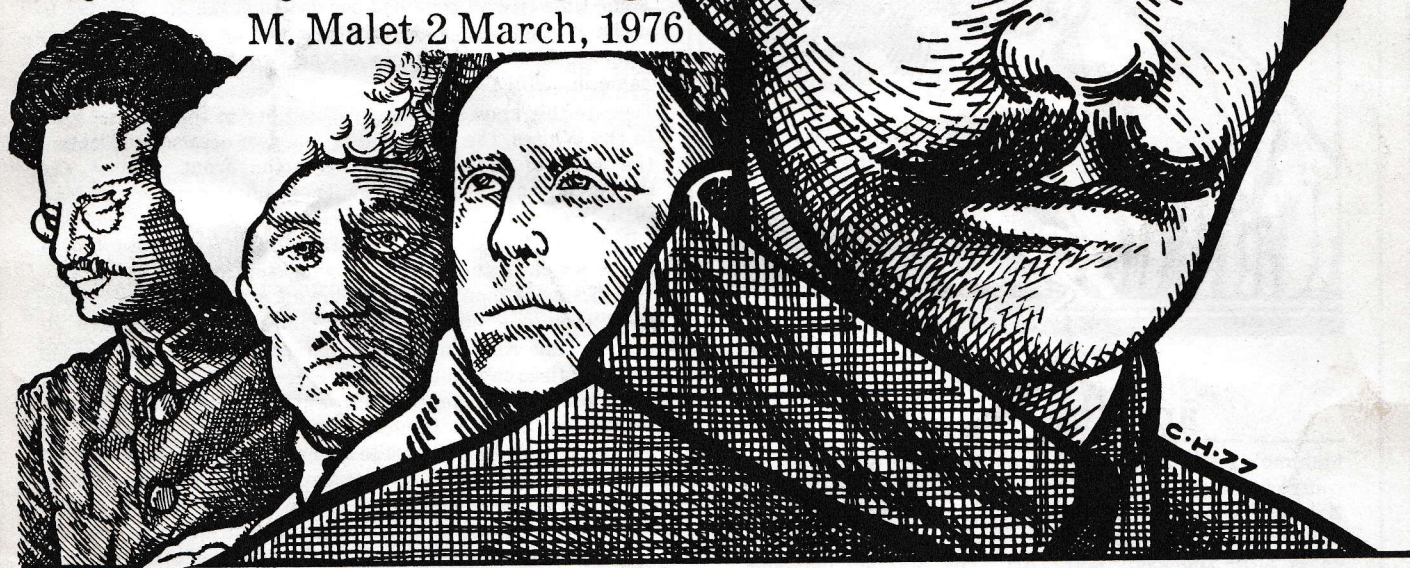


MAKHNO

AND HIS ENEMIES

M. Malet 2 March, 1976



Makhno's personality, politics, and activities, especially during the Civil War, have long been a subject of controversy. More remarkable than the passions he arouses among his own people is the almost total lack of literature on him since the 1920's. Since the last volume of Antonov-Ovseenko's memoirs in 1933, little has appeared.

Reprints of editions are welcome, but a fresh appraisal is urgently needed. The subject is a large one, and it would be impossible to tackle it in one article. The present work addresses itself to one of the chief areas of mythology in Makhno and the Makhnovschina:

his relationships with his enemies.

In no other aspect are there so many confident assertions based on so little information: for example he betrayed the Ukrainian nation, his movement was one of petty-bourgeois kulaks, he was in alliance with the Whites, to name but a few of the commonest allegations.

I will try to indicate, as far as possible, the actual state of the relationship of Makhno to these groups, and to draw some conclusions as to the consistency of Makhno's attitudes, and the relevance of the charges against him.



Makhno and the Whites

Makhno's attitude to the Whites is clearer and much less controversial than his relationship with either the Bolsheviks or the Nationalists. It was the considered judgement of General Denikin, made in his memoirs a few years after the Civil War, that "The Makhno movement was... the most antagonistic to the ideas of the White movement." [1] This statement puts into perspective the accusations of the less scrupulous bolshevik authors that Makhno was at some point in league with the Whites. Similar allegations were made on occasion in Communist newspapers.[2].

In the very earliest days of the Civil War, before an organized White Army had appeared in the Ukraine, feelings had not been so bitter. This is clear from parleying which took place at Alexandrovsk early in 1918 between the town authorities and the Cossack troop trains on their way home to the Don area from the south-western front. Alexandrovsk being the nearest big town, Makhno had sent some men to reinforce the local Red Guard, at the request of the town authorities.[3]

However, as the fighting became more organized and more bitter at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919, accusations of atrocities became more frequent. Makhnovists were torn to pieces by shell explosions or roasted alive on slabs of red hot iron, while the Whites alleged that the Makhnovists burned prisoners alive by throwing them into fireboxes of railway engines.[4] It should be remembered here that the peasants in the Makhnovist army associated

the White Army directly with the landlord regime under which they had suffered for many years. Had they been in any doubt about this Skorpadski's* regime, largely based on German and landlord support, would have reinforced the lesson.[5]

This bitterness was heightened by the occupation of the Ukraine by the Whites during the summer and autumn of 1919. A Makhnovist machinegunner lived to tell the tale: "At 10 a.m., considerable enemy forces attacked from the direction of Sinelnikovo towards Sofieka station (near Alexandrovsk),... we were surrounded by Whites and taken from the tachanki**. At the (White) staff, a captain asked if we were Petliurists† or Makhnovists; his face at the answer read death, but the convoy... refused to shoot us, whereupon the captain grabbed one of their rifles and declared them all under arrest.... On his return, there arrived seven cavalymen, three rankers and four officers, and with that lot I felt the end was at hand.... I was twelfth in line; he was like a tiger without opposition. Two were now left to my left; at the third shot I was lying like a corpse.... Some time later, I regained consciousness,... and decided to make my way to a cabin a few versts away.... Shortly afterward, two insurgents of the 3rd Crimean Regiment came in ..."[6]

Despite this known implacable hostility of the Makhnovists to the Whites, the latter did try on two occasions to obtain the help of Makhno for a common front against the Bolsheviks and the Red Army. On the first occasion, in May 1919, General Shkuro, apparently with some genuine admiration for Makhno's military qualities, wrote him a letter which included the following sentiments: "Being like you, a simple man, I have followed with enthusiasm your swift rise to eminence, which indicates that you are an outstanding Russian. Unfortunately, you have proceeded along a false road, but now I have been very pleased to learn that you have changed your mind, and similarly to the valourous **ataman** Grigoriev‡, have put forward the slogan "Smash the Yids, the communists, the commissars, and the Cheka." With your acceptance of the slogans, we have nothing to fight about. [7] The letter was published in the insurgent paper, "**put k Svobodye**", with the appropriate comments, despite which the Bolsheviks tried to claim it was evidence of a possible alliance. General Slaschov is also have said to have admired Makhno for similar reasons.[8]

* Hetman Skoropadsky's regime was established in 1918 as a German satrapy by invading Prussian armies. His rule was traditional, authoritarian and anti-socialist.

** tachanki - light, two-wheeled horse drawn cart on which large machine guns were mounted. The tactical key to Makhno's mobility and fire power.

† Petliurists - followers of Simon Petliura, Ukrainian nationalist leader and head of the Ukrainian National Republic's armed forces and a leading member of its executive organ, the Directory.

‡ Nikofor Grigoriev - next to Makhno, the most colourful partisan leader, a tsarist army officer who had supported Petliura against Skoropadsky, but switched to the Bolsheviks following their invasion of Ukraine in February 1919. The Red Army worried about his support, ordered him to the Rumanian front. He refused and sought an alliance with Makhno, but Makhno accused him of being a counter-revolutionary and a pogromist and shot him at a public meeting, integrating Grigoriev's forces under his own command.

