

Nestor Makhno

The Life of an Anarchist



Victor Peters

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By Victor Peters

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The drawing of Makhno on the cover is taken from the Italian Anarchist newspaper *Umanita Nova*, Rome, October 14, 1967.

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Foreword

The increasing violence and creeping tendency towards anarchy in North America, and other parts of the world, is causing growing concern among the serious minded citizens. The breakdown of law and order in society inevitably leads to the destruction of liberty ending in anarchy. Thoughtful citizens must therefore study the situations which could deteriorate into anarchy and through better education, organized action and legislation endeavor to present such an undesirable result.

Victor Peters' study of Nestor Makhno and his implementation of the principles of anarchism is indeed timely. Makhno rapidly emerged on the scene in the region of southern Ukraine, once the stronghold of the Cossack Host, after the downfall of the Russian monarchy in 1917, at a time when law and order disintegrated in the Russian empire. Revolution and violence became the order of the day. Makhno organized his own type of government and established his own "republic." He had effective control over a large region for about two years, having defended his "state" against the operations of Russian tsarist and republican forces, Ukrainian armies and the Red Army. Considering himself a sort of a Robin Hood, he plundered prosperous farmers and encouraged looting for the benefit of his followers. A vociferous advocate of the principles of anarchism he ruled his armed bands, which on occasions numbered in the thousands, with an iron hand as a

dictator. Finally, by resorting to duplicity and superior force, the Red Army defeated "Father" Makhno, as he loved to be titled. He died in Paris, virtually unknown and without friends.

Although Makhno has become a legendary figure, still talked about throughout Ukraine and southern Russia, little mention is made of him in history and little has been written about him. Now, after the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversaries of Ukrainian Independence and of the establishment of the Soviet Union, it is appropriate to record and assess the life and achievements of a man who has left his imprint on millions of people.

Victor Peters is well qualified to write this monograph. Of German-Mennonite background he comes from the region where Makhno carried out his experiment in anarchism. Mr. Peters studied Russian and Soviet history at the University of Manitoba and the University of Göttingen and has been a professor of history at Moorhead State College for many years. This combination of heritage and academic training equips the author to present an authentic and interesting discourse.

Mr. Peters is to be congratulated for producing a study in considerable depth by employing all the techniques of a trained historian and presenting his topic in the spirit of objectivity. His biography of Nestor Makhno is an important contribution that sheds more light on the events and the times of the establishment of the Ukrainian National Republic, the subsequent Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Not only history scholars and students but all readers can learn something from this book, in the field of human and political relations.

Senator Paul Yuzyk
Professor of Russian and Soviet History

University of Ottawa
Ottawa, Canada
July 1, 1970

Preface

In 1921 the Red Army emerged as the victor in a long and destructive civil war. The factors contributing to its success varied in the different parts of Russia. In the Ukraine, where the war lasted longest, the victory went to the Red Army in no small measure because of the activities of a talented anarchist, Nestor Makhno. For long periods Makhno and his followers, known as Makhnovtse, virtually controlled some of the most populous provinces of the Ukraine. Despite his important role in the civil war, Makhno has received very little attention. Exiled Slavic writers and historians, as well as Western historians, rarely or only briefly mention him. The reasons were perhaps partly ethnic loyalties, for Makhno and his movement were regarded not only as a highly controversial but also as a somewhat unsavory subject; or the records on Makhno were so meager or partisan that his activities were demoted to a footnote, as in E. H. Carr's authoritative history of the Russian revolution.

Soviet historiography on the other hand, determined to lump all opponents of the Soviets into one camp, played down the role of Makhno and the *Makhnovshchina* ("Makhno's movement"). Lenin and Trotsky were quite prepared to come to terms with Makhno as long as Makhno's forces helped them against the White armies. As soon as these were decisively defeated in the Ukraine and the last remnants under General Wrangel had embarked from

Sebastopol, the Red Army undertook effective steps to liquidate its late allies. From that time on whenever the *Makhnovshchina* was mentioned, as in The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, it was branded a "criminal-anarchist counter-revolutionary" movement among the *kulak* peasantry which obstructed the Soviet cause and deferred Soviet victory.

While historians almost completely ignored Makhno, there were some sources available on the subject. Foremost among them were the writings of Nestor Makhno himself, who, during his exile in Paris wrote his memoirs, a rambling and somewhat incoherent three volume history, which is not available in English. He also contributed numerous articles to Russian anarchist periodicals. A much stronger presentation of Makhno's movement was written by his associate, Peter Arshinov, a work which was published in the early 1920's in Russian, German and French. Then Voline, another associate of Makhno, brought out his history. Besides these partisan works we have the more journalistic account of Max Nomad, who, in his *Apostles of Revolution*, has a chapter on "Nestor Makhno, the Bandit Who Saved Moscow." Among recent historians, John J. Reshetar, Jr., in his *The Ukrainian Revolution, 1917-1920*, has a few pages on Makhno; David Footman, formerly with the British Foreign Service, in *Civil War in Russia*, devotes a full chapter to him; while Arthur E. Adams, in *Bolsheviks in the Ukraine*, gives more space to the freebooter Grigoriev than to Makhno. Three very recent but more general books on anarchism, one by Canadian George Woodcock, another by British historian James Joll and a third by the French writer Daniel Guérin, each make some mention of Makhno. Most of these books, when they deal with Makhno, rely on Arshinov. One of the best studies on anarchism in Russia in general is Paul Avrich's *The Russian Anarchists*. The most recent book devoting some space to Makhno is the Cohn-Bendit book *Obsolete Communism; the Left-Wing Alternative*, but it is more an endorsement than a study.

When Makhno played a role in Russia his negotiations and operations did not lend themselves for a documentation by his staff. Frequently his agreements were verbal, arrived at in conference or by telephone. Then again he changed his allies, so that today's friend could be tomorrow's foe.

In such cases recorded agreements later provided only embarrassment. Moreover, Makhno engaged in very fluid and mobile warfare. In the process of hasty retreats, as he himself complains, the few records which were kept, were often lost. There was one source available, however, which had not yet been tapped: the numerous emigrants from Russia, people who had left the Soviet Union in the 1920's and 1940's and who had personally experienced the *Makhnovshchina*. In response to appeals which I made through the Canadian and American foreign language press, I gained respondents, former opponents or supporters of Makhno, as well as people who had been pawns or victims of the *Makhnovshchina*. Others remembered Makhno when he was young, still others knew him in exile in Paris, and others again pointed out obscure sources, material that had appeared in Ukrainian or Russian journals and newspapers.

While I cannot include all the names of the generous and willing respondents, I feel it an obligation and courtesy to mention a number of them. Mr. I. Antypenko, Philadelphia, a native of Gulai-Polye, was most helpful in establishing the sequence of events before Makhno's imprisonment. Mr. Anatol Kurdydyk, Winnipeg, had collected and published material on Makhno when he was editor of *Nedilia* (The Week), a Ukrainian paper in Lvov. But his archives had been destroyed when the Soviet armies occupied Eastern Poland in 1939. However, a letter from Mr. Michael Petrovsky, Toronto, informed me that he had early files of *Nedilia*, which he made available to me. Mr. Dmitro Mykytiuk, Winnipeg, a former officer in the Ukrainian (Galician) army, was not only himself an excellent source but also assisted me in tracing relevant material in Ukrainian libraries. Most helpful also was Mr. J. Cherney, Detroit, who supplied me with a wealth of anarchist literature on the subject of Makhno, including the files of *Delo Truda* (The Cause of Labor) and *Probuzhdenie* (The Awakening), anarchist periodicals to which Makhno was a regular contributor. Mr. Ivan Topolye (the name, at his request, is an alias) provided a detailed account of his life as a deserter and involuntary recruit in Makhno's army.

Mme. Nina Kornijenko, San Francisco, and Mrs. Anna

Goerz (nee Neufeld), Vancouver, Canada, were both the source of useful information. Mme. Kornijenko was born a few miles from Dibrovka (Veliki-Michaelovka), on an estate which was separated by a small river from the great Dibrovka forest, which Makhno and Tchus, his cavalry commander, used as a hideaway. And it was on the *khutor* (estate) of the parents of Mrs. Goerz, a few miles away from Gulai-Polye, that Makhno began one of his first property requisitions and distributions. From Dibrovka itself also came the respondent Reverend N. Pliczkowski, Prospect, Australia, a relative of the mentioned Fedor Tchus. While I was unable to use his manuscript on Tchus, Reverend Pliczkowski kindly referred me to Mr. A. Moskalenko, New York, and the latter indicated in a summary of the content that it was a defense of Tchus (and Makhno). Similarly, Reverend George Jahodsky, whom I interviewed in Winnipeg and who has an extensive collection of material on Makhno, felt that it would be inaccurate to reduce Makhno's role to that of a bandit and terrorist. Like Father Jahodsky, Mr. Zenon Jaworskyj, Ann Arbor, Michigan, had met Makhno, but as a representative of the Galician Riflemen (*Ukrainskii Sitchestovi Streltsi*), and he was correspondingly more critical of the anarchist partisan. Another source was Mr. Peter Olejnicki, secretary of the Hetman organization in Winnipeg.

Others who contributed very relevant information on Makhno included, in the United States: Dr. Fedor Meleshko, Professor Vasyl Chaplenko, both of New York, Mr. Kalenik Lissiuk, Ontario, California, and Mr. D. Gorbacevich, Jackson, N.J.; and in Canada: Mr. G. Toews, St. Catharines, Mr. P. Vakula, Pickering, Ontario, Mr. H. B. Wiens, Leamington, Mr. Alexander Rybka, London, Mr. H. A. Peters, Sardis, B.C., and Mr. N. Klassen, Vancouver. I had hoped to use the files of the German army archives for the year 1918, when German troops occupied the Ukraine. In Freiburg, where the *Militärarchiv* is deposited, I found that most of the relevant sources were destroyed through an air raid on Potsdam on April 14, 1945. Again I was forced to supplement the readily available secondary sources, beginning with the memoirs of Generals Ludendorff and Hoffmann, with reports from German respondents who had

been in the Ukraine at that time, among them Mr. Walter Burow, Essen, Mr. Heinrich Albeck, Salzgitter, Germany, and the late Mr. Jacob Hömsen, Alexander, Manitoba.

For the period of Makhno's exile in Paris there were the friends of Makhno who gave their information unstintingly: Mme. May Picqueray, who received Makhno as a refugee in Paris, Mme. Ida Mett, who worked with him over a period of years, and the historian Dr. Daniel Guérin. The Centre International de Recherches Sur L'Anarchism, Lausanne, the Federation Anarchiste, Paris, and the Police Department of Paris, whose archives I checked for the records of Russian political émigrés, were most cooperative.

Most respondents themselves had been involved in one way or another in those turbulent events. As a result their reports were often not only vivid but also emotionally charged. The work of the historian is to weigh, select and interpret the evidence as truthfully as he can. This is no easy assignment, especially in the case of such a controversial subject as we have here and I anticipate strong, not to say violent, disagreements. For this reason I am especially indebted to Senator Paul Yuzyk, a distinguished representative of the Canadian-Ukrainian community, for writing the foreword.

I would also like to express a word of appreciation to those people who assisted me in the translation of the source material and the correspondence. They included: Anna Sudermann, Winnipeg, formerly a teacher at Chortitza, Ukraine; my colleagues at Moorhead, Professors A. Khoshkish and G. Baratto; Professor H. Wiebe, of the University of Manitoba, and Dr. G. Hildebrandt, of the University of Göttingen; my daughter, Rosmarin Peters, who interviewed respondents in Paris; and my wife, who was at all times a patient critic. I owe a special debt to Mr. J. A. Watne, who provided the maps, and to Sharon Burns and Margaret Vorvick who typed the final draft of the manuscript and assisted with the index.

V.P.

Moorhead State College, Minnesota
July, 1969

CONTENTS

Foreword <i>by Senator Paul Yuzyk</i>	5
Preface	7
1. Gulai-Polye and the Early Years of Nestor Makhno . . .	13
2. Butyrki Prison and the Triumphant Return	25
3. The Rada-Skoropadsky Interlude and the Rise of the Makhnovshchina	35
4. The Insurgent Army, Its Membership and Operations in the Civilian Sector	44
5. The Insurgent Army, Its Organization and Operations in Combat	60
6. Shifting Alliances: The Insurgents, the Red Army, the Volunteer Army	74
7. Nestor Makhno, the Exile	89
8. The Man and the Legend	98
Appendix	115
Bibliography	129
Index	132

1. Gulai-Polye and the Early Years of Nestor Makhno

In Russian folklore heroes and villains of history and literature often blend into a curious heritage which has found expression in song, legends and tales for long winter evenings. "Stenka Razin" is perhaps the most popular Russian folksong. Razin, the rebel who razed the countryside in a revolt against the upper classes, was beheaded on Red Square in Moscow in 1670. The historical Stenka Razin allied himself with the peasants and lower clergy against oppression, church reforms and Westernization. But these historical events do not provide the substance for the folksong. Instead it singles out a legendary episode to sing the praises of Stenka Razin and his dedication to the people. According to the song, the slightly mellowed warrior, together with his cossacks, takes a boat trip down the Volga. As he fondles a captured Persian princess, he overhears his own men mutter that Stenka Razin is not what he used to be, that his mind is directed towards pleasure instead of towards the deliverance of his country. The mumblings, overheard by Razin, arouse the old resoluteness in the warrior. He takes the princess in his arms, carries her to the edge of the boat and sacrifices her to the Volga. Stenka Razin stands redeemed before his men. Similar stories of resolute action and violence have been woven around another cossack rebel, Emilian Pugachov, and around Gogol's literary hero, Taras Bulba.

It is in this tradition and against this background that we must project Nestor Makhno. Indeed, it may not be irrelevant that Makhno, that twentieth century counterpart to earlier outbursts of fury and passion, was born in the country and region of Taras Bulba. The same irregularly distributed hills, gullies and ravines, the forests and steppes, the same river *plavnas*, or swamps, which served as the

habitat to that audacious cossack who fought in turn Tatar, Pole and Moscovite, also extended their protective hospitality to Makhno and his followers.

Nestor Ivanovich Mikhnenko was born on October 27, 1889,¹ in the Ukrainian village of Gulai-Polye. The name Makhno, by which he is generally known, was not taken by him for political reasons as was the case with so many Russian revolutionaries, but was a popular corruption of the patronym. Years before Makhno's name became a household word in the Ukraine, his widowed mother was known by the villagers as Makhnovka. Makhno's father, Ivan Mikhnenko, was a village laborer and peasant. When he died he left behind his widow and four sons, of whom the youngest, Nestor, was ten months old. Born a serf, Mikhnenko senior appears to have been a harmless individual, for no account mentions him except in connection with his son.

Little is also known about Makhno's mother, but there are indications that she may have exercised a considerable influence over her family. There is Makhno's own reference to her in his memoirs, where he tells of his return to Gulai-Polye in 1917.² On the street he meets a former policeman who had on one occasion searched his home, and who, when his mother had protested, had slapped her. Now this man approached Makhno with an extended hand, and the latter recalls that it filled him with "an unspeakable disgust" to hear the voice and observe "the gestures, the hypocrisy of this Judas." As he describes it, he trembled with hatred and feverishly felt his revolver in his pocket, asking himself whether he should "kill the cur on the spot, or if it were better to wait." There is also the case of Makhno's first name. While its selection may have been accidental, Nestor is not a common Slavic name, as Professor Call of the University of Manitoba, has pointed out. The first historic Nestor was a wise counselor and warrior who fought with the Greeks against Troy. Then there was the twelfth century Nestor, a monk in the Monastery of the Caves who compiled the first Kievan chronicle. Thus,

¹ The *Bolshaya Sovetskaya Encyclopedia* (The Great Soviet Encyclopedia), Moscow, 1954, XXVI, 548, gives 1884 as Makhno's year of birth. I have accepted the date (1889) given by Makhno and his wife.

² Nestor Makhno, *Ruskaya Revoliutsia na Ukrainu* (The Russian Revolution in the Ukraine), Paris, 1929. Chapter 3. See: Appendix.

when Nestor Makhno was born his mother may well have cherished the dream that her son too would grow up to be a warrior or scholar.

Moreover, Makhno's three brothers, though in many ways less talented, developed into as passionate rebels and anarchists as their youngest brother. Whether their character development and political inclinations can be attributed to the home influence or to the political and social conditions prevailing in Russia at the time, all three paid for their activities with their lives. Emilian was executed as a partisan in 1918 by the Austro-Hungarian occupation forces, Grishka (Gregor) was killed in an engagement with Denikin's troops at Uman, in September 1919, and Ssava, the oldest of the brothers, was captured and shot when the Red Army occupied Gulai-Polye in 1920.

As soon as he was old enough young Nestor Makhno attended the local elementary school. During the summer months he, like many of the village boys, worked for his neighbors or for the landowners who had their *khutors* (large farmsteads or estates), around Gulai-Polye, generally herding geese, sheep or cattle, or riding or driving teams of horses or oxen before the plow or cultivator. At the age of twelve, having completed public school, this became his work from early spring to late autumn. His brothers were similarly occupied. The winter months were spent at home in enforced idleness. Though the Makhno brothers engaged in their seasonal work, partly because of the low wages and partly because of their spending habits, their mother continued to live in great poverty in her little *khata*, or cottage, on the outskirts of the village. "On the Makhno yard," writes Antypenko, a native of Gulai-Polye, almost reproachfully, "you never saw a chicken or a piglet, or an armful of straw."³

When Nestor Makhno was seventeen years old he succeeded in getting work at a local foundry. He was engaged as a helper, painting wagons, grain fanners, reapers and other farm implements. Since there were a number of industrial enterprises, there was no lack of work. At one time Makhno also worked at the small Kroeger plant, which

³Mr. I. Antypenko, Philadelphia, a native of Gulai-Polye, in a letter dated March 28, 1968.

was a Mennonite undertaking.¹ Makhno's birthplace, Gulai-Polye, located in the province of Ekaterinoslav, was more than an ordinary village. Aside from its romantic name, which means "a field to roam," it had over ten thousand inhabitants and numerous industrial enterprises, both reflecting the national and economic diversity of the Ukraine. Most of the people of the Ukraine, or "Little Russia," were of course Ukrainians, but there were also millions of Russians, Poles and Jews, more than half a million Germans, and numerous national groups such as Bulgars, Tatars and Greeks. All these nationalities were also represented in and around Gulai-Polye.

Gulai-Polye was located on both sides of the Gaichur river, a small sluggish tributary of the Dnieper. A bridge connected the two parts of the village which extended to a length of from eight to ten *versts*, or five to seven miles. While Gulai-Polye, like most Ukrainian villages, was a cluster-type of village, it was rather narrow for its length. Its inhabitants were peasants, workers, tradesmen, merchants and professional people. Jews, Russians, and Germans, the latter including Mennonites, were strongly represented in Gulai-Polye. In the center of the village, on the market place, was the *volost* (county) administration building and also one of the village's two Orthodox churches. Gulai-Polye also had the resident regional chief of police, a municipal hospital and a post and telegraph office. There were two large elementary schools, one secondary school and also a small school for the German children in which the Lutherans had their church services

¹ A different version of Makhno's youth is presented by K. V. Gerassimenko in *Istoriia i Sovremennik*, Berlin, 1923. A slightly expanded instalment series, written by J. Petrovich but based largely on Gerassimenko, appeared in 1935 in *Nedilia* (The Week), a Ukrainian paper published in Lvov, Poland. According to Gerassimenko (and Petrovich), Makhno was apprenticed to a textile shop in Mariupol, a seaport on the Sea of Azov and not far away from Gulai-Polye. Here Makhno showed little interest in the trade and was morose and surly to his employer. He was also indolent at work, for which he was beaten. Makhno would retaliate by cutting off buttons of his employer's coat or adding castor oil to his tea. His spare time he would spend with the street urchins, or fishing in the Sea of Azov. Once, when his employer's wife wanted to pull his ear, he bit her arm. Gerassimenko also gives 1884 as Makhno's year of birth, and later has him studying as a teacher. Though Gerassimenko had met Makhno during the Civil War, there is evidence that his source on Makhno's early years was inaccurate. That he was a teacher was a false entry in his forged passport, provided for him in 1918 by Lenin to permit him to travel behind German lines.

on Sunday. The community had a synagogue together with a school for Jewish children.

Besides these public institutions Gulai-Polye had several iron foundries, one farm implement factory, two large flour mills and several windmills. There was one brandy plant supplying not only local needs but also the requirements of the surrounding villages. Then there were grain dealers, banks, numerous shops and offices and on the outskirts some barracks for the seasonal workers who arrived in May from the provinces of Poltava and Chernigov to find employment on the estates and farms around Gulai-Polye. The buildings in the center of the village were built of brick or stone and were quite impressive. While the village boasted some large comfortable homes, most of the villagers lived in clay-built cottages, which had straw thatched roofs and dirt floors. The main streets were paved with cobblestones, but the side streets, alleys and paths were unpaved.

An all-weather cobblestone road connected the village to the Gulai-Polye railway station which was located on the Berdiansk-Chaplino line, about five miles away. The traffic on this road was heavy. All day horse-drawn wagons and carts hauled the products of the local industries, farm implements, grain and flour and iron to the station, and returned with coal and coke, textile goods and household articles, for the factories and village stores.

To the casual visitor the conditions and the appearance of Gulai-Polye shortly after the turn of the century could appear almost idyllic. There were public hospitals and schools, there was evidence of tolerance as Orthodox, Protestant and Jew went to his respective place of worship, and factories produced machines which replaced much of the soul-killing manual work on the farms. Yet the ingredients of discontent were also present. While there were no great nobles and powerful financiers in and around Gulai-Polye, to attract the envy of the poor, there was a growing and somewhat smug middle class. The families of this class lived in good if not luxurious homes with carpeted floors, and hired the villagers as servants to do the cooking, the laundry and the hoeing in the garden for them. The landless peasant was not starving. He had his

cottage-cheese *vareniki*, his buckwheat *holubtse*, and his borsch, but he saw that his employer had ham and *vareniki*, meat instead of buckwheat in the cabbage of his *holubtse*, and chicken in his *borshch*.

Moreover, there was a backlog of deep hostility towards the repressive and immobile tsarist despotism. The gradual land and social reforms and the promised political reforms of 1905 did not only not appease the landless peasantry, but on the contrary incited it to greater political activity. In this too Gulai-Polye reflected the unrest that stirred the whole vast Russian empire. The unique development, which set Russia apart from the West, was that large segments of the population, from peasants to princes, from workers to the intelligentsia, saw the solution of their problems and the hope for greater freedom for the people in anarchism, in the rejection of all government. It was Bakunin's view, according to James Joll, that "the Russian peasants were in a particularly strong position, since they had traditional forms of organization, village communes and the like, so that they might well be in a position to set an example to the working class in the more advanced countries, if only they could be given vigorous revolutionary leadership."⁵

The anarchist movement also generated support in the West, for in less than a decade, from 1894 to 1901, anarchists assassinated among others, President Carnot of France, King Umberto of Italy, Empress Elizabeth of Austria and President McKinley of the United States. But while the anarchist philosophy in the West was confined to relatively small groups of extremists meriting little attention, in Russia there was not only widespread popular support for it, but its leaders were also internationally recognized intellectuals and writers like Michael Bakunin (1814-1876) and Prince Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921). The anarchist axiom, that if bad government is evil, then good government is worse, for it will be tolerated and accepted by the people, was interpreted by the young anarchists very literally. Even minor state and local officials would be assassinated for no other reason than that they served the state or one of its agencies. Anarchist activity was spurred

⁵ James Joll, *The Anarchists*, Universal Library Edition, 1966, p. 93.

even to greater fervor by the disastrous Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905), which exposed the political and military weakness of the autocracy. The sporadic and violent revolts which spread across Russia also stirred the villagers of Gulai-Polye. There were public gatherings, meetings and demonstrations. At the height of the unrest there was a strike at several plants, and the workers marched to those factories where the employees had not stopped work, to force them to strike. There were cases of looting, arson and bloodshed.

Most of the initiative had been provided by members of the local intelligentsia (mostly teachers), who had held meetings with the clerks and workers, but there were also "alien" agitators from the district and provincial capitals of Alexandrovsk (now Zaporozhye) and Katerinoslav.⁶ Before long, however, the government regained control over the rebels, in Gulai-Polye as elsewhere in Russia. A troop of Don cossacks arrived in Gulai-Polye (some people suspected that they were units of the police militia disguised as cossacks for greater effect) and established order. Whoever showed himself on the streets after curfew was brutally whipped. Others who were arrested in their homes were led through the street and beaten with the butts of muskets. These police measures, reports one eye-witness, left an indelible mark on the village population and sowed the seed for the covert unrest that infected especially the young of Gulai-Polye.

Since Gulai-Polye later became the center of anarchist activity, indeed was sometimes spoken of as "Makhnograd" long before Lenin, Stalin and Kalinin consented to give their names to other cities, it is necessary to trace the anarchist spark there that led to so much unrest later. In 1907, shortly after the disturbances and the police intervention, there arrived in Gulai-Polye a young lad, eighteen or nineteen years of age, to visit some of his former classmates. His name was Volodya Antoni, a Czech. About five or six years earlier he had attended the public school at Gulai-Polye, and lived with his uncle who owned and operated a beer-saloon near the market place.

⁶ Most place names in the text appear in their Russian form, an exception is the name of the city of Katerinoslav, which appears in its Ukrainian form. Katerinoslav is the present Dnepropetrovsk.

Volodya Antoni had been a quiet boy at school. Pale and near-sighted, his classmates remembered him as "the boy with the glasses." After completing school he had left, and now was back to renew old friendships.

Young Antoni carried on political discussions with his friends and after he had gained their confidence disclosed to them that he was a member of an anarchist movement. He acquainted his friends with the anarchist program, returned to Katerinoslav where he now made his home, and came back once more with anarchist pamphlets and brochures. The village boys, who had never gone far beyond Gulai-Polye and had received but a scant education, were eager to follow the leadership of Antoni after he suggested that they form a cell of the outlawed Anarchist party and submit to the direction of the Katerinoslav party headquarters. Volodya Antoni provided the liaison between the two groups. Before long one member of the Gulai-Polye group, Alexander Semeniuta, was drafted for military service. He almost immediately deserted, fled the country and then returned illegally to establish contact with his wife and two brothers. Sometimes he was accompanied on his visits by Antoni and they would smuggle not only anarchist literature into the village but also supply their friends with small arms and revolvers.

The "activist" anarchist group in Gulai-Polye at this time numbered ten men, but the number of sympathizers was much greater. The "activists" became impatient to expand their work, for which they required money. Semeniuta's advice, to begin with "expropriations" in Gulai-Polye and use terror when necessary, met with approval. Thoroughly imbued with the anarchist doctrine that "the destructive spirit is also at the same time the creative spirit," they began their "expropriations." The first attempt was successful and netted them five hundred rubles, with which they bought paper and a hectograph. They produced some anarchist proclamations and distributed them at night on the streets of Gulai-Polye. The people assumed that this was the work of some agitators from the city and not even the police suspected that it was the work of some of their own village boys. When an inebriate "activist" began to

disclose the source of the proclamation, he was shot and killed by his friends.

