

THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR IN THE PERIPHERY: CASE STUDIES OF ALASH ORDA AND THE CENTRAL RADA

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During the Russian Civil War numerous attempts to achieve independence by many former Tsarist subjects resulted in protracted fighting between Soviet Russian troops and various national groups. This paper examines two of these resistance movements, both of which failed to achieve the principle goal of long-term independence: Ukraine's *Central Rada* and the Kazakh's *Alash Orda*. Bolshevism's victory over these two groups was not due solely to superior military might, or specific policies, such as self-determination. It was, rather, the result of many factors, most significantly the effects of the First World War, which resulted in local and external intrigues, military occupations, and exacerbated already devastated economies. Both movements were directed by an intellectual leadership that was small in number, favored greater cultural autonomy and participation in a federated, democratic Russia, but were forced to compete against rival native political parties for national sympathies and support, White forces, and the Bolsheviks. During the Civil War period both groups achieved a modicum of independence, but the desperate economic situation in Ukraine and Central Asia, in addition to military conflicts, greatly hindered their efforts to realize their programs.

The Ukrainian and Kazakh national struggles

provide an interesting opportunity to compare national aspirations during the Russian Civil War and Bolshevik responses to each. This essay will explore the indigenous peoples' reactions to Bolshevik, White, and Allied and Central Power activity¹ and the nascent nationalism exhibited by the native peoples. To determine why the movements failed it is necessary to briefly describe Soviet national policy and the course of the civil war in each region. Finally this essay will examine similarities and differences between the Central Rada and Alash Orda and how they influenced events.

During the Russian Civil War the Bolsheviks endeavored to alleviate their unfavorable military and political situation by prominently advocating a policy of self-determination, which was intended to divorce the people from their native or local allegiances. The policy was applied in a variety of ways and conditioned by individual situations, such as geography, indigenous political movements, and Soviet military strength.² The Bolsheviks viewed the party as the vehicle for unification, and in Ukraine and Central Asia these policies were conditioned by demographic, economic, and social realities that precluded uniform application of policies. Moscow remained flexible and applied their theories only in regions where control (Red Army presence required) was certain.

Early Bolshevik attitudes towards Russia's nationalities were based upon a concept of self-determination sanctioned by Lenin. He had rejected the cultural autonomy solutions, as propounded by the Austro-Marxist school,³ since, in his opinion, they would lead to the demarcation of people according to national divisions, the organization of nations, and the preservation and cultivation of national characteristics. National chauvanisms were inevitable, he reasoned. Nationalities and nationalism existed, but he believed them to be subject to historical

evolution and change. Consequently, by improving international communication, and thereby dissolving artificial obstacles that prevented an exchange of ideas, opinions, and information, the common bonds of humanity would be strengthened.⁴ National regional autonomy, however, was not unacceptable to Lenin provided it led to unification instead of divisions according to nationality, or to the strengthening of national partitions. Any division which might occur had to be based on class rather than nationality.

Lenin's goal was to dissolve the partitions of nationality, thereby permitting organization along international lines and facilitating unification of the working class. Regional autonomy would be attainable within the unified party. The principle of international worker solidarity was, therefore, declared to be an essential element in solving the national question. Thus, while supporting self-determination, the Party was foremost concerned, and obligated, to defend the interests of the proletariat.

During the civil war the Bolsheviks did not completely abandon self-determination, as their actions in Finland indicated, but, by insisting that it be subordinated to whatever they believed best served the interests of the proletariat, the principle was reduced, for all practical purposes, to a slogan of opportunity. Throughout 1917 self-determination and cultural autonomy were eagerly sought by Ukrainians and Kazakhs alike. The Central Rada and Alash Orda attempted to cooperate with the Provisional Government; however, both groups quickly became dissatisfied with Petrograd's impotence and shortly after the Bolsheviks seized power charted independent courses.

Alash Orda's roots come from the mid-nineteenth century intellectual movement that included Chokan Valikhanov and others. They supported the Tsarist government and regarded the nomadic lifestyle as unable

to advance economically; consequently, they argued, the Kazakhs, as a nation, would disappear unless they adopted western ways. They did not believe that the Kazakh identity would be lost if they wore western clothes, used Russian as a written language, or followed various western social customs.⁵ Indeed, one of the few surviving pictures of Valikhanov is a portrait of him lounging on a couch, in a neatly tailored western suit, with cigar smoke billowing around his head.⁶ The second generation of intellectuals, such as Akmet Baitursunov (the spiritual leader of Alash Orda) was different. What altered the thinking of Baitursunov and his colleagues from that of their predecessors was the rapid growth of Russian immigration into the traditional lands of the Kazakhs.

