dybenko's), 251; 6th Ukrainian Sharpshooter's Division, 260-63, 297; Soviet Army of the Ukraine, 61, 65, 69-70, 72, 74, 76, 90, 115, 142, 144-45, 147, 190, 200-01, 213, 243, 249-50, 261, 264, 266; Tenth Army, 46, 245; Third Army, 242, 261, 263, 286, 305, 356, 368; 3rd Soviet Ukrainian Division, 69-70, 76; 3rd Soviet Zadneprovskaya Brigade (Makhno's), 166, 191-92, 247-48, 363-64, 367, 370; Thirteenth Army (Southern Front), 247, 354, 362, 364, 370; Twelfth Army (RSFSR) (Western Front), 368, 370; Twelfth Army (Southern Front), 267; 20th Central Armored Command, 42; Verblyuzhsky Regiment, 272, 287, 298; Zadneprovskaya Division, 166, 191, 247, 251-52. *See also* Revolutionary Military Council of the RSFSR; Revolutionary Military Council of the Ukraine; Ukrainian Soviet Republic (Military Department)
- Soviet Republic of Belorussia, 359
- Soviet Republic of Estonia, 359
- Soviet Republic of Latvia, 359
- Soviet Republic of Lithuania, 359
- Soviets, 80, 100, 106-08, 112, 126-28, 234, 258, 261, 266, 269, 298, 300-01, 314, 332-34, 338, 397; at Nikolaev, 179; soviet government and Borotbisty, 121-22; supported by *Nezalezhniki*, 109; versus centralization in Red Army, 45. *See also* Congress of Soviets
- Spilki* representatives, 109
- SRs. *See* Socialist Revolutionary party
- Stalin, Joseph V., 28, 89, 145-46, 221, 349-50, 401; opposition to Trotsky, 28, 45-48, 146, 350, 375-76, 378-79; role in Ukrainian affairs, 22, 25, 32-33, 41, 48-49, 55-66, 75, 85, 122, 229 n.

- Struk (partisan leader), 233, 236  
 Suvorov, Count Aleksandr, 276  
 Sverdlov, Ya. M., 50, 217, 219  
 Sytin, P. (General), 47
- Taganrog, 248, 251, 255-57; Conference (*April 1918*), 15-19  
 Taurida, 150, 154, 203, 258, 403  
 Third International, 19, 219-21, 240, 394; role of party in international revolution, 219  
 Thomas, Albert, 202  
 Timanovski (General), 193, 199  
 Tiraspol, 96, 192, 260  
 Tishchenko (partisan leader), 334-35  
 Tkachenko (partisan leader), 192, 342-43  
 Transfront Buro, 382-84  
 Transylvania, 239, 241  
 Trifonov, E., 268  
 Trotsky, Leon, 25-26, 28, 35-36, 38, 55, 66, 84, 87, 89, 102, 117-18, 140, 145-46, 167, 219, 228 n., 249, 251, 253-54, 320, 329, 330, 331, 340-41, 358, 371, 392; at Brest-Litovsk, 5-7, 30; and Eastern Front strategy, 375-79; military policies of, 45-49, 52-53, 62, 73, 85, 139, 144, 222, 227-28, 371, 380; reorganization of the fronts, 359-68; and Stalin's opposition, 28, 146, 375-79; and Voroshilov's Donbass proposal, 365-66  
 Tsaritsyn, 46-47, 66, 112, 118, 144, 243-45, 377; "conflict," 46; Front, 62; "gang," 47, 52-53, 66, 85, 115, 144  
 Turkey, 276  
 Tytarenka, 314  
 Tyutyunik, Yuri, 160-62, 167, 171, 175, 178, 180, 197 n., 198-99, 203, 301, 302 n., 314, 357
- Ukrainian Front, 40, 43, 53, 57-61, 76, 85-86, 90, 146-47, 165, 191, 243, 247, 255, 257, 356, 360-61, 367; abolished, 367-68, 371; formally organized, 89  
 Ukrainian National Constituent Assembly, 5  
 Ukrainian national movement, 3-4, 9, 13-15, 18, 44, 47, 55, 78-81, 104-06, 113-14, 124, 150, 154, 219, 231-32, 281, 313-14, 374, 386, 400-01. *See also* Directory; Petlyura; Vin-nichenko  
 Ukrainian National Union, 13, 23  
 Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR), 5, 7, 23, 80-81, 99-106, 109. *See also* Directory  
 Ukrainian Revolutionary Military Council. *See* Revolutionary Military Council of the Ukraine  
 Ukrainian Social-Federalist party, 108  
 Ukrainian Soviet Government, First (at Kharkov and Kiev), 16, 29  