The second "expropriation," an attack on a mail carriage delivering money to the station, produced another victim. A policeman who had been assigned to accompany the carriage was shot. Since the policeman was well liked in the village, was married and had children, the anarchists, at night, delivered an envelope with one hundred rubles to his wife. Faced with the increased lawlessness, the local chief of police requested the aid of a private detective from Alexandrovsk (Zaporozhye), who, no sooner had he arrived at Gulai-Polye, was also shot by the "activists." The speed and violence of the anarchist reaction convinced the police chief that the terrorists were villagers. He secretly recruited two peasants to report to him all suspected persons and activities. This was in the summer of 1908. In a matter of days the two men could report that the deserter, Alexander Semeniuta, had arrived from Katerinoslav and that the local anarchists would have a meeting that night in the home of one of their comrades, Ivan Levadney.

The chief of police, Karachentsev, immediately went into action. He ordered the police sergeant Lepechenko and ten policemen to surround Levadney's house and arrest everyone found inside. The Levadney cottage lay on the edge of the village. While the men surrounded the house, Lepechenko remained at the gate. Hearing noises outside, the anarchists rushed out and both sides immediately opened fire. In this exchange Lepechenko was killed, another policeman was wounded and one of the anarchists, Prokop, a brother to Alexander Semeniuta, was also wounded in the leg. As the anarchists fled Alexander stopped to assist his brother. With the police in pursuit, Prokop realized that with the additional load Alexander would be unable to reach safety. He pleaded with his brother to set him down and save his own life. Alexander set him down near a house and followed his friends. By this time day began to dawn and when Prokop saw that the police were still about, he shot himself. The other anarchists, however, had succeeded in reaching the wheatfields and under the protection of the tall grain made their way to an old

windmill, where they remained until the danger had passed. Eventually they all reached Katerinoslav. Police chief Karachentsev suspected their destination and also left for the provincial capital. After several weeks of intensive work he succeeded in ferreting out four of the participants and returned with them to Gulai-Polye.

In Gulai-Polye the four prisoners were cross-examined and additional village anarchists were arrested, among them Nestor Makhno. Makhno had not been directly associated with the conspirators. Though his three brothers were anarchist sympathizers and Makhno had become a member of the movement, he had not been accepted for membership by the Gulai-Polye group. Makhno reputedly had a weakness for drink and when drunk he would become very excitable, quarrelsome and talkative. Physically unprepossessive, small of stature, with a pale and pimply face, he made a "generally negative" impression. Distrusted and disliked by the other Gulai-Polye anarchists, he was not accepted into their inner circle. Makhno had been sufficiently active and abusive, however, to attract the ire of the police and for this reason was also arrested. All the prisoners were transferred to Alexandrovsk, where they remained for the winter. One of them, Ivan Levadney, in whose house the conspirators had met, escaped from prison and attempted to reach Gulai-Polye. The escape took place on a bitterly cold and blizzardy day and the following day Levadney was found frozen to death. The other prisoners were taken to Katerinoslav in the spring, where they received a court trial.⁷ They were all found guilty, and, to stem the violence of anarchist activity, the sentences were unusually severe. Four of the anarchists were sentenced to death by hanging and several others, including Nestor Makhno, to life terms of hard labor (*katorga*). Makhno spent the next nine years in the Butyrki prison in Moscow, from which he was released by the general amnesty of March, 1917.

Arshinov, Voline and other partisans of Makhno have attempted to add to the aura of the young anarchist by attributing to him a role of leadership in this early Gulai-

⁷ According to Galina Kusmenko, Makhno's wife, the trial took place in Odessa. See: Appendix.

Polye episode.⁸ According to them Makhno was also sentenced to be hanged, but his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment because of his youth. Other sources, including The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, dispute Makhno's early political exploits and maintain that he had a criminal record, that he was caught after he attempted to rob the state treasury at Berdiansk, charged with armed robbery and sentenced to life imprisonment.

The severe sentences did not deter the terrorists still at large in Gulai-Polye. On the contrary, they increased their activity and especially Alexander Semeniuta, who had not been captured, was determined to kill the chief of police, Karachentsev, whom he blamed for the death of his brother. The anarchists had discovered that Karachentsev was in the habit of visiting his mistress on certain nights and on one such occasion they made an unsuccessful attempt on his life. The failure spurred them on. They knew that the police chief was a great friend and patron of the theater. Behind the scenes but unknown to the cast, with only one performer from their ranks, a son of a landed peasant and thus above suspicion, they directed the preparation for a *vecher* ("evening"). When the chief of police was invited to be guest of honor and he accepted, word was sent secretly to Semeniuta to come.

At the performance Semeniuta, with two loaded pistols in his pockets, occupied a seat two rows behind Karachentsev. Afraid that his quarry would again escape if he failed, Semeniuta decided against an assassination in the theater. After the curtain closed on the last act he hurriedly left the theater and hid behind a tree near the theater's exit. As Karachentsev left the performance and walked down the stairs Semeniuta fired three shots at him from the back, shouting "Death to all hangmen!" By the time the police arrived Semeniuta had disappeared in the darkness and Karachentsev was dead.

A province-wide hunt was begun for the terrorist and a high price was set on his head. For a year there was no

⁸ Cf. Voline (V. M. Eichenbaum). *The Unknown Revolution: Kronstadt 1917-Ukraine 1918-1921*, translated by Holley Cantine, New York, 1955; and P. Arshinov, *Istoria Makhnovskogo Dvizhenia, 1918-1921* (A History of the Makhno Movement, 1918-1921). Berlin, 1923. I used the German edition, *Geschichte der Machno-Bewegung (1918-1921)*, Berlin, 1923.

trace of him. Then one night he returned to his native village, in the company of a young anarchist woman companion. They prepared to stay overnight at one of the brothers of Makhno. But the police had traced Semeniuta's moves and followed him. At night they surrounded the house and called him to give himself up. He answered by firing at them. After a brief exchange of fire the police made a smoke-screen and, protected by the smoke, made their way into the house, only to find that Semeniuta was dead. The girl, slightly wounded, told them that he had committed suicide.

The irony of this initial period of violence was that Volodya Antoni, the organizer of the first anarchist group in Gulai-Polye, had meanwhile emigrated to the United States.

2. Butyrki Prison and the Triumphant Return

Violent criminals or revolutionaries in pre-Revolution Russia were generally confined to one of three penitentiaries. There was the Peter-and-Paul Fortress at St. Petersburg, built on an island in the Neva river and used as a prison since the time of Peter the Great, Oreshek, or Schlüsselburg, built on the southern shore of Lake Ladoga, and Butyrki prison, in the northwestern part of the city of Moscow. Butyrki, moreover, did not only serve as a prison but also as a place where prisoners were gathered before they were transported in groups to Siberia. Built in 1879 as a replacement for an older prison of the same name, Butyrki was known for its unusually severe regulations. These regulations were made even more restrictive in 1906 when prisoners were even forbidden to approach windows within less than three steps. Between 1907 and 1913 there were no fewer than eleven executions of prisoners who violated some of the more severe restrictions. It was within the walls of Butyrki that Nestor Makhno spent the years from 1909 to 1917.

In time Makhno was to find a friend and mentor in a fellow-inmate, Peter Arshinov, but neither Makhno nor Arshinov appear to have met some of those prisoners who subsequently were to wield power and influence in the Soviet Union. Felix Dzerzhinsky, founder and organizer of the Soviet secret police, served his prison term there from 1910 until the amnesty of 1917, Emilian Yaroslavsky (1878-1943), party historian, biographer of Stalin and member and early secretary of the Communist Central Committee, spent some years there, as did Vladimir Maiakovsky, Soviet lyricist and dramatist, who committed suicide in 1930. Except for the few references which Makhno himself made

on his years of imprisonment, we have only Arshinov's brief account for this formative period in Makhno's life.

Arshinov wrote that life in prison was hard and without hope, but that Makhno "took pains to use it for the purpose of his education, and in this effort he displayed an unusual fervor." Makhno occupied much of his time by learning Russian grammar, concerned himself with mathematics, social history and literature, in short, continues Arshinov, he acquired a "knowledge of history and politics which later was of considerable use to him in his revolutionary activities."¹ Makhno was a hot-headed young man who found it very difficult to observe the prison rules. Either he would quarrel with the guards and inmates, causing disturbances or in other ways annoy the prison officials, for which he would be placed in solitary confinement or in chains, or both. The long periods he spent in the stale, cold, damp solitary cells contributed to Makhno's poor health and to his early bouts with tuberculosis of the lungs.

The Butyrki experience had a very decisive influence on Makhno. His bitterness against prisons and all authority grew into a paranoia. His hatred of prisons was so great that later, when his armies occupied towns and cities one of Makhno's first acts generally would be to release all prisoners and burn the prison. The prison, however, matured Makhno and served not only to solidify his vague anarchist ideology but also to develop in him a sense of mission. From an almost illiterate laborer he grew into an effective debater who could hold his own in the discussions with other political prisoners. Later, on one occasion, he was to boast to his visitor, Fedor Meleshko, that he had shared a cell with such notables as Minor and Gotz, but that they had not been able to dissuade him from his anarchist convictions.² The man who may have been largely responsible for this development in Makhno was Arshinov, who was later to become one of his chief "theoreticians."

¹ P. Arshinov (Arschinoff), *Geschichte der Makhno-Bewegung*, 63.

² F. Meleshko, "Nestor Makhno ta yogo anarkhia" (Nestor Makhno and His Anarchy), *Chervona Kalina*, Lvov, 1935. Bertram D. Wolfe, *Three Who Made A Revolution*, lists Abram Gotz and Minor as two prominent Jewish leaders of the Socialist-Revolutionary (SR) party (185).

Peter Arshinov, barely three years older than Makhno, had a political past more colorful than Makhno. Born in Katerinoslav, he became an itinerant railway worker, Bolshevik party member and contributor to the Bolshevik underground paper *Molot* (The Hammer). Concerned that ultimate power should be in the hand of the people, Arshinov left the Lenin-led party because he felt that its program did not go far enough in this direction. He joined the anarchists in 1906, at a time when the Russian government undertook wholesale police action in reprisal against the leaders and agitators of the abortive 1905-1906 revolt. A dedicated terrorist, Arshinov immediately went into action. In December 1906 he and several associates bombed the police station of a small industrial town near Katerinoslav, killing a number of people. A few months later he assassinated Vassilenko, a government official at Alexandrovsk. Captured, Arshinov was sentenced to be hanged, but the execution was deferred on the grounds of a legal technicality. The time he gained Arshinov used to plan a spectacular escape, which took place when the prisoners attended the Easter Sunday service. Arshinov now left Russia, spent some time in France, then moved to Austria-Hungary to assist in the smuggling of arms and anarchist literature to Russia. He was captured and extradited to Russia, but the inefficiency and bungling of the Russian courts worked in his favor. In 1911 the former death-cell prisoner was sentenced to a twenty-year term by a Moscow court. Moved to Butyrki prison, Arshinov soon met Makhno and spent much of his time with him until both were released in 1917.

To Makhno has been ascribed "a certain gift of spinning revolutionary theories,"³ and this also holds true for Arshinov. In his book on the Makhno movement, which he wrote in 1921 and which is available in Russian, German and French, he lashes out against the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks, the Social-Revolutionaries and other Marxist groups because their goal is to transform the capitalist society into a state-owned capitalistic social order. As an anarchist Arshinov rejected the capitalistic as well as the socialist-communist state. Makhno, his Butyrki pupil, in his own works echoes the same sentiments, and vows that he

³Max Nomad, *Apostles of Revolution*, Boston, 1939, 305.

will work towards the destruction of "the slavery created by state and capital." When Arshinov and Makhno left Butyrki prison the more sophisticated Arshinov decided to remain in Moscow and work with the Federation of Anarchists there, while Makhno hurried back to his native Gulai-Polye. Keenly aware of his "ignorance of positive ideas" which would help him "to solve social and political problems from the anarchist point of view," Makhno consoled himself that "such is the case with nine out of ten" anarchists. Furthermore, Makhno was a true son of the Ukraine and shared with the Ukrainian peasants a deep attachment to his home, his family and homeland, and on this love he grafted his primitive anarchy. "Three weeks after my liberation," writes Makhno, "I arrived with some difficulty at Gulai-Polye, where I was born, where I had lived, where I had left behind so many who were dear to me and where, I felt certain, I would operate usefully in the midst of the great family of peasants." He concludes with this vision:

It is from here, from Gulai-Polye, that this formidable revolutionary force of the workers will emerge, in the hearts of the working masses, on which, according to Bakunin, Kropotkin and others, must depend revolutionary anarchism and which will indicate the means by which the old regime of bondage can be destroyed and by which a new one can be created in which slavery will not exist and in which authority will have no place. Liberty, equality and solidarity will then be the principles which will guide men and human society in their lives and in their struggle for greater happiness and prosperity . . . it is with this idea that I now returned to Gulai-Polye.¹

In Gulai-Polye Makhno was received as a hero, as one "returned from the dead." A procession of anarchist friends, followed by poor peasants, "these ignorant but valiant anarchists," as Makhno calls them, came to pay homage to a man who had spent almost a decade in the Moscow deportation prison. "Seeing before me these friends I

¹ Makhno, *Ruskaya Revolutsia na Ukrainia*, Introduction.

felt at ease." Almost immediately, however, he sensed that the revolution at the village level had taken a wrong direction, a course contrary to his anarchist ideal. A new "Communal Committee" with representatives from the various political parties had been organized before Makhno arrived, and it endorsed the new democratic Provisional government in Petrograd. Makhno had been left out and he was alarmed. He spent the first night, according to his own account, telling his anarchist friends that they were not sufficiently concerned with "driving out the Communal Committee." At first his friends were puzzled and it was not until seven o'clock in the morning that he finally persuaded them to follow his lead. Without any loss of time Makhno then scheduled a village meeting at which he planned to organize a body which would challenge the authority of the Communal Committee. At the meeting Makhno appealed to the peasants' distrust of and prejudices against outside and centralized authority. In his book Makhno records the essence of his speech, which was that the peasants should not concern themselves with the Constituent Assembly and political parties, that they had more important and more immediate things to do: the preparation for the return to the people of all land, factories and workshops, and that the time to do so was now. Proudly Makhno records that on that day the Union of Peasants of Gulai-Polye was founded, of which he was elected president. The day was March 29, 1917. With a firm hand Makhno swept aside or ignored all other committees and parties and took control of Gulai-Polye and the surrounding country.

According to Makhno's own account he now visited the neighboring villages and settlements in order to organize his Union of Peasants and assist them in the confiscation and distribution of land, factories and workshops. Both his collaborators, Voline and Arshinov, testify to Makhno's feverish activity. Voline gives the impression that the whole process was relatively orderly. Owners of estates, factories or shops were required to make inventories of their possessions, and these goods were distributed "for the purpose of providing the necessities of life for the working people."⁵ In this manner, says Voline, the commune

⁵ Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*, 106.

"Rosa Luxemburg" was formed at Prokovskoie, and communes Nos. 1, 2 and 3 were formed in the region around Gulai-Polye. Arshinov records more reservedly that Makhno was "the soul of the peasants' movement which proceeded to take over the landowners' lands and goods, and if necessary, their lives."⁶ Makhno's account gives greater insight into the thinking of the peasants than do the writings of Voline and Arshinov, not because of his superior analysis of the political and social conditions, but because he himself reflected the peasants' point of view. Makhno writes that the peasants did not see much difference between "Nikolka" (Tsar Nicholas), and Kerensky and Lenin; they all wanted to lord it over them and tax them. Half-humorously but with an undertone of seriousness the peasants regarded them as *duraki*, fools, says Makhno. Moreover, he continues, the peasants regard the city dwellers as willing tools of these *duraki*, interested only in living off the sweat of the peasant. In reading Makhno it sometimes becomes difficult to distinguish between Makhno the peasant and Makhno the revolutionary.

However, when it comes to the new anarchist social order which sprang up under his leadership, Makhno's facts intentionally or unwittingly are blurred. Not a single source or respondent, aside from the committed Arshinov and Voline, is there to testify to Makhno's idealization of his achievements. Every commune, writes Makhno, consisted of about ten peasant families, or about one hundred to three hundred members, who received the land immediately around their village, and also farm implements, both requisitioned from the landed gentry. And here they worked and sang and tended to their gardens. The communes, according to Makhno, were the product of the ideals of justice to those who had suffered for their realization. Now they triumphed over inequality and were the torch-bearers of a new humanity.

In practice the redistribution of wealth and the organization of the communes were undertaken in a much less formal and orderly fashion than the accounts of Makhno, Arshinov and Voline indicate. In the initial stages there

⁶ Arshinov, *Geschichte der Makhno-Bewegung*, 65.

may be extenuating reasons for this. It is possible that despite appearances Makhno was not as solidly in control of Gulai-Polye as he would have liked to be. Since the Bolsheviks were also advocating a radical distribution of property, Makhno was constantly working under pressure. He could never afford to show more respect to property and property owners than the Bolsheviks. Furthermore, the more responsible revolutionary peasantry who could have been expected to act as a stabilizer in Makhno's projected anarchist communes, were more inclined to support the less radical Social-Revolutionary party. The availability of "free goods" also attracted the rabble in large numbers, not only from the poorer classes but also members of "better" families. These people, unencumbered by either anarchist or other ideals, were interested only in outright plunder. Finally, quite often Makhno's own altruistic motives may quite properly be questioned. These factors combined not only to create a chaos and terror at Gulai-Polye and the regions controlled by Makhno, but also to reduce his ideal of an anarchist republic into a farce.

While Makhno initially required the landowners, the affluent peasants and shopkeepers to draw up inventories of their possessions, these prepared lists were later disregarded by Makhno and his followers. They suspected, quite correctly, that property owners would make every attempt to hide their movable belongings, or give them on loan to poor but friendly peasants and workers. For this reason Makhno preferred to make his own "on the spot" inventories. He or one of his associates together with their following, would take up lodging at the home of some prosperous farmer or landowner, live off his resources and when these dwindled, that is, when there were no more chickens, pigs, and cattle left, they moved to the next farm or estate. The place where they were quartered would become the base for requisitional operations for a radius of many miles. Before leaving the area they would "distribute" the remaining assets, such as farm implements, carriages, horses, clothing, bedding, rugs, furniture, harnesses, etc., among themselves, their followers and friends and the needy who took the trouble to haul it home.

Those who resisted the requisition of their property were beaten, terrorized or shot, but usually the owners did not resist. This did not necessarily mean that they were not beaten and shot, especially if the requisitioners suspected that he had hidden some valuables or money. Still, during the period 1917-1918 relatively few executions took place. These were sufficiently brutal to intimidate and terrorize the landowners and shopkeepers to cooperate with the confiscators. One of the first landowners to "host" Makhno was a Mennonite farmer, Jacob Neufeld, who had a *khutor* at Ebenfeld, near Gulai-Polye. As a boy Makhno had worked here and since the relationship had been good, Makhno showed no hostility to Neufeld and his family. Indeed, he made every attempt to establish a friendly basis and when Neufeld offered him a key for his room for greater safety, Makhno refused to take it, saying that he felt safe enough among friends. When Makhno moved to the next *khutor*, belonging to another Mennonite by the name of Klassen, Makhno invited Klassen to take his turn, that is, claim some of his possessions for himself, during the distribution of his own belongings.⁷

As Makhno's success and fame as a requisitioner spread, his following increased. Makhno and his men would move about on carriages, or *tachankas*, which they had confiscated from the German farmers. Deserters and demobilized men had returned home with their arms. There was thus an abundance of various kinds of arms and all of Makhno's followers were fully armed. His supporters began to speak of Makhno as *Batko* ("Father"), and the core of them began to speak of themselves as "Makhnovtse" (followers of Makhno, or Makhno's men). Gulai-Polye began to resemble a Tatar camp. Men were dressed in everything from top hats and riding habits to fur coats and patent shoes, items requisitioned from prosperous farmers, business or professional people or from Jewish shops. "The village (Gulai-Polye) looked as if it had prepared for a masquerade," reports one eye-witness. "It was," he continued, "like a painting by Repin: exotic, gaudy, unusual. The Makhnovtse wore colorful shirts, wide pants

⁷ Letter from Mrs. H. Goerz (nee Neufeld) to the author.

and wide red belts, which reached down to the ground. All of them were armed to the teeth: besides a sword and pistol, everyone had a few hand grenades stuck behind his belt . . . On the walls (in the houses) were firearms and here and there a machine gun."⁸ There were prisoners and public interrogations and all night there was music and dancing, mixed with the shrieks of gay women.

Makhno's methods as an equalizer and as an agent of vengeance were often excessively brutal, but he and his followers rarely molested the poor peasants. On the contrary, as a result of Makhno's operations many of them had horses in their barns, flour in their bins and rugs on the walls of their rooms. It was equally true that since no one with property was safe few peasants and workers cared to till their land or work in the factories. Paul Avrich illustrates the state of conditions in Russia in general at this time by citing W. H. Chamberlain's story where a worker was asked "What would you do if you were the director of the factory?" To which the worker replied, "I would steal a hundred rubles and run away." With the conditions that existed in the Ukraine as well as in other parts of Russia, Avrich's statement that "cases of pillage and theft were not uncommon," appears as bland as the report of a British trade union delegation which found that workers' control of plants in 1917 had "a very bad effect on production."⁹

While many Ukrainian peasants refused to join Makhno or to take part in the expropriation expeditions which were so rewarding to the participants, others felt no such restraints. Especially among the young many were convinced that a new dawn of freedom had arrived and that they were after all only "expropriating the expropriators." Numerous accounts indicate that many of Makhno's supporters were under twenty years old, some as young as fifteen.¹⁰ Still others joined for the sake of adventure.

⁸ *Nedilia*, No. 40, October 13, 1935.

⁹ Cited in Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*, Princeton, 1967, 162-163.

¹⁰ Writing of the anarchists' activities during the revolution of 1905, Avrich is also impressed by the age factor. He writes, "A striking feature of the *Chernoe Znamia* (the "Black Banner" anarchists) organization was the extreme youth of its adherents, nineteen or twenty being the typical age. Some of the most active *Chernoznamentsy* were only fifteen or sixteen. Avrich, *op. cit.*, 44.

"It would be a nice revolution," said one Makhnovite to the owner whose clothes-closet he was emptying and who asked him why he had left home, "if we all stayed at home."

Events beyond Makhno's control put a temporary stop to his pursuits. Lenin and the Bolsheviks took over the government of Russia and a little later their armies invaded the Ukraine. The newly constituted Ukrainian government appealed to Germany for military assistance in the preservation of Ukrainian independence. German and Austro-Hungarian troops immediately moved into Ukraine and by March 30, 1918 were in control of the country up to the Dnieper river. On that day, at three o'clock in the afternoon, as a teacher at Nishnia Chortitza recorded, units of the retreating Soviet army dynamited the great Dnieper bridge at Kichkas. In another few days all the Ukraine was cleared of Soviet troops. Behind the German lines the countryside once more returned to relative peace and quiet. Overnight Makhno's following had disintegrated. Some of the Makhnovtse had joined the retreating Red Army units, others returned to their homes. Makhno himself left the Ukraine for Moscow.

3. The Rada-Skoropadsky Interlude and the Rise of the Makhnovshchina

In order to trace the activities of Nestor Makhno it is necessary to review the political development in Russia, more particularly in the Ukraine. The four years following the abdication of Nicholas II belong to the most confused and chaotic periods in Russian history. In March, 1917, the tsarist autocracy gave way to a moderate coalition government headed by Prince Lvov. A few months later the liberal but weak administration of Lvov was replaced by a government under the more vigorous Alexander Kerensky. On November 7, 1917, the Bolshevik party, under Lenin's relentless leadership, staged a coup, took over the government from Kerensky, and began to consolidate and extend its power throughout the country. While these political shifts took place in Petrograd and Moscow, their immediate effects did not extend to the peripheries of the Russian empire. Different regions, especially those with non-Russian populations, from the Baltic to the Caucasus, saw the time opportune either to liberate themselves from Russian control or to gain greater political autonomy.

Such was the case with the Ukraine. An All-Ukrainian *rada*, or council, convened at Kiev as early as March, 1917, and elected the respected historian, Professor Michael Hrushevsky, as president. A *rada* executive was formed, headed by the socialist V. Vinnichenko. In its first proclamation the *rada* informed Moscow that while its objective was not a complete break with Russia, it considered the Ukraine "free". The government of Prince Lvov, largely because it was too weak to do otherwise, recognized the authority of the *rada* and its executive. Prince Lvov's successor, Kerensky, however, was not prepared to extend recognition, and in an emotional speech ("And why, my brother, dost thou kiss me? Who gave thee thirty pieces of

silver?") he implied that the Ukrainian national aspirations had German backing and were treasonous.¹ The strained relations between Moscow and Kiev reached a breaking point once Lenin took over the government. Petrograd spoke of the *rada* and its executive as "a government by the traitors to socialism" (Stalin),² and as a bourgeois attempt to keep out the Bolsheviks. The immediate cause for the rift between Kiev and Petrograd was the former's refusal to permit Soviet troops to cross its territory in order to strike at General Kaledin's forces at the Don River. Moreover, Petrograd was aware that the British and French were negotiating to divide between themselves all of southern Russia and the Caucasus region. The secret agreement, the negotiators of which were Lord Milner, on behalf of the British government, and Clemenceau, was not signed until December 23, 1917. By its terms the British sphere encompassed "the Cossack territories, the territory of the Caucasus, Armenia, Georgia, Kurdistan," and the French zone included "Bessarabia, the Ukraine, the Crimea." It was partly on the basis of this knowledge that Lenin despatched an ultimatum to Kiev, which the latter, however, felt it could not meet.

The Soviet government thereupon took steps to compel the Ukraine to accept its terms. In a parallel to the 1968 Czech crisis, Moscow ordered a small Ukrainian party nucleus, whose very existence had hardly been known in Ukraine, to convene a Ukrainian soviet in Kharkov, and that "mutual" military units take action to reunite the Ukraine with Russia. The Ukrainian government saw no alternative but to appeal to Germany, with which country Petrograd was conducting peace negotiations. The Kiev government informed the German representatives at Brest-Litovsk that Moscow was not empowered to negotiate on behalf of Ukraine. Furthermore, the Ukrainian government would abide by the terms of the treaty only if it found them acceptable. The German officials, who had been stalled in their negotiations with the Bolshevik representatives, were not dis-

¹ Cf. O. S. Pidhainy, *The Formation of the Ukrainian Republic*, Toronto, 1966, 147.

² *Pravda*, No. 215 (1917), cited in *Ukraine: A Concise Encyclopedia*, Toronto, 1963, Vol. 1. 736.

pleased to see the increased tensions and rifts develop within the Russian empire.