In 1894 the Tsarist government eased restrictions for migration and colonization of the steppe region. Rates on trains were reduced significantly, so that by 1898 a peasant family of five could travel 1,000 versts for fifteen rubles.⁷ Over the next twenty years over 1.5 million Russians moved to the region.

Tensions between native peoples and immigrant Russians persisted and occasionally manifested by native local uprisings, the most significant being near the city of Andizhan in 1898. The economic situation continued to deteriorate for the Kazakhs regardless of, or, perhaps more accurately due to, tsarist reforms and regulations. In spite of this fact, the 1905 revolution resulted in some positive changes, most importantly in the cultural sphere, such as the government's easing of restrictions on publishing in native languages. There emerged an active, though limited, Kazakh press, centered in the larger urban centers, such as Orenburg and Omsk.⁸ Kazakh intellectuals began to enunciate their grievances and had new means to disseminate their political views. In addition, small, often clandestine, reform-oriented political organizations were

formed. The first political movement to use the name *Alash*⁹ appeared in July 1905. The name, however, was not officially used until 1917; although many of the same participants were present in 1905 and 1917. Beginning in 1907 several newspapers were founded, although the majority, such as *Kazakh Gazeti*, which was suspended after only one issue, appeared briefly.

It was a slow beginning, but the introduction of a Kazakh press was the most significant result of the 1905 revolution. In 1911 *Ai Kap*,¹⁰ the first of the two most influential Kazakh newspapers, started publication. *Ai Kap* was more political than any of its predecessors, emphasizing the preservation of traditional Kazakh culture and improved treatment of women. It also published numerous articles denouncing the Russian presence in Kazakh lands, going so far as to advocate armed revolt against Russian power.

In February 1913 the bi-weekly paper *Qazaq* first appeared. The editor, Baitursunov, was assisted by many notable Kazakh writers and poets, including Magzhan Zhumabaev. The paper's editorial line, extremely critical of Russian immigration, argued for an equitable division of the land and it also advocated continued education in the Kazakh language¹¹ and the transition from the nomadic to the sedentary life for Kazakhs. Most of all it campaigned for the cultural development of the Kazakh people. Baitursunov wrote, "the very existence of the Kirghiz [Kazakh] people is facing us . . . we should struggle with all our strength in order to acquire education and culture."¹² During the First World War *Qazaq* maintained a neutral position. However, at the time of the revolt of 1916,¹³ the paper supported the Tsarist call-up of Central Asians, even debating the issue several months earlier in *Qazaq*.

Many young Kazakh intellectuals had been active in *Birlik* (Unity), formed in Omsk in 1915, and *Erkin Dala*

(The Free Steppe), organized in Orenburg in 1916. They began to establish youth groups, usually as discussion circles, the most popular being *Jas Qazaq* (Young Kazak). They were inspired by the editorial line of *Qazaq* and closely followed it in the youth journal *Saryarka* (The Wide Steppe).

Shortly after the February revolution, meetings and gatherings were held throughout the steppe. Most provided the opportunity simply to air grievances, but they also revealed the disunity among various Kazakh leaders and intellectuals, in particular the more conservative clerics. In early April 1917 the first recorded official Congress of the Alash Orda Party was held in Orenburg, capital of the Turkestan gubernia (Turgai oblast). Most of the delegates were selected by members of *Qazaq's* editorial board, thereby providing greater opportunity for agreement and action.

While clearly dissatisfied with past association with the Russian government, there appeared to be little, if any, secessionist sentiment at this congress. Indeed, throughout the final protocol references were made to the "constituent assembly" and Kazakh participation therein. The delegates addressed many issues of significance, ranging from political to religious matters, and passed several resolutions. All of the resolutions passed by the congress reflect the effect of tsarist administration policies and Russian migration. Most interesting, and progressive, were the resolutions on the election of representatives to the various branches of government, religious representation, and education. They illustrate Kazakh dissatisfaction not only with Russian leadership but Tatar influence as well, particularly in religious and educational affairs.

Alash Orda held congresses in July and later in December 1917. The July meeting reaffirmed their commitment to a federated Russia, but it also asserted their

increasing desire for greater autonomy. Foremost among the issues discussed at this congress was the land issue. The delegates demanded cessation of migration to the steppe and that all illegally confiscated land must be returned to the previous holder.¹⁴ The congress also adopted several resolutions granting women equal rights. The payment of *kalym* (bride price) was forbidden, marriages required dual consent, and widows were to be free to remarry.¹⁵ The delegates also sought to create a militia.¹⁶ The congress concluded and throughout the Fall it attempted to implement its policies.

