

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC RELATIONS IN CENTRAL UKRAINE ON THE THRESHOLD OF AND DURING THE UKRAINIAN REVOLUTION (1881–1922): THE AGRARIAN QUESTION

Yurii Mytrofanenko<sup>1</sup>, Oleksandr Zhytkov<sup>2</sup>, Nina Doroshchuk<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract.** The *subject of the study* is the analysis of economic development (agrarian relations) in Central Ukraine in the 80s of the XIX century – the first quarter of 1922. The problematic nature of the article is stipulated by the insufficient attention of specialists to the economic history of this region. The publication deals with the socio-economic sphere of regional history. *Methodology.* The study is based on the use of interdisciplinary methodological optics: economics, history, geography, and law. *The purpose of the article* is to analyse the approaches to solving the agrarian issue in Central Ukraine in the post-reform period and during the liberation struggle of 1917–1922. The article focuses on various aspects of socio-economic development in the late XIX century – the first quarter of the XX century. *Conclusions.* In the 80s and 90s of the XIX century, significant economic experiments took place in Central Ukraine aimed at solving the agrarian issue and meeting the economic needs of the peasantry. They were initiated by both representatives of the authorities – zemstvo officials – and public figures, such as M. Levytskyi. These attempts were partially successful economically: the peasantry of Kherson, Yekaterinoslav, Kyiv, and Poltava provinces had larger land holdings than in other areas, and were more entrepreneurial, as evidenced by their support for the cooperative movement. The second part of the article deals with the analysis of socio-economic relations during the liberation struggle of 1917–1922. The analysis of this struggle suggests that the peasantry of Central Ukraine was the driving force behind various insurgent movements. There were several major uprisings on socio-economic grounds in these areas, which were caused by the Ukrainian peasantry's rejection of the economic experiments of the Russian occupiers: the Bolsheviks and their opponents, the White Guards. The interests of the Ukrainian peasantry were partially satisfied by the introduction of a new economic policy in 1921, which contributed to the gradual decline of the insurgency.

**Key words:** economy, agriculture, reform, peasantry, co-operation, new economic policy, uprising, Central Ukraine.

**JEL Classification:** R14, D18, P20

## 1. Introduction

The Great Peasant Reform of 1861, despite its scale and significance, did not solve all the problems that existed in agrarian relations in the territory of Great Ukraine in the post-reform period. The existence of landowners' and communal land holdings, the long redemption operation, smallholdings and landlessness of the peasantry remained serious problems of agrarian relations on the Ukrainian territory as part of the Russian Empire. These factors exacerbated the socio-economic situation in the country, which,

despite the completion of the industrial revolution, remained largely an agrarian state, and the peasantry was turning into a driving force behind revolutions. In this context, the territory of Central Ukraine was no exception.

The article aims to analyse agrarian relations in this micro-region of the Right Bank of Ukraine. The upper boundary of the study is the 80s of the XIX century, when land laws were introduced to solve the problems of landlessness and small-scale landownership of the peasantry of Central Ukraine, in particular, Kherson

<sup>1</sup> Communal institution "Kirovohrad Regional In-Service Teacher Training Institute named after Vasyl Sukhomlynskyi", Ukraine (*corresponding author*)

E-mail: mitrofanenko77@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5371-3918>

ResearcherID: U-6483-2020

<sup>2</sup> Volodymyr Vynnychenko Central Ukrainian State University, Ukraine

E-mail: gitkov.oa@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2423-6352>

<sup>3</sup> National Academy of Internal Affairs, Ukraine

E-mail: doroshchuk.nina@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7564-6055>



This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 4.0

and Yekaterinoslav provinces, and the emergence of the *artel* (cooperative) movement on the initiative of Mykola Levytskyi.

The lower part of the period – 1921–1922 – was caused by the emergence and implementation of a new economic policy in Ukraine, which for some time became a compromise in the relations between the peasantry and the authorities.

The geographical scope of the study is the territory of Central Ukraine. The boundaries of this poorly explored historical and geographical region of the Right Bank are the Dnipro River in the east, the Syniukha River in the west, the Southern Bug River in the south, and the Ros River in the north. In the period under study, the territories of Central Ukraine were part of the Kherson, Yekaterinoslav, Kyiv, and Poltava provinces.

The research methodology is based on the principles of historicism and multifactoriality. The critical method of analysing historical sources of various origins is used. A regional method is used, in particular, to identify the peculiarities of agrarian relations in Central Ukraine. To study the little-known facts from the life of the founder of the cooperative movement Mykola Levytskyi, the methods of biography are used. The study applies interdisciplinary methodological optics: economics, history, geography, law, and statistics.

The scientific novelty of the publication lies in the analysis of agrarian relations in Central Ukraine, a historical and geographical region that is one of the least studied in Ukrainian historiography. The article also introduces little-known documents on the history of agrarian relations in Ukraine in the author's original interpretation.

The analysis of the agrarian question in Ukraine is a rather popular topic among Ukrainian historians. Two collective monographs dealing with the peculiarities of agrarian relations in Ukraine in the first quarter of the twentieth century are devoted to different aspects of this issue: "Peasants, land and power during the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921" and "War with the state or for the state? The peasant uprising in Ukraine in 1917–1921". The authors of the articles on the context of agrarian relations in Ukraine in the early twentieth century are renowned experts N. Kovalova, S. Kornovenko, O. Mykhailiuk, N. Zemziulina (Kornovenko, Zemziulina, Kovalova, Mykhailiuk, 2020). Their articles are part of the monograph "Peasants, land and power during the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921". V. Lobodaiev, B. Malynovskyi, D. Mykhailychenko, M. Kovalchuk, P. Isakov analysed the approaches to solving the agrarian issue in Ukraine during the period of liberation struggle by different participants of the revolutionary events in Ukraine in the book "War with the state or for the state? The peasant uprising in