Meanwhile the Bolshevik pressure on Ukraine continued. Between December 26, 1917, and early February, 1918, Soviet forces captured Kharkov, Katerinoslav, Alexandrovsk (Zaporozhye) and Kiev. In desperation a Ukrainian delegation signed a peace treaty with the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey) on February 9, almost a month before the Moscow government took the same step. By the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk the Central Powers recognized the independence of Ukraine, and promised that country military aid against outside aggression. In turn Ukraine pledged to supply the Central Powers with grain and raw materials.³

The ruthless Bolshevik occupation of Kiev, where several thousand hostages were executed, served partly to intimidate the Ukrainian government, which had fled to Zhitomir, and partly to attract to the Red Army, units of the new but dispirited Ukrainian army. Both objectives were thus achieved, but the result was not the submission but rather the reorganization of the Ukrainian government. The left-wing socialist Vinnichenko was replaced as prime minister by Holubovich, who now invited Ludendorff to assist the Ukrainian National Republic in clearing its land of the Bolshevik invaders. Despite the German manpower shortage, for Germany faced increased pressure on its Western front through the American entry into the war, the German government readily accepted the invitation, largely to insure stable conditions within Ukraine, which in turn would permit the uninterrupted flow of supplies westwards.

The occupation of Ukraine by German and Austro-Hungarian forces was carried out very smoothly. On March 3, 1918, Chancellor Hertling could send friendly greetings to Premier Holubovich on the occasion of his government's

³The full text of the Peace of Brest-Litovsk between the Ukraine and the Central Powers appeared in the *Reichsgesetzblatt*, No. 107 (1918). The text available to me was in Stefan Horak, "Der Brest-Litowsker Friede zwischen der Ukraine und den Mittelmächten vom 9. Februar 1918 in seinen Auswirkungen auf die politische Entwicklung der Ukraine." Unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Erlangen, 1949, 163-166. Horak also has the text of the agreement of March 25, 1918, between Germany and Austria-Hungary for the regions to be occupied by their respective forces. The document was first published by D. Doroshenko, *Istoria Ukraina*, II.

return to Kiev. Nevertheless, difficulties arose almost immediately. A state of disorganization and lawlessness had seriously crippled the new country's industries, and the government was too weak to establish order. Moreover, the social legislation passed by the *rada* included the confiscation of most land and provided for state control of industry in general. Germany and Austria-Hungary felt that the hasty socialization would still further impair the country's production, especially in the area of agriculture where much of the land lay idle as a consequence of land redistribution. Many of the new owners lacked the machinery, horse-power and seed-grain to work and seed the land. On April 6, the German commander-in-chief, Field Marshal von Eichhorn, issued an order which assured the peasants and landowners that whoever seeded a crop, should also harvest it. On the other hand, if a peasant was unable to seed all the new land in his possession, then the former owner was required to seed it and share the crop with the peasant to whom the land had been allocated.¹

While Germany assisted the Ukrainian government's attempt to restore order, the German military administration soon was looked upon with favor by the middle and upper classes, who opposed the socialist policies of their government. Their political arm, the Ukrainian Democratic Peasant party, with German approval, held a convention towards the end of April 1918, and elected General Paul Skoropadsky as hetman. By a coup Hetman Skoropadsky took over the government and became head of state. He dissolved the *rada*, organized a paramilitary police to provide greater authority for his government, and at the same time pursued a policy of close collaboration with Germany. His personal relations with Emperor William II were excellent. Though he was bearer of a name which had a proud tradition in Ukraine and was personally highly regarded, Hetman Skoropadsky did not succeed in attracting popular support for his government.

During the German occupation the Skoropadsky government, in cooperation with German authorities, required

¹ Horak, *op. cit.*, 59.

all those who had participated in the confiscation of property to make immediate restitution. In many instances former expropriators returned property even before requested to do so, especially if they suspected that the former owners knew where the property or goods had gone. In other cases the identification of the actual expropriators was more difficult. All those who had been quiet for so long, who had often feared for their lives, "the non-revolutionary element", in the words of the Ukrainian historian Stefan Horak, now became active supporters of law and order. Viewing the development from the anarchist position, Arshinov agrees: "The occupation of the Ukraine by the Austro-Germans was accompanied by a fierce reaction on the part of the gentry."

There were instances where landowners and peasants accompanied military units in order to identify goods and culprits, and sometimes even insisted on punishment for the latter, who on occasion were publicly flogged. But there were also instances where landowners and peasants asked the Ukrainian National Guard and the German military to deal leniently with expropriators. Still, since a large segment of the peasantry had taken part in the expropriations, there was resentment against repossession and there were outbreaks of violence. These increased as the German military position in the West weakened. Sometimes the peasants banded together, and the manner in which they operated is described by the Makhnovite Arshinov:

Then the peasants persevering in their revolt, organized as guerrillas and started hedge warfare. As if by order of invisible organizations, they formed in a number of places, almost simultaneously, a multitude of partisan detachments, acting militarily and always by surprise against the nobles, their guards and the representatives of power. As a rule, these detachments consisting of twenty, fifty or a hundred well armed horsemen, would appear suddenly where they were least expected, attack a nobleman or the (Hetman's) National Guard, massacre all the enemies of the peasants and disappear as quickly as they had come. Every lord who persecuted the peasants, and all his faithful servants, were noted by the

partisans and were in continual danger of being liquidated. Every guard, every German officer was condemned to almost certain death. These exploits, occurring daily in all parts of the country, cut out the heart of the agrarian counter-revolution, undermined it, and prepared the way for the triumph of the peasants.⁵

Arshinov's somewhat flamboyant account exaggerates the effectiveness of partisan operations, and German records substantiate Trotsky when he writes that the partisans appeared "invincible" only to themselves, but that as soon as the "improvised detachments came up against regular, undemoralized enemy units, their own total ineffectiveness was immediately shown up." Trotsky does not discount that "there were heroic elements" among the Makhnovites and the other partisans, but concludes that "they also numbered not a few self-seekers, marauders and scoundrels."⁶

With the German withdrawal and the collapse of the Skoropadsky regime, when all government authority broke down, the activities of the partisans were to reach their peak. At first they directed their reprisals and executions primarily at the Skoropadsky supporters and collaborators, but the reprisals soon developed into an almost indiscriminate attack on the whole middle class of peasants and shopkeepers.

By July 1918, Makhno had once more returned to Ukraine. Since the German occupation he had spent much of his time in Moscow, where he had met Kropotkin, Sverdlov and Lenin. The reflective Kropotkin, who dreamed of a vague peaceful-violent revolution, was somewhat taken aback when confronted by the impulsive Makhno, who was prepared to translate the anarchist ideals into practice. Lenin recognized the born partisan in Makhno, flattered him, praised the disruptive work of the anarchists, and urged Makhno to carry on the struggle in the Ukraine (which the Communists did not control at this time).⁷ Through Lenin's intervention Makhno received a forged passport

⁵ Arshinov, quoted by Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*, 82.

⁶ Jan M. Meijer, ed., *The Trotsky Papers 1917-1922*, The Hague, 1964, Vol. I, 389-391.

⁷ Cf. Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*, 210-211; and David Footman, *Civil War in Russia*, London, 1961, 253-256.

made out to "Ivan Jakovlevich Shepelye, teacher and officer," which permitted him to return to the Ukraine. The occupation "teacher" inserted in the forged passport was most likely responsible for the numerous accounts which erroneously list Makhno as a former teacher. The information for the passport was provided by Makhno himself. He gave as his address: Mateyevo-Kurganskoi Volost, Taganrogskogo okruga, Ekaterinoslavskii Gubernii.

On the way from Russia to the Ukraine Makhno, who had with him a suitcase full of anarchist literature, was arrested by a German guard. Fortunately for Makhno a wealthy Jew from Gulai-Polye intervened, and he was released.⁸ Makhno now made his way to Gulai-Polye, and from there to Dibrovka, about 50 *versts* away. Dibrovka, also known as Viliki-Michaelovka, was a large Ukrainian village with a population of about 10,000. Here a native peasant by the name of Fedor Tchus, who served in the navy during the war, had organized a band of partisans who would meet in the Dibrovka Forest, the largest forest in the Ekaterinoslav province. Tchus, according to his biographer, had developed his own political philosophy. His theory was that all landowners held their property under tsarist laws; since the tsar had abdicated, all owners had now forfeited their rights to the land. Tchus was as great a hero in Dibrovka as Makhno was in Gulai-Polye. Makhno and Tchus now joined forces.

Word reached the landowners and *kulak* farmers that Makhno and Tchus had made common cause. Alarmed, they organized a home defense guard and together with Austro-German detachments they carefully encircled the Dibrovka area. Makhno and Tchus, together with thirty of their followers, seemed hopelessly trapped. With a few companions Makhno stole into the village and found that a unit of Austrians and troops of the Ukrainian militia had pitched their camp on the market square. They returned and Makhno disclosed his plan of action. Tchus and six or seven men would make a flank attack on the square, while he and the rest would make a frontal attack on it. They all knew that it was a desperate gamble, but they

⁸ Arshinov, *Geschichte der Makhno-Bewegung*, 66.

had no alternative. At the same time the audacity of Makhno's plan, his boldness and decisiveness left a deep impression on the men. When he closed with an emotional appeal to die fighting, Tchus greeted him as their *batko*, their "Father".⁹

The surprise attack was successful. The unsuspecting Austrians and Ukrainian home guard were overwhelmed and massacred, and their weapons, machine guns and ammunition were distributed among the friends and followers of Makhno and Tchus, who were feted as heroes. It was on this occasion and from this time on, says Arshinov, that Makhno was recognized unanimously as the *batko* of all the Ukrainian revolutionary insurgents. Two days later, on October 5, German and Austrian troops, together with Ukrainian guards, attacked Dibrovka, which was practically wiped out by an intense artillery fire before it was occupied. But Makhno, and presumably also Tchus, who was to play an important role in the ranks of the Insurgent Army, had fled. Makhno turned up in Gulai-Polye, which he occupied.

Meanwhile, in November 1918, the Germans signed an armistice in the West, and one condition imposed on them and their allies was their withdrawal from all occupied countries. When the German and Austro-Hungarian forces in the Ukraine laid down their arms, Hetman Skoropadsky's position deteriorated very rapidly. The Bolshevik government, aware of its opportunity, dispatched two armies to occupy the Ukraine. The Hetman's political opponents at home felt only a government with wide popular support could hope to stop the Communist invasion. In a short campaign they forced Skoropadsky¹⁰ to relinquish his position, and a "Directorate" of five took over the government. Its strong man was a young lawyer, Simeon Petlura, who was born in the same year (1879) as his great antagonists, Trotsky and Stalin.

Petlura attempted desperately to build an army strong enough to withstand the Communist attack. He failed, for again the Soviet armies occupied Kharkov, and except for

⁹ Arshinov, *Geschichte der Machno-Bewegung*, 73.

¹⁰ Hetman Paul Skoropadsky (1873-1945) later made his home in Berlin. With the approach of the Red Army, in 1945, he attempted to leave the city by train. The train was subjected to an American air attack and Skoropadsky was severely wounded. He died three days later.

the guerrilla activities of organized bands like those headed by Makhno and Grigoriev, they met little resistance from the war-weary population. The resistance developed from the White armies, composed of the combined forces of the Don Army under Krasnov and Denikin's Volunteer Army, and timidly supported by the French and British. Since neither the Red nor the White armies were in a position to take over and control effectively the Ukraine, the Petlura government continued to operate in and around Kiev, while Makhno controlled the region around Gulai-Polye.

4. The Insurgent Army, Its Membership and Operations in the Civilian Sector

In the initial stages, as we have seen, there was no regular Insurgent Army with a ready organization to direct its operations. It was a force, loosely banded around the person of Makhno, which, by its success attracted more and more recruits. Sometimes its ranks were also swelled by minor *batkos*, leaders of their own small bands who joined the Insurgents for greater protection and opportunities. The ideological orientation of those who joined generally did not differ very much from the position of Makhno. They too endorsed a primitive anarchy, and were willing agents of confiscation and distribution. The objects of their anger were not only the landowners and better situated peasants, but also the shopkeepers, town dwellers in general and the intellectuals. The anti-intellectual prejudice was not confined to Ukraine. Avrich points out that *Burevestnik*, organ of the Moscow anarchists, carried the following headline on one occasion: "Uneducated ones! Destroy that loathsome culture which divides men into 'ignorant' and 'learned'. They are keeping you in the dark. They have put out your eyes. In this darkness of the night of culture, they have robbed you."¹ And a writer in a Ukrainian paper relates how the Makhnovtse had removed every item in his home except the library on the shelf. When he bitterly reminded them that they had forgotten to take the books, one of them turned to him and said, "Who do you think we are, counter-revolutionaries?"

Thus Makhno had no difficulty either in attracting recruits or in selecting enemies. A few examples, the story of an ordinary deserter, the effect of the alignment of the Ukrainian nationalists with the occupation powers,

¹ Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*, 176.

and the operations of a colorful local *batko* may serve to illustrate the conditions and social climate in Ukraine which provided the ground for Makhno's success.

The great motor and accelerator for unrest was the war. While the peasant and working population had been extremely restive even before the war, it was the war itself which completely disintegrated not only the army but also the political and social fabric of the country. General Golovine, chief of staff of the Russian armies on the Rumanian front, states that more than 2,000,000 men left the Russian armed forces in 1917 in a "spontaneous" demobilization. This was before Russia signed a peace treaty with Germany. These men drifted home or roamed the countryside, ill-fed, ill-clothed, fully armed but insecure since they could be caught, in which case they were either shot or sent back to the front. Sometimes they banded together temporarily for greater safety.

The story of one such deserter who became a partisan of Makhno is told by Ivan Topolye:²

On August 7, 1915, the mobilization order included all those born in 1896. Since I was born on June 26 of that year, I was sucked into the meat-grinder. I had my own ideas, and when the recruits took the loyalty oath, I added under my breath that I would not keep it. Three days in the army was enough for me, and I left for home. But my father felt that I should submit to God's will, and so I returned to my unit, knowing that I would get a jail sentence. Instead a court-martial sent me to the front, with the provision that I should serve the prison term after the war.

I was sent to Czernovitz (Rumania), was wounded in both legs and became a prisoner of war. Here we often discussed the conditions at home, that we had too little land, that the Russian landowners looked down on us (as Ukrainians), calling us derisively *khokhols*, that the church always sided with the Russians and the nobility. In time I escaped and made my way home. Though hostilities had ceased, I was afraid that I would be

² The name is an alias, but the real name and address are known to the writer. The story is based on fifteen pages of notes made by the author.

captured and returned to Austria-Hungary. I slept under bridges and caught rides on trains, and when I reached home, unshaven and in rags, even my mother did not recognize me.

As a patrimony my father had bought for me a small farm. Meanwhile the Civil War had broken out. When Petlura mobilized the men in our district, I fled; when the Whites mobilized me, I deserted; when the Bolsheviks occupied the area, I hid in the fields or in the forest. Since I was nowhere safe any longer I joined roving bands. In succession I was with Matvienko, Feodosy, Semenka, Litchko and the anarchist Bro. These groups never asked whether I was a deserter or not. In this way I finally joined Makhno. At this time he was hard-pressed by the Bolsheviks, and I did not have an immediate opportunity to desert him.

I had heard of Makhno before. When I returned as a prisoner of war and left the Losovaya railway station to walk to my home village of Weliki-Butchky I met a harmonica player who played for the Makhnovites at their drinking bouts. Makhno and his band had their camp near the station Yurevka, exacted contributions from the landowners and spent their time in revelling, with good food, plenty of *samogon* (vodka) and women. The harmonica player said that if I went to Makhno's camp I would get clothes, shoes and a girl.

Another countryman, Ivan Bloshchenko, who lived in the village of Bogdanovka between Zaporozhye and Sinelnikovo, a region where there were many wealthy German farmers, told me that Makhno spent much of his time in that area. He recruited volunteers and placed contributions on the rich and distributed the money among the poor. One day a small troop of Whites occupied Bogdanovka before Makhno had time to escape or organize his men, who were scattered in the village. Makhno, who stayed in the home of the Bloshchenkos, quickly slipped into a woman's dress, tied a scarf over his head as if he had a toothache, and began scouring the cooking pots. When three White guards entered the kitchen and inquired of Bloshchenko's wife whether she had seen any Makhnovtse, she replied that there had been

several *tachankas* of them, but that they had left. The three men left, having hardly looked at Makhno who was busy with the pots and the fire. No sooner had they left when Makhno organized his men and pursued the soldiers, killed most of them and returned to the village with new arms and munitions.

Makhno was a very clever operator and one felt safe with him. Many deserters who had committed offenses in the Red or White armies joined Makhno, where they could plunder and rob at will. Petlura officers would join Makhno for their own protection.

My own village was occupied by the Makhnovtse four times, but I stayed about two or three kilometers away and watched some of the farms go up in smoke. As soon as it was safe for me I deserted the ranks of the Insurgent army. From 1921 to 1922 I lived in the Pozharnaya Ulitsa 43, in Katerinoslav.

Moreover, the German, Austrian and Magyar occupation forces often found it difficult to distinguish between organized partisan and ordinary peasants, and their swift and often indiscriminate reprisals against guerilla attacks served to drive many peasants into the ranks of partisan bands. Dr. Paul Dubas relates one such incident which stirred the latent hostility of the peasants. Since it occurred in the general Gulai-Polye region it served to strengthen Makhno, in that many peasants began to see in him not the anarchist, but the resistance leader.

An Austrian regiment, writes Dubas,³ consisting mostly of Poles and some Ukrainians and commanded by a Czech, and two Ukrainian companies were transferred from Odessa to Krivoi Rog, where the countryside was thick with Insurgents. The nascent Ukrainian national spirit, reports Dubas, was evident everywhere. He (Dubas) and his *sotnia* (company of one hundred) were quartered in a girls' high school. The Hetman government had introduced Ukrainian as the language of instruction, and the school was decorated with Ukrainian motifs, and there were Ukrainian dances and concerts.

³ Paul Dubas, "Z rayoni Makhna," (From Makhno's District), *Chervona Kalina*, No. 3, 1932.

One night, continues Dubas, they received order to move to the Gulai-Polye area where a "Bolshevik band" had attacked the village of Vladimirovka, butchered a few villagers and massacred eighty Magyars and their captain. "We surrounded Vladimirovka, and all males were required to gather at one farmyard, altogether about eighty men." Dubas, himself a Ukrainian, got the impression that none of the villagers had participated in the massacre, and that the partisans most likely had not been Bolsheviks but Makhnovtse. But the commander's interrogation was so crude, according to Dubas, that the villagers were hostile, whereupon about half of the men were stood up against a wall and executed.

Dubas felt that this course drove the peasants in the area to support Makhno. Later he spent some time in Gulai-Polye and was told by an old peasant, "May he perish, that Makhno. He brings us a lot of distress and misery, but on the other hand he protects us from the marauding rabble and Bolsheviks."

Makhno in turn was more astute in his dealings with the peasants, especially with prisoners, and as a result gained many of them as recruits. F. Meleshko, who was not a partisan of Makhno but knew Makhno's wife before she married, together with his wife visited the Makhnos at Gulai-Polye. At this time the Insurgents had about eighty Bolshevik prisoners, and Makhno took his visitor to see them. Meleshko describes what he saw:¹

From the church we went to the school, where the prisoners were kept. Makhno assured us that if there were some prominent Bolsheviks among them, or some of those who had threatened to shoot us at the Pomishna station, he would have them immediately beheaded, if that were our wish. The prisoners were assembled in a large room. Most of them were Moscovite rabble and in rags. There were no prominent Bolsheviks among them. They excused themselves, they too hated the Communists but they had been mobilized. Under the circumstances this confession was not surprising. Then *Batko* Makhno spoke to them. It was an emotional speech, but Makhno

¹ F. Meleshko, "Nestor Makhno ta yoho anarkhia," *Chervona Kalina*, No. 1, 1935.

was no great orator. He spoke largely about himself, his aims, and about the invincible *Makhnovshchina*. The speech in tone and content demonstrated that Makhno could be both, cruel and humane. He closed with these words: "I am giving you your freedom. Your duty is to report everywhere what Makhno stands and fights for, and that is all (i tolki)."

The gloomy faces of the prisoners lit up, says Meleshko, and some immediately volunteered that they would never again fight against Makhno.

Makhno was only one of the many chieftains who emerged during these times of troubles. Almost every larger village or *volost* (county) had its *ataman* or *batko*, and to the surprise of the villagers he was often a man they would have least expected to rise to such prominence. Sometimes women took over as leaders. One of them, Marusja Nikiforova, at Pologi, supplied her fellow anarchist Makhno with weapons when he returned to Gulai-Polye. Though Makhno named one of his commando units in her honor "Marusja",⁵ Marusja Nikiforova never joined his ranks. But other local leaders, together with their following, joined Makhno and thereby greatly extended the latter's field of activity. Two such leaders of considerable prominence were *Batko* Pravda, who "took over" the Krasnopol volost where the settlers were German (Mennonite) farmers, and *Batko* Noumenko, who presided at a neighboring *volost*. The following account of *Batko* Pravda's activities was given by H. B. Wiens,⁶ a native of the Krasnopol region:

In 1917 I was elected chairman of the village council, and one of my duties was to collect the grain from the

⁵ At different times Makhno, who generally used "Kerensky" money, printed his own verses on it. One such rubber stamp verse read:

Marusja, don't be sad,

With Makhno money can be had.

The "Marusja" reference was to his Marusa brigade and not to Marusja Nikiforova.

⁶ Mr. Wiens, an octogenarian, now lives in Leamington, Ontario, Canada. He sent me this account together with a letter, dated November 7, 1963. Written in German, the manuscript consists of twelve handwritten pages. The Krasnopol *volost*, also known as Schönfeld, was settled exclusively by German Mennonite farmers who had come to Ukraine in the early 19th century.

farmers and have it delivered to the city. Every second week I would have to go to a bank at Alexandrovsk (Zaporozhye), get the payment in cash for the grain and distribute the money among the producers. This always involved large sums of monies, and when it became increasingly unsafe to travel because of the general unrest, I was informed to collect the money from a bank in Gulai-Polye, which was only thirty *versts* (twenty miles) away.

When I made my first trip to Gulai-Polye the manager of the bank told me that I could not get the money without permission from Makhno, who had his office in the *volost* (county) building. I was surprised, for I did not know that the ex-convict Makhno, who had robbed a bank before the war, was now in charge of the Gulai-Polye *volost*. I went to the building as directed, but was stopped at the door and asked whom I wished to see. I said that I wanted to see Makhno, and the man took me inside. We had some difficulty pushing through the crowded rooms, for the whole building was full of people.

Then I was before Makhno, a thin man with piercing eyes, sitting on a chair. He asked abruptly, "What do you want?" I replied that I came from the Krasnopol *volost* and required his permission to get money from the bank for the grain we had delivered. He answered that he allowed no one to withdraw money from the bank.

The whole interview was carried on under conditions and an atmosphere that I was happy to get out. I reached home and we thanked God that I had returned safely. In the following weeks our village undertook the redistribution of land,⁷ but rumors circulated that this would not be enough, and that we should be prepared to organize into *communas* (collectives). Then followed the first night raids on farm homes, and the Balzer family of three people was massacred on one such raid. People left their farm homes and moved to the villages.

By September (1918) waves of marauding bands swept over the *volost*, plundering and killing at will. By this time the power of the central government had completely

⁷ Presumably in response to a government directive.

disappeared. It was in late November that *Batko Pravda*² appeared at our place with a number of fully armed followers on carriages. They drove on the yard screaming and yelling. I was ordered to appear in the living room and *Batko Pravda* said he wanted immediately all my money or they would shoot me. He stuck the barrel of a gun in my mouth, another of his cronies jabbed a gun in my back and a third one fired a shot only inches away from my face. In the adjacent room my wife, Agatha, received the same treatment. I gave them all the money I had in the house and in my pocket. They also took my pocket knife, my watch and the rings from my fingers.

Meanwhile others of the band had begun loading the carriages with everything that could be moved. We were ordered to supply bags for the fur coats and the clothes. Their carriages could not hold all the plunder, and we were required to load our wagon and take what was left to Lubimovka, *Batko Pravda*'s home village. The inhabitants of Lubimovka numbered about one hundred families, living in small homes and in poverty. Since their 2 to 15 *dessiatines* (1 dess. = 2.7 acres) of land per family was not enough to make a living, many of them went as laborers.

In the following days most landowners and farmers were to experience similar raids. On November 29 *Batko Pravda* moved to Schönfeld, together with a large following, and established himself in the home of John Warkentin. The house was vacant as Warkentin and his family had fled to the Molotschnaya.

The Warkentin home was only a quarter of a mile away from us and many of *Pravda*'s band were also

² Simeon Pravda was a native of the village of Lubimovka. A former miner, he had lost his legs in a train accident. He had two crude wooden stumps, and when he walked he supported himself with two canes. Unable to work he was forced to make his living as a beggar, travelling with his mother on a cart from village to village. In this way he came to know most farmers for miles around Lubimovka. (Letter from G. Toews, dated St. Catharines, Ontario, April 2, 1968.) After his rise to power *Batko Pravda*, in raiding drug stores, discovered the soothing effects of morphine and became addicted to it. One of his first inquiries, whenever he reached a new place, would be, "Where is your drug store?" Cf. J. G. Rempel, *Mein Heimatdorf Nieder-Chortitza*, pp. 58-59. Rempel was the chairman of the village council (soviet) in Nishnia-Chortitza, a village in the Chortitza *volost*, raided and occupied by both, *Batko Pravda* and *Batko Makhno*.

quartered in our home. My wife was busy from morning to night cooking and baking for them, but thank God she was not molested. On some days I would be ordered away from the place, for they said they could not tolerate the sight of a "bourgeois," at other times I would be required to eat and drink with them. They always had great quantities of *samogon* (home-brewed whisky) with them.

About a week later we were assigned four 14 to 15 year old boys, who were the drivers for the Pravda band, and we were required to obey their order. At first they were often quite demanding, and when they were dissatisfied they complained to *Batko* Pravda, which always had serious consequences. We were consistently friendly to them, and after a while their attitude changed and they began to call me "papasha" (Little Father), and my wife "mamasha" (Little Mother).

The same transformation took place in *Batko* Pravda. After he had been in Schönfeld for a few weeks he sent word to me why I did not visit him, or did I think that he was not good enough for me. I immediately paid him a visit, and over the months I visited him regularly once a week. At first I made the visits not without trepidations, as there were these 14-16 year old boys running around with loaded guns, dressed in the sombre (Mennonite) Sunday coats, which were much too big for them. One of these boys was placed as a sentry at the farm-gate where the *Batko* stayed, and another stood guard at the door of the house. Every time I would have to state the purpose of my visit. Sometimes they would let me pass, at other times they would first get permission from Pravda before I was permitted to enter.

Inside I would be seated and Pravda would enumerate his achievements during the week and outline his plans for the future. Once I asked him why they took the lives of so many innocent people, and he said it was true that many innocent people were killed, but much of it was done without his knowledge.

Batko Pravda's quarters also housed his staff, and some days they would send out orders to the men quartered in the village. These would then harness the horses for three or four carriages. About four men would get on each

carriage, they would also get an escort of a few riders, all fully armed, and would leave the village. We then knew that they were out on another raid.

Later word would reach us from some village or *khutor* of who had been killed. If they were people we knew, or relatives, *Batko* Pravda, because of our good relationship, would permit us to attend the funeral. Sometimes as a special favor he would provide for us an armed escort to protect us from other marauding gangs. This went on for months. On several occasions Russian landowners were brought to the village and were executed or cut down and chopped to pieces. I remember how in one case four Russian landowners were shot and mutilated in the barn of the homestead where the staff was quartered. When their wives came, sobbing and weeping, they were told to pick out their husbands and take them home.