Wrangel's situation was much more desperate in 1920 than Denikin's had been a year earlier, and in the late spring he dispatched emissaries to the two most important anti-Bolshevik groupings in the Ukraine, the Makhnovists and the Nationalists, to try to obtain their co-operation. A messenger duly reached the Makhnovists early in July 1920. Despite the fact that he was hanged on the spot, once again the Bolsheviks alleged that the visit was evidence of a direct Makhnovist link with the Whites, although Trotsky did later repudiate this suggestion.[9]

Further ammunition was given to the Bolsheviks following Wrangel's formation in order to gain peasant support of detachments of "various rascals and bandits calling themselves *atamy* of the Makhnovist detachments." No less than eight of these detachments are mentioned, but they seem to have played no part in the final campaign. Their commanders seem to have been insurgents who had had loose connections with Makhno in the autumn of 1919, but the stronger element undoubtedly to have been Wrangel's wish to use Makhno's name as a means of recruitment.[10]



Makhno and the Bolsheviks

If we can thus assert that Makhno had a clear-cut policy of opposition to the Whites, this cannot be said of his dealings with the Bolsheviks. This does not mean that his relations with the Bolsheviks cannot be explained, but it does mean that both sides used tactical alliances when it suited them. There were brief military contacts between Makhno and the Red Guard at Alexandrovsk at the turn of 1917-1918, mentioned above; similarly between the Red Reserve commander Belinkevich and the Makhnovists in their home Hulyai Polye area in April 1918 at the time of the invasion of the Ukraine by the Central Powers assisted by the Rada* forces.[11] Apart from this, relations with Makhno were of almost continuous concern to both the Ukrainian and Russian Federation Soviet governments, the latter increasingly so with the military and productive powers it took over from the Ukrainians, who were regarded as

incompetent, in June 1919. The Red Army, not surprisingly, shared this concern.

Forced to depend on Makhno to defend large areas in the spring of 1919 in the name of Soviet power, the Bolsheviks never trusted him, and this feeling was reciprocated. Although Makhno preferred ideological argument to military until the common enemy, the Whites, had been defeated, the increasingly authoritarian and militarized regime of War Communism became more and more intolerant of opposition. The leadership, from Lenin and Trotsky downwards, co-operated with Makhno only out of sheer necessity, and were determined to crush this military menace in an area of vital strategic and economic importance, as soon as possible.

As early as December 1918, when a joint Red Army-Makhnovist force briefly occupied the city of Katerynoslav, differences on the question of political power had shown themselves.[12] However, the Bolshevik forces of invasion who reached the Sinelnikovo-Hulayi Polyè-Alexandrovsk area at the end of January and the beginning of February 1919 were so small that the Red Commander, Antonov, had no alternative but to ally the Red forces with Makhno.[13] A similar arrangement was made shortly afterwards with Grigoriev for similar reasons.[14] In May 1919, two thirds of the Second Ukrainian Army was made up of Makhno's and Gregoriev's forces.

At this time there were none of the later accusations of banditry against Makhno; rather, the complaints concerned his attitude to Soviet institutions, including the Red Army, the seizure of goods, and lack of discipline in the Makhnovist forces. Such complaints were by no means limited to the Makhnovist forces at the time: his divisional superior, Dybenko, was accused of acting like a partisan himself. Further, the Makhnovists pointed out that the agreement concerned military matters only, and that the insurgents and the civilian population were perfectly entitled to hold and disseminate political and economic views opposed to those of the Bolshevik regime.

The relatively mild remonstrances in March had become much more bitter by the end of April and the beginning of May; it was alleged that the entire Berdyansk Cheka had been arrested, and that Political Commissars - the Bolsheviks' main hope of winning over peacefully the rank and file Makhnovists - were being harassed and even threatened in their work.[15] The polemics reached their height with Trotsky's attacks in early June 1919, when, in addition to previous differences, there was added the task of placing the odium for Denikin's breakthrough, for which each blamed the other.

It followed that Makhno received scant thanks in the Soviet press for his considerable part in the defeat of Denikin in the autumn of 1919. The Bolshevik paper *Zvezda* conducted running slanging matches with the *nabat* anarchists** in Makhnovist-occupied Katerynoslav during October to December 1919, but had to tread warily with the Makhnovists themselves, as they were hoping to win over large numbers of them to the Soviet side. Their main fear was the power of the Makhnovist counter-intelligence, which the Bolsheviks regarded as the real rulers of the city. Anarchist ideas were attacked, but Makhno himself was

* Central Rada - March 1917 to April 1918 The Ukrainian Central Council and its first government. The word "rada" is the Ukrainian equivalent to "soviet". Composed of democratically inclined petite bourgeoisie, the nationalist intelligentsia and the middle peasantry. The peasant masses, the soldiers and the urban proletariat were not represented.

** Nabat Anarchists - the Nabat (Tocsin) Confederation of Anarchist Organizations of Ukraine. Headquarters in Kharkhiv and principal organ in Kursh, as well as centres in Kiev, Odessa, and Ekaterinoslav. Its most prominent members were Voline, Arshinov and Aron Saron. Came to serve as Makhno's ideological spokesmen.

largely left alone until the renewed break in January 1920. Even then, in the ebb tide of the anti-Denikin movement, Makhno paused before resuming anti-Soviet military activity. By June/July, however, the Red Army was once more obliged to divert some of its best units against Makhno..[17]

There was, however, a significant shift in the balance of forces in the Ukraine during 1920: never had the Bolsheviks been stronger, or their opponents - Whites, Makhnovists, Nationalists - been weaker. The latter were by no means finished, nor were the Bolsheviks impregnable. In the face of the Wrangel threat, the Bolsheviks saw the necessity to secure their rear, and so came to an agreement with Makhno, which gave them additional help of seasoned anti-White insurgents.

As soon, however, as Wrangel had been defeated, the Bolsheviks broke the alliance. Justification was adduced in the, by now, usual manner and phraseology: Red Army units had been attacked, soviet representatives had been ejected from the villages, poor peasants were being persecuted, and most of the Makhnovist army was made up of deserters and Whites anyway.[18] Given the shift in military power in favour of the Bolsheviks in 1920, and its accentuation in the defeat of Wrangel, the end of the Makhnovist movement could not be long delayed. Makhno and a small band of followers finally crossed the Rumanian border in August, 1921.[19]

The Makhnovists themselves had many complaints against the Bolsheviks, although there is some evidence that Makhno restrained the more anti-soviet anarchists in his area at the start of 1919.[20] By early April, this mood had become openly anti-Communist. A stinging telegram was sent to Dybenko when he tried to ban the third district congress of Soviets, which met at Hulyai Polye in April. What right, it was asked, did the Bolsheviks have to interfere in the political and social life of the south-eastern Ukraine? The toilers had a perfect right to govern themselves as they say fit, and if the Bolsheviks didn't like it, they could lump it.[21]

If the state in general was often a target for both anarchists and peasants, certain aspects of it were so abhorrent to them that a Communist state was little better than a White regime. The activities of the Cheka and the food requisitioning teams were bitterly resented. The Cheka and the *prodrazverstka*† never showed themselves in Hulyai Polye during 1919, but the peasants living nearer the towns of Katerinoslav and Alexandrovsk had plenty of experience of them.

Makhno made opposition to these organizations explicit and political. The Bolsheviks hold on the Ukraine in general, was precarious, and to expect the peasants to give grain to the cities in return for occasional and irregular town goods was surely to expect trouble. The Makhnovists regarded the poor peasant committees - which did not always consist of poor peasants - as the civilian arm of Bolshevik repression. In 1920 and 1921, any party members discovered in these and similar soviet institutions were frequently shot.[22]

The Bolsheviks also fought Makhno on the non-ideological front. They made several attempts to assassinate him. All the plots were unsuccessful. Trotsky indicated the reasoning behind the attempts: "The anti-popular character of the Makhnovist Army is shown most clearly of all in the fact that this Hulyai Polye army is called the 'Army of Makhno'. Here armed persons are united not around a programme, not around a proletarian banner, but around a person, exactly the same as Grigoriev." [23] If Makhno could be got rid of, the movement would be decapitated. There was considerable truth in this point of view. Whilst he was alive, he would continue to cause the Bolsheviks many headaches. Trotsky remarked on another occasion that he would rather see the Ukraine occupied by Denikin than Makhno.[24] This, it should be emphasized, is as much or more a tribute to the peasantry who chose to follow Makhno through four years of

revolution and civil war, as it is to Makhno himself. If, during 1919, the Bolsheviks could do little except fulminate against Makhno, the position changed considerably during 1920 and 1921, as we have already noted. With no external enemy to fight, the Red Army had plenty of men to spare to deal with 'banditry'. Whilst it is true, in general terms, that the introduction of the New Economic Policy, which was passed at the Tenth Party Congress in March, 1921, made life more difficult for any remaining peasant guerillas. The important move against Makhno had been made nearly a year earlier. This was to quarter garrisons on the villages, especially those thought to favour the insurgents. The reasons this strategy did not work swiftly were that, right to the end, Makhno, with use of cavalry and *tachanki*, was always able to out-distance his pursuers, and that the policy was pursued piecemeal by the rear units of the Red Army. Only at the end of the year, following the rupture after the defeat of Wrangel, did one of the Red group commanders, Eideman, painstakingly plot Makhno's known routes, and combine quartering in these areas with active pursuit by cavalry forces. Thus was the Makhnovshchina, surely but slowly squeezed to death, as Makhno's home area steadily became untenable to him, even for short periods, until he was finally forced into exile.[25]