Ukraine in 1917–1921" (Lobodaiev, 2017). Yaroslav Hrytsak paid a lot of attention to the peasant issue in his book "Overcoming the past: Global history of Ukraine". To analyse the processes in the Ukrainian village in the first quarter of the XX century, he uses the term "Peasant Revolution" (Hrytsak, 2021). Oleksandr Zhytkov has studied the historiographical dimension of scientific research on approaches to solving the agrarian issue in the context of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921 (Zhytkov, 2018). An interesting approach to analysing the mentality of the peasantry in the post-reform period is offered by historian Tatiana Portnova in her monograph "To love and to teach. The peasantry in the perceptions of the Ukrainian intelligentsia of the second half of the 19th century" (Portnova, 2016). The edition of Stepan Rudnytskyi's works edited by historian Olha Kovalevska may be of considerable interest to researchers of agrarian relations in Ukraine. This five-volume edition contains a lot of important statistical data related to agrarian relations in Ukraine, analysed in detail by S. Rudnytskyi using economic, historical and geographical methodological optics (Rudnytskyi, 2018).

However, despite the considerable attention to the problems of agrarian relations in Ukraine, some regions remain poorly studied in this context. This research problem has determined the interest of the authors in choosing the topic of the publication.

## **2. Agrarian Relations in Central Ukraine in the Post-Reform Period (1881–1917)**

"Over the past fifteen years, events of enormous economic importance have taken place in the agricultural life of the Kherson province. Based on the laws of 1881 and 1884, the State Property Department allocated 120,000 acres of state land in the Kherson province, where 75,000 landless peasants and townspeople settled, and 160 new settlements appeared on 120,000 acres of land. Our province has not seen such a huge increase in the area of peasant land ownership since the famous reform of 1861." (Statistical overview, 1884, 1898)

This is how the employees of the statistical department of the Aleksandriya uезд zemstvo of the Kherson province characterised socio-economic changes. The history of these important decisions is connected with the activities of zemstvos. According to the statistical data of zemstvo employees, 85% of state land: state-owned land items were leased to private individuals who, according to local government reports, "used them for speculative purposes" (Statistical overview, 1884, 1898). At that time, a large part of the Ukrainian peasantry remained smallholders and landless. In an attempt to solve this problem, representatives of the Kherson provincial government

in 1879 proposed to facilitate peasants' access to this type of state land (state-owned plots).

At that time, there were two problems in the Russian Empire that had not been resolved by the Great Reform. Firstly, there was a significant percentage of landless peasants, which, in the context of the revolutionary movement, could pose a threat to the state system, and huge areas of undeveloped fertile land. Representatives of the zemstvos of the Kherson and Yekaterinoslav provinces proposed to solve this problem by granting landless peasants allotments from the state fund.

The opinion of local governments was taken into account. In July 1881, the peasants of Kherson and Yekaterinoslav received permission to lease the land of state-owned articles in the amount of 3 tithes for 12 years, subject to payment of land tax. In 1884, landless burghers were granted such permission. The decree applied to seven governorates: Kherson, Yekaterinoslav, Taurida, Saratov, Samara, Orenburg, Ufa (Statistical overview, 1884, 1898). The territories of two of these governorates: Kherson and Yekaterinoslav were located in central Ukraine.

In accordance with the laws of 1881 and 1884, all state-owned articles were divided into plots and assigned to the settlements that had been formed earlier. Until 1886, residents of different provinces could become resettlers. However, the Kherson Zemstvo obtained the right to ban residents of other provinces from settling in the province. In general, the process of establishing all the settlements in the county lasted from 1887 to 1891. Peasants and townspeople from the settlements of Aleksandriya, Yelysavethrad, Ananievo, Odesa, and Kherson uezds arrived on the lands of former state-owned articles. The fact of the land transfer was confirmed by a contract between the new settlers and the Kherson-Besarabian State Property Department and an agreement on tax payments (Statistical overview, 1884, 1898). Under the terms of the agreement, all landless people of different classes were offered plots of land (3 dessiatas each) on a 12-year lease. During the first four years, the resettlers had to build residential and commercial buildings. Until then, the state retained ownership of the land. A prerequisite was the use of a three-part system (Statistical overview, 1884, 1898).

According to the law of 1889, the settlements were to establish village governments, elect delegates to the volost congress, and introduce the position of a police officer. The new settlers had to choose the name of the settlement. It is worth noting that the introduction of local self-government was caused by the desire to overcome the disorder that prevailed in villages before their appearance (List of new settlements in Kherson province. Annex VI, 1893).

Local governments: the provincial and county zemstvo supported the new settlers, provided them with loans for sowing crops at 6% per annum; they took care of the organisation of medical care, helped to purchase equipment for land cultivation. In 1894, representatives of the zemstvo, after checking the fulfilment of the requirements, transferred the plots to the settlers for permanent use. In addition, taxation of new settlers was reduced by 40%. These decrees contributed to the economic growth of the newly formed villages. Statistical data suggests that by 1897, "the economic situation of the new settlers looked better than in neighbouring villages that had been founded earlier" (Statistical overview, 1884, 1898).

It can be concluded that the formation of settlements was an integral part of the all-Russian socio-economic processes of the late nineteenth century, called "colonisation of the licensable right", as well as a solution to the problem of landless and small peasantry, which continued to exist after the Great Reform of 1861. The emergence of new villages became possible thanks to the initiative of zemstvos, which emerged after the reform of 1864 and offered a successful solution to the problem of efficient use of land resources.