 Ukrainian Soviet Republic, 63-64, 66, 73-74, 76, 85, 89-90, 100, 108, 115-17, 119, 131, 144, 170, 200, 212-14, 219, 228, 236, 238, 243, 256, 261, 264, 284, 296-98, 301, 303, 311, 331-32, 359, 369, 371, 381, 388-91, 397-98; administrative weaknesses, 73-74, 135-36, 331-36, 341; Central Executive Committee, 284, 305, 315, 336, 359, 382; Cheka, 125, 134-35, 142, 232, 248, 265, 269, 281, 299, 305, 307, 318, 321-23, 330-31, 333, 335-36, 340, 347-48, 356, 358, 381, 383; Commissariat of Education, 136; Commissariat of Food (Narkomprod), 118, 317, 336, 339-40, 343, 372; Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, 174; Commissariat of Internal Affairs, 118, 125, 134, 266, 336; Commissariat of Labor, 372; Commissariat of Military Affairs, 117-18, 159, 265, 330, 367; Council of Defense, 284, 286, 310-11, 352, 381-82; Council of People's Commissars, 289, 316, 327, 382; Council of Public Econ-

- omy, 118, 372; Military Department, 65, 140, 144, 248, 250, 265; Supreme Military Inspectorate, 145. *See also* Administrative problems; Revolutionary Military Council of the Ukraine
- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 209
- United States of America, 98, 146
- UNR. *See* Ukrainian People's Republic
- UPSR (communists). *See* Borotbisty
- Urals, 145, 375-77; Front, 25, 146
- Vatsetis, I. I., 31-33, 38, 45, 51-53, 60, 64-66, 68, 70-71, 74-78, 84-85, 90, 137, 140, 167, 242, 246-47, 260, 284, 349, 368-71, 392; attitude toward the Ukrainian Front, 35, 39, 50, 55, 85-86, 359; demands for Southern Front reinforcements, 49-50, 147-48, 191, 250-55, 272, 350-51, 362; difficulties arising from Tsarist Army background, 32, 38, 61, 85; distrust of Ukrainian Command, 48-49, 74, 77-78, 145, 370; loss of command and arrest, 376, 378; military strategy, 58, 86-87, 114, 147, 241-43, 249, 350, 375-79. *See also* Antonov-Vatsetis controversy
- Verblyuzhka, 260, 272, 298
- Veretelnikov, 321
- Village Unions (*Spilki*), 109
- Viller, Comrade (Skitalets), 287, 290, 302 n.
- Vinnichenko, Vladimir, 44, 79, 99, 103-08, 110-12, 234; criticisms of Petlyura, 81-82; in Central Rada, 4; on Ukrainian atamany, 235; political views, 79-81, 101-02, 232; and Ukrainian National Union, 13, 23
- Vinnitsa, 114, 334
- Volunteer Army, 16, 24, 29-31, 42, 95-96, 98, 103-04, 141, 146, 153, 188-90, 193, 196, 199-200, 202, 207 n., 245, 248, 354, 373
- Volynskaya, guberniya, 114, 265
- Voronezh, 33, 35, 39, 41, 50-51, 243, 373, 474
- Voroshilov, Klimenti, 66, 118, 236, 289, 291, 310-11, 328, 330, 343, 355-56, 358, 360-65, 381-82; Donbass proposal, 363-66; member of "Tsaritsyn gang," 46-47, 366
- Vsevolod (Red Army commander), 249
- Western Front, 13, 28-30, 36, 350-51, 361, 368, 370
- Western Ukrainian Republic, 105-06, 114
- White forces, 35, 37, 98, 245, 247, 354, 364-65, 373-75. *See also* Denikin; Krasnov; Volunteer Army
- White Guards, 259, 296, 303, 323
- Winter Palace, capture of, 27
- World War I, 8, 26, 71, 73, 149, 162, 168
- Wrangel, Baron Peter N., 374, 400
- Yakovlev, 327
- Yassy, 95
- Yatsenko (partisan leader), 233, 236
- Yudenich, N. (General), 349
- Zak (General), 168
- Zaporozhe, 150, 159
- Zaporozhian Cossacks, 11, 150-51, 158
- Zatonski, Vladimir, 16-18, 22, 25, 36, 41, 53, 76-77, 85, 116, 119, 136, 394, 398; controversy with Moscow, 53-64
- Zeleny (partisan leader), 232, 234, 236, 263, 314, 319, 369
- Zhitomir, 7
- Zhupan (Red Army commander), 157
- Zinovev, Grigori, 219-20
- Znamenka, 151-52, 156, 235, 287, 292, 312, 347