It will be very clear from what has been said that the aim of the Soviet governments from April 1919 onwards was the physical and ideological destruction of both Makhno and the Makhnovshchina. Lenin as well as Trotsky took a personal interest in this. Lenin showed a certain cynicism when he telegraphed to Kamenev and Rakovsky (the latter was then head of the Ukrainian Soviet government) in May 1919, that "we shall undoubtedly perish unless we clear the Donbas completely in a short time. For the time being, until Rostov is occupied, we must be diplomatic towards Makhno's forces..." [26] Shortly before the attack on Hulyai Polye on 26 November, 1920, Lenin urged Rakovsky to "keep a close watch on all anarchists and prepare documents of a criminal nature as soon as possible, on the basis of which charges can be laid against them. Orders and documents to be kept secret. Send out the necessary instructions." [27] Needless to say, these instructions were intended for Makhnovists as well as anarchists, as events proved. Anarchists were arrested in Kharkiv, in the early hours of 26 November, at the same time as the Red Army launched a full-scale attack on Hulyai Polye.

Ideologically, the Bolsheviks alleged that the kulaks were the backbone of the Makhno movement and army; alternatively, Makhno was accused of following an 'united village' policy, paying court to the kulaks whilst trying to reconcile their interests with those of the middle and poor peasants. The former could help explain Makhno's successes, the latter his failures. The contradictory nature of these claims can be clearly seen in article in *Izvestia* of October 6, 1920: "Correspondence sent to us from the Don Committee of the RKP contains interesting information on the content and activity of Makhnovist detachments, which are overwhelmingly made up of kulaks, deserters and the like...(Their anti-Soviet activities) of course took place under the guise of revolutionary-anarchist slogans...We now have official information that Makhno has, under the pressure of poorest followers, declared his submission - for how long? - to the Soviet power, and wants to fight Wrangel. It is quite possible that the mood of the peasants in the Makhnovist detachments has sobered up Makhno himself..." [28] Where, one wonders, did Makhno's poorest followers come from in any numbers, if his detachments were almost all kulaks and deserters? The article is little more than sloganizing, and the Bolsheviks got into similar difficulties over the inclinations and activities of the middle peasants.

The impression should not be left that Lenin and Trotsky made the policy, which was then dutifully carried out by

† *prodrazverstka* - food requisition squads.

their subordinates. The worst disagreements took place between the return of the Bolsheviks to the Ukraine at the end of 1918, and the sacking of Antonov as Commander-in-Chief of all Red forces in the Ukraine in June, 1919. Most of the disputes centred around Antonov himself. He bombarded his superior, the Commander-in-Chief, Vatsetis, with telegram after telegram on matters important and unimportant. He quarrelled with Podvoisky, Commissar for Defence in the Ukrainian Soviet government, with Shlikhter, the Commissar for Food, with Skachko, his direct military subordinate and commander of the Second Ukrainian Army for most of this period, with Dybenko, one of Skachko's divisional commanders, and with Dybenko's immediate subordinates, Makhno and Grigoriev.[29]

Having been commander of the Red forces which had fared so disastrously in the face of the German invasion in the spring of 1918, Antonov was under considerable pressure to produce results. In addition to a Red Army which at the start at the end of 1918 was barely worth the name, large segments of his forces, those of Grigoriev and Makhno - were certainly insurgents first and Red Army men second. Furthermore, the lower he looked down the command scale even in regular units, the more pronounced became sympathy with the insurgents. It should be remembered that most of the Red units consisted of Ukrainian villagers. Each commander felt that his own competence was being called into question of his military superior queried the behaviour of the insurgents, and blamed either his subordinates or, more commonly, his superiors, for the difficulties of the current situation. As far as Makhno himself was concerned, Antonov was placed in the almost impossible position of being politically but not operationally responsible for Makhno to the supreme command. This came about because Makhno's geographical and strategic position indicated his military subordination to the southern front. Unfortunately, supplies could only get through to him from the Ukrainian sector. Antonov's bitter complaints to Vatsetis went unheeded.

As might be expected, as the military situation became more uncertain and turned for the worse, the disagreements and bickerings increased. Makhno, holding a vital sector of the front, consequently became more and more prominent in these arguments. In May, L.B. Kamenev came to the Ukraine as RSFSR plenipotentiary to try to sort out the mess. The situation was so bad that when holding his initial talks with the Soviet government in Kiev, Kamenev felt obliged to emphasize that agreement between Antonov, Podvoisky and Kshlikhter was necessary before the government as a whole could expect to reach agreements with Grigoriev and Makhno. Kamenev saw Dybenko in Simferopol. The latter complained of the poor work of the food organization, but said he would obey orders in the future. Podvoisky admitted to Kamenev that he made no pretence of controlling the supply organizations of Dybenko, Makhno and Grigoriev - who were largely feeding themselves. When Kamenev questioned Dybenko's supply chief on why he had no control over his subordinates, the latter shrugged and stated: "Makhno will be Makhno, and you won't get him to subordinate." [30]

Perhaps the most glaring example of this division in the Bolshevik leadership towards Makhno was shown at the end of April, when Antonov visited Hulyai Polye, to have a look at things for himself. We have noted that relations between Makhnovists and Bolsheviks were by this time distinctly cool, and an official press campaign had started against the movement. In his report on the visit, Antonov stated: "The article of *Izvestia* of the Kharkiv Soviet for 25 April, which partly about the military worthiness of the Makhnovist partisans, is the most perverted fiction, and does not in the least correspond to the actual situation. In communicating this, the field staff feels obliged to declare that while the insurgents are whole-heartedly devoted to the revolutionary cause, fighting the Whites without rest for months, some person in the rear, - why we don't know - is spreading this

infamous slander about them. Such an attitude towards revolutionaries who have given their lives for the popular cause is in itself proof of some dirty work of provocation." [31]

Either Antonov knew of this campaign, which doesn't say much for his truthfulness, or he didn't, which doesn't say much for his competence. Either way, the divisions within the Bolshevik establishment gave both Makhno and Grigoriev ample room for manoeuvre.

These divisions were made worse by the fact that the Bolsheviks were too few on the ground to influence the insurgent units militarily or politically. As early as March the chief commissar of Makhno's brigade reported: "...among the Makhnovist detachments, (political work) is totally lacking. Political activists are refusing to go to work in Makhno's detachments, and this refusal is leading to the growth of banditry and pogrom agitation, beating up of Jews, etc...The energetic must be mobilized for political work in the Makhnovist detachments. In addition, the strictest control should be exercised over the regimental commissars, among whom drunkenness and debauchery have been frequently noted." [32] Trotsky also attacked Antonov's attitude: "The revolution has derived all that can be obtained from the improvised insurgent detachments, and henceforth these detachments become not only dangerous, but positively disastrous to the cause of the revolution...(but) comrade Antonov conducts a constant struggle against those who indicate that a change-over is essential." [33]

The radical change in the military balance in the following eighteen months was reflected also in a much greater military and political competence on the part of the Bolshevik authorities. The Ukrainian Red Army had disappeared in the aftermath of Denikin's advance in the summer of 1919; orders came from RSFSR headquarters, and were obeyed. The Ukrainian Soviet government, shorn of many of its real powers following its abysmal performance in the first half of 1919, was much chastened, and did Moscow's bidding with little argument. These factors in turn led to increased pressure on Makhno and gave him less room for manoeuvre. The few disagreements only served to indicate the general validity of the change.