On New Year's Eve I had gone to bed early when word reached me shortly before twelve that I and my neighbors were to await New Year with *Batko* Pravda. Guards had been placed every fifty paces from our home to the house where Pravda was staying. As I walked along the street one guard would shout to the next, "Wiens is coming!" At the door I was received courteously, and we sat down around a table. *Samogon* was again served, though I for my part protested that I was under doctor's order which restricted my drinking. At 12 o'clock we went outside and everybody who had a gun began shooting.⁹

On January 21 (1919) the whole village was on the move as Pravda's band prepared to leave. Rumor had it that the home guard of the neighboring volosts¹⁰ would come to free the Krasnopol (Schönfeld) volost. In the engagement, which took place about thirty *versts* away, the home guard was beaten. The following nights hundreds of carriages and wagons, carrying partisans, plunder and women, returned and were once more quartered in the villages of our volost.

⁹ In many European countries this is a traditional custom at New Year's Eve.

¹⁰ The *Selbstschutz* was organized by the volosts of Prischib, Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld. See: Gerhard Toews, "Schönfeld, Werde- und Opfergang einer deutschen Siedlung in der Ukraine," *Der Bote*. The last installment of the series carries a list of all the names of people executed in the Schönfeld volost. *Ibid.*, December 28, 1965.

On January 26 (1919) we had a wedding in our village. A young Mennonite married a non-Mennonite girl,¹¹ who was working as a cook in Pravda's quarters. With the permission of *Batko* Pravda they could have a church wedding, and the marriage ceremony was performed by my father-in-law, Reverend Jakob Dück. *Batko* Pravda also came for the service and when a few partisans arrived, fully armed, Pravda ordered them to leave their weapons at the church entrance. I was the *Vorsänger*¹², and took my place near the pulpit. Suddenly, in a loud voice and without warning, Pravda interrupted the service and ordered me to take the place next to him.

In the evening there was a wedding party and a program at which our village teacher, G. Derksen, with the permission of the *Batko* addressed the guests. All at once Derksen was called out and was informed that his son had been arrested. He had been a clerk in his uncle's store, and he was charged with cheating the customers. The partisans had also searched the school and found a document which I had signed in my capacity as chairman of the village soviet. I was arrested and told that I had no authority to sign any documents, and my protests that the paper was signed before the partisans occupied the village were of no avail. A third party arrested at this time was an old man, D. Dück, the secretary of the *volost*. Dück was accused of favoring the rich farmers in his dealings with the villagers.

All of us were required to appear before *Batko* Pravda and *Batko* Noumenko, who had come to take us to the neighboring *volost* where he was in charge. I pleaded with Pravda to permit me to stay in my home village, and he finally agreed that my transfer should be deferred until the next day. The other two were taken under heavy guard to the neighboring village and interrogated. Both received very severe beatings, and young Derksen was taken to a straw stack, cut down and mutilated until he was dead. Dück survived, dragged himself away but lost consciousness.

¹¹ Anna Klein. Toews, *op. cit.*

¹² In the Mennonite church the intoner of hymns, who occupies a seat near the minister.

When he recovered he went to a house where he stayed for the night. The following day he was taken home.

The next day, on January 27, a *droshke* came to pick me up and take me before *Batko* Noumenko. I had heard that Derksen had been murdered, and Dück had been almost killed, so that when Noumenko received me with curses I was prepared for the worst. At the interrogation the most unbelievable accusations were levelled at me. Among other things I was charged of burying alive fifteen men (partisans?), with their booted legs sticking out of the ground.

Then *Batko* Noumenko, *Batko* Pravda and his brother, Mitka, left the room to reach a decision on me, while I remained behind with the guards. Almost immediately *Batko* Noumenko and Mitka returned, the former with an unsheathed sabre and the latter with a *nogaika* (whip). They had me taken to a barn, where I was made to lie face down on the concrete floor, and then they began beating me as if they were threshing grain, Noumenko using the flat side of the sword. After my back was completely cut up I had to turn face up and the beating continued. In between I was ordered to get up only to be struck down again. Once I was asked to kneel and they made the motion of beheading me. I almost saw my head rolling in front of me when I was ordered to get up and run in the direction of home. My eyes and face were covered with blood and I was so weak that I staggered and fell, but their shouting would pull me up and I would stumble on. Meanwhile the guards and the bystanders had their fun, jeering what fun it was to watch a "bourgeois" run. In a state of complete exhaustion I finally reached home.

About a week later when *Batko* Pravda and his brother were in Pravda's headquarters and they had been drinking for some time, an argument developed between them. *Batko* Pravda thereupon levelled his gun at Mitka and shot him through the head. A report of the incident was immediately carried to Makhno, who ordered Noumenko to bring Pravda to Gulai-Polye. *Batko* Noumenko and twenty heavily armed men arrived, surrounded *Batko* Pravda's headquarters and ordered him to

come out. Pravda appeared at the door with a gun in each hand.

"What do you want?" he inquired.

"You are arrested and are to appear before *Batko* Makhno immediately," was the answer.

Pravda ordered one of his men to bring a carriage, and he drove to Gulai-Polye. Here, as he told it, Makhno had asked him why he had shot his brother, to which Pravda had replied that Mitka had repeatedly disobeyed his orders. Makhno had then patted him on the shoulder and said that he approved, discipline had to be maintained.

When *Batko* Makhno returned to our village Mitka's body was taken to the Lubimovka cemetery. A large crowd was in attendance during the funeral, including some people from Schönfeld. Before the body was lowered into the grave *Batko* Pravda placed a loaded revolver in the coffin, saying that Mitka should not be defenseless when he faced bandits in the great beyond.¹³

While the operations of these lesser *batkos* were often very crude, Makhno usually added a special touch to his own exploits, which made him a *batko* of *batkos*. A selection from J. Kessel's articles "Buccaneers of the Steppes" reads like a passage from fiction, but accounts from other sources describing Makhno's operations are equally bizarre. Kessel's articles includes the following eye-witness story:

At four o'clock in the afternoon, Makhno's advance guards galloped through the city, gathering all the scum of the manufacturing districts around them. Father Makhno in person, with his general staff, arriving the next morning.

The slaughter of the bourgeoisie began immediately. Among others, a judge, a factory-owner, a big land-owner, an engineer, and a priest were thrown out of a fourth-story window. Father Makhno personally busied himself robbing the safes in the banks, and cleaned out completely the pawnbrokers' shops.

¹³ The account continues with other stories of Pravda's exploits, and mentions a visit of Makhno, with whom Wiens was invited to have tea. By spring, 1920 the increased terror forced the last inhabitants to flee from their homes and seek greater security in the Molotschnaia settlement.

One evening Makhno, accompanied by a few followers, broke into my room, declaring that he wanted to know personally everyone who lived in the same house with him. He was very small, almost a dwarf, with abnormally long arms, and was dressed in an officer's overcoat, a high black cap on his head.

"Do you know me?" he asked hoarsely; and without waiting for an answer said: "I'm Makhno." And he stretched his hand out to me. I do not recall what I said to him at that moment. In another twenty minutes he and his band were drinking vodka and tea, and eating cheese, bacon and sausage in my room.

I do not know why they imagined, being quite drunk, that I was an acrobat. Anyway, they kept telling me: "Go on! Walk on your hands!"

They drank until morning. Next evening they were again in my room, drinking, and insisted that I personally heat the samovar for them.

Every morning Makhno reviewed his troops. "Good morning, my lads," was his usual greeting to them.

He ordered high caps made out of the astrakhan coats he took from the pawnbrokers and distributed them himself among his best trusted men. In a cellar he found eighteen barrels of sunflower oil and decided, Communist fashion, to arrange a public distribution of it. Each woman and child that came to the market place received two pailfuls of oil. However, when a deputation of starving mail-carriers came to him with a petition, he sent them away. "I never write letters," he said by way of explanation.

There also came to him a delegation of railway workers. "What the devil are you good for?" he asked them. "Robbing the people, that's all you do. If anyone wants to go anywhere — let him take a cart and horse, and go! At least, there's no smoke and stench — I present all the railroad property to you, fellows."

Next, he learned that a number of sick workers were starving in a hospital, and felt sorry for them. Immediately, and without any formality, he presented them with a million and a half rubles. A few minutes later he killed with his own hand a chauffeur who did not

have his motor car ready on time. Some more exploits of his do not lend themselves to description.

A surgeon who successfully operated on his wife for appendicitis, he took a handful of diamonds from his pocket and presented them to him. The surgeon refused them, and Makhno distributed the diamonds among the nurses.

All this time Makhno's brother, who was Chief of Commissary, was pillaging private houses and presenting gold watches to the faithful satellites of the "Father."¹¹

There is much evidence to corroborate this account. Meleshko records how in his native village of Golodas a group of twenty Makhnovites, headed by Tchus, raped the teacher's daughter, a teenager. On another occasion Makhno passed Meleshko, had a few friendly words with him, and entered a building to visit some of his wounded men. Then they heard a shot inside the building. A Makhnovite rushed out and reported that one of the wounded men had complained about the treatment he received from the *feldsher* (medical attendant), whereupon Makhno shot the *feldsher*. When Makhno emerged from the building he was again in good spirits. Grishka (Gregory), Makhno's brother, confided to Meleshko that he feared his brother as he "feared fire," and that if Makhno was so inclined he would shoot him without further thought.

Makhno's subsequent claim that his activities were consistent with the objectives of anarchism, the liberation of the individual, is difficult to accept when contrasted to the terror which he (and his movement) spread even among his closest associates and supporters.

It is not surprising, therefore, that many anarchists were not quite happy with Makhno. W. Chudolye, in reviewing Arshinov's book in an anarchist journal, as early as 1924, criticizes Makhno for not pursuing broader objectives. The writer explicitly states that he is not prepared to shed tears of sympathy on exterminated landowners, but, he continues, there is little heroism in shooting defenseless people, nor is it "the function of anarchism to train

¹¹ *Living Age*, Vol. 315, No. 4, 1922, 276-277.

executioners.” He endorses Makhno’s resourcefulness and partisan tactics as an invaluable example for the future, but Makhno’s regime he labels an “anti-authority” authoritarianism, a “bastardisation” of anarchy, which should be rejected.¹⁵

¹⁵ *Volna* (The Wave), No. 51, March, 1924.

5. The Insurgent Army, Its Organization and Operations in Combat

On October 4, 1919, the "Chief of the Counter-Intelligence" of the Ukrainian National army prepared a report on Makhno and his army. Marked "top secret," the purpose of the report was to acquaint the commanding officers of the Ukrainian army with Makhno and the *Makhnovshchina*. The document was first published in a Ukrainian journal in Lvov, in 1935.¹

The report describes Makhno as "swarthy" in appearance, "uneducated, possessing a peasant cunning and low morals," in short, "a regular bandit on horseback." "In his activities," the report continues, "he uses those methods and political-social concepts which will attract armed men or forces to his cause." It dismisses his ideological advisors as "men who found no place with the Bolsheviks," but concedes that they make every attempt to transform the gangs of bandits into more respectable units, "in which they are successful only as far as their plans do not run counter to those of Makhno." According to the report the "advisors are without genuine influence, and are used by Makhno mostly as 'orators' in the villages."

The report finds that militarily the Makhnovtse are very loosely organized, that they do "not even have uniforms," nor visible distinctions of rank. One paragraph in the section, "Organization of Makhno's Army" describes it in these words:

Makhno and his staff have provided various statistics on the strength of their army, and their figures range from 50,000 to 75,000 to 100,000 men. Actually Makhno commands

¹ M.S., "Makhno ta yogo Viisko (Makhno and His Army)", Subtitle, "Source Material on the History of the Ukrainian War of Liberation," *Chervona Kalina*, Lvov, 1935. The compiler of the report is the *Nachalnik Kontr-Rosvidchogo Viddula K-ri Sapillia Divoi Armii, Sotnik*.

an army with a fighting strength of only a little over 5000. To these must be added the men engaged in transport, the educational and political workers and the deputies, which, together, would bring the number up to over 8000 men. The army consists of ten regiments made up of eight regiments of infantry and two regiments of cavalry. This total includes the two Bolshevik regiments which joined Makhno after he left [his Bolshevik allies] at Uman. The cavalry is made up of 1500 men. The infantry moves on wagons, cabriolets, phaetons and other vehicles. They possess very many machine guns, and about 35 cannons of German and Russian make, but not enough ammunition. The military units have a large camp-following, including herds of sheep and cattle. Makhno also employs the use of camels and mules.

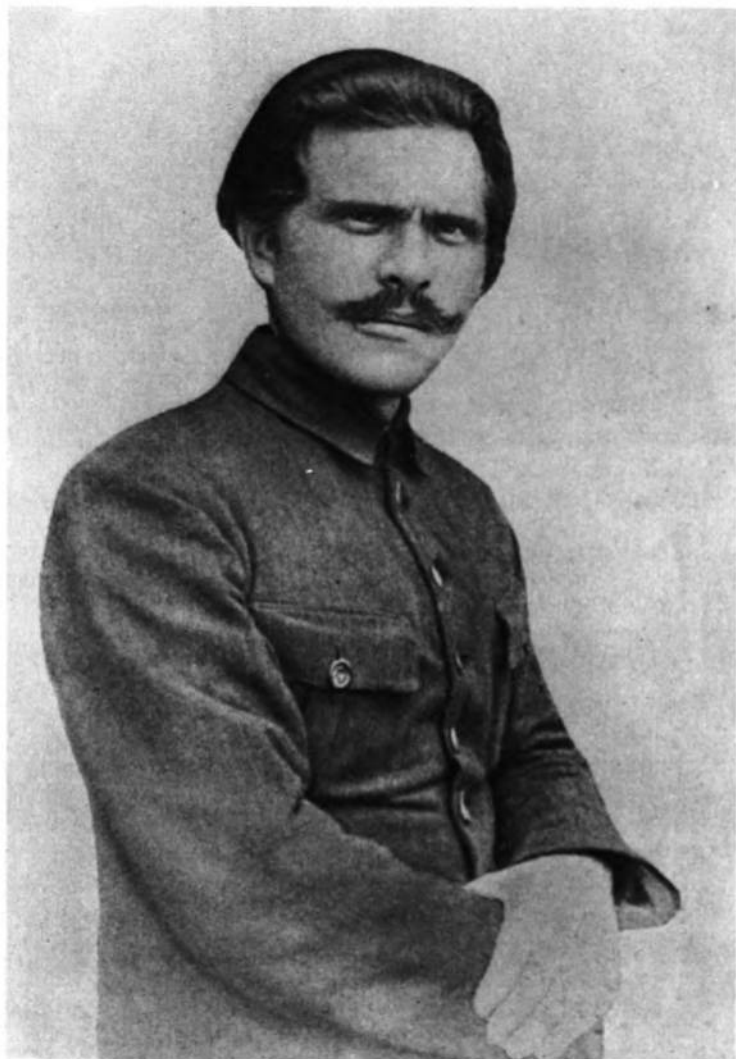
The report finds that Makhno's fighting power is weakened because of a lack of medical supplies and the complete absence of field hospitals. These and the unsuited clothing contribute to the outbreak of various diseases. The incompatibility of "banditry" with the "policies of the Ukrainian [Petlura] government creates confusion among the rank, and constantly there is a stream of Makhnovtse who either leave for home or join the armies of the National government. "Furthermore, the whole leadership is concentrated in the hands of Makhno. There is a military soviet to which even ordinary Makhnovtse can be elected, but this council has no power to influence the military tactics". Generally the regiments and the *sotni* (companies of one hundred) are commanded by "wily Makhnovite cossacks." The political line or direction is provided by Makhno, who is assisted by his deputies. The report states that while there is no definite political orientation within the *Makhnovshchina*, and its political platform "is often determined by the military position of the army," in general, "anarchist and communist views predominate."

When it is considered that Makhno's army lives off the land, says the report, it is not surprising that the population is passively hostile, but not sufficiently aroused to take up arms against it. The explanation lies in the Makhnovite policy in directing their brigandage largely

against landowners and wealthy peasants. The Makhnovtse have attempted to attract popular support, but their efforts have failed partly because in passing through a region they "tax" the peasants by confiscating their horses and wagons. It is also a fact, concludes this section of the report, that in regions where Makhno has not made his appearance, the peasants think quite highly of him.

In comparing this comprehensive document with other non-anarchist sources and with the files of respondents, it is surprisingly accurate. Thus Meleshko's description of a Makhnovite army on the march closely parallels the description in the report. Meleshko writes that the long lines of wagons hauling the plunder away consisted of vehicles from carts to hayracks and automobiles, the latter also pulled by oxen or camels, as the army had no fuel. There is also evidence that the lack of medical equipment was costly to the Makhno army. Wounded Makhnovtse were usually left unattended, and if they were badly wounded they would sometimes be shot by their own men as an act of mercy. Often contagious diseases, especially typhus and diarrhea, would immobilize large segments of the army. The sick men would remain in the homes where they had been quartered and would be attended by the villagers, who in turn would often get the disease from them. In the Chortitza *volost*, settled by Mennonites, sick Makhnovtse were housed not only in homes but also in schools and churches. One respondent reports that one of the chief problems was the prevalence of lice and the absence of soap. "Our first job would be to de-louse our patients," one woman told me. "When one of them removed his shirt you could almost see it move, especially along the hems. Usually the Makhnovtse would wear their hair long, and we would have to comb them for lice. The man would sit with his head over the table and every time you pulled the comb through his hair the lice would scatter on the table, and he would gleefully crush them with his thumb-nail."

All accounts indicate that diseases took the greatest toll of lives among the Makhnovtse, and presented a problem which they were unable to solve. One respondent writes that in the village of Chortitza typhus broke out



Nestor Makhno (1921)



Makhno, behind him, in sailor's cap, Tchus.



Young Makhno, in Gulai-Polye.



Makhno in exile, in Paris.



Baron Peter Wrangel, 1877-1928.
(died in Brussels)



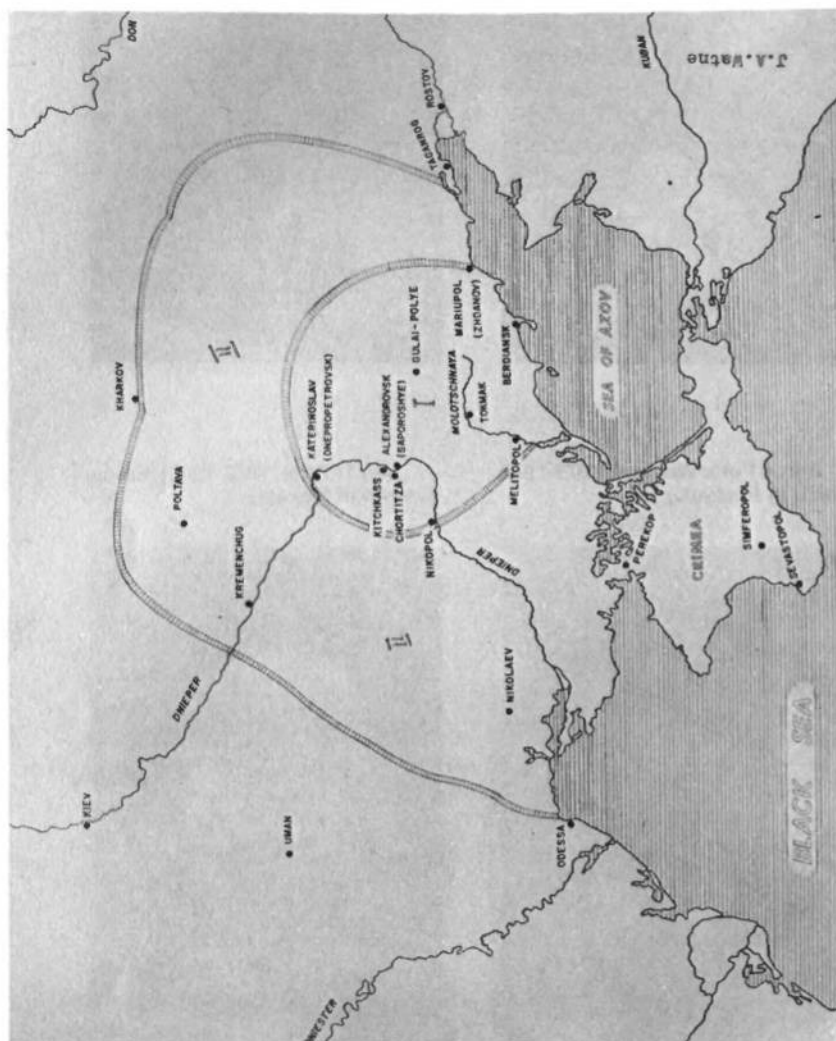
Leon Trotsky, 1879-1940. (assas-
sinated in Mexico)



**Hetman Paul Skoropadsky, 1873-
1945.** (victim of an air attack on
Berlin)



Simon Petlura, 1879-1926. (as-
sinated in Paris)



I. Makhno's inner circle of strength. II. Extended area of Makhno's activities and influence.

among the Makhnovites and spread so rapidly that not only all the hospital beds were filled but that also practically every home housed their patients.² The Makhnovtse attempted to mobilize the village girls to serve as nurses, but since the girls feared being molested and raped they hid in barns, empty buildings and in the undergrowth around the village pond. The village boys, many of them teenagers like himself, volunteered to take their places. The respondent was assigned to a classroom in the girls' high school. It had forty patients. Bedded on straw most of them were too weak to go to the toilet. The school's toilet facilities were inadequate for the large number of people, and pails were placed in the corridors. There was not enough help to empty them regularly, and as a result there was ankle-deep human waste on the floor. The dead were also stacked in the corridors waiting for removal. The attendants worked hard, but a rumor was spread that a staff inspection from Gulai-Polye would find their work unsatisfactory and they would be shot, whereupon he and others decided to leave and go into hiding.

Another writer estimates that about half of the Makhnovtse quartered in this *volost* died of typhus.³ As chairman of a village he estimated that about seventy percent of the villagers were ill with typhus, and that from eleven to fifteen percent of the population, mostly adults, died. In his own village, with a 894 population, 637 had typhus and of these 94 died. Because of the long periods in which the Makhnovtse had been quartered in the *volost* most of the food was gone, and this posed an added problem. The people who were sick were undernourished and too weak to take care of the sick or to bury the dead.

Makhno's combat tactics were in keeping with the means at his disposal. His army was known as the "Insurgent Revolutionary Army of the Ukraine (Makhnovtse)", and its banner was the black flag of anarchy. Beyond these unifying elements its two salient factors of strength were continued limited action which would assure local

² G. H. Fast, in a letter dated Rosenfeld, Manitoba, Canada, October 5, 1963.

³ J. G. Rempel, *Mennonitische Welt*, IV, 5, May, 1951. Also: *Mein Heimatdorf Nieder Chortitza*, Rosthern, Sask., Canada, n.d., 72. The Chortitza *volost* was in the Zaporozhskii *okruga*, Ekaterinoslav province, across the Dnieper from Alexandrovsk.

but immediate success, and rapid maneuvers which would prevent the confrontation with regular army units. In the latter circumstance even defensive tactics were the exception, the rule was deployment. The pursuing enemy was thus also forced to spread out, meanwhile the Makhnovtse would regroup in clusters, wedge between small isolated army units, attack and if possible wipe them out. Their high mobility enabled them to strike simultaneously or consecutively at widely different points. The pattern was to stage either a surprise raid or a night attack, or a combination of both. This not only kept the enemy in suspense, but also served to demoralize him.

The tactics were developed in the years 1917-1918. Initially employed by small bands in raids on *khutors* and estates, they were expanded in the hit-and-run attacks on the German and Austro-Hungarian occupation forces and on the military police units of the Hetman regime. By 1919 these tactics had become much more sophisticated in their execution and were used in turn or simultaneously against competing bands, Petlura's National Ukrainian army, the Bolshevik or Red Army and the Volunteer armies of Denikin and Wrangel. While guerilla warfare was waged against these various opponents, the main target of the Makhnovtse continued to remain the *kulak* peasants and the urban middle class.

The most colorful partisan leader, next to Makhno, was Nikifor Grigoriev,¹ and his liquidation by Makhno demonstrates Makhno's audacity and ruthlessness. Grigoriev had been an officer in the war, later had served in turn Skoropadsky and Petlura, who appointed him *ataman* of Zaporozhye, and then turned to the Bolsheviks in February, 1919. Commanding a force of about 15,000 men he captured Kherson and Odessa and soon was in control of the entire lower right bank region of the Dnieper river. When the

¹ A very comprehensive account of Grigoriev's meteoric career appears in Arthur E. Adams, *Bolsheviks in the Ukraine*, New Haven, 1963. Numerous references to this Zaporozhian *ataman*, as well as to Makhno, are found in *The Trotsky Papers*, Vol. 1. John S. Reshetar, Jr., *The Ukrainian Revolution, 1917-1920*, Princeton, 1952, illustrates Grigoriev's bravado by citing his ultimatum to the commander of Odessa, that if he did not surrender, he would have his skin "used in a drum." (249). My chief sources for the Makhno-Grigoriev meeting are Voline, Arshinov and *Nedilia*, Nos. 42 and 43, October 27 and November 3, 1935.

Red Army began to consider his success and popularity a threat to itself, it tried to direct his activities to Bessarabia. Like Makhno, Grigoriev did not like to operate too far away from his home base, deserted his allies and began negotiations with the Makhnovtse. Grigoriev was fiercely anti-Jewish and responsible for numerous pogroms, especially in the province of Kherson, which had a large Jewish population. Perhaps because of the similarity of their careers Grigoriev and Makhno have sometimes been grouped together as *pogromchiki*.⁵ As we shall see later, Makhno was not anti-Semitic.

By summer 1919 the Ukrainian peasantry had become increasingly disillusioned by the activities of the Red Army, and Grigoriev attempted to channel this sentiment to his cause by denouncing the Moscow "scoundrels." He also tried to enlist Makhno in his ventures and sent him a telegram reading: "*Batko!* Why do you still deal with the Communists? Kill them! *Ataman* Grigoriev." Afraid that his following would desert him and join Grigoriev, whose campaigns had successfully propelled him in the direction of Katerinoslav, Makhno and his advisors prepared a long "appeal" to the "peasants, toilers and Insurgents" in which they labelled Grigoriev a "traitor" and an "enemy of the people."⁶ The appeal was widely distributed and also appeared in the Gulai-Polye Insurgent paper *Puit k Svobode* and in the anarchist journal *Nabat*.⁷

Meanwhile a successful drive by Denikin's Volunteer army swept across the eastern Ukraine. Gulai-Polye was occupied and Makhno retreated across the Kitchkas bridge to the right river bank of the Dnieper. His position was sufficiently precarious for him to remember Grigoriev's former overtures. Under the pretense of discussing a merger of their two camps and with the objective of attracting the *ataman's* following to his cause, Makhno sent word to

⁵ Cf. Donald W. Treadgold, *Twentieth Century Russia*, Chicago 1959, 178: "Makhno and Hryhoryiv (Ukrainian for Grigoriev) now turned on the Communists and launched a partisan campaign against 'Communists, Jews and Russians . . .'"

⁶ The "appeal" is reprinted in Arshinov, *Geschichte der Machno-Bewegung*, 141-144.