The reform of agrarian relations had a significant impact on the development of cities whose industry was directly linked to agriculture. A striking example is the history of Yelysavethrad, the largest city in Central Ukraine. In the early XX century, it had 75,000 inhabitants. Yelysavethrad also had one of the highest percentages of merchants among the cities of Southern and Central Ukraine. In the encyclopaedic publications of the late nineteenth century, Yelysavethrad, the county centre of the Kherson province, was compared to Odesa itself: "After Odesa, Yelysavethrad has the second largest flour-milling industry. Ten steam mills process up to 3 million poods of grain annually. The flour is shipped to various cities in Russia and abroad. Yelysavethrad is a major grain market and a trade centre for a large region that gravitates towards it. There are five fairs in total. Trade items: bread in grain and flour, cattle, sheep and wool, horses." (Kyzymenko, 2004)

The compilers of the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary noted: "It is one of the most orderly and best cities, not inferior to many provincial cities." (Kyzymenko, 2004). It should be noted that the population of Yelysavethrad was diverse: Russians, Jews, Ukrainians, Poles, and Greeks. However, the percentage of Ukrainians in the city remained the highest among other cities in Central and Southern Ukraine (Rudnytskyi, 2018). The economic success of Yelysavethrad was linked to the development of agriculture in the surrounding areas.

However, these economic successes could not fully solve the main problem of agrarian relations in Ukrainian villages, including in Central Ukraine. Historian and geographer Stepan Rudnytskyi noted: "The second reason for the sad condition of Ukrainian agriculture (the first was the low level of education of the Ukrainian peasant, which, according to the scientist, negatively affected the efficiency of economic activity) lies in very disappointing land relations." (Rudnytskyi, 2018) According to the scientist, the domination of foreigners on Ukrainian territory has led to the fact that "the Ukrainian peasant is cramped and starving to death in his narrow paddocks". On the territory of Central Ukraine, which included the territories of Kyiv, Yekaterinoslav, and Kherson provinces, the peasantry owned land in the following proportions: Yekaterinoslav region – 45.6%; Kherson region – 34.4%; Kyiv region – 37%, Poltava region – 53% (Rudnytskyi, 2018).

This led S. Rudnytskyi to conclude: "The hunger for land has become a chronic phenomenon among the peasantry of the whole of vast Ukraine." (Rudnytskyi, 2018) Although at that time, foreign colonists in the South of Ukraine received much better and larger land plots. The communal land system imposed by the Russian Empire on the Ukrainian peasantry also had a negative impact on the development of agrarian relations. Such a form of farming without stable land tenure did not suit the peasantry, which had a negative attitude towards the community under the phrase: "Collective is devilish". That is why the land reform of 1906–1911 by R. Stolypin, despite the chauvinistic worldview of its initiator, resonated with Ukrainian peasants. However, it also failed to solve the problems of landlessness and smallholdings. This led to labour emigration of the Ukrainian peasantry.

In addition, some of the successful farms of the khutors and vidrubnyks (a peasant who left the community and was given a piece of land) were envied by community members, as well as representatives of the small and landless peasantry, who were only waiting for the moment to carry out land redistribution. For example, in 1918, residents of the village of Kanizh in the Kherson province tried to take away the land and farms of peasants and landowners (Mytrofanenko, 2012).

On the threshold of the revolution in 1916, peasant ownership reached 64.7% of the total land area. On average, there were 8 hectares per peasant household. In the projection to Central Ukraine, the following statistics on peasant land tenure are available: Kyiv region – 4.05%, Poltava region – 6.22%, Kherson region – 9.08%, Yekaterinoslav region – 9.37%. It is worth noting that the highest percentage of peasant land ownership is observed in the territories

where reforms of the 80s of the XIX century related to the allocation of land to peasants at the initiative of zemstvos took place. The statistics provided by S. Rudnytskyi confirm this fact (Rudnytskyi, 2018).

New forms of organisation of peasant farms were to change the situation of the peasantry. One of these experiments was the artel, a cooperative movement that emerged in Central Ukraine in the late nineteenth century. Its initiator was Mykola Levytskyi, who was called the "artillery father" (Zhytkov, 2020). At the end of the XIX century, in the village of Adzhamka, Aleksandriya uезд, Kherson province, Ukrainian public figure Mykola Levytskyi initiated an interesting experiment in the agricultural sector. Here is what the famous local historian Volodymyr Bosko said about it: "At the end of the XIX century, provincial Yelysavethrad was a thunderous sound throughout Russia. Almost all the respected metropolitan periodicals wrote about what was happening in the villages of the Yelysavethrad uезд, and a real pilgrimage of famous people (including Lesya Ukrainka) began to visit the city. They all watched Levytskyi's Yelysavethrad experiment with great interest." (Bosko, 1998)

Russian and European periodicals wrote about this man in the late XIX century. M. Levytskyi, a member of the Ukrainian community in Yelysavethrad, started with theoretical developments in the creation of agricultural cooperatives. When he returned to Central Ukraine in 1891, he plunged into the process of their practical implementation. M. Levytskyi had to think about and implement the difficult task of uniting individual Ukrainians into collective unions and artels.

In 1894, the first collective of cooperators was established in the village of Fedvar (now Pidlisne, Kirovohrad Oblast). And in 1896, there were almost 80 artels in the Yelysavethrad district, uniting 287 households on a voluntary basis. As the researchers would later write: "The artel pioneers did not succeed in everything, but the business was still a success, and more and more people joined it from year to year." (Kutsenko, 2005) In 1896, the "artillery father" Levitsky participated in the International Cooperative Congress in Paris.

In 1917, M. Levytskyi became an active participant in the Ukrainian Revolution. He was a member of the Central Rada. He did much to awaken the national consciousness of the inhabitants of Central Ukraine. He successfully used statistical data in his speeches. In December 1917, he addressed the newly elected representatives of the Yelysavethrad Zemstvo with the following words: "My dear brothers! I can't call you anything else but brothers, because there are 74% of you in the uезд, and as many as 88% in the neighbouring Aleksandriya uезд. This is our land, a bucket of blood has been spilled on every peak,

so whose land is it? The tsars plundered and gave away our land... and now it has returned to us! I can't imagine that the Yelysavethrad uezd will not recognise Ukraine. There are 80% of us here! And in the Aleksandriya uezd there are even more of us! Who will govern us then? Some kind of Rodzianko?!" (Kyzymenko, 2004)