We should not forget that there were times, especially early in 1918 and during the autumn and winter of 1918-19, when Communists and Makhnovists were on good terms. The practical help of 90,000 poods* of wheat flour seized from the Whites and sent north in January 1919 to help feed Moscow and Petrograd was much - and publicly - appreciated.[34]. The agreement of January 1919 was signed amicably, covering military co-operation only: under it, the Makhnovists would obey the operational orders of the Red Army command.[35] However, and inevitably, whether Makhno fought well or badly, or not at all, were political as well as military questions, because of the key importance of his front line area and of the area behind it under civilian Makhnovist control. Further, political matters in the front line area are regarded by any government as being subject to military discipline. As an anarchist, Makhno instinctively rejected outside military limitations on his political activities, among front line soldiers as anywhere else. Trotsky may have embittered the dispute, but he did not cause it.

On more than one occasion, the Bolsheviks offered to share power with Makhno. The negotiations over the one day **revkom**** at Katerynoslav in December 1918 are one example of this. It is said that, when he was digging in against the Whites after resigning his Red Army command in June 1919, there was an invitation from the Bolshevik authorities in Alexandrovsk to take over command of all Soviet forces in the area. Although quite likely, in view of Makhno's military reputation and the disorganization of the Soviet forces, there is no confirmation of this. In October 1919, the local

* 1 pood = 36.1 pounds.

** revkom - revolutionary committee.

Bolshevik party organization approached him with the suggestion that he hand over political power to them, while retaining military control for himself. Makhno's reply was to tell them to go away and take up an honest trade, and made it quite clear - as also in Katerynoslav shortly afterwards - that freedom of speech, which was allowed by the Makhnovists, was something quite different from the organization and imposition of political power.[36]

A word should be said about relations between the Red Army and the Makhnovist forces. There were some organizational similarities. One of these was the Revolutionary Military Soviet. In the Makhnovist Army this was the nominal superior body of both the military and civilian wings of the Makhnovschina. Both it and its successor, the Soviet of the Insurgent Army of the Ukraine (Makhnovists) were to exercise no-initiatory power in between congresses of soviets. Similarly to the Bolshevik RVS, political and military control were combined in one body in order to assert the primacy of the political over the military; there the similarity ends, for the Makhnovists, always in close touch with their peasant support, had no reason to fear the possibility of a military coup, which was the main motivation behind the introduction of the Red Army commissar system and its incorporation in the command structure. The only time the Makhnovists had commissars was when the Bolsheviks introduced them early in 1919.[37]

The differences in outlook and organization between the two forces also reflect differing political and ideological concepts. The election of commanders, the attitude to discipline and enlistment, variety in uniforms, type and use of weapons and warfare, are examples of fundamental differences. The lack of military specialists is evident both from the study of Makhnovist commanders and those at Kronstadt in 1921; this contrasts strongly with the large number of Tsarist ex-officers pressed into service for the Red Army, of whom perhaps the most striking was Tukhachevski. Makhno was a master of guerilla warfare, at home, on the move, but nonetheless happiest in his home Hulyai Polye area. Red Army men employed against him in the latter stages, were often from outwith the Ukraine altogether, it being found that Ukrainian detachments were not always reliable, and might even change sides, as happened at the time of the Novy Bug revolt* in July-August 1919. Initial meetings between the rank and file of both sides were always friendly, and Arshinov says - it has not been contradicted - that in December 1920 a special detachment was formed to round up prisoners released by the Makhnovists. One of the points of the October 1920 agreement was that the insurgents should not accept any deserters from the Red Army into their own ranks. A Bolshevik author suggests that this was precisely one of the aims of the Makhnovists in signing the agreement; an early example of something similar can be seen in the invitation to Red Army units to send representatives to the abortive fourth area congress which had been set for June 15, 1919 at Hulyai Polye.

It seems to have been common practice for all Makhnovist prisoners to be shot from 1920 onwards: certainly, allegations to the effect are not denied. The Makhnovists themselves certainly shot commissars, Chekists, and other agents of repression, as opposed to the mobilized rank and file. Stories of atrocities tend to be more frequent in recent Communist publications, as opposed to the better quality works of the 1920's; this doesn't mean there weren't any.[38]

* Novy Bug revolt - Following the defeat of Denikin's White forces from the south, at the Bug River, approximately 3,000 Ukrainians joined his retreating forces, about 3,000 Ukrainians deserted the Red Army and joined his retreating forces.



The Nationalists

"Impartial history will record the damage that Makhno inflicted through the terrible policy of his own personal rule, making everything dependent on himself, with the result that the Ukrainian national authority could not establish a firm footing on Ukrainian territory, and he was thus one of the causes of the recent enslavement of the Ukraine." [39] This is a view very widely held today among Ukrainian exiles. Makhno is blamed for the loss of the eastern Ukraine to the Bolsheviks, especially in the crucial period at the end of 1918, as the demoralized troops of the Central Powers abandoned the country, leaving a power vacuum.

Before considering the activities of Makhno, with reference especially to this vital period, we should indicate the differences in ideology which separated him and the Makhnovschina from the Nationalists. As an anarchist, Makhno had no time for the idea of an independent Ukraine as put forward by the Nationalists, and on many occasions conducted propaganda against it: "Petliurism... they (the Makhnovist staff in December 1918) considered was a movement of the Ukrainian nationalist bourgeoisie, with which, for peasants and revolutionaries, there could be no collaboration whatsoever: the Ukraine should be run on the basis of the freedom of labour and the independence of the workers and peasants from all political authority; between the movement of the toiling people, the Makhnovschina, and that of the bourgeoisie, the Petliurivschina, there could only be strife." [40]

In his memoirs, Makhno regularly speaks of the nationalists as chauvinists. He bitterly condemned their activities in supporting the Germans in the spring of 1918, calling them "those messenger boys for the occupation of the revolutionary territory by the counterrevolutionary forces of the Central Powers... Those traitors, hiding under the flag of socialism brought (to the Ukraine) against the

revolutionary toilers by the all-powerful political bosses whose esteem they coveted..."[41] His opinion of the Hetman was just as scathing. "The hangman has mounted the throne of the Ukrainian autocrat, and is planning to complete the task of killing the revolution in the Ukraine, left unfinished by the Rada." The Hetman was, "surrounded and supported by the scum of the Ukrainian and Russian counterrevolutions on the one hand, and by the German-Austro-Hungarian junker regime on the other." [42] His view of the Directory** was similar: "I don't know exactly what part Vynnychenko† played in the conclusion of the alliance of the Central Rada with the Kings of Germany and Austria-hungary,... but I do know that Petliura, Minister of War at the time of the attack on the Ukraine,... advanced with the vanguard of the Haidamak bands‡, dealing savagely with any revolutionarily-minded peasant or worker. And I also know that Vynnychenko, hand in glove with this same Petliura, is now (December 1918) setting up a new government in Ukraine. Where indeed, I ask you, comrades, in the revolutionary towns and villages of Ukraine, are to be found toilers fool enough to believe in the 'socialism' of this Petliura-Vynnychenko government, or of the 'Ukrainian Directory' as it calls itself?... From the example of all the liberal governments sometimes in power in republican countries, [it] will soon become the standard-bearer of the rights of the bourgeoisie, a class that is materially rich and profitable for the government..."[43]

This attitude persisted through 1919. A passage in the Project-Declaration, a key document on the theory of the Makhnovschina first issued at Alexandrovsk in October 1919 says: "In speaking of the independence of the Ukraine, we do not understand the term to signify national independence, a Petliura sort of autonomy, but rather the social and toiling independence of the workers and peasants. We declare that the toiling people of the Ukraine - or anywhere else - have the right to self-determination, but not on the national sense." [44] The opinion of Arshinov, Makhno's constant companion during the period of spring 1919 to the beginning of 1921, is just as emphatic.