⁷ According to Avrich only one issue of the Insurgent paper was published in Gulai-Polye, in May 1919. *Nabat* was edited by Voline and Arshinov.

Grigoriev to meet him. Grigoriev consented, and the meeting of the two chiefs and their following took place on July 27, 1919, in the village of Sentovo, in the province of Kherson. Arshinov writes that the discussion was held in public before a gathering of both camps and numbering about 20,000 people. Grigoriev spoke first, and was followed by Makhno. The latter accused Grigoriev of being a counter-revolutionary, a pogromist and an enemy of the people. Grigoriev perceived too late that he had been led into a trap, but was unable to retreat. When Makhno had finished, his henchman, Karetnik, took out his gun and shot Grigoriev. Makhno himself hurried across the platform and with the cry "Death to the *ataman*!" emptied his gun into the body of his late rival until the last traces of life subsided. Some of Grigoriev's close associates, taken by surprise, made a move to come to their leader's assistance, but Makhno's men were prepared and cut them down. The rank and file of Grigoriev's people saw that resistance was useless. Intimidated and cowed they agreed to a resolution that they be integrated in the Insurgent army.

In some ways Makhno's greatest threat came from his weakest opponent, the army of the Ukrainian National Republic, headed by Simeon Petlura. The position of the Ukrainian Republic was an unenviable one. "The political and social system prevailing up to 1917," writes Manning, "had not given any training in self-government to the Ukrainian people and in midst of war and revolution they had to start on the most elementary tasks of popular education, while at the same time they corrected fundamental abuses in the economic situation and created and administered a government."⁸

Petlura, a moderate socialist, faced two powerful and implacable enemies of Ukrainian independence, the Red Army and Denikin's Volunteer (White) army. In addition he had to contend with the corrosive activities of such free-wheeling spirits as Grigoriev and Makhno. Many Ukrainians contend that if it had not been for Makhno the fortunes of the ill-fated young Republic might have fared differently.

Makhno's ranks were constantly replenished with

⁸ Clarence A. Manning, *Ukraine under the Soviets*, New York, 1953, 16.

dissidents who left Petlura either because they thought Petlura's social policies, such as land distribution, went too far or did not go far enough. To appease the revolutionaries in its own ranks the Petlura army, popularly known as the Petlurovtse, became excessively permissive, and one writer claims that in its make-up, organization and operations it often almost resembled Makhno's army.⁹ Though this statement is an exaggeration, these conditions, together with the new Ukrainian national consciousness which characterized the Petlurovtse, served to attract many Makhnovtse to Petlura. The very existence of the Petlura army thus represented a constant threat to Makhno's hold on his followers. While Makhno never ceased hurling epithets such as "counter-revolutionary" in the direction of Petlura, he was careful not to go too far so as not to offend the national sensitivity of his following.

In contrast to Denikin's officers, who were labelled derisively *Zolotopogniki* ("Golden Epaulets"), the Makhnovtse called Petlura's officers *Zolotorutshniki* ("Golden Hands"). The confidential report by Petlura's counter-intelligence already quoted¹⁰ states that the Makhnovtse regarded the Petlura government as typically petite bourgeois, but that their precarious military position restrained them from being more aggressive than they were, that the relationship between the Petlurovtse and the Makhnovtse was often dependent on Makhno's moods, which would range from "outbursts of abuse to a state of megalomania, that if Petlura will not respect him, he will not respect Petlura." The report concludes that there can be no useful relationship since Makhno recognized no form of government, and that the very philosophy of the Makhnovites prevented them from subordinating themselves to any outside authority. "If possible," ends the report, "we should attempt to edge Makhno's army behind Denikin's line where Denikin would require a greater force than Makhno's to liquidate him."

Thus not even a symbiosis developed between Petlura and Makhno, and in several instances negotiators sent out by the Petlurovtse fared no better at the hands of Makhno

⁹ *Nedilia*, No. 43, November 3, 1935.

¹⁰ "Makhno ta vogo Viisko," *Chervona Kalina*, 1935.

than those sent out by the Red Army, or later by Wrangel. They were shot. Indeed, one of Makhno's most spectacular victories was won at Petlura's expense when Makhno captured the city of Katerinoslav in December 1918 and held it for five days. Later when Petlura, in his military extremity, negotiated with Pilsudski and in an agreement granted Poland East Galicia and Volhynia, the Makhnovtse were outraged, not so much that Petlura had signed away Ukrainian territory, as that he had collaborated with *Pan* Pilsudki.¹¹ The pact did not save Petlura, and when Poland unilaterally made peace with the Soviet government the days of the Ukrainian National Republic were numbered. Petlura himself went to Paris as an exile, and in 1926 was assassinated, allegedly by a man named Schwarzbart, an acquaintance of Makhno.

The degree to which the Petlura-Pilsudski pact was resented by many Ukrainian nationalists was brought out in a letter which I received from Mr. Zenon Jaworskyj, formerly an officer of the USS (*Ukrainskii Sitch Streltsi*).¹² Up to 1918 Galicia, a province settled largely by Ukrainians, was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. In 1916 the Vienna government created two battalions known as the "USS" which were made up exclusively of Galicians (Ukrainians). When the Empire collapsed Galicia became independent and formed its own government under Dr. Eugene Petrushevych. Its goal was the ultimate merger with Ukraine proper, but in the interim Ukraine had two separate governments both of which had for the period July-November 1919 their seat in Kamenets-Podolsk, not far from the Polish border. Mr. Jaworskyj writes that they were appalled at the proposed alliance with Poland, "the deadly enemy of Ukraine." Three officers of the USS brigade, Major Osep Bukshowanyj, Captain Zenon Noskowskyj and he (Jaworskyj), later joined by Captain Myron Luckyj, decided to assassinate Petlura. The date was set for August 25, 1919, but they found him too heavily guarded. Suspecting a plot, Petlura sent an ultimatum to Dr. Petrushevych to order the brigade to the Soviet front. The conspirators then decided to open negotiations with Makhno. The meeting with Makhno, also

¹¹ *Pan*, meaning "Lord," or nobleman.

¹² Letter dated Ann Arbor, Michigan, January 1, 1968.

attended by Jaworskyj, took place on September 27, 1919 in the village of Khrystynivka, near Uman. They proposed to Makhno an alliance directed against Pilsudski and Denikin, and also discussed military action against the Red Army. Makhno was sympathetic, but events took their own cataclysmic course, as we shall see in a later chapter.

6. Shifting Alliances: The Insurgents, the Red Army, the Volunteer Army

The Makhno-Petlura relationship, for the greater part of the Civil War, can be described as one of hostile neutrality. Makhno vilified the Ukrainian nationalist leader but courted his followers. In turn Petlura, while unhappy that Makhno should attract so many followers who should have been in the ranks of the Ukrainian national army, was appeased in that at least they could not be mobilized by the Red and White armies. The greatest testimonial to Petlura's altruistic nationalism is the fact that he on more than one occasion provided his Red Cross services to the sick and wounded Makhnovtse.¹ As for the relationship between Makhno and the Volunteer (White) army, most confrontations between them developed into fights marked by unusual bitterness and savagery. Makhno's relationship with the third warring party, the Red Army, took a most mercurial course. There were periods when they were mutual friends and allies, there were other periods of mutual acrimonious name-calling, and there were also periods of mutual throat-cutting.

The history of the Volunteer Army is a long and painful study in failure. When the Revolution fragmented Russia, the Don Cossacks became a semi-autonomous state and elected General Kaledin as their *ataman*. Meanwhile, as the Bolsheviks consolidated their power in Russia, many officers filtered to the Don, partly for their own protection and partly to organize a resistance against the Bolsheviks. Among them were such reputed army commanders as Kornilov, Alexiev, Denikin and Krasnov. It was Alexiev who began organizing the remnants of the Russian army into a new fighting force which became

¹ *Nedilia*, No. 43, 1935; and Arshinov, *Geschichte der Machno-Bewegung*, 170.

known as the Volunteer Army, or, more commonly, as the White army. The huge old tsarist army had of necessity a large cadre of officers, and since these were singled as objects of hate by the revolutionaries, a regular stream of them made their way to the Don. Their Russian patriotism was demonstrated when later tens of thousands of them were willing to serve in the ranks of the Volunteer Army. Whole army units were thus composed entirely of former officers. But there was also much jealousy and bickering especially among the senior officers. *Ataman* Kaledin was most unhappy with the influx of so many "counter-revolutionary elements," which weakened his own position with the cossacks, many of whom were hostile to the Russians. In despair he committed suicide.

Denikin was only forty-seven years old when he took over the command of the Volunteer Army from Alexiev in early 1919, but his generation had experienced the humiliation of defeat in the recent war and he gave the impression of a tired old man.² Of peasant background and of a conciliatory disposition he projected more of an Eisenhower image than that of tsarist despotism. But he was completely befuddled by the rapidity of change. Moreover, a Russian patriot, he could not understand how non-Russian nationals would want to break away from Russia. He regarded their national aspirations as the invention of the intelligentsia. His position was re-enforced by such Russian nationalists as Paul N. Milyukov, the leader of the Constitutional Democratic party (the Kadets), who had also made his way to the Don. Their inflexible position on the question of nationalities was one reason why the revolutionaries of all colors made the term "Kadet" synonymous with reaction. While the Bolshevik government created a "People's Commissariat for the Affairs of Nationalities" under J. Stalin to "put an end to the oppression and inequality of the non-Russian nationalities,"³ the leaders of the Volunteer Army failed to grant any concessions to the national sentiment of the people whose regions they occupied. To them the Don, the Kuban,

² Anton Ivanovich Denikin (1872-1947) spent most of his later years of exile in England. He died in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

³ *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, Moscow, 1960, 270.

the Ukraine were bases with ample supplies of food and fuel, lying close to excellent seaports through which additional aid could be shipped in.

Furthermore, the social problems which gave rise to such movements as the *Makhnovshchina*, if mentioned at all, were to be "solved" after "victory." It is symptomatic that in the numerous memoirs which made their appearance in the 1920's the military and political leaders of the Volunteer Army rarely mention Makhno, while the Bolshevik records, to mention only the "Trotsky Papers," refer repeatedly to him. On one occasion, during the Civil War, Denikin is reportedly to have shouted, "I don't want to hear anything more about Makhno!"⁴ and the name does not appear in his memoirs.

In contrast to the Volunteer Army the Red Army had a much more versatile and politically oriented leadership. The military reputations of Soviet heroes like Voroshilov, Frunse and Budyenny were established in the Ukraine. Kamenev's⁵ diplomacy and Trotsky's drive both played their role in the Soviet victory. But the primary architect of success was the many faceted Lenin. From distant Moscow he would either check Trotsky and encourage Antonov-Ovseenko, who was the commander-in-chief in the Ukraine during the first phase of the Civil War, or he would give full reign to the impatient Trotsky to crush all opposition. Makhno, who was later to accuse Lenin of flagrant hypocrisy, was told by him in the summer of 1918 that "genuine anarchists" like Makhno and the Bolsheviks had "a common goal."⁶ Lenin's resourcefulness was demonstrated repeatedly in his treatment of Makhno. In early May 1919, the position of the Red Army in the Ukraine, in Lenin's own words, was "critical, well-nigh catastrophic."⁷ They needed every ally they could find and had entered into a military alliance with Makhno, whose units were integrated within the Red Army, with

⁴ *Nedilia*, No. 43, 1935.

⁵ Lev B. Kamenev (Rosenfeld) had been editor of *Pravda*, chairman of the Moscow soviet and was a member of the Politburo from 1917 to 1927. He was liquidated by Stalin in 1936.

⁶ Makhno, "Tenth Anniversary of the Revolutionary Insurrection," *Delo Truda*, Nos. 44-45, 1928.

⁷ Directive to the Soviet leaders in Ukraine, marked "top secret" and dated May 8, 1919, signed by Lenin, Stalin and Krestinski. *The Trotsky Papers*, 407.

Makhno remaining in command. The arbitrary and impulsive Trotsky was outraged at Makhno's behaviour and the influence the Makhnovtse had on the Red Army. In a secret message to the Communist Central Committee in Moscow and dated May 1, 1919 he wrote that "the purging of openly criminal elements from these units, the establishment of firm discipline, the abolition of the practice of electing commanders, the combating of demagoguery among the commanders, who were insolent in their behaviour towards higher military and Soviet authorities" was absolutely necessary. The "Makhno problem," he suggests, can only be solved by the "most savage measures," which he lists as "cutting down its strength by perhaps a half or two thirds"; "shooting . . . and imprisonment in the concentration camps; simultaneously (conducting) a decisive struggle against 'meeting-prone' commanders."⁸

Instead of endorsing the recommendations of Trotsky, Lenin, who had already sent General Antonov, the commander-in-chief of the southern front, to pay a courtesy call on Makhno on April 29, on May 4 and 5 sent an impressive delegation of Soviet leaders, including Lev Kamenev, to Gulai-Polye to assure Makhno that his services were indeed appreciated. When the appropriate time came Lenin had no more scruples than Trotsky on turning on his former ally. At the conclusion of the Civil War when most of the Makhnovite leaders had either been shot or had fled abroad, those who had been captured were tried in Moscow. One of them, Voline, accused the Bolsheviks of having themselves broken an agreement with Makhno and of having committed treason. Samsonov, the prosecutor, retorted: "You call that treason? Our view is that we pursued a policy of realism: as long as we needed Makhno we exploited him; after we no longer needed him, we successfully liquidated him."⁹

It is not the purpose of this book to trace the tortuous course of Makhno's campaigns and alliances, but a chronological summary of them illustrates the complex

⁸ *Ibid.*, 391-392.

⁹ Voline (Voline), in his Introduction to Arshinov, *Geschichte der Makhno-Bewegung*, 26.

pattern of successful guerilla warfare. This is not to suggest that Makhno developed a pattern, or was even aware of it. His own associates were at times alarmed at his easy-going unconcern about the future.¹⁰ The Revolution had created conditions in which large areas of Russia were without authority. Makhno's keen perception ferreted out these power-vacuums and he filled them. In this Makhno presents an interesting contrast to Lenin. Before Lenin's "seizure of power" in October he was warned by Zinoviev and Kamenev, "We are told: (1) that the majority of the people of Russia is already with us, and (2) that the majority of the international proletariat is with us. Alas! — neither the one nor the other is true, and this is the crux of the entire situation."¹¹ Lenin was as aware of this as his two comrades, but he accepted the challenge and directed the events. Makhno's role was simply to fill a void.

Makhno's resourcefulness as a partisan of more than ordinary talent became apparent when the Germans and their allies withdrew from the Ukraine. There was a brief struggle between the Skoropadsky and Petlura factions, with Petlura emerging as the victor. But his hold on the country was most precarious. At this propitious time Makhno seized the railway centers at Chaplino, Sinelnikovo and at other points, allied himself with local Bolshevik groups, who accepted him as their leader, and sent a train-load of his followers, disguised as workers, to occupy Katerinoslav, the capital of Ekaterinoslav province which had been occupied by Petlura. He held the city for only a few days, but his reputation was established. Moreover, he captured large stores of arms, and his "requisitions," conducted in the homes of the middle class citizenry, had provided his followers with rich rewards. These "supplies" were now moved to Gulai-Polye. Half-jokingly and half-seriously this Makhnovite citadel now sometimes was referred to as Makhnograd. Almost immediately, however, the Makhnovtse found themselves in a vice as Denikin's Voluntary Army approached from the south and the Red Army from the north, the former with Moscow as its objective, the latter

¹⁰ Arshinov, *Geschichte der Machno-Bewegung*, 275.

¹¹ Lenin, *Toward the Seizure of Power*, II, New York, 1932, 329.

the control of the Ukraine up to the shores of the Black Sea. Denikin's army was the more immediate threat and Makhno made his first move against it. As the Volunteer Army rushed north to occupy the Ukraine, Makhno's infantry, on machine-gun mounted carriages, and cavalry, forming long two-row columns and moving from sixty to one hundred *versts* (1 *verst* = 2/3 of a mile) a day, cut deep into the exposed Denikin hinterland, occupying and holding such southern key cities as Berdiansk and Mariupol from January until summer, 1919. Makhno even sent one hundred train cars with captured grain as a trophy to the workers of Moscow and Petrograd, where the population was on the brink of starvation. One of Denikin's officers, General Shkuro,¹² and his cossack cavalry, copying some of the techniques of Makhno, successfully curbed Makhno's operations, but the diversion had blunted Denikin's drive to Moscow.

After the Denikin retreat the Red Army, under Dybenko, occupied the Gulai-Polye region. For his exploits the Bolshevik press had hailed Makhno as a hero and an ally. It is possible that the Bolsheviks failed to see the unique character of Makhno and his movement, and that they felt Makhno could be "domesticated" and that his followers could be subordinated and integrated into the Red Army. In short, the Bolsheviks planned to absorb the Makhno movement. Makhno was aware of these designs, but since the threat of the Volunteer Army was the immediate danger he hoped that the confrontation with the Bolsheviks could be deferred, or at least confined to discussions. Since the Bolsheviks had little support in the Ukraine, especially among the peasantry, Makhno felt confident that he would win in a "confrontation of theories." The peasants had quite often demonstrated their opposition to the Bol-

¹² General Andrei Shkuro (1886-1947) was also unusually successful in his campaigns against the Red Army. He spent his years of exile in Germany. In 1945 when the British "repatriated" tens of thousands of cossacks and their families, who were staying in camps at Lientz, Austria, many of them committed suicide rather than return to the Soviet Union. General Shkuro, who had left his home in Salzburg in an attempt to persuade the British to cease their forced repatriations, was also seized by them and turned over to the Soviets. According to Moscow *Pravda* report of January 16, 1947, the cossack leaders, including General Shkuro, had been sentenced to death for treason and the sentence had already been carried out.

scheviks and their land policy by attacking and killing their commissars.

Faced with a common enemy the Bolsheviks and Makhnovtse negotiated a union despite their differences. The union soon became obsolete, but was again renegotiated in October, 1920 (see: Appendix). The terms of union provided that: 1) the inner organization of the Makhnovites would remain unchanged (that is, voluntary recruitment, election of commanders, and order by self-discipline, which allowed the individual Makhnovite considerable latitude); 2) the Makhno army would have, like the Red Army, political commissars appointed by the Communist party, to supervise its political orientation; 3) in combat the Makhno army would serve under the supreme command of the Red Army; 4) the Makhno army would operate primarily against the Volunteer (Denikin) army; 5) the Makhno army would retain its black flag and the name Revolutionary Insurgent Army (Makhnovtse).¹¹

The Bolsheviks soon realized that Makhno was a very independent ally. They began to short-supply his units and initiate a press campaign in which the *Makhnovshchina* was presented as a form of *kulak* resistance. The campaign was stepped up when Makhno openly began to "cold-shoulder" the Bolshevik political commissars attached to his units. The Bolsheviks even succeeded in infiltrating the Makhno movement and involved one of Makhno's regimental commanders, Padalka, in a plot to assassinate the *batko*. But Makhno's extraordinary sense for danger saved him. While Makhno generally travelled on horseback, this time he flew from Berdiansk to Gulai-Polye, surprised the conspirators and had them shot. The Bolshevik-Makhnovite relationship now became extremely strained, and when the Makhnovtse prepared to hold a workers' and peasants' congress on April 10, 1919, as part of their ideological war with the Communists, the Red Army commander Dybenko sent a telegram forbidding the holding of the congress as counter-revolutionary.

The Volunteer Army was encouraged by the rift and General Shkuro sent a letter to Makhno, commending his

¹¹ Arshinov, *Geschichte der Makhno-Bewegung*, 118-120.

patriotic resistance. The letter was disdainfully published by the Makhnovtse, but Lenin, sensing the danger of an alliance between Makhno and Shkuro, played on the former's vanity by sending General Antonov and a few days later Kamenev¹¹ to Gulai-Polye as plenipotentiaries of peace. Moreover, Makhno was still in control of stores of food and fuel in his region and would part with them only in exchange for arms and munitions.

On May 22, 1919, Trotsky, as Chairman of the Military Revolutionary Council, sent the following note, marked "Secret," from Kharkov to Lenin in Moscow: "It is essential to organize a large detachment, consisting of, roughly, one reliable Cheka battalion, several hundred Baltic Fleet sailors who have the getting of coal and bread at heart, a supply detachment of Moscow or Ivanova-Voznesensk workers and some thirty senior Party workers, for the purpose of obtaining supplies of bread and coal from the Mariupol area and disciplining Makhno's anarchist bands. Only on this condition will an advance in the Mariupol-Taganrog direction become possible." But Lenin cautioned Trotsky to play Makhno's game a little longer. His answer was sent on May 26, 1919, through Kamenev. It read: "The Council of Defense recommends that an immediate start be made with the speedy loading of coal at Mariupol for delivery to the Port Commander at Petrograd. In the event of opposition from Makhno, coal supplies are to be obtained from him on a barter basis, and textiles and other goods sent to Mariupol for this purpose by the shortest possible route."¹⁵

Makhno responded. His troops again fought shoulder to shoulder with the Red Army. Once more the Communist press greeted Makhno as the custodian of the peasants' and workers' cause, but the success and new role swelled his ego. He again announced the holding of a peasants' congress for May 31. On June 4 Trotsky branded the unilateral Makhno action illegal. Simultaneously Denikin's army swept back the Makhno units and on June 6 General

¹¹ It was Politburo member Lev Kamenev, and not General Sergei S. Kamenev, as some historical accounts have it. General Kamenev, a former tsarist officer and later a Communist commander, was also active on the Ukrainian front, but not as a Commissar.

¹⁵ *The Trotsky Papers*. I. 459-469.

Shkuro occupied Gulai-Polye. When Red Army General Voroshilov arrived at Makhno's camp on June 9 Makhno was beaten, at least for the moment. He consented to relinquish his command and leave his troops with the Red Army. Makhno was permitted to leave and he disappeared, but most of his staff were arrested and shot.

Meanwhile the reinvigorated Volunteer Army offensive continued, and Alexandrovsk, Katerinoslav and Kharkov were captured in rapid succession. The Red Army retreated in utter confusion. Once more Makhno emerged. Many of his troops, joined by other "Reds", deserted the Red Army and came to Makhno. He appealed to the retreating Red Army soldiers to do away with their commissars and join him to fight Denikin. Since he lacked weapons he sometimes attacked Denikin units for the purpose of acquiring arms. Fighting and retreating westwards, Makhno was confronted with the forces of *Ataman* Grigoriev, a problem he solved in his own inimitable way by shooting Grigoriev and taking the *ataman's* men into his own army.

But the Volunteer Army pursued him relentlessly. Prisoners of war, on either side, rarely survived. When his brother, Grishka, was killed in action against Denikintse, Makhno staged a blood-bath by killing all wounded "White" officers. By the end of September the Volunteer Army had encircled Makhno near Uman. It seemed that his doom was sealed. In a desperate gamble Makhno, together with his company of one hundred, stealthily stole away and left his main army to face the brunt of the battle. Then he emerged from some ravine and surprised the Volunteers by attacking their flank. As panic spread among the "Whites" the battle reversed. Arshinov writes, "The Simferopol regiment of officers was slaughtered to the last man. A distance of two to three kilometers was literally covered with enemy dead." Now Makhno swept back, "like a giant broom he went through villages and cities," destroyed and massacred anyone he regarded as an enemy, "land-owners, *kulak* peasants, policemen, priests, village elders and officers" (Arshinov). Like a whirlwind he moved on, sometimes one hundred kilometers a day. One day after the victory he occupied Krivoi Rog and was before Nikopol, another day and he captured the Kichkas Dnieper bridge

and occupied Alexandrovsk. In one week he occupied Orechov, Pologi, Tokmak, Melitopol and Mariupol. Repulsed, he turned north and took Katerinoslav on October 20, 1919.

Denikin had dispatched the partisan fighter, General Shkuro, from the Bolshevik front, and though he captured Gulai-Polye he lost about half of his cavalry. Makhno himself spent most of his time on an armored train on the line Berdiansk-Chaplino-Sinelnikovo. He expected the Denikin counter-offensive to come from Taganrog, instead it came from Losovaia. It was so unexpected that of Makhno's 300 *tachankas*, only two had returned the fire. In this engagement the Terek regiment captured about two hundred *tachankas*, horses and plunder. Though the Makhnovtse were either killed or escaped, about 400 women they had with them were captured. Makhno's own sheepskin coat with the embroidered "Batko Makhno" label was found on one carriage.

Both sides won and lost engagements, but irreparable damage had been done to Denikin by Makhno's breakthrough. Denikin, who had planned to reach Moscow by December, was now forced back by the Red Army and his retreat developed almost into a rout. The alarm and terror which the Makhnovtse had spread during their sweep through Southern Ukraine had mounted steadily, and with good reason. Only isolated statistics are available, but in every county through which Makhno moved, people were shot. In the Sagradovka *volost* 200 people were shot in three days, in the Nikolaipol *volost* 119 people were shot, seventy-six of them, or the entire male population over sixteen years old and some women, in one village. When Makhno had approached Taganrog, where Denikin had his headquarters, the terror-stricken administration personnel had fled to Rostov, Kharkov or in any other direction away from Makhno. Petrovich's account has the report of an eye-witness who walked from Alexandrovsk (Zaporozhye) to Chaplino, where he boarded the train for Berdiansk. He writes that though Denikin's forces were nominally still in control of the railway, the name of Makhno was in the air and every station was deserted. When he checked into a hotel at Berdiansk he was assured that Makhno

was nowhere near. At night he heard cannon fire. Makhno was in the process of taking over the city. He describes the occupation in these words:

I was asleep when I was awakened by artillery fire. I rushed out. The street was a scene of madness. Soldiers ripped off their epaulets or threw away their uniforms and weapons, and cavalry rode in every direction not knowing where to go. With some difficulty I made my way to the shore¹⁶ and saw that the cannonade came from the cemetery and the fishing village of Liski. Soldiers gathered at the port, which was under fire, but in the distance you could see the lights of ships which were to evacuate them. In the harbor lay a coast guard cutter and near it was a tank which returned the fire. The boat, loaded with people, began moving away from shore when it turned over, spilling its load and cargo into the sea. The Volunteers fought tenaciously, but by eleven o'clock the Makhnovtse were in control of the port. The fishermen of Liski, organized by Makhno, had captured the artillery of the Whites and immediately began shelling the city. For two days the Makhnovtse combed the city for officers and policemen who were then shot. They employed the help of street urchins who received 100 rubles per head. The population hid in the houses and stayed off the streets. On the third day Makhno's commander arrived in the city, and a day later Makhno himself and his staff. The executions ceased and there even appeared a newspaper, *Free Berdiansk*. Soon thousands of wagons and carts arrived from the surrounding villages and emptied the stores . . .¹⁷

But despite his astounding success in guerilla warfare, Makhno had no plans for the organization of the territory he occupied. When, at the end of December, 1919, the Red Army appeared, the Makhnovtse gave up Alexandrovsk (Zaporozhye), one of the last cities still in their hands. "The soldiers of the two armies," writes Voline, who was with the Makhnovtse, "greeted each other fraternally and

¹⁶ Berdiansk is a seaport on the Sea of Azov.