It was M. Levytskyi who brought the blue and yellow flag to Yelysavethrad, the largest city in Central Ukraine, in the spring of 1918. However, in the face of the defeat of the liberation struggle, he had to adapt to the Bolshevik government, which took control of cooperative organisations but did not destroy them. M. Levitsky continued to develop co-operation in Ukraine. At the same time, he remained under the watchful eye of the State Political Directorate (it was initially known under the Russian abbreviation GPU). Local historian Fedor Shepeliu managed to find documents confirming this fact in the Archive of Temporary Storage of Documents of the Security Service of Ukraine Office in Kirovohrad Oblast. A review of the case files allows one to conclude that the "artillery father" was under the control of the Soviet special services even during the era of "Ukrainisation". The case of M. Levitsky indicates the reasons for such attention from the punitive authorities. He was accused of participating in the Yelysavethrad Committee of the Ukrainian Political Socialist Revolutionaries and of having close ties with Mykhailo Hrushevsky, who was the leader of this party. M. Levytskyi was suspected of sympathising with the idea of an independent Ukraine and of disseminating anti-Bolshevik poetry. One of them was entitled "Rise up, people, enough of sleep!" He signed this poem with his literary pseudonym "Myron Zaporozhets". The work was reproduced on a typewriter. Representatives of the punitive authorities noted that such activities of M. Levytskyi were connected with the belief that the international authority of the cooperative activist would protect him from arrest. GPU's reports confirm the "artillery father's" belief in the potential of the Ukrainian national idea: "Let them arrest all Ukrainians, but they will not arrest the idea of statehood!" (Shepel, 2014)

However, neither the land reforms of the late XIX – early XX centuries nor M. Levytskyi's experiments could radically improve the situation of the Ukrainian peasantry. According to S. Rudnytskyi, a contemporary and researcher of these processes, the low level of education of the Ukrainian peasantry, small landholdings and landlessness, and significant landownership by landlords and communal landowners were the main reasons for the participation of the Ukrainian peasantry in the revolutionary processes of 1917–1921 (Rudnytskyi, 2018). It was the attempts to resolve the land issue

in their favour that turned the peasantry into the main driving force of the liberation struggle as part of various military formations and insurgent groups.

### 3. The Agrarian Question in the Era of the Liberation Movement of 1917–1922

The revolutionary processes that began in 1917 gave the peasants a chance to resolve the land issue in their favour. This explains the political sympathies of the peasantry for the parties that declared in their programme documents that they would resolve the land issue. The agrarian issue in the revolutionary era was addressed in two ways: theoretically and practically. The focus of the publication is on the practical component of solving the problem of land relations in Central Ukraine. The importance of this area of research on local processes in resolving the agrarian issue was emphasised by American researcher Mike Beiker: "In some villages of the Kharkiv province, the revolutionary events had their own local pace." (Beiker, 2005) In the study of agrarian relations in Central Ukraine, the methodological perspectives of social local history will be used to investigate the processes of the peasant revolution in Central Ukraine.

From the very beginning of the revolutionary period of 1917, the Ukrainian peasantry expected the Provisional Government and the Central Rada to resolve the land issue in their favour. However, both the Russian and Ukrainian authorities delayed its resolution. In the absence of clear land legislation, peasants resorted to unauthorised seizures of landowners' landholdings, allotments of farmers and vidrubnyks, and monastery lands. In September–October 1917, 849 peasant riots took place on the Right Bank, 90% of which were the seizure of property, livestock, food and supplies. In November–December 1917, the peasants moved on to requisitioning landowners' estates. In the context of the territory of Central Ukraine itself, the land conflict between the "Peasant Union of Free Cossacks" and the nuns of the Motroninsky Monastery, which arose over the land of this monastery located in the Chigirin uezd of the Kyiv province, was interesting. The "Free Cossacks", referring to the provision of the Third Universal of the Central Rada (7 November 1917) on the socialisation of land, tried to appropriate the territory and property of the monastery and demanded that the nuns pay for its protection. In addition, they threatened to expel the nuns from the monastery and socialise the property under the pretext of taking it under protection. Melitima (the abbess of the Motroninsky Monastery) appealed to the UPR authorities to protect the monastery from attacks by "Free Cossacks". The disputes lasted from November to December 1917. At the end of

December 1917, the chief of police of Medvédivka village arrived in Melnyky together with soldiers of the 290th reserve regiment based in Cherkasy. The chief of police "explained" the provisions of the Third Universal of the Central Rada to the Cossacks, who were going to take away all the property of the Motroninsky Monastery. The police chief stated that the security of the monastery falls under the jurisdiction of state institutions. He compelled the "Free Cossacks" to leave the monastery and stationed a guard to protect the sacred site from anarchic elements. A report was submitted to Kyiv, informing that the "Bolshevik excesses" of the Cossacks had been quelled. The police chief received appreciation for resolving the conflict (Mytrofanenko, 2016).

In 1918, Ukrainian villages were swept up in Bolshevik agrarian experiments. The Ukrainian peasantry reacted to them in different ways. Part of the peasantry participated in the plundering of landlord estates, the distribution of landed property, the property of farmers and cuttings, and the savings of entrepreneurs. However, a significant part of the inhabitants of Central Ukraine opposed the Bolshevik government. They could not be seduced by the populist slogan: "Land to the peasants". In January-February 1918, the Cossacks of the Zvenyhorod Free Cossacks stopped the advance of the troops of the head of the Bolshevik troops, Mykhailo Muraviov, who recalled that he had come across an original form of military organisation of the population in this area. The people of Zvenyhorodka did not allow the Russian Bolsheviks to enter Seredinnoye (Central Ukraine). In March 1918, a powerful "People's Uprising" erupted in Yelysavethrad against the Bolsheviks and their anarchist allies, caused precisely by the Bolsheviks' economic experiments. The citizens drove the anarchists and communists out of the city on their own. One of the reasons for the success of the uprising was the presence of a significant number of small and medium-sized owners among the residents of Yelysavethrad (Mytrofanenko, 2018).