The December congress was faced with different issues than either of the two previous meetings. In April and July the Kazakhs had assumed the existence of a government committed to democratic rule; however, by December the continuation of the relationship to Russia became central to Kazakh interests. During the congress the delegates expressed concern that the region was void of authority and the well-being of Kazakh people was threatened by anarchy. They argued that only a government with popular support could remedy the situation. The delegates also hoped to unify the steppe Kazakhs with those in Turkestan, which included the Syr-Darya region and the city of Tashkent. They resolved to create an autonomous region called *Alash*, with an executive body called *Alash Orda* and comprised of 25 members, 10 of whom would be of non-Kazakh origin.¹⁷ Ali Khan Bukeikhanov was elected chairman of the new government. According to Turar Ryskulov, a participant in the congresses, *Alash Orda* was widely supported by the majority of Kazakhs and it was the most important political event to most Kazakhs, who were largely unaware of events in Petrograd.¹⁸

Alash Orda's attempt to govern was plagued by its inability to implement any of its programs.¹⁹ As the

leadership soon discovered, the Steppe territory, due to its immense size, could not be governed by a single, militarily weak authority. Indeed, in the very regions Alash Orda claimed authority—Uralsk, Turgai, Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk, Syr-Darya, Semirechie, and Transcaspia—control was simultaneously claimed by Russians, Bolsheviks, and others.²⁰ For example, in Orenburg Ataman Dutov declared himself military governor of Siberia in November 1917 and Ataman Annenkov claimed sole authority in Akmolinsk beginning in late-December 1917.²¹

The principle objective of the Cossack leaders was the defeat of Bolshevism. Alash Orda was permitted by Dutov to govern, so long as it helped control the wandering bands of impoverished Kazakhs. Alash Orda had little choice since it still lacked a military force. In March 1918 Bolshevik forces destroyed Alash's printing press, effectively shutting down *Qazaq* and severely hindering its communication ability. In May 1918 Alash Orda signed its first military accord with White forces and by June armed Kazakhs were fighting along with White troops throughout the steppe region. In late-July military negotiations began with Ataman Dutov and Alash Orda recognized Dutov's government as the legitimate representative of the February 1917 revolution.²²

Hindering Alash Orda's efforts to govern, excluding the civil conflict, was the immense size of the steppe region, which lacked good communication and transportation structures. What might have been in place before the civil war was quickly destroyed. Thus, they decided to establish two separate governments, the first in western Kazakhstan, with its capital in Zhambeytu, and the second in eastern Kazakhstan at Semipalatinsk. Both lacked the means to resist either White or Bolshevik forces and throughout 1918-1919 sought allies with the autonomous Bashkirs and various Cossack hosts.

By late 1920 the Kazakh steppe region was economically devastated. Between 1918 and 1920 famine and civil war reduced the indigenous population by 31 percent. Many of Alash Orda's leaders, after three years of difficult existence and governing, and believing Bolshevik propaganda about self-determination, joined the communist party. Some, such as Baitursunov and Bukeikhanov, continued to exercise significant influence during the early years of Soviet rule, but almost all would perish in Stalin's purges.

Sir Olaf Caroe dismisses Alash Orda as an organization that was "never much more than a committee which held congresses and issued manifestos."²³ There is some truth to this, but it was much more than that. Alash Orda was the most successful native political party in Central Asia during the Russian Civil War. It achieved a modicum of independence unparalleled by its contemporaries, such as the Young Bukharans and Young Khivans, and was equaled perhaps only by the Ukrainian Central Rada. It had a clear program and an active, relatively influential press, though it proved unable to consolidate its power, implement its program, and govern.

Ukraine had a very similar experience during the civil war. The Ukrainian national movement—idealistic and small in number—was in its embryonic stages in 1917 and, indeed, prospects for popular nationalism in Ukraine seemed remote before the Russian Revolution of 1917.²⁴ Between 1825 and 1900, a small number of Ukrainian social organizations appeared, often privately funded and seeking to eradicate hunger, illiteracy, and other social ills. The first true political organization, the Ukrainian Revolutionary Party, was formed in 1900 and eventually its members were absorbed into larger, more effective parties after the Russian Revolution of 1905 when that party officially adopted the platform of the Social-Democrats.