¹⁷ *Nedilia*, No. 43, 1935.

a meeting took place at which the combatants shook hands and declared that they would fight together against the common enemy — capitalism and counter-revolution.” Then Makhno entrenched himself once more in Gulai-Polye. He expected the fraternization between his men and the Red Army would draw men to his side, but the Bolsheviks were not prepared to repeat Denikin’s mistake and expose their hinterland to Makhno. A week passed and then Makhno received orders from Moscow to move his force against Poland. Makhno refused, claiming, truthfully, that he was ill and that half of his men were sick with typhus, but he also knew that severing him from his native peasants would spell his end. But Moscow was relentless and now the hunter became the hunted. Since the Bolsheviks feared that their war-weary Ukrainian and Russian troops might become easy victims of Makhnovite propaganda, they employed mostly Chinese and Latvian regiments against Makhno.

All through the year 1920 and even later (writes Arshinov) the Soviet authorities carried on the fight against the Makhnovists, pretending to be fighting banditry. They engaged in intense agitation to persuade the country of this, using their press and all their means of propaganda to uphold the slander both within and outside Russia. At the same time, numerous divisions of sharpshooters and cavalry were sent against the insurgents, for the purpose of destroying the movement and pushing its members towards the gulf of real banditry. The Makhnovist prisoners were pitilessly put to death, their families — fathers, mothers, wives, relatives — were tortured and killed, their property was pillaged or confiscated, their houses were destroyed. All this was practiced on a large scale.¹⁸

Constantly pursued and harassed, Makhno’s following dwindled, and even among these many were untrustworthy. The Bolsheviks infiltrated agents with the object of assassinating Makhno, and, for a price, even some of his own men became involved in these plots. Though these plotters,

¹⁸ Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*, 184.

according to Makhnovite accounts,¹⁹ were exposed and shot, they were an ever present additional threat to Makhno. One respondent, a boy at the time, recalls how in the summer of 1920 a troop of about 120 Makhnovtse arrived at the village of Kusmitski, near Piatikhatka.²⁰ They seized a man suspected of being a Bolshevik agent and shot him. Then an attack by a Red Army unit surprised them. It was so unexpected that the Makhnovtse even unhitched the horses and left the *tachankas* behind in order to get away faster. Riding, sometimes two men on a horse and others hanging on to the horse's tail, they attempted to flee, but were overtaken and cut down. The village boys collected the plunder which had been left on the streets, and the writer mentions the surprise of his friend when he inspected a large hat and found part of the head of a Makhnovite in it.

But fortune was to smile once more, and for the last time, on Nestor Makhno. The tired generalissimo of the Volunteer Army, Denikin, was replaced by the more aggressive General Wrangel. He succeeded in infusing a last flicker of life into the army, which left its Crimean sanctuary and captured Berdiansk and Alexandrovsk (and Gulai-Polye) before it entrenched itself at Chortitza. Wrangel made an attempt to unite the divergent political views to support a drive on the Red Army. He even sent a message, signed by Colonel Eugene Konovalets, to Makhno, offering terms for an alliance. But Makhno had his pride, and, to impress the rank and file that he was not prepared to collaborate with Wrangel, he had the messenger, a young man, shot. Several respondents, who had been with Wrangel's army, insist, however, that for weeks there had been a truce between the Wrangelitse and Makhnovtse.

Evidence in support of this is the Bolshevik readiness to resume once more negotiations with Makhno which, by October 15, 1920, resulted in a firm agreement (see: Appendix). Later Makhno was to recall that Moscow had been unusually friendly and had dispatched the wily Hungarian

¹⁹ Arshinov, *Geschichte der Machno-Bewegung*, 204-206.

²⁰ Peter Harder, Abbotsford, B.C., Canada, in a letter dated November 28, 1963.

revolutionary, Bela Kun, to visit him at Ulianovka.²¹ On behalf of the Communist Central Committee Bela Kun presented him with a collection of one hundred photographs of the executive of the III. International, "dedicated to the champion of the toilers' and peasants' revolution, General *Batko* Makhno." Bela Kun also inquired whether Moscow should send a surgeon to look after Makhno's needs.

Makhno succumbed. The decision to side with the Red Army was made easier as Wrangel's drive was soon spent and the "Whites" were once more pushed into the Crimea. While the pursuing Red Army stopped at Perekop, on the narrow isthmus leading to the Crimea, its ally, the Makhno army, commanded by Simeon Karetnik, crossed the shallow frozen Siwash, about twenty-five *versts* east of Perekop and invaded the Crimea. Rushing ahead of the Red Army, Karetnik's troops attacked and occupied Simferopol on November 14. The Wrangel army and many civilians were evacuated from the port of Sevastopol, and the city itself fell to the Red Army on November 15. The fate of General Wrangel,²² the 130,000 evacuated refugees, and the tens of thousands of soldiers and sympathizers who were left behind is a woeful story, but perhaps less tragic than the fate which overtook the Makhnovtse.

When the triumph of the Red Army was assured, Red Army General Frunze announced, on November 23, that with the termination of the Civil War all military units other than those of the Red Army were to be dissolved. Resistance was expected from Karetnik as well as from Makhno, who had remained behind in Gulai-Polye. The Red Army, without a day's delay, attacked the Makhno army in the Crimea and, except for one cavalry unit, wiped it out. The one unit, a troop of 1500 men under Marchenko, escaped and fled to Gulai-Polye, where, when it arrived, it had been reduced to 250 men. Karetnik, the commander of the Makhno army in the Crimea, was shot at Mariupol,

²¹ Makhno, "An Open Letter to the (Moscow) Central Committee," *Delo Truda*, Nos. 37-38, 1928.

²² Peter Nikolaevich Wrangel (1878-1928) succeeded Denikin as commander-in-chief on April 4, 1920. He died in exile, in Belgium. Brinkley provides the following statistics for the Crimean evacuation: 126 ships and 150,000 people, including 50,000 combat troops, 40,000 rear military personnel, 3000 military school cadets, 6000 wounded and 50,000 civilians. George A. Brinkley, *The Volunteer Army and Allied Intervention in South Russia, 1917-1921*, 271.

where he had been summoned by Red Army headquarters under the pretext to attend a military meeting.

The Red Army now encircled Gulai-Polye itself. Through sheer luck Makhno and a small band succeeded in breaking out. For more than half a year he and his loyal followers roved through the country. Makhno was repeatedly wounded and spent much of his time flat in a carriage. As he himself writes more than once he owed his life to his "beloved Lewis boys" (operators of the Lewis machine-gun), who provided for his escape by selling their lives as dearly as they could. In June, 1921, his associate Tchus was killed in the course of an engagement with Red Army troops. Wounded, plagued by lack of food and drink and ammunition, Makhno made a dash for the Rumanian border. On August 28, 1921, he succeeded in crossing the Dniester river.

7. Nestor Makhno, the Exile

Makhno did not cross into Rumania alone. He had with him several of his followers. Galina Kuzmenko, who had been married to him since the summer of 1919, arrived a little later. The Rumanian government permitted Makhno and his wife to live in a private home in Bucharest, while Makhno's men were interned in camps.¹ One source implies that Makhno was not without means as one of his men, Koselsky, had succeeded in transferring some money and valuables from Russia to Bessarabia. At first the Rumanian government vacillated between sending Makhno out of the country or providing political asylum for him. As a result of the First World War Rumania had gained all of Bessarabia from Russia. The Red Army, flushed with its recent victories, was not yet demobilized, and Moscow might decide to press its claim to it.² In such case it would be useful for Rumania to have for an ally an experienced guerilla leader like Makhno, especially since Bessarabia had a large Ukrainian minority. But the crisis passed. Since providing a domicile to Makhno could be interpreted as a provocation by the Soviets, the Rumanian authorities encouraged him to leave the country, and Makhno left for Poland on April 11, 1922.

Poland had fought its own war with the Soviet Union, and though the two countries were now at peace, after the Treaty of Riga, signed on March 18, 1921, the Ukrainian populations of both Russia and Poland continued to wage a guerilla war, especially in the U.S.S.R. where the under-

¹ *Nedilia*, No. 46, 1935; Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*, 216.

² Bessarabia, now known as the Republic of Moldavia, became a state of the U.S.S.R. in 1945.

ground struggle continued until 1924.⁴ The Polish government interned Makhno and his party. Besides his few followers, Makhno had with him his wife and daughter, born to him in Rumania. The camp in which they were placed also held Ukrainian nationalist internees, but the relationship between the two parties was less than cordial.

It is in the nature of prison camps that rumors, charges and counter-charges divide camps into hostile factions, and Makhno's presence did not contribute towards camp harmony. One rumor, based on intercepted mail, had Makhno conspire with the Soviet government, and that he planned to lead the Galician (Ukrainian) peasants in an insurrection against Poland. Now the Galicians (Ukrainians) were less acquainted with the more destructive activities of Makhno than the Ukrainian nationalists, and there is evidence that they were not unfriendly to him. The charges consequently developed into a court case in which Makhno, however, was found innocent. But the Poles unquestionably found Makhno's presence in the country a liability. With its large hostile Ukrainian minority, Poland feared that a person with the leadership qualities of Makhno could provide the spark for a civil war in which the Soviets might intervene.⁵ There is no source to indicate whether Makhno left Poland voluntarily or was "invited" to leave.

Little is known about his brief stops at Danzig and Berlin, where he stayed before moving to Paris. In Göttingen, Germany, I interviewed Sister Frieda Franz, a former nurse at the Danzig City Hospital. A Mennonite, she had heard from Mennonites in transit from Russia to Canada about the activities of Makhno, when, to her surprise she found that man among her patients. Makhno was suffering from tuberculosis and had been brought in by the police, who regularly checked transients for communicable diseases. He spoke no German and Sister Franz did not recall any details except that he had been a very sick man.

Cf. *Ukraine: A Concise Encyclopedia*, Vol. I, 768; see also: Alexander Udovychenko, *Ukraina u Vini sa Derzhavnist* (Ukraine in the War for Independence), Winnipeg, 1954. 3 Vols.

⁵ The "Polish" Ukraine was taken over by the Soviet Union in 1945 and became part of the Ukrainian S.S.R.

Makhno's frustrating years of exile are described by his associate, Voline:

Sick, and suffering bitterly from his many wounds, ignorant of the country's language and adapting himself with difficulty to surroundings which were so different from those he was accustomed to, he led in Paris a life which was as difficult materially as it was psychologically. His existence abroad was little more than a long and miserable agony, against which he was powerless to struggle. His friends helped him support the weight of these sad years of decline.⁵

In the early 1920's May Picqueray, a militant anarcho-syndicalist, had formed in Paris a small mutual aid organization to help emigrant "comrades." When Makhno and his family arrived, she took them under her wing. "I sent them to some friends in the country," she writes in a letter, "where they remained for several days, after which we found for them a small place to stay in Paris."⁶ Mme Picqueray also organized, together with a friend, a "Makhno Committee" to solicit funds in France, Spain, but especially in the United States. Although he continued to live in great poverty, the monies collected provided Makhno with a very modest income for the rest of his life. Occasionally Makhno would work as a laborer at a plant or in a factory. Illness was one reason why he never held a job very long, and he was frequently ill. At other times his old wounds would trouble him. Another reason was his inability to adjust to the alien environment, so different from his own. He never succeeded learning sufficient French to communicate coherently in that language. His approach to master French was unique, he set out to memorize the dictionary.⁷ His wife and daughter opened a small grocery store in Vincennes. There were long periods when Makhno and his wife lived separate lives, and though Makhno loved his daughter, she was almost a stranger to him.

Makhno devoted much of his time to writing a history of his struggles and of the revolution in the Ukraine. In

⁵ Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*, 216.

⁶ Letter dated Paris, March 14, 1967.

⁷ Mme Ida Mett, in a letter dated Paris, April 30, 1967.

time three small volumes appeared in print, the first in Russian and French, the second and third in Russian only, after his death. Poorly educated, Makhno wrote laboriously and was unable to complete his account. But he was obsessed with the idea of completing it and even on his way to the hospital, where he died, he took with him a "bag full of papers." Later these were to disappear mysteriously.* His former associates and "theoreticians", Arshinov and Voline, who, on leaving Russia, had gone to Berlin to edit a Russian-language anarchist paper (Arshinov's history of the Makhno movement first appeared in German and was published in Berlin, in 1923), now moved to Paris where Arshinov started the Russian anarchist organ *Delo Truda* (The Cause of Labor). Makhno contributed many letters and appeals to its columns, and for three years he was assisted in his writing by his friend, Ida Mett-Lazarevich.

Makhno felt most at home in Paris when he could be in a club or restaurant together with friends and fellow-anarchists. Then new plans would be laid and old skirmishes and feuds would be fought all over again over a bottle of French wine. The anarchists, including Makhno, hated Lenin and Stalin, but found Trotsky most odious, perhaps because so many knew him from his days in Paris and regarded him as a renegade." Trotsky and Stalin had been

* Letter from Daniel Guérin, dated Paris, April 25, 1967.

" Mme Picqueray's letter contains the following informative passage:

"Makhno did not like Trotsky and with reason. For Trotsky, the 'superman' as he is called today by his followers in France and elsewhere, inordinately proud and spiteful, the polemicist and orator and military dictator contributed to the aberration of the Revolution. This man could not tolerate the existence of a free people, and an organization following the principles of Proudhon and Kropotkin rather than those of K. Marx. And for that reason he did not hesitate to have hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians killed, men, women and children and use the most perfidious methods to discredit and destroy Makhno in the eyes of the people and the soldiers, attributing to him the characteristics of a bandit, an anti-Semite, etc. Lenin was in complete agreement with Trotsky in this manner.

"I personally knew Trotsky in Paris, before the Revolution. He would meet with the revolutionary students, of whom I was one, at the Café la Rotonde. I considered him intelligent but Machiavellian, ready to do anything to attain his goals. I saw him again in 1923, at the Second Syndicist Congress in Moscow, where I was a delegate with a mandate to oppose our merger with the Third International. In Berlin I made contact with A. Berkman and E. Goldman, who had returned from Russia and had given me numerous addresses of comrades living in hiding. I succeeded in contacting some, but others were in prisons.

singled out for the Order of the Red Banner in November, 1920, for their part in the Red Army's success in destroying Wrangel (and Makhno). Now the anarchists had the satisfaction of seeing Trotsky humbled by Stalin, and hoped that the latter's turn would follow. Apparently Makhno, however, did not retain the same animosity for another adversary, now his fellow-exile in Paris, Petlura, though many other anarchists, especially Jews, regarded him as a pogromist.¹⁰ One evening Makhno, May Picqueray, Alexander Berkman, Schwarzbart and others were eating at a Russian restaurant on the rue de l'École de Medicine when Petlura entered. Schwarzbart, who came from Odessa, turned pale, but said nothing. Petlura was shot the following day, presumably by Schwarzbart. According to Ida Mett, Makhno expressed to her strong disapproval of the assassination.¹¹

During the Revolution and later in Paris Makhno was often accused of being an anti-Semite and he spent much of his time refuting this charge. In a proclamation, during

Among the latter, Mollie Steimer and her companion Senya Flechin, interned at a camp at Arkhangelsk, were scheduled for deportation to the Solovietzky Islands. I decided to make use of my position as a delegate to demand an audience with Trotsky. I obtained it after eight hours, and visited him at his office in the Kremlin. Because of the experiences of a previous delegation, our friends Lepetit, Vergeat and R. Lefebvre, who disappeared and who, we were to learn later, had drowned under mysterious circumstances while trying to return to France, a companion insisted that he accompany me.

Trotsky received me very cordially, walked towards me, smiling and extending his hand, but I pointedly put my hands in my pockets. He asked me why and I was unable to resist telling him that I could not shake the hand of him who had massacred Makhno's men and who was also responsible for the events at Kronstadt. To my great surprise he was not angry, at least if he was he did not show it. It was not very diplomatic on my part, as I had come to request the liberation of Mollie and Senya, but at that time I had a rather impetuous disposition and was agitated. I explained to him the reasons for my visit and told him that I had firmly decided not to leave Russia until they were free. My request was granted and I had the pleasure of seeing my friends freed and received them in Paris a short time later. He (Trotsky) did not do this for humanitarian reasons, for he was hard and ruthless, but the Lepetit-Vergeat affair had created a stir among the anarchists and syndicalists, and Trotsky was interested at that time to launch a new campaign for the support of the workers."

¹⁰ Margolin, a Jew and a member of the Petlura government, places the pogroms in the Kherson province on "criminal elements" which the Ukrainian government was too weak to stop. See: Arnold D. Margolin, *From a political Diary*, pp. 38-39.

¹¹ Simon Petlura was assassinated in 1926. In checking the police files I gained the impression that the police took only a mild interest in the feuds between the rival emigrant factions. Schwarzbart was acquitted by the Paris Court of Assizes.

the Civil War, the Bolsheviks lumped together the *Makhnovshchina*, the *Petlurovshchina*, banditry and anti-Semitism as allies of the *kulaks*. Makhno, in a proclamation which was widely circulated, admitted that there had indeed been cases in which the Insurgents had staged pogroms. He blamed "criminal elements" who had infiltrated his movement for the atrocities and appealed to his followers to remove such "stains and blemishes" from their ranks.¹² Makhno's language against anti-Semitism had been so strong that all he could do was to reiterate it again and again.

The charge that Makhno was anti-Semitic was particularly resented by his Jewish supporters. In an interview one of them stated that Makhno could not entirely divorce himself from his peasant prejudices, such as anti-Semitism, but these should not be held against him. But even after his death articles appeared in the Anarchist press marshalling evidence that Makhno and his movement had not been anti-Semitic, that: 1) among his friends and supporters, in Gulai-Polye as in Paris, there had been a long list of Jews: Arshinov, Alexander Berkman, Voline, Schwarzbart, Ida Mett-Lazarevich, Krasnopol'sky, Aron Baron, Wishnevski and others; 2) the Anarchist *Nabat* organization in the Ukraine (Voline and Arshinov) consisted largely of Jews and remained loyal to Makhno to the end; 3) the commander of Makhno's artillery, Schneider, the vice-chairman of the Gulai-Polye *rayon* soviet Kohan and other officials were Jews; 4) the Makhnovite newspapers *Puit k Svobode* (Road to Freedom) and *Golos Makhnovtse* (Voice of the Makhnovtse) often carried articles by Makhno in which he condemned anti-Semitism; 5) one meeting of *volost* representatives held at Gulai-Polye on March 7, 1919 was directed against hate campaigns; 6) one reason Grigoriev was shot was that he had said many of the socialists and Bolsheviks who governed Ukraine were those "who had also crucified Christ,"; 7) finally, a commission consisting of Social Revolutionary (SR) representatives (Steinberg), Bundists, Mensheviks (Aronson) and Anarchists

¹² Both proclamations are reprinted under the heading "Documents for the Study of the Revolutionary Movement in Russia," in *Volna* (The Wave), No. 58, October, 1924.

had found that there was no evidence that the Makhno army as such committed pogroms, and that pogroms were committed not only by "White bandits" but also by the Red Army.¹³

It may be relevant to point out that Jews played a very important role in all revolutionary activities in Russia. Suffering from discrimination, many Jews saw no alternative for gaining recognition but the overthrow of the tsarist regime and the defeat of counter-revolutionary parties. The result was a disproportionately large number of Jewish leaders were found in the ranks of the Anarchists, Social Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. This in turn sometimes contributed to anti-Semitism among parties dedicated to combat it. The problem was periodically taken up by the Politburo. At its meeting on April 18, 1919, with Lenin, Krestinski, Stalin and Trotsky present, there was a discussion of "Comrade Trotsky's statement that Latvians and Jews constituted a vast percentage of those employed in Cheka frontal zone units, Executive Committees in frontal zones and the rear, and in Soviet establishments at the centre; that the percentage of them at the front itself was a comparatively small one; that strong chauvinist agitation on this subject was being carried on among Red Army men and finding certain response there; and that, in Comrade Trotsky's opinion, reallocation of Party personnel was essential to achieve a more even distribution of Party workers of all nationalities between the front and the rear."¹⁴

Certainly his Jewish friends in Paris behaved most compassionately to him. "In 1932 I spoke with Mrs. Maria Korn," writes Mme Ida Mett, "who entertained Makhno often, and she described the miserable poverty in which he lived; she asked me to make an X-ray examination of him because his lungs were getting worse." When Maria Isidorovna Goldschmid, better known as Maria Korn, for years a friend of Kropotkin, committed suicide a few

¹³ Cf. L. Lipotkin, "Nestor Makhno," *Probuzhdenie*, Nos. 50-51, 1934; G. Maksimov and Voline, "An Answer to the Slanderer," *Delo Truda-Probuzhdenie*, Sept., 1956; Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*, 219-220.

¹⁴ *The Trotsky Papers*, Vol. I, pp. 261 and 363.

months before Makhno died, Makhno paid her a glowing tribute in an Anarchist paper.

One of the more unsavory aspects of the Anarchist party in Paris was the bitter feuds which were carried out among the leaders. In one of these fratricidal disagreements Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman and Voline set off a bitter campaign against Arshinov. Though Makhno, intellectually less versatile than his friends and by now less important, tried to remain aloof, he initially sided with Arshinov. They felt that the Anarchist ranks were too divided. But when in 1931 Arshinov advocated an Anarchist policy of recognition of the Stalin regime, Makhno deserted him. In 1934 Arshinov, frustrated by the dissension in the Anarchist camp, went to Russia and publicly endorsed the Soviet government. Three years later he disappeared in one of the Stalin purges.

Plagued by party and family feuds, Makhno sought solace in drink. Respondents do not agree whether Makhno was an alcoholic or not, but one of his closest friends and defenders admits that "a single glass of wine would cause a great effect on him." During his last years he constantly thought back about his home, and to Mme Mett he once related a dream which had him back in the Ukraine, an ordinary peasant, married to a village girl, and in possession of a carriage and good horses. He was very tired of life and when he heard that his friend, Rogdaiev, had died in exile and was buried behind the Caspian Sea, he composed a tribute which he ended with these words:

And you, dear friend, comrade and brother, sleep,
even though it is a heavy sleep with no awakening, it
is a peaceful sleep.¹⁵

Makhno had planned to send the testimonial to an anarchist paper, but he lacked the money for the postage, and it was mailed by his wife after his death.

On July 25, 1934, at six o'clock in the morning, Nestor Makhno died at the Tenon hospital. About 500 mourners — French, Italian, Spanish and Russian anarchists and revolu-

¹⁵ Makhno, "At the New Grave of T. N. Rogdaiev," *Probuzhdenie*, Nos. 52-53, 1934.

tionaries — followed the plain coffin to the Père-Lachaise cemetery. The body was then burned at the crematorium and the urn holding the ashes was marked by a name plate. As Meleshko has pointed out, the hundreds of mourners included only two Ukrainians, his wife and his daughter.

8. The Man and the Legend

The life of Makhno, born in a peasant's cottage in Gulai-Polye and buried in a cemetery which at one time had been the estate of the Jesuit confessor to Louis XIV, was colorful enough. His years at the Butyrki prison would have been a credit card during and after the Revolution, which, together with his spectacular military exploits, might well have placed him beside the dashing Marshal Budyenny as a hero of the Red Army, taking review from Lenin's tomb on Red Square, if he had subordinated himself to the Bolshevik party and converted to its ideology. Instead he chose to challenge Lenin and Trotsky, as well as Denikin and Wrangel, Skoropadsky and Petlura, and anyone else who appeared on the scene. But the legend which was spun around him, even before his death, surpassed his own dreams. To many Ukrainians, and Russians,¹ Makhno and his *Makhnovshchina* came to represent the ultimate ideal of freedom, a return to the unencumbered free life of the Zaporozhian Cossack *sich*, where every man lived in a way and manner that pleased him, and where the only authority and discipline to which he had to submit was the categorical imperative inside himself. Sufficient time has passed to permit an evaluation of the man and the legend Makhno.

Some of the most penetrating insights into the man Makhno are provided by his two close associates and defenders of the Makhno movement, Arshinov and Voline. Arshinov says he knew three Makhnos: the Makhno in Butyrki prison, the Makhno who headed a small band of partisans, and Makhno, the commander of the Insurgent

¹ According to Sir John Maynard (*Russia in Flux*, 211) even the Russian Alexander Herzen regarded the Zaporozhian *sich* as the most suitable form of state for the Slavic people.

army. Arshinov also knew Makhno the exile, but since he was only the shell of his former self, Arshinov mercifully passes over this phase. The Makhno of Butyrki prison, where he spent many years with Arshinov, was excitable, intensely proud of being an Anarchist, a "loner" who spent most of his time writing proclamations and poetry. Makhno, the early partisan leader, had developed considerable self-assurance. He would discuss a course of action with his associates, withdraw and make a quick decision which might make the difference between life and death for all of them. Moreover, he had become "immensely popular among the peasants" (Arshinov). But the great transformation, according to Arshinov, took place after the spring of 1919. He had become a strange, different person, displaying unusual cunning, will power and "colossal reserves of energy;" he would spend hours in the saddle, or on a carriage when wounded, work on his plans until one o'clock at night, and between five and six in the morning he would make the rounds, tapping on the windows to wake his *staff*. Between these strenuous hours he found time to be present at some peasant wedding or anniversary celebration.

Obstacles spurred him on to greater efforts. Friends could be killed around him, but he remained calm as though it did not concern him. An observer could have taken his unusual composure under such circumstances for the composure of one demented, writes Arshinov, "but to the initiated it reflected Makhno's will to win." As to his followers, Makhno's peasant cunning, his talent for war, and his resourcefulness made him a hero. He was their *batko*, who did not disdain to share a brandy with them, who fired their imagination by an outburst of earthy oratory and who took the lead in an attack. Makhno's person provided the cement that bound the movement together, and his humblest followers as well as his commanders sometimes felt "the strong hand of the leader." By 1920 an additional name of endearment was added to *batko*, it was *maly*, "The Little One."

But even the uncritical Arshinov, who wrote his account in 1921 when the events were almost too fresh in his memory, found that Makhno had some flaws. that he

lacked a basic education and insight, that the movement which he led required its own social-revolutionary ideological framework, which Makhno was unable to supply. Furthermore, Makhno, even in times of serious crises, often displayed a "heedlessness," a "frivolity" which was "incompatible with the gravity of the situation."

While Voline concurs with Arshinov on many points and concedes that Makhno had the traits of a leader and that he was better suited than anyone else to head the movement because "he was simpler, bolder, more comradely and more of a peasant," he also draws attention to facets of Makhno's character which made him not only the terror of Ukraine but also the terror of his followers. "His greatest fault," writes Voline, "was certainly the abuse of alcohol."² Under its influence he would become "over-excited, mischievous, unjust, intractable and violent." "Often, during my stay with the army," continues the same writer "I left him in despair, unable to get anything reasonable out of him even when matters of some importance were concerned, because of his abnormal condition. (At certain periods, indeed, it became almost his 'normal' condition!)" In a letter to me Mme Mett disputes Voline's characterization: "You might say that he drank in the same proportion that all Ukrainian peasants drink — that is, on such occasions as festivals, celebrations, etc." But there is overwhelming evidence that Voline knew Makhno better than Mme Mett. Though the latter also came from Russia, she had not met Makhno until he came to Paris.