However, there were also cases of the peasantry's support for the Russian Bolsheviks' plundering activities. In the spring of 1918, a quasi-state formation, the Kanizka Republic, was formed in central Ukraine, led by local Bolsheviks, former soldiers. They seized power in the village, distributed landowners' land and property, the savings of E lvorti's entrepreneurs, and the property of farmers and cuttings. The leaders of the "republic" did not recognise the orders of either the UPR authorities or the Ukrainian state of Pavlo Skoropadskyi. Moreover, they were going to seize the territories of neighbouring villages and were preparing for an armed offensive against Yelysavethrad. The exorbitant ambitions of the Bolshevik leaders of the "republic"

were tempered only by the Austro-Hungarian troops who arrived in Central Ukraine in March 1918. They brutally suppressed attempts to seize the territories of neighbouring villages and overthrow the Hetmanate in Yelysavethrad (Mytrofanenko, 2012). In June 1918, a large peasant uprising broke out in the Zvenyhorodka district against the agrarian policy of the Austro-German allies, who often behaved like occupiers. In total, about 600 uprisings took place in the villages of Ukraine in 1918. All the uprisings against the agrarian policy of the Austro-German authorities that took place before September 1918 were suppressed by the "allies".

These uprisings accelerated the redeployment of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen from southern Ukraine to central Ukraine, where the insurgency intensified. Representatives of the Austro-Hungarian and German authorities intended to use the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen to suppress the peasant uprisings. However, the Sich Riflemen did not have to do this. In return, in June-October 1918, Halychany provided economic assistance to the local peasantry. The immigrants from Western Ukraine were also impressed by the economic opportunities of the peasantry of Central Ukraine, which, compared to the peasantry of Western Ukraine, had much larger land holdings. "All of this fascinated me, a podolyan who was used to a narrow strip of field cut by countless borders," one of the riflemen recalled. On another occasion, he was impressed by the farm of a peasant in Central Ukraine when, travelling to "Khutir Nadia", the estate of Ivan Tobilevych, he noticed a large flock of sheep that belonged not to a landowner but to a wealthy peasant: "What a man! Our Halych land did not produce such people, only the endless steppes of the Dnieper Ukraine are fertile with such people." (Vivsiana, 2018)

At first glance, this quote seems to be inconsistent with the authors' previous conclusion about the small landholdings of the Ukrainian peasant and the low efficiency of his farm. However, this can be easily explained by comparing the size of the land plots of a peasant in Central and Western Ukraine. A peasant of Greater Ukraine had a much larger land allotment than a resident of Western Ukraine. For example, in Galicia, a peasant had an average plot size of 5.4 dessiatins, while in Central Ukraine it was 9.08 dessiatins (Rudnytskyi, 2018). And the territory of the Yelysavethrad uezd of the Kherson province, where the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen were stationed in June-October 1918, was indeed one of the most prosperous in the coastal part of the territory, with one of the highest percentages of large peasant farms. However, compared to landowners' property, the size of such plots was much smaller (Years of struggle. A collection of materials on the history of the revolutionary movement in the Zinoviev district, 1927).

In 1919, the Bolsheviks regained power in Ukraine. The main role in this was played by their populist slogans regarding the resolution of the land issue in favour of the peasantry. Volodymyr Vynnychenko, the head of the UPR Directory, later wrote: "It was a war of influence and we lost it." In the winter and spring of 1919, interesting metamorphoses occurred in the support provided by the peasantry to the warring parties. The territories of Central Ukraine are an interesting area for researchers in this regard. In January-April 1919, the peasantry of this region armed themselves to support the Bolsheviks. The most numerous and powerful units were those of Nykyfor Hryhoriv and Pavlo Tkachenko in the south of central Ukraine and Svyryd Kotsur in the north. This allowed the Russian Bolsheviks to establish control over a large part of the region and use the units of Ukrainian atamans to fight against the UPR troops: S. Kotsur in Podilia, N. Hryhoriv in the South of Ukraine. Only the positions of the Kholodnyi Yar atamans remained stable and pro-Ukrainian. The spring of 1919 was the beginning of a systematic movement of resistance to various forms of Russian occupation in Kholodnyi Yar, led by the Chuchupak brothers.

However, the alliance between the Ukrainian atamans and the Bolsheviks did not last long. Their relationship was interrupted by the policy of food rationing, the forced creation of communes, and an attempt to eliminate commodity-money relations in the Ukrainian countryside. The peasantry responded to the introduction of the food dictatorship with a powerful insurgency. Central Ukraine became one of its important centres. In April 1919, an anti-Bolshevik uprising in Kholodnyi Yar was led by Vasyl Chuchupak. In May 1919, a major uprising against the Bolsheviks began in Yelysavethrad under the leadership of Nykyfor Hryhoriv. The reason for Hryhoriv's armed uprising against the Soviets was the policy that Lenin would later call "war communism". The uprising was triggered by the conflict in April 1919, which was witnessed personally by Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko, the commander of the Ukrainian Bolshevik Front. "The population was provoked by the actions of Moscow's pro-democracy units," the Communist leader said. In a telegram to Moscow that he sent from Aleksandriya after returning from Verbliuzhka, he called for other methods to "grab bread" (Antonov-Ovseenko, 1932). Hryhoriv's uprising lasted throughout May. In order to suppress it, the Bolsheviks had to withdraw units from the White Guard front and refuse to support the revolution in Hungary.

In June 1919, a large peasant uprising broke out in Nikopol on the very day of the Trinity. That is why the Bolsheviks called it the Trinity Uprising. Despite the name of the uprising, which suggests that it was

caused by the Bolsheviks' atheistic policy, which was not accepted by the peasantry, this factor was nothing more than a pretext for armed action. The Bolsheviks managed to suppress it.

However, in the summer of 1919, the anti-Bolshevik peasant insurgency was only gaining momentum. Subsequently, the Bolsheviks admitted in a document attributed to Trotsky, although there is a whole line of research that questions this: "It is no secret that it was not Denikin who forced us to leave the borders of Ukraine, but a huge uprising that was raised against us by the well-fed Ukrainian peasantry."