Although he made clear he was no nationalist, Makhno also made it clear he was no Great Russian chauvinist either, intent on importing and imposing an alien rule on the people of the Ukraine. For one thing, he was proud of being a Ukrainian. He never used the derogatory terms "Little Russia" of the Tsars or "South Russia" of Denikin. He complained to Lenin and Sverdlov when he met them in Moscow in June 1918, that it was common practice for the Bolsheviks to speak of "South Russia". [45]

On the other hand, Makhno never mastered literary Ukrainian. It is probable that he spoke village dialect, although this also has been denied by a nationalist writer. His memoirs were written in Russian - with an apology for not being available in Ukrainian - and in them he reveals how embarrassed he was, on re-entering the Ukraine from Soviet Russia in July 1918, not being able to ask in Ukrainian to clarify the situation. [46] In October 1919, when asked what the language of instruction should be, the reply was that, "in the interests of the spiritual development of the people, the language of school instruction should be the one that the local population - teachers, pupils, and parents - are naturally inclined to use". [47] Makhno was here thinking of the countryside, where Ukrainian predominance was overwhelming; the situation in the towns was not so simple. To him, Ukrainian culture was welcome, but political nationalism was an enemy. It should be stated, however, that most of the surviving propaganda of the Makhnovists is written in Russian rather than Ukrainian. The significant exception is nine issues of a paper *Shlyakh do Voli*, published in Katerynoslav in the autumn of 1919, some of which is translations from the Russian language *Put'K Svobody*. The explanation is quite simple; almost all the papers and leaflets

were written, apart from Makhno himself, by anarchists whose native language was Russian. This included the anarchists of the Ukrainian organization Nabat, who came mostly from the towns.

The first sign of any nationalist influence on the Makhnovschina comes from a Bolshevik author writing in the 1920's. According to him, there was a temporary upswing in nationalist feeling during the retreat to Uman in August-September 1919. This had nothing to do with the arrival of the Makhnovists in the much more nationalist Western Ukraine, but was rather due to Makhno's wife Halyna. She had been a primary schoolteacher in Hulyai Polye, and it seems fairly clear that she had nationalist sympathies, even if she was not an overt follower. Certainly, in exile, she drifted from Makhno politically as well as personally. There is also a photo - unfortunately, not dated - of Makhno's staff, with Halyna included. This would imply considerable political influence within the movement. [48]

Other writers, both Bolshevik and Nationalist, have asserted that the Makhnovschina became increasingly chauvinist during 1920 and 1921, as times became harder - a possible common factor, also, with the retreat to Uman. Statements such as "Batko Makhno is struggling for the liberation of the Ukraine from the Muscovite yoke" would suggest, if verified, a growing desperation in the face of continual Bolshevik-identified with Russian - pressure. Such a political 'line' does not go right against what Makhno had previously stood for, and some doubt is thrown on it by the fact that there is no sign of such language in the surviving Makhnovist leaflets of 1920, nor in documents signed by them, nor in any upsurge of co-operation with the Nationalist insurgent groups. [49]

The one report that does lend some retrospective credence to these allegations is a report of conversations between the Petliurist command and Makhno in Romania, soon after he had been driven into exile. According to this account, dated at the end of 1921, from Nationalist sources: "Their most recent appeals have more or less underlined their sympathies for the creation of an independent Ukraine... They had nothing against our conditions (for co-operation against the Bolsheviks): 1) Recognition of the government of the Ukrainian People's Republic; 2) Subordination of all detachments to our command; 3) Organizations and slogans of the insurrectionary movement were to be united for the purpose of an insurrection." [50] Nothing came of this: one would suspect that Makhno, although desperate enough to have talks, was not so desperate as to go along with the Nationalist plans, even if ill-health and ideology had not been limiting factors.

It is at first sight surprising to see how little influence the Nationalists had on events in the left-bank Ukraine during 1917-21, but there are good reasons. For much of the 19th century, Kharkiv had been a centre of Ukrainian culture, but with growing Russification the emphasis shifted westwards, especially to Eastern Galicia, where Lviv became its centre under the less repressive rule of the Austrians. One has only to think of the flourishing condition of Ukrainian studies in Lviv university compared to the difficulties faced by publishers in the Russian Ukraine under the Tsars.

** The Directory under Petliura was established in December 1918 after the overthrow of Skoropadsky.

† Vynnychenko - prominent Ukrainian novelist and playwright. He was a leading member of the Central Rada and was head of the Directory. Resigned from the Directory in 1919 and later became a key figure in the UKP (Ukrainian Communist Party).

‡ Haidamak bands - Ukrainian nationalist peasant bands and supporters of the Church.

However, this is an indication that the nationalist movement before the revolution was largely an intellectual one, although it was spreading in the towns, and in the west, to some of the villages. Its agents were the intelligentsia, especially teachers, and, later, the lower ranks in the armed forces, both commissioned and non-commissioned. Many of the 'bandit' leaders in the west during the Civil War were ex-officers or ex-teachers, including Grigoriev. It is true that Petliura himself came from the east, but there were not many others.

In the early part of this century, therefore, the traditions in the south-eastern Ukraine, Makhno's home country, was not one of nationalism, but, especially in this area, one of peasant uprising dating back to the Zaporizhian Sich*. In the elections for the Constituent Assembly, the Ukrainian parties consistently trailed behind the SR's in the countryside and the Bolsheviks in the towns. The Bolsheviks considered the right bank - provinces of Kiyiv, Volyn, Podol, Chernigov, and Poltava - as Petliurist, while the left - Katerynoslav, Kherson, and Tauride - was seen as Makhnovist; Kharkiv belonged to neither. Kubanin, one of the leading Bolshevik authorities of the 1920's suggests that the national question played hardly any part in the Makhnovist movement.[51] This is some achievement, if we recall that the villages of the east bank were overwhelmingly Ukrainian, more so than some of the right bank provinces. The towns of the left bank, on the other hand, were never fruitful territory for either Makhnovists or Nationalists - the Bolshevik hold on Kharkiv, Katerynoslav, and Alexandrovsk and the Donbas remained fairly constant despite the violent fluctuations of the civil war period.

To say that the nationalist activity was minimal in the south-east is not to say that it was non-existent. There was during 1917 some agitation in the town of Katerynoslav, and some peasants in the Novomoskovsk area complained about nationalist agitators. Makhno's own memoirs show that Hulyai Polye itself, during the latter half of 1917 and early 1918, there was a small but increasingly active nationalist group. Makhno himself, as a the only political returnee and a very capable organizer, was certainly in command until the arrival of the Central Powers, but he had to sometimes fight for it. He encountered a Ukrainian SR during a meeting held to discuss the July events in Petrograd. A resolution was passed in favour of the Petrograd rising, containing a sideswipe at the Kiyiv Rada. At the provincial congress of peasants' unions, held at Katerynoslav in December 1917, the nationalists of Selyanska Spilka were in a small minority, even had they not been intimidated by the growing influence of Bolsheviks, anarchists, and left SR's in the city.[52]

Early in 1918, the situation in the Ukraine became more confused, and Makhno noted an increase in the activity of Rada agents in the Hulyai Polye area as the break between the nationalists and the left fast approached. One of the main reasons that Makhno moved some of his armed peasants up to Alexandrovsk was to help the Bolshevik/left SR coalition forestall a Rada takeover in the town, possible aided by some Cossack troop-trains on their way home to the Don from the South-Western front. Back in Hulyai Polye, speakers putting forward the Ukrainian case were dragged off the public platform and beaten up. Despite this, Makhno had to hasten back from Alexandrovsk to forestall their further activity: among them were a rich Jew and a number of low-ranking officers.[53]

As the Rada forces approached along with their allies of the Central Powers, the local nationalists became more open; at one meeting anarchists and nationalist supporters were almost equally divided. The nationalists were unable to stop Makhno organizing free battalions to fight the invaders - his personal prestige was too great for that - but they were in a position to effectively sabotage their defence of Hulyai Polye

when Makhno himself was cut off from the town while trying to link up with the commander of the retreating Red forces. Makhno regarded this as base treachery, and he settled accounts with some of those concerned when he regained Hulyai Polye in the autumn of 1918. The treachery did not, however, alter his confidence in the revolutionary capabilities of the peasants. He considered that the Jewish company on guard duty at the time had been deliberately misled by nationalist intellectuals.[54]

It will be clear from this that future political or military operations between Nationalists and Makhnovists was hardly likely. Apart from a few local cases we will consider below, relations between them from the autumn of 1918 onwards varied between open hostility and cautious neutrality, the latter being allowed only when it was in the coincident interests of both. One such occasion was in November and early December 1918, when Makhno, unsure of the ideological and numerical correlation of the forces in Katerynoslav, sent two of his closest associates, Chubenko and Migorodski, to investigate. He was worried by the possible buildup of White forces there, and wanted to know the strength of revolutionary elements in the city. Apart from a minor misunderstanding, they were well treated by Horobyets, who was holding power in the name of the Directory; they reported, however, that Horobyets and most of his men were counterrevolutionary. Makhno was not strong enough - he had barely consolidated his position against the occupying forces - to take action against the city immediately, and even felt it politic to agree to the Directory mobilization order being carried out in areas under his control. By the end of December the situation had changed, and Makhno, in allegiance with the Bolsheviks, felt strong enough to go over to the offensive against Horobyets. Even earlier, a Petliurist detachment in the Uezd** of Alexandrovsk had been disarmed.[55]