Makhno's second flaw, which, according to Voline, he shared with "many of his intimates," was their "behaviour towards women." He refers to their indulgence as "shameful" and "odious" and speaks of "orgies" and "acts of debauchery" which not only "produced a demoralizing effect," but also "led inevitably to other excesses and abuses." Voline also speaks of a "camarilla about Makhno" which made the decisions and ignored the elected council. He paints a picture of a drunk Makhno entering a council

² Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*, 226. The anarchist journalist Augustin Souchy, who writes that he associated almost daily with Makhno when the latter spent some time in Berlin, maintains that he "never saw Makhno drunk." *Der Spiegel*, 47, 1969.

session, with drawn revolver, and pointing it at the gathering. Voline hastens to add that this behaviour was compensated by other qualities, but it is the recklessly and irresponsibly violent Makhno whom tens of thousands of people of the Ukraine of all nationalities, classes and occupations, not excluding many humble peasants, remember.

Since in Voline's description of Makhno we have the analysis of a sympathetic associate, but not one of his intimates, as we shall see later, there is not much for his adversaries to add. Physically Makhno was a small man, about five feet four inches, weighing less than 150 pounds.³ In 1919 his clean-shaven face already had a sickly sallow complexion, the mark of the consumptive and the man who had spent years behind prison walls. "On first impression," says one account, "he did not look like an *ataman* at all; he looked too weakly and thin." Describing the man she learned to know in Paris, Mme Mett said that if one didn't know who he was, one could pass close to him without noticing him. He was, however, a vain man. In the earlier years he wore his dark hair to his shoulders, and he and his friends would visit the hairdresser and have their hair set. Though Makhno was not the dandy that his close friend Tchus was, he liked stylish clothes. When Meleshko visited him in Gulai-Poyle he wore the uniform and crest of a law student.

When the Makhnovtse occupied Katerinoslav and began to plunder the city they did not even miss the museums and laboratories, where they drank the methyl alcohol and stole the mineral collections, thinking the latter might contain precious stones. The students were especially aroused when they witnessed the mistreatment of a fellow-student, an invalid, and they sent a delegation of student anarchists to Makhno. A member of the delegation many years later described the meeting in an Anarchist journal:

"Makhno did not act like a *batko* ("Father"). We were afraid, but Makhno shook hands with us, and was very

³Mme Picqueray, in her letter, writes: "Makhno was about 1 m 65 cm tall. When I knew him in 1923 he did not weigh more than 60 kgs."

friendly. I took a close look at the room of Nestor Ivanovich. He sat behind a large desk, on the desk lay a pistol and two hand-grenades and a box with the field-telephone with wires going into the next room and from there into the garden. Near the desk was a small table with a pot of tea, glasses and the left-overs of breakfast. Makhno was small, but his hair was a regular mane. He had on a trench-coat with shoulder straps. An adjutant remained in the room to take notes.”¹

The students presented their complaint and Makhno explained how difficult it was to keep his men from plunder, though he had many of them hanged for this offense. He promised that he would look into the students' complaint, if the students in turn would endorse anarchism. Neither side was troubled with the promise for long; Makhno left the city after a few days. The same writer, however, also mentions Tchus's unusual mode of dress: a brilliant corsair's uniform, a sailor's cap, a Caucasian dagger on the side and behind his belt pistols and hand grenades.

Makhno appears to have had a yearning for the unusual, the exotic, and his marriage to Galina Andreyevna Kusmenko provided an appropriate occasion for one of those colorful celebrations he enjoyed. We have the account of Fedor Meleshko, whose wife and Galina Kusmenko had been students at a teachers' seminary at Dobrovelichkino.² Later Galina Andreyevna went to Gulai-Polye, teaching Ukrainian history and Ukrainian at the newly formed Ukrainian State Gymnasium there. Her first letters to her friends had carried an ominous note: “A bandit by the name of Makhno has made his appearance here. He raids the homes of wealthy people, the clergy and the intelligentsia. He robs and kills. We are very much afraid of him. As soon as darkness sets in we stay away from the streets. We lock the doors and close the shutters to blackout our homes.” Then, quite unexpectedly, in the summer of 1919, Makhno married Galina. The wedding took place in Pishchaney-Brod, where Galina Andreyevna's

¹ B.T., “Remembering Makhno”, *Delo Truda-Probuzhdenie*, Nos. 41-42, 1953.

² F. Meleshko, “Nestor Makhno ta yoho anarkhia.” *Chervona Kalina* (1935). Dobrovelichkino is a village in the Yelisovetgrad okrug, Kherson.

father was the village *uriadnik* (official). Despite their anarchist convictions Makhno and his bride wanted to have the wedding take place in church. The "sons of the *batko* ("Father")" had spread carpets from the Kusmenko home to the church, a distance the couple walked on foot. All the brandy in the district was "mobilized" and there was a celebration such as the village had never seen and would not likely see again. There was music, dancing and merry-making to mark the occasion on which "the sons gave away their father in marriage."

Some time after the wedding Galina invited Meleshko and his wife to dine with her and Makhno. The invitation was more like a summons, though it also contained the assurance of a safe-conduct. They were courteously received at the Makhno home, where they had cherry-filled *vareniki* with honey for dinner. No drinks were served, Makhno explaining that he did not touch liquor and that he had outlawed drinking in his army. Meleshko expresses the opinion that from time to time Makhno apparently turned teetotaler, but that these periods did not last long. He also mentions that Galina was by a head-length taller than her husband. Makhno did most of the talking, and his favorite topic was Makhno, according to Meleshko. All accounts agree that Galina Andreyevna was a genuine Ukrainian idealist and patriot, and she may have felt that by marrying Makhno she could interest him in Ukrainian aspirations for independence. At the same time she unquestionably enjoyed her role as *Matushka* ("Mother") Makhno. She would make her visits in a coach drawn by four black horses, and these would be covered, as was the custom in Russia, by white silk nets.

In later years Galina Kusmenko denied that she and Makhno had had a church wedding, but this may have been because among the sophisticated anarchists of Paris a church wedding would seem out of place. Nor was Galina the only woman in the life of Makhno, either in Gulai-Polye or in Paris. Even the diary of Fedora Gaenko, published in the Soviet Union to discredit Makhno as a harmonica-playing drunkard, may very well have been written by a former marital comrade of Makhno.

Perhaps Makhno's most outstanding characteristic was

his uncontrolled impulsiveness. Arshinov relates how Makhno, travelling to Gulai-Poyle to meet Lev Kamenev, stepped out of the railway coach at Vershnei-Tokmak and saw a crude billboard reading "Kill the Jews! Save the Revolution! Long Live *Batko Makhno!*" Infuriated, Makhno demanded that the responsible culprit be brought before him. The young lad, one of Makhno's followers, was found and taken before Makhno. He admitted that he had tacked up the placard, but had not written it. Makhno accepted no excuses; the man was shot.⁶ Even in exile Makhno retained his excitable temperament, and in a letter to me, Mr. Guérin, the French writer, says that it was generally supposed that a wound on Galina's throat had been inflicted by Makhno. These examples are not isolated cases. Repeatedly Makhno would make unpremeditated and hasty decisions affecting even the survival of his followers. The only comfort they had was a willingness on the part of Makhno to share the risks. He was no coward. But his own men lived in constant fear of him. Two of his commanders, Bogdanov and Lashkovitz, were executed for war profiteering. They had collected requisitions in the name of the army and spent the money on themselves, an offense which was rather common among the Makhnovtse.

We have no medical reports on Makhno, but Meleshko, who had a chance to observe him over a period, says that Makhno was possibly mentally ill, and that his "miracles" — all his successes were of a very temporary nature — can be partly attributed to this state. Meleshko also observed that Makhno could tolerate no equal around him, and since he was accountable to no one he would liquidate anyone who remotely challenged his authority. And indeed, at no time did Makhno have close friends. He had companions who fought and drank with him and he had his "theoreticians" whom he bullied and openly insulted, possibly because of a deep-seated feeling of inferiority.

Ostensibly the whole Makhno movement was directed by a Revolutionary War Council composed of twelve men. Among the villagers they were sometimes known as "Monk Nestor's Twelve Apostles." Initially the entire group

⁶ Arshinov, *Geschichte der Machno-Bewegung*, 260-261.

was made up of swordsmen who were at their best when they could head an expedition and raid some village or *khutor*. They would meet on the village green or on the square before the church when the weather permitted, or in the school or some larger house when it rained or when it was too cold to meet outside. Theoretically Makhno acted on orders of this Revolutionary Council, but as Karpo, a council member, once remarked to Meleshko, if anyone dared to question Makhno's orders he would have been shot. Later the membership of the Council changed somewhat when Voline, Archinov, Baron and others were added. While the Revolutionary War Council gained in respectability by this, its function remained unchanged. It was a rubber-stamp for Makhno.

Voline and Arshinov, by far the most intelligent of Makhno's followers, worked tirelessly as cultural officers, publishing papers and manifestos. Voline especially seems to have been obsessed with a deep hatred of Trotsky, with whom he had a running feud in his paper, *Nabat* (The Alarm), Trotsky replying in kind through the Bolshevik press. There were also numerous meetings, held before village peasants or in the army, at which Makhno would generally give the main talk while his council stood near the platform.⁷ Makhno, who would become very emotional but was otherwise no great orator, would develop his theme in short, staccato sentences. His message was that people were by nature anarchists, and that anarchy was the state for which Ukrainians especially were suited, that cities were a violation of natural law, that man should live as a social being in villages on the steppes or in forests, that Denikin as well as the Bolsheviks were counter-revolutionaries who wanted to impose their order on the peasantry.

When he had finished Makhno would step back and for a few minutes he would listen in a half-bored, half-mocking manner as Voline, who generally followed him as a speaker, would speak on the nature and goal of anarchism in carefully structured sentences. Long before Voline would launch into the body of his speech, Makhno

⁷ Cf. *Nedilia*, No. 45, 1935.

would leave. Accounts have it that Voline, though somewhat volatile on the platform, was an excellent speaker and most effective at meetings. Apparently also Makhno felt a satisfaction in associating with intellectuals like Voline and Arshinov who gave his movement a semblance of respectability. Later, in Paris, differences developed between Makhno and Voline. Mme Mett, in a letter to me, defends Makhno's position, but unwittingly she also supports the evidence that in Gulai-Polye Makhno was the unchallenged dictator. She writes: "Voline criticized Makhno when he had emigrated, whereas in the Ukraine he would not have dared to open his mouth to express an opinion, if he had one." Death, however, joined the two revolutionaries. When Voline died in September, 1945, he too was buried at the Père-Lachaise cemetery.

Voline (V. M. Eichenbaum) and a number of the other anarchist intellectuals who supported Makhno, were Jews. Though the majority of the Makhnovtse were Ukrainians, there were also Poles, Germans, Greeks and numerous Russians among them. Makhno had no chauvinistic feelings and barely a trace of Ukrainian nationalism in him. Because thousands of Jews were killed many of them believed Makhno was a pogromist. While it hardly mattered to the victims, the reasoning was fallacious. The Ukraine had many poor Jews, but it had also many affluent and even very wealthy Jews. They formed a large sector of the urban middle class. Consequently, when the Makhnovites occupied a city the shops of Jewish shopkeepers and tailors and the homes of Jewish doctors, dentists and photographers, provided rich rewards. The owners were liquidated.

Similarly many Germans felt that Makhno was a victim of the vicious anti-German propaganda which the war had released, and that was why the German Catholic, Lutheran and Mennonite villages were plundered and burned and the people slaughtered. There is every evidence that as far as Makhno was concerned the severe attack on the German settlements was not undertaken because they were German. There are two reliable reports that when the war broke out the national feeling in Russia ran so high that even the inmates of Butyrki prison

became feverishly patriotic. Makhno almost risked his life denouncing this sentiment, declaring that the enemy was not without but within, that it was tsarist despotism and capitalism that was the enemy of the people. He did this at a time when even his idol, Kropotkin, turned mildly nationalistic. Makhno directed those expeditions to the German *volosts* not out of blind hatred for the German colonists but because their villages were wealthier than the Ukrainian villages, whose turn came later. In the German villages there were more horses and hogs in the barns, more lard and hams in the pantries, more white flour and sunflower oil in their storerooms, more fur coats and carpets in the homes. It was for these that their owners were tortured and killed, so that they would not identify anyone when the "Reds" (Bolsheviks) or "Whites" occupied the region. Makhno came to regard anyone who was not with him as his enemy, and one of the cruel jokes he would repeat was that the "Reds" should be flogged until they turned white, and the "Whites" until they turned red. The Russian or Ukrainian landowners, shopowners and propertied peasants fared little better than the Jews and the Germans.

At the beginning of his activities Makhno appears not to have displayed a special hostility to the clergy. Meleshko even reports that he showed an inclination to be quartered in a priest's home. Later he identified the clergy with the counter-revolutionaries and they were classified together with officers and *kulaks*, and liquidated. It appears that initially the village priests, like the teachers, identified themselves with the social goals of the *Makhnovshchina* but were soon repelled by the bloody course it took. A typical treatment of a captured priest is related by Voline, with not a touch of disapproval. The priest, accused of being an informer, was first interrogated and flogged. Voline, who was present, describes the priest's end:

The priest said no more. "Are there any peasants here to defend this man?" asked the insurgent. "Does anyone doubt his guilt?" No one moved.

Then the insurgent seized the pope. Brutally he took off his cassock. "What fine cloth!" he said. "With this, we can make a beautiful black flag. Ours is all worn out."

Then he said to the pope, "Now get on your knees and say your prayers without turning round."

The condemned man did so. He went down on his knees and with folded hands began to murmur. "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come . . ." Two insurgents came up behind him. They drew their revolvers, aimed and fired several bullets into his back. The shots rang out, dry and implacable. The body fell over. It was finished. The crowd disbanded slowly, talking about the event.⁸

As an anarchist Makhno had few qualms about the complexities of an anarchist society. He had studied Bakunin, who held that cities and large scale modern industries were artificial and corroded human values, and Kropotkin, who taught that individuals should be the judge of their requirements in a society of plenty.⁹ These became Makhno's axioms, or rather they articulated what he and many peasants felt would establish a truly just system. Makhno rejected "conference tables" and the "scribblings of intellectuals." According to him, one action outweighed all their words. He also rejected the communism of the Bolsheviks. "It would be the greatest folly to dispossess the peasants," he wrote in 1928 in the Anarchist organ *Delo Truda*, "and create a barrack society." Instead all land should belong to the peasants, those who worked it, communally. Again and again he reiterated that the peasants needed no state. It is entirely possible that Makhno did not realize the terror his name inspired. Reportedly Pancho Villa's widow on one occasion denied that her husband had committed atrocities: "If he didn't like you, he'd pull out his gun and shoot you." That was all. Nestor Makhno behaved very much in the same manner. He was hardly aware that he spread havoc, death and destruction; he thought he was building a new world.

While one associate of Makhno later regretted "that the moral qualities of Makhno himself and of many of his friends and collaborators were not entirely equal to the

⁸ Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*, 153-154.

⁹ Cf. Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*, pp. 25-29.

strains that were imposed upon them" (Voline), another close friend, Arshinov, felt that Makhnovism itself represented a "universal and immortal" idea. "Wherever the laboring masses do not let themselves be subjugated," he wrote, "wherever they cultivate the love of independence, wherever they concentrate and express their class will and spirit, they will always create their own popular social movements, they will act according to their own understanding. That is what constitutes the real essence of Makhnovism." Indeed, it would be premature to underestimate the impact of Makhnovite anarchism. More than three decades after Makhno's death, one of his admirers, Cohn-Bendit, called it "a great liberating force."¹⁰ It was the feverish agitation and activity of the same Cohn-Bendit that shook the pedestal of Charles de Gaulle and rocked France.

Nor was Makhno's willingness to ally himself with all and sundry population elements, including criminals, inconsistent with the revolutionary program advocated by his great ideal, Bakunin. As early as 1869 Bakunin, together with S. Nechaev, drafted a *Revolutionary Catechism* in which they laid down the "principles of revolution." Bakunin maintained that:

Brigandage is one of the most honoured aspects of the people's life in Russia . . . The brigand in Russia is the true and only revolutionary, without phrase-making, without bookish rhetoric. Popular revolution is born from the merging of the revolt of the brigand with that of the peasant . . . Even today this is still the world of the Russian revolution; the world of brigands and the world of brigands alone has always been in harmony with the revolution. The man who wants to make a serious conspiracy in Russia, who wants a popular revolution, must turn to that world and fling himself into it.

The revolutionary despises and hates present-day social morality in all its forms . . . he regards everything as moral which helps the triumph of revolution . . . All soft and enervating feelings of friendship, relation-

¹⁰ Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, *Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing Alternative*, New York, 1968, 220.

ship, love, gratitude, even honour, must be stifled in him by a cold passion for the revolutionary cause . . . Day and night he must have one thought, one aim — merciless destruction.

We recognize no other activity but the work of extermination, but we admit that the forms in which this activity will show itself will be extremely varied — poison, the knife, the rope, etc. In this struggle, revolution sanctifies everything alike.¹¹

If Bakunin expressed the latent feeling of many people of the old Russian empire, then to them Makhno must have appeared as the executor of history.

Makhno's activities were so unusual and spectacular that almost from the beginning the man and his exploits became themes for poetry and romantic narratives. Makhnovite poetry and songs will not be discussed in this monograph, but the poem "Song of the Makhnovtse," by Ivan Kartachov, which appeared in *Probuzhdenie* (The Awakening), Nos. 56-57, 1935, is an example of the revolutionary note that was common to them:

Through the forests and over hills,
on *tachankas* along the river
in endless lines
move the peasants.

At the head rides grim Makhno,
the fighting inspirer.
His clarion call sweeps
the insurgents along:

"Arise, you who starve,
destroy the evil Kadets
who want to take the freedom
of the working masses.

"We stand for equality and brotherhood,
for freedom and the soviets.
We are the homeless and the hungry
we fight against the bourgeoisie.

¹¹ Quoted, James Joll, *The Anarchists*, 95.

“In the end we shall conquer:
Our strength is the people,
our cause is justice,
Forward, all workers!”

An early Ukrainian Nationalist army intelligence report said that among those peasants whose villages were most remote from Makhno's area of operation he was most popular, but as one came closer to his base his popularity decreased, and that in his home territory even the peasants who supported him in time found his pace and excesses oppressive. Thus it was not surprising that the first literary account of the *Makhnovshchina* was not written by a Ukrainian from Zaporozhye or Katerinoslav, but by an admirer from Galicia.¹² During the Revolution it appeared as if Galicia would be able to return “home,” and be joined to Ukraine proper. On their first encounter with Eastern Ukrainians the members of the Galician army saw in every Zaporozhian a blood-brother. In September, 1919, M. Irchan, the press officer of a Galician brigade, visited the Makhnovtse, who were dejected and mellowed after a long retreat, and what he saw enthralled him. Irchan described the Makhnovtse, but the picture that emerged resembled more a cossack camp of the sixteenth century than the Insurgent army. The writer captures the atmosphere by beginning with a portrayal of the moonlit countryside and a ride across the steppes, where the bundles of harvested grain stand like silent sentinels. Not without danger he reaches the villages:

Peasants stood in front of their houses and children played on the streets. Only at one *khaťa* did I see some men dressed in uniforms. The group stood at the gate, and the men were dressed in black shirts, open at the neck. Many telephone wires led to the house. It was the telephone station of the staff. My carriage stopped at the school. The driver got off and I followed. We entered a large room. In it there were about ten to

¹² M. Irchan, “Makhno e Makhnivtsi” (Makhno and the Makhnovtse), *Chervona Kalina* (1936). Irchan was the pseudonym for M. Babiuk, who emigrated to Canada, lived in Winnipeg for some time, then returned to Russia in the early 1930's, where he disappeared.

twenty men, sitting on benches and desks. Some rested their heads on their hands, others sat bent over and silent. Their expressions were gloomy and morose. No one paid any attention to us until my driver introduced me in a deep voice, "This man is interested in our history. He has come to us to observe our way of life." After this introduction I bowed and all responded with a bow on their part. I approached each one of them and extended my hand, and each one in turn pressed my hand. They were firm, dark and hairy hands. A few of them had some fingers missing. I felt as if I had submerged into an enchanted world. Before me were gruesome figures, disorderly attired, with black, grey and red caps, uncombed tousled hair, sinister faces. "To get to know us, comrade," a voice out of corner said, "you'd have to live with us for some time." "It's wonderful, wonderful," piped out a woman's voice.

The writer continues in this vein. He is particularly impressed with Makhno, and one senses that he feels here is a modern counterpart to Taras Bulba, ready to fight Pole, Turk or Russian: A troop of men on horseback precede about twenty paces a carriage drawn by three magnificent horses; the coachman has a cap made of a rich red material such as is more generally used as covering for expensive furniture, in his belt and in his boot-tops he carries pistols; in the carriage sits *Batko* Makhno, grey cap, long hair, clean and sober face, in a blue jacket trimmed in black and cut in the fashion of a hussar's uniform, with a black belt and gorgeous boots; with him are two companions, at their feet lie two machine guns, behind them is another troop of horsemen.

To Irchan, who saw heaps of war booty and beautiful women in Makhno's camp, and who was told that sometimes the Makhnovtse shot their own badly wounded comrades rather than have them taken prisoner, the whole strange world looked like a resurrection of the past and assumed an aura of glamor. But Makhno's trail was too bloody, his violence too frightening to permit him entry into the Ukrainian shrine of legendary heroes. Instead he turned into a peasant villain. As such he appears in numerous

stories and novels. One of the literary most appealing of these is Oless Gonchar's "Chernei Koster" (The Black Fire).¹³

The story begins with Makhno driving through Blumental, one of the German settlements, when he stops to chat with a Ukrainian boy who is tending geese near the wayside. Makhno finds that the boy's name is Yegor, that he works for the German *kulak* Heinrichs and that his father was killed in the war. The boy's story recalls in Makhno memories of his own childhood and he asks Yegor to join him on his carriage. They are heading for Katerinoslav. The evenings are spent by Makhno and his companions by discussing the life of the early cossacks. One of them mentions the name of Professor Yavornitsky who has spent years in research on cossack life and in excavating *kurgane*, ancient burial mounds, from which he had collected great treasures for his museum.

One evening when the Makhnovtse prepare to camp on the shallow banks of the Dnieper Makhno incites them to action by pointing out the distant gold-covered cathedral spires. They storm the place, enter the cathedral, destroy or plunder the interior and robe themselves in the priests' vestments. The priest on duty hides for he has heard how another priest, at Sinelnikovo, was tossed alive into the furnace of a locomotive. As one of the Makhnovtse prepares to set the church on fire a firm voice orders all of them to cease their vandalism. It is Yavornitsky.

Then the two men meet, the powerfully-built but unarmed scholar and the small, boyishly slender partisan chieftain, whose long sword reaches to the floor. The latter is impressed by Yavornitsky's courage and asks him

¹³ Oless Gonchar, "Chernei Koster," *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, Moscow, No. 47, November 22, 1967. The translation from Ukrainian into Russian is by K. Grigoriev. The story is based on a historical incident, the confrontation between Makhno and the Ukrainian historian and anthropologist Dmitro Ivanovich Yavornitsky (1855-1940). The Ukrainian form of the name Yavornitsky is Yavornenko. As such he appears in a novel by Wasyl Chaplenko, *Na Ukraine* (The Ukrainians), first published in Russia in 1919. Selections from it appeared in a booklet published in Argentina in 1922, which was available to me. Here too the meeting between the scholar and Makhno takes place and Professor Chaplenko, who now makes his home in New York, assures me in a letter that the meeting as he describes it is historically authentic. Though Gonchar does not state his source for the main incident, it is reasonable to assume that he read Chaplenko's novel. Chaplenko is also the author of a poetic cycle *Issko Gava*, (New York, 1965), which also deals with the *Makhnovshchina*.

whether he disagrees with the ideals of anarchism. What kind of ideals are those if they can only be realized over corpses and destruction, retorts the professor. The Makhnovtse are surprised that Makhno carries on a discussion with a man who is obviously a counter-revolutionary. Makhno hesitates, then gives the boy Yegor a pistol and orders him to shoot the scholar. But the heavy pistol slips out of Yegor's hand. Magnanimously Makhno pardons both, the boy and the scholar, and then asks about the "elixir of life," a potent flask of vodka which Yavornitsky supposedly had found in a Zaporozhian burial mound and which he had refused to serve the Tsar on his visit to the museum. Makhno asks whether Yavornitsky would let him, Makhno, taste from it. The scholar skillfully evades an answer by saying that it does not belong to him, the content of the museum is the property of the people.

Again a discussion ensues in which Makhno's position evokes a comparison between the Makhnovtse and the Cossacks. The scholar looks at the men around him and replies that it would seem that while the weapons had become bigger and heavier, the people had become smaller. Makhno understands. That night, as he restlessly tosses in his bed he pledges that he will haul down the cathedral bells.

APPENDIX

The Makhnovshchina¹

The *Makhnovshchina* was a counter-revolutionary armed struggle of anarchist-*kulak* bands in the Ukraine, in 1918-21, against the Soviet government. The Makhno bands were led by N. I. Makhno (1889-1934). In 1907 Makhno received a life sentence of hard labor for burglary, having robbed the city-treasury of Berdiansk; after his return to his home village of Gulai-Polye (Ekaterinoslavskaja gubernia) in the autumn of 1917, he worked in the *volost* and committee. For a period in the summer of 1918 Makhno led a partisan campaign against the landowners, the regime of the Hetman and against the German occupation. With the restoration of the Soviet government in the Ukraine, at the beginning of 1918, he took a decisively hostile position against the dictatorship of the proletariat by leading the counter-revolutionary movement of *kulaks*, recruited from the Ukrainian peasants. The ringleaders of the *Makhnovshchina* — *kulaks* social-revolutionaries, anarchists and White guardists — tried with every means (lies, slander, provocation) to deceive the peasant masses, to undermine their confidence in the Soviet government, and to incite the Ukrainian working peasant against it. Makhno and his hacks employed treacherous tactics. The Makhnovtse would change their colors depending on the war situation or on political circumstances. They either took a waiting position, in the hope that the Soviet government would be defeated in its struggle against the foreign armies and their hirelings, the White Guard generals, or they would wage, under the pressure of the growing revolutionary movement of the masses, a guerilla war against the units of the White guardists. At such time they would feign penance, would

¹ *Bolshaya Sovetskaya Encyclopedia* (The Great Soviet Encyclopedia), Moscow, 1954, XXVI, 548.

recognize in words the Soviet government and in isolated cases would even fight on the side of the Red Army, but usually they would quite unexpectedly betray an exposed section of the Soviet-held front, and would make common cause with Denikin, Wrangel, and other hangmen of the Entente, against the Soviet troops. Makhno's combat groups consisted mostly of cavalry divisions with subunits on machine-gun mounted carriages, which gave them exceptional mobility and maneuverability.

The atrocities committed by the Makhnovtse against the people, against the Communist Party and against the Soviet government soon opened the eyes of even the most backward segments of the working people as to the true nature of the *Makhnovshchina* as an enemy of the people. As a result of concerted efforts by which the Bolsheviks exposed the *Makhnovshchina*, some Makhno-units left Makhno and attached themselves to the Red Army. Greatly reduced units of the Makhnovtse, which were largely composed of anarchists, social-revolutionaries, *kulaks* and questionable and criminal rabble, foraged through the provinces of Ekaterinoslav, Poltava and Charkhov, and occupied themselves with open political brigandage. They raided small, isolated groups of the Red Army, the militia, reinforcements units, organized bloodbaths, and robbed and massacred the people. In 1921 the Soviet armies liquidated the Makhno bands. Makhno fled the country.