In this document, the primary interest is not in the identity of its author, but in the recognition of the reasons for the defeat of the Bolshevik regime in Ukraine. The main ones were the food dictatorship and the violent organisation of communes.

In June-August 1919, the military and political situation in Ukraine changed. Russian White Guard troops seized the territory and divided Ukraine into three regions: Kyiv, Little Russia, and Novorossiysk. The territory of Central Ukraine was included in the Novorossiysk region. Despite the policy of "non-decision-making", which meant postponing the solution of the agrarian question until the victory over the Reds in the civil war and the regaining of control over the rebellious outskirts of the empire, the Whites did not avoid looking for a solution to the agrarian question. The social base of the White Guards was a stratum of landowners who had lost much during the revolutionary events of 1917–1919. However, the leaders of the Armed Forces of Southern Russia tried to avoid a quarrel with the peasantry. As an option for resolving the agrarian issue, it was proposed to conclude lease agreements between landlords and peasants regarding landed property that the peasants considered their own. The amount of rent was set by the landlords, so in most cases it was overstated, which caused resentment among the peasantry and led to uprisings (Kovalchuk, 2012; Kornovenko, 2020).

The insurgent movement of the Ukrainian peasantry against the White Guards was professionally studied by historian Mykhailo Kovalchuk in his monograph "No Winners" (Kovalchuk, 2012). The work allows one to conclude that there was a large-scale insurgency in Ukraine, including in Central Ukraine, against the Russian White Guards. It can be typified into several areas: anarcho-Makhnovist, UPR, and Soviet. It involved units that rebelled against the Russian Bolsheviks in the summer. What was the main motive for the peasantry's participation in the uprising: national or economic? This question can only be debated in relation to the UPR insurgency. At the beginning of the year, the atamans of this movement rebelled against the social policy of the Directory, dissatisfied with the delay in resolving

the agrarian issue and its alleged bourgeois nature. It was against the backdrop of dissatisfaction with the Directory's policy that the infamous "otamanshchyna" (the presence in a certain territory of a large number of partisan groups headed by their own atamans (commanders), de facto military and political power in the absence or insufficient strength of the centralised apparatus of state power) emerged (Mytrofanenko, 2016). This time, the Ukrainian atamans, dissatisfied with the previous options for resolving the agrarian issue, started an insurgency against the Russian White Guards.

One of the most striking examples of such resistance was the insurgency led by Ataman Herásym Nesterénko ("Eagle") in the Kompaniivka volost. In August 1919, Nesterenko's rebels took part in the liberation of Yelysavethrad from the Bolsheviks, which greatly facilitated the capture of the city by the White Guards. In September, those dissatisfied with the agrarian policy of the White Guards, in particular, the excessive form of leasing landowners' land to peasants, rebelled against the Denikins, combining social slogans with national ones: the struggle for an independent Ukraine, and began a war with the Russian White Guards. Nesterenko's insurgent units managed to capture even the central part of Yelysavethrad for a short time, but they failed to gain a foothold in the city. Having repelled the insurgent attack, the Whites carried out a punitive expedition to the villages that were the centre of the insurgency led by Nesterenko.

The fight against the White Guards united two powerful insurgent centres in Kholodnyi Yar: the Chyhyryn and Kholodnyi Yar organisations (peasant republics). Together, with the help of Semen Tuz's rebels, the atamans managed to liberate Chyhyryn and the surrounding areas from the White Guards (Kovalchuk, 2012). The insurgent movement led by S. Kotsur, whose residences were the hetman's places of Subotiv and Chyhyryn, spread to the Right Bank of Poltava, areas close to Kremenchuk (Serhieiev, 2011). In the Black Sea region, neighbouring Central Ukraine, the resistance to the White Guards was provided by peasants of the Bashtanka and Vysunsk republics who were also dissatisfied with the agrarian policy of the White Guards. On the Right Bank of the Yekaterinoslav, which is also included in the territory of Central Ukraine, the units of atamans Mykhailo Melashko and Tryfon Hladchenko were active (Chepurko and Pakhomenkov, 2021).

The resistance of the peasantry of Central Ukraine to the Russian White Guard regime was significantly strengthened by the Makhno Insurgent-Partisan Army of Ukraine. In June 1919, after the betrayal of their Bolshevik allies and defeats by the White Guards in the south and east, the Makhnovtsi retreated to the territory of central Ukraine. It was

on this territory that the Makhnovtsi significantly increased in numbers and strengthened their organisation. In September 1919, they managed to defeat the White Guards in Eastern Podilia, near Perekónivka, and break through the territory of Central Ukraine to the south-east: Pryazovia and Yekaterinoslav (Kovalchuk, 2012).

The Russian Bolsheviks took advantage of the exhaustion of the Whites in the battles with the insurgents and the UPR's Active Army on the territory of Ukraine. They tried to take advantage of the temporary unity of the Ukrainian insurgency, which was not least due to dissatisfaction with the agrarian policy of the White Guards, and with the help of the economic populism characteristic of the Reds, they sought to attract peasant insurgent groups to the Red Army. In late 1919 and early 1920, documents appeared in which the Reds proclaimed their support for the idea of Soviet Ukraine's independence, which had a certain impact on the atamans. But in social terms, they could not offer anything new to the peasantry. The policy of food dictatorship and predatory food rationing remained unchanged, which soon led to a new wave of insurgency. Even the absence of Makhnovtsi in Central Ukraine, the liquidation of the insurgency led by S. Kotsur, and the destruction of the Chuchupak brothers, leaders of the Kholodnyi Yar organisation, did not affect large-scale uprisings. Many of them had economic reasons and were caused by the rejection of the Bolshevik policy by the peasantry of central Ukraine, which was rather mixed in ethnicity.