There was an echo of this hesitation at the first district congress of soviets held at Velikaya Mikhailovka, north of Hulyai Polye, in January 1919. This took place in the aftermath both of the temporary Nationalist reoccupation of Katerynoslav at the end of September, and White successes against the Makhnovists in the south. There was a definite feeling among the civilians that fratricidal strife between Makhnovists and Nationalists should cease. The military, including Byelash, Makhno's chief of staff, and Chubenko, were strongly in favour of an immediate military alliance with the advancing Red Army, against both Nationalists and Whites. The military, supported by Makhno, won the day, although a delegation was sent off by the congress to appeal to all, including Makhno, to stop the fighting; it was also to try to persuade recruits to the nationalist forces to desert or refuse to join up. In the south - Tauride - the opposition to Makhno was almost entirely White.[56]

An interesting indication of Makhno's wish to see an independent Ukraine controlled by the workers and peasants of the Ukraine can be seen in the summer of 1919. In the face of Denikin's advance, the Red Army headquarters decided for strategic reasons to abandon the Ukraine. Unfortunately, retreat was not possible for all Red units, especially along the Black Sea littoral and in the west. In the former case, units retreating from the Crimea found themselves hemmed in by Whites and Makhnovists. Many of them were Ukrainians, and for those who wished to continue the fight, Makhno was a magnet ready at hand. Hence, "there arose the mistaken opinion that in these circumstances the Denikinists should be fought with the Makhnovists as allies... The Makhnovists agitated... with the slogan: All to whom freedom and independence are dear should stay in the Ukraine and fight the Denikinists." [57] It

* Sich - stronghold of the Cossack class of warriors in the 17th and 18th Centuries.

** uezd - district.

is relevant to recall that Petliura was not at war with Denikin at the time.

There was a temporary agreement between Makhnovists and Nationalists when both were confronted by Denikin's forces near Uman in September 1919. Both felt that they could not fight two enemies at one time, and a truce was agreed on. To both sides this was only a tactical arrangement; their ideological hostility continued - the Makhnovists printed an anti-Petliura leaflet, and it has been alleged that Makhno was plotting to kill the Nationalist leader, just as Grigoriev had been dealt with at the end of July. Makhno escaped from the arrangement as soon as he could, following his victory over the Whites at Peregonovka, near Uman, at the end of September. A garbled form of the arrangement turned up in the Moscow papers towards the end of October (they had no means of direct communication with the Ukraine); Makhno and Petliura were there recorded as having joined forces.

The truce did have one important side-effect: under its terms, the eight thousand or so Makhnovist wounded were to be taken care of in Uman and other hospitals under Petliura's control. Their abandonment enabled Makhno to undertake his incredible ride through Denikin's rear following the battle of Peregonovka. Those wounded were certainly luckier than those left behind following the abandonment of Katerynoslav in December - the White general Slaschov had them strung up and left to hang.[58]

During the first occupation of Katerynoslav by the Makhnovists in October-November 1919, one of the local insurgent detachments under Dyakivski was supplied with arms and ammunition by Makhno. Dyakivski was considered a Petliurist who considered himself to be part of the Ukrainian People's Army; when the crunch came with a White counterattack from Pyatikhatka to the west, Dyakivski refused the expected flank coverage, leaving the Makhnovists exposed to attack and forcing them to abandon the city. There were many Petliurist detachments operating in the Novomoskovsk area to the north of the city; Dyakivski's, at Kamenskoe, was the nearest. Not surprisingly, one of the local communists reported that, "the Makhnovist attitude to the Petliura movement was one of suspicion bordering on hostility, especially towards the end of this period".[59] Shortly afterwards, Voline, one of the leading anarchists who joined up with the Makhnovists during 1919, was sent of to Krivij Rih to counter nationalist influence among the insurgents there. On the way, however, he caught typhus - an epidemic was raging - and was captured by Red Army soldiers and taken off to prison in Moscow.[60]

In 1920 the scale of fighting was much smaller. One Makhnovist states that, "There were cases of Makhnovists giving Petliurist arms when we had a surplus, as in the provinces of Chernigov, Kiyiv, Poltava, and Kherson, when Makhnovist detachments were in those areas." [61] The lack of formal links with the Petliura command is hardly surprising, and is confirmed by the Directory's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was in touch with Wrangel: "As far as relations of the chairman of the Directory with Makhno are concerned, there have been none to date, as we have no definite information either on the composition of his army, or on where he is, or on the starting point of his military activities. The chief command [of UNR Army] is hoping to get some information on Makhno from the representatives sent by it to the Army of General Wrangel." [62] This was not long after the Makhnovists had hung the envoy Wrangel had sent to them.

As will be seen from the previous paragraph, the Makhnovists, because of Red Army pressure and the fact that the Hulyai Polye-Orekhovo area was the centre of fighting with the Whites, wandered considerably during the summer of 1920. This brought them into contact with various groups. In 1920 it was less likely that these groups

would recognize Petliura's overall authority, both because of the distance involved and because the start of the nationalists had been on the wane since the re-entry of the Bolsheviks into the Ukraine at the end of 1919.

In the area of Reshetylyka, near Poltava, a pursuing Red Army detachment came across both Makhnovist and Petliurist sympathizers. Shortly before this, just before the Wrangel delegation, a delegation from an underground nationalist organization had been received, but unfortunately neither time, place, or names are given. Some of the smaller nationalist bands joined up with him, such as Matveenکو with three hundred men in the Novomoskovsk area. Near Zinkiv, in the province of Poltava in August 1920, Butavetski, head of a detachment of five to six hundred, joined up with Makhno, although Red forces scattered his men shortly afterwards. It is significant that these men are described - by an anarchist turned Bolshevik - as regular rather than insurgent in formation, and even more so that it contained some former Petliura staff officers of considerable military experience.[63]

Before assessing Makhno's relations with both Bolsheviks and Nationalists more generally, it is worth saying something about the Borotbisty. Firstly, there is evidence that they were co-operating with Makhno at the time of the occupations of Katerynoslav in October-December 1919. Secondly, their reasons for so doing were rather different from either the Bolsheviks or occasional Nationalists. Their relevance to the discussion on Makhno and the nationalists will become clear from the following paragraphs.

Their name originated from the name of the paper of the Ukrainian SR's, **Borotba**, which the left wing of the party took over in the summer of 1918, formalizing a split at an illegal congress in May 1918 (which had broken the party into right, centre, and left factions). The fundamental disagreement concerned whether the fight for national independence should have precedence over the implementation of social and economic reforms. They were sympathetic to the Bolsheviks, but suspicious of their centralizing tendencies; they advocated an independent Ukrainian socialist republic, including an independent Ukrainian army, such as had existed in the Red Army until it was abolished in June 1919. "Their aim was not to split the revolutionary forces; they wanted an alliance of the Ukrainian and Russian armies which would however be ethnically, culturally, and organizationally separate." [64]

After June 1919 the Bolsheviks set their face against this, and the Borotbisty, who had briefly joined the Ukrainian Soviet government in May 1919, were searching that autumn for armed forces to supplement their own small numbers of insurgents. Makhno was one of the few military leaders in the Ukraine who was a revolutionary without being either a nationalist or a centralist.