Raiding the Police Archives

Nestor Makhno¹

Meanwhile the officials in charge of Gulai-Polye, Lieutenant Kudinov and his secretary, the old unwavering *kadet* A. Rambievski, invited me to help them raid the police archives of Gulai-Polye.

These archives were of a very special interest to me, and I asked our group to let me take part in it. I accorded

¹ Makhno, *Russkaya Revolutsia na Ukraina* (The Russian Revolution in the Ukraine), Paris, 1929. Makhno describes his activity in Gulai-Polye immediately after returning there in 1917.

such importance to this job that I was ready to abandon for the moment all other activity. Some of my comrades in the group, Kalinichenko and Kratochvil in particular, began to tease me and said that I had become one who was willing to aid the police. It was only after a prolonged discussion that Comrade Kalinichenko became convinced that I had reasons (for going), and came with me himself. In the archives we found documents showing who, among the inhabitants of Gulai-Polye, had informed on the brothers Semeniuta, and other members of the group, and how much these dogs had received for their services.

We discovered, among other things, that Peter Charovsky, a veteran of our group, had been an agent of the secret police, to whom he had rendered many services.

I communicated the contents of the documents to our group. Unfortunately all the people (mentioned) in them had been killed in the war. There remained only Sopliak, Charovsky, and the policemen Onikhchenko and Bugaev, who, during their off-duty hours, dressed in civilian clothes, had crept into courtyards and gardens to spy on all who seemed suspect to them.

We noted the names of those who were still alive, feeling that the time had not yet come to execute them. Moreover, three of them, Sopliak, Charovsky and Bugaev, were not in Gulai-Polye: they had disappeared shortly before my arrival.

I made public the evidence proving the guilt of P. Charovsky, who had delivered Alexander Semeniuta and Martha Pivel to the police. The documents concerning the three missing guilty parties were kept secret. We hoped that these men would return to Gulai-Polye some day, and that we could then without great difficulty arrest them. As for the fourth man, Nazar Onikhchenko, the Coalition government had sent him to the front, but he had succeeded in deserting, and was living at Gulai-Polye, without showing himself at community meetings or rallies.

A short time after the release of the evidence concerning Peter Charovsky, Nazar Onikhchenko approached me in the center of Gulai-Polye. He was the same policeman and secret agent who, while searching our home with a warrant,

also searched my mother, and when she protested, slapped her.

Now this cur, who had sold his body and soul to the police, rushed up to me, doffing his cap, shouting and stretching out his hand, "Nestor Ivanovich! Greetings!"

The voice, the gestures, the hypocrisy of this Judas provoked in me an unspeakable disgust. I trembled with hatred and yelled at him with fury, "Get back, you miserable wretch, back, or I'll kill you!" He recoiled and turned white as a sheet. Unconsciously I put my hand in my pocket and feverishly felt my revolver, asking myself whether I should kill the cur on the spot, or if it were better to wait.

Reason prevailed over fury and the thirst for vengeance.

My strength left me, and I let myself fall into a chair at the entrance of a nearby store. The merchant approached me, greeted me, and asked me questions, but I was too numb to comprehend.

I excused myself for having occupied the chair and asked him to leave me alone. Ten minutes later I asked a peasant to help me get back to the (village) soviet of the Union of Peasants.

Having heard of my encounter with Onikhchenko, the members of our group and those of the soviet of the Union of Peasants insisted on the release of the evidence which proved that, even while being a policeman (which the peasants knew very well, for he had arrested and beaten a number of them), Onikhchenko was in addition also a police agent.

All the comrades insisted that we release the evidence in order to justify the execution of the guilty one.

I opposed this strenuously and begged the comrades to remain calm for the moment, saying that there were more dangerous traitors, in particular Sopliak, who, according to the evidence in our hands, was a specialist in spying. He had worked for a long time in Gulai-Polye and Pologi, and helped trail Comrade Semeniuta.

Another, Bugaev, was also an accomplished informer. (As a waiter) he came and went among the peasants and workers, carrying on a wooden tray biscuits and seltzer-water, which he sold to them. You could see him espe-

cially at the time when the tsarist government had promised a reward of 2000 rubles to anyone who would turn in Alexander Semeniuta. More than once Bugaev, in disguise, had disappeared for weeks at a time in the company of police chief Karachentsev and of Nazar Onikhchenko. They had covered the area around Gulai-Polye, Alexandrovsk and Ekaterinoslav. The police chief Karachentsev was killed by Comrade Alexander Semeniuta, in the theater at Gulai-Polye. Bugaev, Sopliak and Charovsky were now living and hiding somewhere in the area.

That is why it was necessary not to touch Nazar Onikhchenko. It was necessary to arm oneself with patience and try to get the others who, according to the peasants, sometimes came to Gulai-Polye.

Even while asking the comrades not to molest Nazar Onikhchenko for the moment, I told them that it was important to seize all these curs and to kill them later, that such persons were a disgrace to the human community. (I said:) "One can expect nothing from them. Their crime is the most horrible of crimes, treason. A real Revolution must exterminate all of them. A free and harmonious society has no use for traitors. They must all perish by their own hands or be killed by the vanguard of the Revolution!"

All my comrades and friends thereupon agreed that Nazar Onikhchenko should not be unmasked for the time being and his execution should be deferred.

An Answer to the Article "Pomer Makhno" in Nova Pora on September 9, 1934, Detroit, Mich.¹

Accidentally the article "Pomer Makhno" (Makhno Died), which appeared in *Nova Pora* (New Times) on September 9, 1934, reached my hands.

I read the article and smiled to myself, and this at a time when I am in no mood for laughter.

¹ This letter by Galina Kuzmenko, wife of Makhno, appeared in *Probuzhdenie*, Organ of the Federated State-Opposed Labor Unions of the United States and Canada, Detroit, No. 50/51, Sept.-Oct., 1934, pp. 17-18, a few months after Makhno's death.

Everything in it, from beginning to the end, cannot be taken seriously, and does not correspond to the facts.

The man who wrote the article, like so many others who at different times have written about Makhno, heard the bells peal, but did not know where they were, he has heard of a person who was active in the Ukraine during the revolution, about a man Makhno, and that under his leadership there had existed a people's movement, a *Makhnovshchina*, but who Makhno was, what his aspirations were, why he fought, what ideals he cherished, represented, interpreted and defended, that he expressed the dreams, hopes and demands of the broad masses of the Ukrainian people, whose love and confidence he enjoyed, how great and of what quality the army was which Makhno headed, all this is unknown to the author of that article.

Beginning with the first line of author errs in that he refers to Makhno as Michael, whereas his name was Nestor.

N. Makhno has never been a carpenter at a Parisian theater. Never has Makhno or have the Makhnovtse ever killed a rabbi, at no time has Makhno taken a Jewish girl to a priest to have her baptized.

Makhno was never and with no one married in church, for as a true revolutionary anarchist he did not accept the authority of the church.

I was his wife, Galina Kusmenko, the daughter of a Ukrainian peasant.

Makhno did not name his movement of insurrection an "anarchist republic".

Makhno has never issued "his" money, either with or without his signature. These are all fairy tales and inventions, stories and legends created by people's fancies.

Makhno had no association with types like Selenii, or Grigoriev, or Petlura, Konovalets, Vinnichenko and others. But for the author of that article all those who differ from him in their thinking, who are not attached to or do not support the Hetman [Skoropadsky], are Makhnovtse.

Similarly the author has failed to grasp the philosophy (literally, "theories") of Makhno and the Makhnovtse, and

compounds nonsense about "Makhno's philosophy" which does not correspond with reality.

Who then was Makhno, what did he fight for and what did he want to achieve?

Nestor Makhno was the son of a poor peasant, who was a former serf. He was born in Gulai-Polye on October 27, 1889. As a young lad scoundrels forced him to earn his bread as a shepherd, or he would be required to drive ox-carts for the landowners. After he gained a little independence and had completed the public school, he began work at a foundry.

In 1906 Nestor Makhno joined the Ukrainian group of Peasants-Anarchists-Communists.

For his passionate, energetic and revolutionary activities, which characterized the revolutionary youth of that period, for his unselfish struggle against tsarism, for the political assassinations and expropriations, N. Makhno was arrested and imprisoned.

In 1910 he was sentenced to death by the Odessa military district court, lived for 52 days under this sentence, when it was commuted to a life sentence of hard labor.

Makhno remained in a Moscow prison until the outbreak of the Great Russian Revolution of 1917, when the door was opened to all political prisoners.

Makhno returned to his home, his homeland and to his familiar Gulai-Polye.

With new strength and vigor he devoted himself to the cause of the revolutionary movement and gained, in a short time, the sympathy, the confidence and the great love of the Ukrainian peasants and workers, who elected him to numerous responsible positions in their revolutionary struggle. And later, when the time came to take up arms to preserve the achievements of the Revolution and the rights of the people, these same peasants and workers named him *Batko* [Father], and placed him at the head of the Revolutionary Insurgent Army of the Ukraine (Makhnovtse).

And this army, which began with the recruitment of volunteers, largely peasants, grew to number many tens of

thousands of insurgents, and not two thousand as reported by *Nova Pora*. This Revolutionary Insurgent Army of Makhnovtse fought against all those who attempted to control the Ukraine and establish their mastery over it, and for the universal freedom of the workers of the Ukraine, for a free soviet system, for conditions that would provide for the whole country, free communities, subordinate to no one, social organs of self-government for the toilers.

(They were) For the liberation of the Ukraine from any form of control, and for a socially, political-economically and national-internationally completely autonomous toiler's Ukraine. (They were) For the transfer of all lands, factories, natural resources, plants and other enterprises into the hands of those workers who were directly concerned with the productive process.

(They were) For freedom of speech, conscience, of the press, of political choice, etc.

It is not possible to describe completely in a few words, limited (as one is) by time and space, what the *Makhnovshchina* stood for, how it fought, and how the *Makhnovshchina* symbolized and defended the liberated will of the people.

As if one could describe in a few words the uniformly long, hard, thorny and heroic road which the Makhnovtse, headed by Makhno, trod unselfishly for freedom and right.

No, with a few words it is impossible to recount and explain everything. It takes much time and space, and it is wearisome to do so.

Interested readers, however, who want to know the truth about Makhno and the *Makhnovshchina*, one can advise to read Arshinov's *Istoriia Makhnovskogo Dvizhenia*, Makhno's *Russkiiia Revolutsiia na Ukraina*, and a series of articles by Makhno and other authors which have appeared in the anarchist press.

As for the rest of the bulky literature, it concerns itself with this question to this day, like *Nova Pora*, largely for the purpose of spreading fairy tales, inventions and slander, which are contrary to the truth.

G. Kuzmenko

Vincennes, France

Makhno's Visit to Uman: An Account of an Eye-Witness

E. Yakimov¹

Many reminiscences have been written on the *atamans*, who, during our war of liberation, became notorious for their destructive work.

I would like to relate something about the most eccentric, obnoxious, anarchist bandit, the "Ataman" Makhno.

Makhno, an "anarchist", *batko* of the partisans, was an artist in partisan operations. This is not a strange phenomenon with us, it may be said to be a characteristic of the Ukrainian mentality: to obey no one, to recognize no authority, and to submit only to the whip.

I met Makhnovtse on two occasions. Once I took their delegation to the chief of the Armed Forces, and the second time I was a witness to a visit by Makhno at our headquarters in the city of Uman. It is of the latter occasion that I want to give an account.

It was in the late summer of 1919, Makhno was very strong at the time, he had a cavalry of several thousand and about 10,000 infantry, or, more appropriately, drivers, for his infantry did not move on foot but drove on *tachankas* (carriages). On every *tachanka* there was one driver, another in charge of the machine gun, and a group of two or three armed men. His troops moved very quickly, made surprise raids and disappeared as rapidly as they came. In this way they successfully harassed their opponents.

The Bolsheviks were thoroughly vexed by Makhno, for he took over their slogans. At a meeting in Vinnitsa a Bolshevik commissar said that the Communists had the same ideals as the Anarchists, but that people had not sufficiently matured for them. They possibly could be realized in 50 years, when Communism was firmly established. One would have to wait for some 40 years.

¹ E. Yakimov, "Hostini Makhna v Umani", *Chervona Kalina*, Lvov, 1931, 78-80. Yakimov was with the Galician brigades of the "U.S.S." (Ukrainian Sich Rifle-men). Here he recounts one instance where Makhno made common cause with the U.S.S. against Denikin's White Army. Uman is a city in the western part of Ukraine.

At the end of August a brigade of the U.S.S. was engaged in combat with the Denikintse at Uman. The staff of the brigade was lodged in Khristinitse, another unit, under the command of *Sotnik* (Lieutenant) Noskovsky, was quartered at the station in Uman, and in the villages to the east and south was "*Batko* Makhno" with his "army". The right wing of the U.S.S. brigade was suspended, as they say, in thin air, and it was most desirable to extend this wing. For this purpose it was necessary that we come to an agreement with Makhno, who came to negotiate on this matter with the commander at Uman. He (Makhno) obligated himself to extend our right wing, and did this in his own way. He set up his headquarters in a southerly direction some 10-15 kilometers away from us, and, occupying with his staff the center position, he distributed his units in the neighboring villages in such a manner that they could meet the attacking enemy from either side.

Thus Makhno became our ally and (as such) paid a visit to the commander of the city of Uman.

The day before his arrival one could see his emissaries and spies survey that part of the city which their "*Batko*" would pass through. They prepared to take their places so that if a sneak attack were attempted, they would be in a position to give warning.

At ten o'clock in the morning there arrived an armed cavalry troop of 20 men, all dressed to their own individual taste, some using a rug for a saddle, and others having a saddle with a rug under it. Behind this advance guard came five *tachankas*, on each one was mounted a machine gun. In the middle carriage was Makhno, dressed in a dark green cossack coat, and with him (on the carriage) were three men. Behind the last *tachanka* there was again a troop of riders as in front.

Before our headquarters the riders formed two straight lines, permitting the carriages to pass between them. Faced with such "dear guests", the Jews had closed up their shops. At the house in which our staff occupied the first floor, Makhno dismounted and went up the steps. The "*batko*" was preceded by two guards, with their revolvers at the ready, and followed by two other guards, who provided protection from the rear.

As the "dear guest", with loaded pistols, entered the room of our headquarters, the commander arose to greet him. Makhno immediately occupied his chair. — I recall how Makhno disposed the duties of his office. A Pole, one of his men, came to him with the request for home leave. He received his discharge, with the "*Batko Makhno*" signature, and the "treasurer" gave him money for the trip. He got out half a meter of *Kerenskys*² in 40 rubel denominations, and the Pole went home. Makhno also punished some marines who had been arrested by our police for looting. Also a delegation of men from his guards came before him with the request, "*batko*, permit us to occupy ourselves with the Jews, for we find it difficult to leave them alone." But here our administration stepped in energetically, and gave them to understand that as long as Galician units were in the city, there would be no question of molesting the Jews.

Makhno remained for some time at the headquarters, and then left in the same manner as he had arrived.

Shortly after this Makhno was attacked by Denikin. He defeated the enemy, and then moved eastwards. For a long period he operated on the steppes, moving from place to place, until the Bolsheviks closed in on him from all sides, and he was forced to flee with a small group across the Rumanian border, and later to Poland. His band, however, as is the custom of partisans, spread out in all directions, and disappeared without leaving a trace.

Preliminary Political and Military Agreement between the Soviet Government of the Ukraine and the Revolutionary Insurrectionary (Makhnovist) Army of the Ukraine¹

"Part I — Political Agreement.

1. Immediate release of all Makhnovists and Anarchists imprisoned or in exile in the territories of the Soviet

² Money issued by the short-lived Kerensky government.

¹ The agreement, signed on October 15, 1920, appears in Arshinov, *Geschichte der Machno-Bewegung*, 1918-1921, 214-216: the transl. used here is from Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*, 188-189.

Republics; cessation of all persecutions of Makhnovists or Anarchists (only those who carry on armed conflict against the Soviet Government are not covered by this clause).

2. Complete freedom for all Makhnovists and Anarchists of all forms of public expression and propaganda for their principles and ideas, by speech and the press, with the exception of anything that might call for the violent overthrow of the Soviet Power, and on condition that the requirements of the military censorship be respected. For all kinds of publications, the Makhnovists and Anarchists, as revolutionary organizations recognized by the Soviet Government, may make use of the technical apparatus of the Soviet state, while naturally submitting to the technical rules for publications.

3. Free participation in the elections to the Soviets; and the right of Makhnovists and Anarchists to be elected thereto. Free participation in the organization of the forthcoming Fifth Pan-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets, which shall take place next December.

[Signed] (By mandate of the Soviet Government of the Ukrainian SSR): Yakoleff. Plenipotentiaries of the Council and the Commander of the Revolutionary Insurrectionary (Makhnovist) Army of the Ukraine: Kurilenko, Popoff.

“Part II — Military Agreement.

1. The Revolutionary Insurrectionary (Makhnovist) Army of the Ukraine will join the armed forces of the Republic as a partisan army, subordinate, in regard to operations, to the supreme command of the Red Army. It will retain its established internal structure, and does not have to adopt the bases and principles of the regular Red Army.

2. While crossing Soviet territory, at the front, or going between fronts, the Insurrectionary Army will accept into its ranks neither detachments of nor deserters from the Red Army.

Remarks:

a. The units of the Red Army, as well as isolated Red soldiers, who have met and joined the Insurrectionary Army behind the Wrangel front, shall re-enter the ranks of the Red Army when they again make contact with it.

b. The Makhnovist partisans behind the Wrangel front, as well as all men at present in the Insurrectionary Army, will remain there, even if they were previously mobilized by the Red Army.

3. For the purpose of destroying the common enemy — the White Army — the Revolutionary Insurrectionary (Makhnovist) Army of the Ukraine will inform the working masses that collaborate with it of the agreement that has been concluded, it will call upon the people to cease all action hostile to the Soviet power; for its part, the Soviet power will immediately publish the clauses of the agreement.

4. The families of combatants in the Insurrectionary (Makhnovist) Army living in the territories of the Soviet Republic shall enjoy the same rights as those of soldiers of the Red Army and for this purpose shall be supplied by the Soviet government of the Ukraine with the necessary documents.

[Signed] Commander of the Southern Front: Frunze; Members of the Revolutionary Council of the Southern Front: Bela Kun, Gussev; Plenipotentiary Delegates of the Council and Commander of the Makhnovist Insurrectionary Army: Kurilenko, Popoff."

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INDEX

- Adams, Arthur E. 68
 Alexeiev, General Michael 74, 75
 Antoini, Volodya 19, 20
 Antonov-Ovseenko, Vladimir 76, 77, 81
 Antypenko, I. 15
 Arshinov (also: Arschinoff), Peter 22, 23, 25-30, 39-42, 58, 68, 69, 74, 78, 82, 85, 92, 94, 96, 98, 99, 100, 104, 105, 109, 123, 126
 Avrich, Paul 33, 44, 108

 Babiuk M. see: Irchan, M.
 Bukunin, Michael 18, 20, 109, 110
 Baron, Aron 94, 105
 Bela Kun, see: Kun, Bela
 Berkman, Alexander 92-96
 Bloshchenko, Ivan 46
 Bogdanov 104
 Brinkley, George A. 87
 Budyenny, Marshal Simeon 76, 98
 Bukshowanyj, Major Osyp 72

 Call, Paul 14
 Carnot, Sadi, President of France 18
 Chamberlain, W. H. 33
 Chaplenko, Vasyi 113
 Chudolye, W. 58
 Clemenceau, G. 36
 Cohn-Bendit, Daniel and Gabriel 109

 De Gaulle, Charles 109
 Derksen, G. 54, 55
 Denikin, General Anton I. 43, 68-70, 73-86, 98, 105, 117, 124
 Doroshenko, D. 37
 Dubas, Paul 47, 48
 Dück, Jacob 54, 55
 Dybenko, F. M. 79, 80
 Dzerzhinsky, Felix 25

 Eichhorn, Field Marshal von 38
 Elisabeth, Empress of Austria 18

 Fast, G. H. 67
 Flechtin, Senya 93
 Franz, Sister Frieda 90
 Frunze, Michael V. 76, 87, 128

 Gaenko, Fedora 103
 Goerz (Neufeld), Anna 32
 Gogol, Nicholas 13
 Goldman, Emma 92, 96
 Goldschmid, Maria, see: Korn, Maria
 Golovine, General Nicholas N. 45
 Gonchar, Oless 113
 Gotz, Abram 26
 Grigoriev, N. 68-70, 82, 121
 Guérin, Daniel 128
 Gussev 128

 Harder, Peter 86
 Hertling, Chancellor Georg von 37
 Herzen, Alexander 98
 Hrushevsky, Michael 35
 Holubovich, Premier 37
 Horak, Stefan 37, 38
 Hryhoryiv, see: Grigoriev, N.

 Irchan, M. 11, 112

 Jaworskyj, Zenon 72, 73
 Joll, James 18, 110

 Kaledin, General Alexis M. 36, 74, 75
 Kalinin, Michael 19
 Kamenev, Lev 76-79, 104; General Sergei S. 79
 Karachentsev 21-23, 120
 Karetnik, Simeon 70, 87
 Kartachov, Ivan 110
 Kerensky, Alexander 30, 35, 49, 126
 Kessel, Josef 56
 Klein, Anna 54
 Konovalets, Colonel E. 86, 121
 Korn, Maria 95
 Kornilov, General L. 74

- Krasnov, General P. N. 43, 74
 Krestinski, Nicholas M. 76, 95
 Kropotkin, Prince Peter 18, 40, 95, 107
 Kun, Bela 87, 128
 Kurilenko 127, 128
 Kuzmenko, Galina 22, 89, 102, 103, 120, 121, 123
 Lashkovitz 104
 Lenin, V. I. 16, 19, 30, 34, 35, 36, 40, 76, 77, 78, 81, 92, 95, 98
 Lepechenko 21
 Levadney, Ivan 21, 22
 Lipotkin, L. 95
 Louis XIV 98
 Luckyj, Myron 72
 Ludendorff, Erich von 37
 Lvov, Prince George 35
 Maiakovsky, Vladimir 25
 Makhno, Emilian 15. Gregory (Grishka) 15, 58, 82. Nestor: early years 14, 15, 16, 122; guerilla warfare 28-58; Insurgent army 60-68; and Grigoriev 68-70; and Petlura 70-73; and Lenin 40, 41, 76; in Rumania 88, 89; in Poland 89, 90; in Germany 90; and the Jews 69, 93, 94, 95, 104, 105, 125, 126; and the Germans 106, 107; and the clergy 102, 103, 108; the person of 22, 50, 58, 99, 100; marriage 102, 103; death 96, 97. Ssawa 15
 Manning, C. A. 70
 Margolin, Arnold D. 93
 Marusja Nikiforova 49
 Marx, Karl 92
 Maynard, Sir John 98
 McKinley, President William 18
 Meleshko, Fedor 26, 48, 49, 58, 62, 97, 102-105
 Mett, Ida (Lazarevich) 91, 92, 93, 96, 100, 101, 106
 Mikhnenko, Ivan 14. Nestor Ivanovich, see: Makhno, Nestor
 Milner, Lord 36
 Milyukov, Paul N. 75
 Nestor, Monk, Monastery of the Caves 14
 Neufeld, Jacob 32
 Nechaev, S. 109
 Nicholas II, Tsar 30, 35
 Noskowskyj, Zenon 72
 Noumenko, "Batko" 49, 54, 55
 Pancho Villa 25
 Peter the Great 25
 Petlura, Simeon 42, 43, 46, 47, 61, 68, 70, 71, 72, 74, 78, 93, 98, 121
 Petrovich, J. (Kurdydyk, Anatol) 16, 83
 Petrushevych, Dr. E. 72
 Picqueray, May 91, 92, 93, 101
 Pidhainy, O. S. 36
 Pilsudski, Josef 72, 73
 Pravda, Mitka 55, 56; "Batko" Simeon 49, 51-56
 Proudhon, Pierre 96
 Pugachov, Emilian 13
 Razin, Stephen ("Stenka") 13
 Rempel, J. G. 51, 67
 Repin, Ilya 32
 Rogdaiev, T. N. 96
 Reshetar, John J. 68
 Schwarzbart 72, 93, 94
 Semeniuta, Alexander 20, 21, 23, 118; Prokop 21, 118
 Shepelye, Ivan Y. (Makhno) 41
 Shkuro, General Andrei 79-83
 Skoropadsky, Hetman Paul 38, 40, 42, 68, 78, 98, 121
 Souchy, Augustin 100
 Stalin, J. 19, 36, 42, 75, 76, 92, 93, 95, 97
 Steimer, Molly 93
 Sverdlow, Jacob M. 40
 Taras Bulba 13, 112
 Tchus, Fedor 41, 42, 58, 64, 88, 101
 Toews, G. 51, 53
 Topolye, Ivan 45
 Treadgold, Donald W. 69
 Trotsky, L. 40, 42, 68, 76, 77, 81, 92, 93, 95, 98, 105
 Udovychenko, Alexander 90
 Umberto, King of Italy 18
 Vinnichenko, V. 35, 121
 Voline (V. M. Eichenbaum, also: Wollin) 22, 23, 29, 30, 40, 68, 69, 77, 84, 85, 91, 92, 94, 96, 98, 100, 101, 105-109, 126
 Voroshilov, Marshal K. 76, 82
 Warkentin, John 51
 Wiens, H. B. 49, 53, 56
 William II, Emperor 38
 Wolfe, Bertram D. 26
 Wollin, see: Voline
 Wrangel, Baron Peter 68, 72, 86, 87, 93, 98, 117, 127, 128
 Yakimov, E. 124
 Yaroslavsky, Emilian 25
 Yavornitsky, Dmitro I. 113, 114
 Zinoviev, Gregory E. 78

Few cemeteries in the world have as diverse occupants as the cemetery Père-Lachaise, in Paris. Here are found the tombs of Héloïse and Abélard, Molière, Balzac, Chopin and Sarah Bernhardt. It was on this cemetery that the Paris Commune of 1871 made its last stand, that thousands of the communards met their death and were interred. But one of Père-Lachaise's most unusual tenants was laid to rest there in 1934, by a motley crowd of several hundred anarchists, emigrants and sympathizers. It was Nestor Makhno, hero and villain of the Ukrainian steppes.

Makhno was only forty-five years of age when he died of drink, disappointment and tuberculosis. Born in Gulai-Polye, a remote Ukrainian village, he had early turned to anarchism and violence, and landed in a Moscow prison, from which he was released by the Revolution of 1917. During the Russian Civil War, from 1918 to 1921, Makhno held sway over large parts of the Ukraine. He succeeded in attracting to his cause tens of thousands of landless peasants, deserters, criminals, rebels, adventurers and idealists. Moreover, he engaged in mobile warfare so successfully that his guerilla tactics have served in many ways as a model for partisan operations in many parts of the world.

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