Other parties quickly emerged in the post-revolutionary period, such as the Ukrainian Social-Democratic Alliance, the Ukrainian Democratic Party, and the Ukrainian Radical Party.²⁵

Most of these organizations, whether political or social, advocated a refederated Russia with a modicum of Ukrainian autonomy. Unfortunately, despite the growth in political national awareness, the majority of Ukrainians were immune to revolutionary literature and the government was able to effectively limit political activity. Indeed, only one-seventh of the Ukrainian population was literate, which further exacerbated nationalists' difficulties. Several newspapers and journals were published, like *Hromadska Dumka* and *Khliborob*.²⁶ Some even published in the Ukrainian language, however, most eventually ceased publishing due to financial difficulties or governmental interference.²⁷ Thus, in the decade before 1917, Ukrainian nationalists had very little opportunity to educate or agitate among the Ukrainian people, particularly among the peasantry, which, according to the Imperial Russian census of 1897, comprised 87 percent of the population.²⁸

Before the war the vast majority of Ukrainian peasants worked on small hereditary tenure farms, whereas, most non-Ukrainian peoples (principally Russians) lived in urban centers or on large farms, traditionally along Ukraine's periphery. Russians also dominated the oppressive bureaucracy and were heavily represented among the *pomeshchiki* (landowners) class, as were Poles. Jewish merchants, particularly in the eastern provinces, constituted a large portion of petty trade, commerce, and industry.²⁹

At the outset of World War I two political organizations, the Union (or League) for the Liberation of Ukraine (*Soiuz Vyzvolennia Ukrainy*—SVU) and the General Ukrainian Council (*Zahalna Ukrainiska Rada*—ZUR) were

created in Austrian-ruled Ukrainian lands (Eastern Galicia). Both were self-appointed spokesmen for their compatriots living under Tsarist rule and sought the military defeat of Russian forces. The respected parliamentarian, Kost Levytsky, headed ZUR and Michael (Mikhailo) Hrushevsky, a former professor of history at Lviv (Lemberg) State University, was the spiritual leader of SVU.³⁰

Hrushevsky's real political career began after the 1905 revolution. He started to reside in Russian-Ukraine and in 1909 began publishing the pedagogic and popular newspaper *Selo* (1909-1911). Hrushevsky was also one of the founding members of the Society of Ukrainian Progressives (*Tovarystvo Ukrainskykh Progresystiv*—TUP) and was universally recognized as the leader of the Ukrainian nationalist movement. During the war Hrushevsky was arrested and spent most of his time in Moscow.

During the early months of the war Russian advances forced many Ukrainian nationalists to flee to Austria. By May 1915 the Austrians had successfully counterattacked and recovered most of Eastern Galicia. The work of Ukrainian nationalists was reestablished and often funded by German and Austrian resources. Indeed, the German government was quite active in the cause of Ukrainian liberation, particularly among Ukrainian prisoners of war, where they were segregated from their Russian comrades and commanders and placed in selective camps. A top secret document, written by a Colonel Friedrich and a Captain von Luebbers, outlined German goals and advantages of Ukrainian liberation. It detailed the methods to be used in the camps to promote Ukrainian national self-awareness, such as the creation of classes to teach the Ukrainian language, music, and arts and crafts.³¹ The principal political considerations were for

transforming Ukraine into an independent state and in keeping an independent Ukraine alive, we shall certainly administer a deadly blow to Greater Russia which will completely paralyze her development for many years to come. . . . Such independence would mean for the Central Powers a complete independence of grain imports from foreign countries (America, etc.). As a country, suitable for settlement, Ukraine offers vast stretches of fertile black earth.³²

At the time of the Russian Revolution, the Ukrainian people, as with all non-Russians of the empire, celebrated the collapse of the Tsarist regime. In Kiev members of TUP quickly organized and began to assert their nationalist aspirations. On 17 March they adopted the name *Ukrainska Tsentral'na Rada* (Ukrainian Central Council), which was commonly known as the Central Rada.³³ It was led by liberal moderates from the TUP, including Evhan Chykalenko, Serhii Efremov, and Dmytro Doroshenko, and several Social Democrats, especially Volodymyr Doroshenko and Symon Petlura. Hrushevsky, who was returning to Kiev from his Moscow exile, was elected President. He instructed the Rada members to reject "old Ukrainian petitions and again . . . hand them over to the government as a statement of our demands" since they would no longer satisfy Ukrainian needs. Territorial Ukrainian autonomy, he argued, must be the foremost goal of the Rada.³⁴