In the early months of 1919, in the power vacuum that followed the hasty nationalist retreat, some Borotbisty organized a Central Revolutionary Committee at Znamenka.[65] This body had definite pretensions to being a Ukrainian Soviet government, but it was unfortunately sandwiched between the forces of Grigoriev and the advancing Red Army. Grigoriev was at that time sympathetic to the aims of this **Tsentrevkom**, but early in February, agreed to subordinate himself to the Kharkiv government on terms similar to those agreed by Makhno a few days before. The **Tsentrevkom** therefore disappeared, and the local Borotbisty became increasingly disenchanted with the growing anti-Bolshevik and anti-Jewish turn of Grigoriev's policies. As early as March the Borotbisty made overtures to join the Kharkiv government, but only when these were renewed in May, following the Grigoriev revolt, did the hitherto overconfident Bolsheviks agree; one Borotbist, Yakovlev, became chief of the Cheka. Even so, the Bolsheviks were not altogether pleased, but they could not

afford to choose in a time of crisis. There was drafted in Moscow, at this time, an order for the liquidation of the Borotbisty; Trotsky was exceedingly irritated by the independent-minded attitude they showed, and their preoccupation with what seemed to him rather parochial concerns. To show their standpoint more emphatically, the Borotbisty, in merging with the left-wing Ukrainian Social Democrats, later including Vynnychenko, dropped 'SR' from their party title, becoming in August 1919 the Ukrainian Communist Party (Borotbisty).[66]

The first evidence we have of Borotbist military activity in the Katerynoslav region is at the end of October 1918, when, among the insurgent forces of the Bolshevik Kolos in the Sinelnikovo junction area immediately to the north of Hulyai Polye, were three Borotbist groups from the right bank of the Dnieper and others from the left bank. Kolos' chief of staff was a Borotbist. The Bolsheviks incorporated them into the unsurgent forces as quickly as possible.[67]

When next we find them active, the political situation had changed, following the demise of the Ukrainian Soviet government which they had joined in May 1919. Once again we find a few Borotbisty insurgents, and a renewed search for an independent Ukrainian Red Army. An underground Bolshevik report states that: "A congress of the initiative-revolutionary groups in Novomoskovsk area was held on 26 September 1919 (Old Style). Under the influence of separatist elements [i.e. the Borotbisty], a resolution was adopted on the establishment of a socialist bloc of all 'left' parties, even including the Petliurists, for the purpose of fighting the Whites. The congress elected a revolutionary committee which was half Petliurist and half Makhnovist." [68]

The activities of the Borotbisty were clearly a considerable irritant to the local Bolsheviks as well as those in Moscow. Although a later Bolshevik author suggests that this congress ended with a Bolshevik resolution being passed, it is plain from the original text that the leading elements following the Bolshevik withdrawal from the Ukraine were the Borotbist, nationalist, and some residual Makhnovists. The Borotbisty were strongest in the province of Poltava. The Makhnovists were those who had not retreated towards Uman following the debacle in June against the Whites.

Following the Makhnovist occupation of Katerynoslav, a Borotbist organization soon appeared, and immediately began talks on possible co-operation with the Makhnovists, as a result of which all Borotbist detachments in the province of Katerynoslav were to come under Makhno's operational command. One Bolshevik author has suggested that not all Borotbist detachments agreed to this. The conference took place in the middle of November 1919.

One writer has even suggested that Borotbisty edited *Slyakh do Voli*, the Ukrainian equivalent of the Russian-language Makhnovist paper *Put K Svobodye*, on the reasoning that the line taken by *Put K Svobodye* approximated most nearly to their own views. This is not borne out by other evidence. Majstrenko, a Borotbist from the province of Poltava, who later wrote a book about them, states that the Borotbisty did have a paper, but that it was called *Ukrainskyi Proletar*, edited in Katerynoslav by a leading member, Lisovyk.[69]

The Makhnovist-Borotbist agreement was succinct: "it is necessary to combine the [partisan] units in order to organize an independent Insurrectionary Army, with the aim of thwarting the party dictatorship of the Russian Communist Party [Bolsheviks]." [70] Little came of it, however, because of the decline of Makhno's military fortunes, but the importance each side attached to it can be gauged from the fact that Voline, chairman of the RVS, and Chubenko, Makhno's adjutant, signed it, while Lisovyk, Hrudnitski, and Matyash signed it for the Borotbists. The

latter was a military commander who became part of the Makhnovist army under the agreement.

The Bolsheviks were extremely annoyed at the behaviour of the Borotbists, whom they considered more than a little tainted by nationalism. It had been suggested that there was a secret Trotsky order, at this time, saying that: "All attempts by any political groups in the Ukraine to find support among insurgent units or to make the latter the basis of a separate army, must be branded as military sabotage and treason to the Soviet Ukrainian Republic." [71] The Borotbists were further denounced as two-faced, ready to negotiate with both Bolsheviks and Makhnovists as an insurance policy. One said that, "At the same time that the Borotbists were proposing to co-operate with us (they signed an agreement with the Makhnovists). In general, their activity was unprincipled and two-faced enough to be reminiscent of provocatory adventure." [72]

Following the Makhnovist military collapse, the Borotbisty, despite these Bolshevik fulminations, entered the provisional Ukrainian government. The Bolshevik aim was to get rid of the Borotbisty as a separate party, and thus destroy any chance of a separate Ukrainian Communist party with any meaningful power following the self-dissolution of the Communist Party of the Ukraine (Bolshevik) in October 1919. This was to be achieved, "by means of attracting its best elements into our ranks and meeting out implacable retribution to the Makhnovist and Petliurist elements in the Borotbist ranks." [73] The merger took place in March 1920, but the following month an RCP directive still found it necessary to urge a purge of "unprincipled and adventurous fellow-travellers, demagogic elements, semi-Makhnovists and opportunists." [74] The Ukapisty*, formed in August 1919, continued to exist until 1925, for twenty percent of the Borotbisty refused to join the RCP. [75] It would be interesting to speculate what might have happened if the Bolsheviks advanced to the south at the end of 1919 had been a few weeks slower.

Conclusion

The reader will have noted that I have said little of Makhno's ideology, and less of those of his enemies. This was deliberate, in an attempt to search out the factual truths beneath the many and conflicting layers of distortion and legend around him. Having done this, it is possible to draw some conclusions, even though these well inevitably be more controversial than the main part of the article.

It cannot be pointed out too often that for most of the Civil War, Makhno was on the move. Where other, such as Reds or Whites, expanded or contracted from a given area, the Makhnovists' home area was rarely at peace from the beginning of 1918 onwards. This not only makes his military movements more difficult to follow, it also indicates many strategic and political decisions were taken under the pressure of events.

Two questions followed from this: Firstly, how far was Makhno politically consistent? Secondly, to what extent are the more common accusations of betrayal and inconsistency justified?

A full answer to the first question is beyond the scope of the present article, but there is no doubt that Makhno was a convinced anarchist who tried to put his anarcho-communist ideas into practice at both civilian and military levels. For the purpose of answering the second question, one may pick out two vital components of his philosophy. It was internationalist, and therefore opposed to nationalism or any discrimination against particular nationalities, such as the Jews; and it was based on the need for a revolution which

* Ukapisty - Ukrainian Communist Party (Borotbisty).

would overthrow the exploiters and thence lead to the self-managing of society on a federal basis, there being no need for government.

Given that there were five distinct political groupings fighting for control in the Ukraine during the Civil War - Makhnovists, Bolsheviks, Nationalists, Whites, and Borotbisty - quite apart from groups of local insurgents wanting control of their own localities (the Greens**) - it was inevitable that each grouping would search for possible allies among the others. We should bear in mind that the inevitability of events as seen from hindsight was by no means clear at the time; the Bolshevik victory was not an inescapable, nor, in the earlier stages, were they even considered to be the strongest contenders.

Absolute irreconcilability considerably limited the possible permutation of alliances. For the Makhnovists, alliance with the Borotbisty was desirable, with the Bolsheviks possible, with the Nationalists on occasion conceivable, with the Whites impossible. For the Borotbisty, either Makhnovists or Bolsheviks could be allies, the Nationalists were a possibility, the Whites, never. The Bolsheviks would never co-operate with either Nationalists or Whites, whilst co-operation between the Nationalists and Whites was a possibility.

In each case there are definite ideological considerations involved. For the Makhnovists, Borotbisty, and Bolsheviks, the appeal was to workers, and/or peasants; for the Nationalists, a classless appeal; for the Whites, to mainly conservative elements. No co-operation was possible between the extremes, whilst alliance between either extreme and the nationalists was precarious and short-lived. Even within the left, the differences were deep enough, especially between Makhnovists and Bolsheviks.

Generalized accusations of treachery to class or nation need to be examined very carefully in the light of these fundamental ideological differences, for, if aims are so different, it is more difficult to prove that desertion of short-lived alliances, or downright enmity, were consciously Machiavellian. Certainly, the participants lost much of their earlier naivete, but only between Bolsheviks and Makhnovists is it possible to argue a significant place for cynicism. Perhaps if the Nationalists and Whites had come to similar terms for any length of time, a similar claim could be made. Certainly the Nationalists case concerning Makhno's betrayal of the left bank to the Bolsheviks at the end of 1918 and beginning of 1919 does not stand up to such an examination; it was well known both that Makhno was no nationalist, and that he preferred the more revolutionary-minded Bolsheviks. Makhnovists and Bolsheviks had their internationalism in common, and both wished to see the defeat of the Whites more than anything else. The Nationalists did not regard either of these as their first priority.