The most striking example was the Zlynka anti-Bolshevik uprising that broke out on Easter 1920. Russian Old Believers, who made up a significant section of the village's population, took part in the uprising against the Bolsheviks. The main reason for the resistance was the economic policy of the Bolsheviks, and the reason for the large-scale uprising was an attempt to collect food in this village for Easter. The fighting around the village lasted for three days and influenced the success of the UPR army during the military operation to capture Voznesensk. The soldiers of the 14th Bolshevik Army, who took part in the suppression of this uprising, no longer had the opportunity and time to strike at the rear of the First Winter Campaign troops led by Mykhailo Omelianovych-Pavlenko (Mytrofanenko, 2023).

In May 1920, a large anti-Bolshevik uprising led by Toggole the table of contents Konstantin Pestushko, nicknamed "Blakytyni", erupted in Kryvyi Rih. The rebels managed to capture Kryvyi Rih for a while. The ataman formed the Insurgent District Aleksandriya Division, sometimes called the Steppe Division. The driving forces of this unit were peasants of the Aleksandriya uезд of the Kherson province and the



Kryvyi Rih district of the Yekaterinoslav province. K. Pestushko's rebels operated in Central and Southern Ukraine. In September 1920, they united with the residents of Kholodnyi Yar. However, the ataman's alliance did not last long. The Bolsheviks managed to stop the insurgency only at the end of 1920.

In the autumn of 1920, Pavlo Tychyna, who came to Central Ukraine on tour with Kyrylo Stetsenko's chapel, was amazed by the scale of the insurgency, which the artist compared to a "boiling cauldron". In conversations with the local peasantry, he tried to find out the reasons for their dissatisfaction with the Soviet government. The answers he recorded in his diary confirmed their socio-economic motives. Some peasants believed that the struggle was going on because "they have rich land", while others complained about the policy of "robbery". This is how they called the "grain requisitioning" among themselves. P. Tychyna's diary of autumn 1920 is full of names of Ukrainian atamans who operated in Central Ukraine (Tychyna, 1982).

The artist's impressions of what he saw were confirmed by the reports of the Bolshevik punitive authorities about the significant scale of the insurgency in these areas, which they considered to be manifestations of "kulak banditry". This was the term they coined to describe the alliance between the peasantry and the insurgents. The rebels of Central Ukraine were particularly active on the Right Bank. "Against the background of the revolutionary events in Ukraine, Zinoviev (now the territory of the Kirovohrad Oblast) stands out as a particularly contrasting place of collision between the driving forces of the revolution and the driving forces of the kulak reaction," the Bolsheviks wrote about the events in this region (Years of struggle. A collection of materials on the history of the revolutionary movement in the Zinoviev district, 1927).

They described another insurgent focus of Central Ukraine, Kholodnyi Yar, in no less vivid terms. Outlining the situation in Ukraine in 1921, when the main insurgent resistance centres were subdued, Chekist Borys Kozelskyi noted: "In other places, Soviet work had long since begun. New influences were felt everywhere, and Kholodnyi Yar was out of this world. It stood aside, diligently preserving its independence and opposing the Soviet government. It remained such an unwavering and unrelenting enemy throughout 1920 and almost all of 1921." (Kozelskyi, 1927)

The development of the insurgency in 1921 depended on the answer to the question: would the Bolsheviks change their policy towards the peasantry, the main driving force of the insurgency? The rebel leaders also understood this, as evidenced by a conversation between Makhnovtsi and Kholodnyi Yar members in the winter of 1921 in Central Ukraine.

H. Makhno believed that the Bolsheviks would continue their policy of war communism, which would cause a new outbreak of insurgency: "Those fools in the Kremlin are putting their own heads in the fire. Another year of this policy and we will have a hundred, a thousand peasant fronts. In Ukraine, Russia, on the Don – everywhere! The peasant revolution is the right of every nation, city or village to arrange their life to their liking..." (Gorlis-Gorsky, 2006)

However, the hopes of the leader of the Ukrainian anarchists did not come true. The Bolsheviks began to slowly make concessions to the peasantry, introducing the principles of a "New Economic Policy". The peasants perceived the changes in the economic course of the "Soviet government" and the abandonment of the doctrine of "war communism" as a compromise, and therefore reduced their support for the rebels. In exile, Yuriy Gorlis-Gorsky, an insurgent and author of the novel *Kholodnyi Yar*, reflected on why the predictions of the charismatic peasant leader N. Makhno, who knew the psychology of the Ukrainian peasant well, did not come true: "Who knows, if the Kremlin had not abruptly changed its domestic policy that year, perhaps the "father's" prediction about a thousand internal fronts would have come true." (Horlis-Horskyi, 2006)

The NEP and the famine of 1921–1923, when certain areas of Central Ukraine were compared to the Volga region, significantly weakened the insurgency. For the first time, the Bolsheviks used socio-economic levers to fight the peasant insurgency in Ukraine. The Ukrainian peasantry welcomed the New Economic Policy (NEP) and considered it a victory during the peasant war with the Bolsheviks. It seemed that such a solution to the agrarian issue satisfied both sides: the government and the peasantry, and took into account the interests of both sides. But the hopes of the peasantry were not fulfilled. In 1929, the Bolsheviks curtailed the NEP and moved on to resolve the agrarian issue through forced collectivisation.

#### 4. Conclusions

Agrarian relations in Central Ukraine in the 80s of the nineteenth century – 1921 had a number of features that distinguish this region from others. It was on this territory that significant economic experiments took place: the allocation of land to peasants at the expense of state funds; the development of the cooperative movement. During the liberation struggle, the territory of Central Ukraine was marked by a large-scale insurgency led by atamans. The peasantry was the driving force behind this struggle, trying to satisfy their economic interests, and therefore often changing their political preferences.