It is certainly true that the Bolsheviks used the Makhnovists when convenient, and turned on them once the whites were out of the way. Therein, certainly, lies a measure of Bolshevik cynicism and Makhnovist naivete; having tried to establish the historical record, I consider that the reader must make his own judgement.

** the Greens - followers of ataman Zeleny whose name means green. His area of operations was around Kiev and in the Poltava region.

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2. e.g. Yaroslavski, p.75; *Pravda*, Feb. 9 1920.
3. Makhno, Vol. 1, pp.127-137.
4. Arshinov, p.92; Byelash, p.218; Rudnev, p.29.
5. e.g. Makhno, Vol.3 p.94; Arshinov, pp.58-9.
6. Put K Svobodye, Dec. 7 1919, p.2.

7. Put K Svobodye, June 4 1919, pp. 2-3; cf. *Izvestiya*, June 18 1919; *Pravda*, June 14 1919; Arshinov, p.103.
8. Gerasimenko, pp.70-73.
9. Arshinov, pp.167-169; *Pravda*, July 9, 27 Aug. 14, 1920; Lebed, pp.43-4; Teper, pp.92-3; Menzies, p.95.
10. Rakovski, p.82; Makhno - Vcherashnie, pp.50-1; Kubanin, pp.149-152.
11. Makhno, Vol. 1, pp.198-9.
12. Byelash, pp.213-4.
13. Byelash, pp.224-5.
14. Adams, pp.155-7.
15. Antonov, Vol. 4, pp.101-3; Semanov, p.43; *Grazhdanskaya Voina*, Vol.1, Bk.2, pp.362-3.
16. Trotsky, *Revoliutsiya*, Vol. 2, Pt.1, pp.189-91, 201-2.
17. Kubanin, pp.119-21; Konevets, pp.96-7; Frunze, 1919, p.181; Rudnev, p.86.
18. Kubanin, pp.157-9; Frunze, 1957, pp.427-9.
19. Fomin, p.97.
20. Rudnev, p.37; Teper, pp.28, 41.
21. Arshinov, pp.98-103.
22. Biliy, p.12; Lebed, pp.31,42-3; Makhno - Vcherashnie, pp.33-7; Rudnev, pp.68-72, 88.
23. Trotsky, *Revoliutsiya*, Vol.2, Pt.1, p.191.
(underlining in original).
24. Berkman, Myth, p.189; Makhno, Vcherashnie, p.59; Arshinov, p.124.
25. *Grazhdanskaya Voina*, Vol.3, p.522; *Radyanske Budivnitstvo*, p.554; Biliy, pp.13-7; Lebed, p.51.
26. *Grazhdanskaya Voina*, Vol.2, p.16. (underlining in original).
27. *Goneniya*, p.24.
28. *Izvestiya*, Oct. 6 1920; cf. *Izvestiya*, June 6 1919; *Radyanske Budivnitstvo*, p.344; Kubanin, pp.131-6.
29. e.g. Antonov, Vol.3, p.214, Vol.4, pp.55, 59-65; v.s. p.125.
30. V.S., p.132.
31. Antonov, Vol.4, pp.113-4.
32. *Grazhdanskaya Voina*, Vol.1, Bk.2, p.374.
33. *Trotsky Papers*, Vol.1, p.391.
34. *Izvestiya*, Feb. 9 1919; Arshinov, pp.92-3.
35. Byelash, pp.224-5; Arshinov, pp.94-5.
36. Kubanin, p.78; Voline, p.162.
37. Voline, p.108; Kubanin, pp.167-70; Arshinov, p.166.
38. Arshinov, p.190, 221-7; Biliy, p.12.
39. Onatski, p.968.
40. Arshinov, p.82.
41. Makhno, Vol.1, pp.210-11.
42. Makhno, Vol.2, p.73.
43. Makhno, Vol.3, pp.154-5.
44. Arshinov, p.204.
45. Makhno, Vol.2, p.132.
46. Makhno, Vol.1, p.6; Reshetar, p.250.
47. Arshinov, p.204.
48. Teper, p.49; Mett, p.3.
49. Kubanin, p.165-6; Vyna, *Zvyazky*, p.18.
50. *L'Ukraine Sovietiste*, pp.124-5.
51. Trotsky, *Revoliutsiya*, Vol.3, Pt.1, pp.251
51. Trotsky, *Revoliutsiya*, Vol.3, Pt.1, pp.251-2; Kubanin, p.163; Lebed, p.9; Teper, p.50.
52. Vynar, Materialy, p.15; Makhno, Vol.1, pp.16 8, 104-5.
53. Makhno, Vol.1, pp.114-6,147-8; Byelash, p.196.
54. Makhno, Vol.1, pp.181-92, 201,11; Vol.3, pp.143-6.
55. Vynar, *Materialy*, pp.18-9; Vynar, *Zvyazky*, pp.15-6; *Makhno*, Vol.3, pp.167-76; Byelash, pp.210-1. Makhno, Vol.3, pp.167-76; Byelash, pp.210-1.
56. Byelash, pp.222-4.
57. Naida, Vol.4, p.218.
58. Arshinov, pp.137-38; Vynar, *Zvyazky*, pp.16-7; *Pravda*, Oct. 15, 30 1919; *Izvestiya*, Nov. 1 1919; Teper, p.51; Arbatov, p.99.
59. Konevets, p.90; Miroshevski, p.199; Vynar, *Zvyazky*, p.17.

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60. Voline, *Razyasneniye*, pp.4-7.
61. Kubanin, p.111.
62. *Grazhdanskaya Voina*, Vol.3, p.410.
63. Lebed, p.44, Romanchenko, p.124; Teper, p.20; Biliy p.12
64. Borys, p.258.
65. Skaba, Vol.2, p.68; Majstrenko, pp.112-9.
66. Kubanin, p.73; Majstrenko, pp.126-7, 136-8.
67. *Iz Istorii*, p.57; Majstrenko, p.226.
68. Majstrenko, p.152.
69. Skaba, Vol.2,p.381; Konevets, p.91; Majstrenko, p.182.
70. Majstrenko, p.175; Kin, p.197.
71. Majstrenko, p.181.
72. Konevets, p.91.
73. *Trotsky Papers*, p.791; Majstrenko, p.156.
74. Majstrenko, p.214.
75. Majstrenko, p.196.

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A Proclamation from the CULTURAL-EDUCATIONAL SECTION OF THE INSURGENT ARMY (MAKHOVIST). 27 April 1920

—The Makhnovists are peasants and workers who rose as early as 1918 against the coercion of the German-Magyar, Austrian and Hetman bourgeois authority in the Ukraine. The Makhnovists are those working people who raised the battle standard against the Denikinists and any kind of oppression, violence and lies, wherever they originated. . .

—WHY DO WE CALL OURSELVES MAKHOVISTS? Because, first, in the terrible days of reaction in the Ukraine, we saw in our ranks an unflinching friend and leader, MAKHNO, whose voice of protest against any kind of coercion of the working people rang out in all the Ukraine, call-

ling for a battle against all oppressors, pillagers and political charlatans who betray us. . .

—WHAT DO WE SEE AS THE BASIS OF LIBERATION? The overthrow of the monarchist, coalition, republican and social-democratic Communist-Bolshevik Party governments. . . The Soviet system is not the power of the social democratic Communist-Bolsheviks who now call themselves a soviet power. . .

— . . . The working people themselves must freely choose their own soviets, which will carry out the will and desires of the working people themselves, that is to say ADMINISTRATIVE, not ruling soviets.

—WHAT ROAD LEADS TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MAKHOVIST GOALS? An implacable revolution and consistent struggle against all lies, arbitrariness and coercion, wherever they come from, a struggle to the death, a struggle for free speech for the righteous cause, a struggle with weapons in hand. . . only through the destruction of the state by means of a social revolution can. . . we arrive at SOCIALISM.

(Abridged from text in the Black & Red/Solidarity (1974) translation of Peter Arshinov's *History of the Makhnovist Movement*.)