The NEP, introduced by the Bolsheviks in 1921, proved to be the socio-economic factor that helped to weaken the peasant insurgency. On the territory of Central Ukraine, the insurgency as a form of resistance to Russian Bolshevism continued until the mid-20s of the twentieth century, despite the favourable attitude of the peasantry to the new economic policy and the decline in support for the rebels from the villagers. The villagers

thought that the compromise with the authorities would be sustainable. However, this approach proved to be a mistake. In 1929, forced collectivisation began, accompanied by repressions against participants in the peasant insurgency of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1922. The topic of resistance to forced collectivisation in Central Ukraine can become a promising research platform for further socio-economic studies.

## References:

- Antonov-Ovseenko, V. (1932). Notes on the civil war. Available at: <http://irbis-nbuv.gov.ua/ulib/item/UKR0008752> (accessed May, 07, 2023). (in Russian)
- Beiker, M. (2005). One historian's view of the development of modern historiography of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1920. *Ukraina Moderna*, vol. 9, pp. 69–77. (in Ukrainian)
- Bosko, V. (1998). Yelysavethrad epic of an "artillery father". July 28. (in Ukrainian)
- Vivsiana, I. (2018). The Cathedral Mission of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen in the Dnieper Ukraine. Kharkiv: Individual Entrepreneur Ozerov. (in Ukrainian)
- War with the state or for the state? The peasant uprising in Ukraine in 1917–1921. Kharkiv: Klub simeinoho dozvillia. (in Ukrainian)
- Years of struggle. A collection of materials on the history of the revolutionary movement in the Zinoviev district. Zinoviev: The District October Commission. (in Ukrainian)
- Hrytsak, Y. (2021). Overcoming the past: Global history of Ukraine. Lviv: Portal. (in Ukrainian)
- Gorlis-Gorsky, Y. (2006). Kholodnyi Yar. Lviv: "Vidrozhennia". (in Ukrainian)
- Zhytkov, O. (2018). The peasant question in the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921: Historical and graphic research. Kharkiv: Machulin. (in Ukrainian)
- Zhytkov, O. (2020). The formation of the socio-political views of the Ukrainian cooperator Mykola Levytskyi in the period 1890 – early 1900. *Chronicle of Volhynia*, vol. 22, pp. 25–30. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32782/2305-9389/2020.22.03>
- Kovalchuk, M. (2012). No winners: The insurgency in Ukraine against the White Guard troops of General A. Denikin (June 1919 – February 1920). Kyiv: STYLOS PUBLISHING HOUSE. (in Ukrainian)
- Kozelskyi, B. (1927) Petlyuriv Rebellion: The Path of Treason and Adventures. Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy. (in Ukrainian)
- Kornovenko, S., Zemziulina, N., Kovalova, N., Malynovskyi, B., Masnenko, V., Morozov, A., Mykhailiuk, O., & Pasichna, Y. (2020). Peasants, land and power during the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921. Cherkasy. (in Ukrainian)
- Kyzymenko, P. (2014). Memory of the steppes. Historical essay. Kropyvnytskyi: Mavik. (in Ukrainian)
- Kutsenko, L. (2005). "Self-sown children of the nation". The Ukrainian fate of the Wild Field. Kropyvnytskyi: Heritage, pp. 92–98. (in Ukrainian)
- Mytrofanenko, Y. (2023). The military struggle between the army of the Ukrainian People's Republic during the First Winter Campaign and the Red Army in Central Ukraine (February – April 1920). *Scientific Notes of V.I. Vernadsky Taurida University. Series: Historical Sciences*, vol. 1(34), pp. 97–105. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32782/2663-5984/2023/1.14>
- Mytrofanenko, Y. (2016). Ukrainian atamanship in 1918–1919. Kropyvnytskyi: Imeks-LTD. (in Ukrainian)
- Mytrofanenko, Y. (2012). The Kanizh Uprising (an attempt to reconstruct the event on the basis of the memories of the participants). *Scientific notes of the Central State University named after Vladimir Vinnichenko. Series: Historical Sciences*, vol. 16, pp. 122–126. (in Ukrainian)
- Mytrofanenko, Y. (2016). Kholodnyi Yar in the History of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1920: Historiographical tradition and modern innovations of understanding. *Ukrainian Liberation Movement*, vol. 21, pp. 81–117. (in Ukrainian)
- Mytrofanenko, Y. (2018). The Yelysavethrad People's Uprising of 1918 as a historical basis for Y. Yanovsky's novel "Bayhorod". Kropyvnytskyi: Imeks-LTD.
- Portnova, T. (2016) To love and to teach. The peasantry in the perceptions of the Ukrainian intelligentsia of the second half of the 19th century. Dnipro: Lira.
- Chepurko, O., & Pakhomenkov, Yu. (2021). Leaders of the Dnieper Insurgency (based on materials of the state security agencies): a collection of documents. Dnipro: "Herda". (in Ukrainian)
- Rudnytskyi, S. (2018). History. Policy. Geography. vol. 4. Kyiv: Tempora. (in Ukrainian)
- Serhieiev, V. (2011). At the breaking point. A collection of essays. Kremenchuk: Piramida. (in Ukrainian)

Statistical overview of the settlements of landless people of different classes based on state lands of the Aleksandriya uezd on the basis of the law of 10 July 1881, 17 February 1884 (according to the local survey of 1897). Aleksandriya: Typohrafiya F. Kh. Raikhelsona. (in Russian)

Spisok novyh poselenij Hersonskoj gubernii. Prilozhenie VI [List of new settlements in Kherson province. Annex VI]. (1893). Aleksandriya: Typohrafiya F. Kh. Raikhelsona. (in Russian)

Tychyna, P. (1982). Journey with Kyryll Stetsenko's chapel. Kyiv: Radianskyi pysmennyk. (in Ukrainian)

Shepel, F. (2014). "Artillery father" and other compatriots in the sights of the DPU. No one wanted to die, or the repressed Yelizavet-Zinovievsk-Kirovo-Kirovohrad. Kropyvnytskyi: Imeks-LTD. (in Ukrainian)

Received on: 19th of June, 2023

Accepted on: 21th of July, 2023

Published on: 25th of August, 2023