The Rada assumed greater authority and legitimacy at the All-Ukrainian National Congress convened in Kiev on April 19-21, 1917, which was attended by over 900 delegates of all ideological persuasions.³⁵ On 18 May, representatives of Ukrainians serving in the army met in

Kiev and agreed to join the Rada. Later, in June, almost 1000 delegates of the Ukrainian Congress of Peasants did likewise. Richard Pipes says that the "desire to apportion the rich black Ukrainian earth independently of Russia, for the sole benefit of the local population, became a powerful factor in the development of nationalist sentiments among the Ukrainian rural masses."³⁶

In May 1917, the Rada petitioned the Provisional Government in Petrograd to consider Ukraine an autonomous state within a federated Russia and, in addition, to permit Ukrainian representation at the anticipated international peace conference. The Rada was rejected. Kiev seized the initiative and on 23 June issued its First Universal.³⁷ The Rada assumed exclusive legislative control of the Ukrainian people, although it did not separate itself from Russia. The document also called for a National Ukrainian Assembly [*Soim*], elected by secret ballot and universal suffrage. In addition, the Universal declared that only the *Soim*, not the Rada, could establish laws.³⁸ The Universal was issued in response to the Provisional Government's rejection of Ukrainian demands for autonomy, monetary compensation for taxes collected, and recognition of the Ukrainian representatives sent to Petrograd on behalf of the Rada.

The Second Universal, issued in response to additional negotiations in early July, advised the Ukrainian people that at the request of the Provisional Government their grievances would be deferred until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. Also, the Central Rada was to be expanded in an effort to better represent the diverse population. In addition they would create a separate body--The General Secretariat--which was responsible to the Rada and subject to confirmation by the Provisional Government. The Universal also deferred the creation of a separate Ukrainian military force.³⁹

The agreement met severe opposition both in Ukraine and Russia. Members of the *Kadet* [Constitutional Democrats] Party resigned their positions in the Provisional Government in protest, believing the agreement opened the door to the disintegration of the empire. In Kiev, Ukraine nationalists in the Ukrainian Democratic-Agrarian Party and the Union of Ukrainian Statehood vehemently protested that only independence, and not continued allegiance to Petrograd, best served the interests of the people.⁴⁰ Indeed, on the night of July 17 members of the Second Polubotok Regiment seized control of Kiev. They planned to declare an independent Ukraine, call Ukrainian soldiers back from the various fronts, and conclude a separate peace with the Central Powers. The Rada stood firm against the rebels and, with the aid of the *Khmelnyskyi* Regiment, forced the rebels to abandon their plans.⁴¹

The relationship between Kiev and Moscow continued to deteriorate, so much so that by the time of the Bolshevik usurpation of power in November 1917, although disturbing, was not, in some quarters, altogether unwelcome. Interestingly, on November 8, 1917 the Bolsheviks issued a decree granting all nationalities the right to political independence and self-determination.⁴² This was a core ingredient of their political agenda that was designed to disrupt their capitalist enemies. It was, however, soon to strike at their own interests, and, indeed, they would be the first to violate it. Shortly after the Bolshevik takeover, England and France, both fearing the loss of an impotent but necessary ally, agreed to divide Russia into two spheres of influence. France, concerned about their huge investment of capital in Russia, particularly in the mines of the Don region and the metallurgical industry in Ukraine, was to have suzerainty in Ukraine. Political independence for Ukraine was of secondary importance to France.

Events in Petrograd prompted the Rada to issue its

Third Universal which declared Ukraine as the Ukrainian Peoples Republic and also repeated the desire for an autonomous Ukraine in a newly federated Russian Republic to be governed by the Constituent Assembly. The document also proclaimed the regions of Kiev, Podillia, Volhynia, Chernihiv, Poltava, Kharkhiv, Katerrynoslav Kherson, and Taurus (excluding Crimea) as Ukrainian controlled lands and, in addition, it called for a plebiscite in Kursk, Kholm, Voronesh and other regions where Ukrainians were the majority population, which under the strictest enforced circumstances could have included parts of Turkestan.⁴³ Finally, it charged the Secretariat of Labor to establish state control over production and the Rada declared they would initiate peace negotiations with the Central Powers at once.⁴⁴

The relationship between the Bolsheviks and Kiev quickly soured. The Bolsheviks were unclear how to deal with the Rada, but it became obvious that Kiev had no intention of following central direction in matters affecting the revolution. On 12 December Joseph Stalin, as Commissar for Nationalities, attributed the difficulties to "Kerenskyism" and "landlords and capitalists" who

find it advantages, of course, to represent the conflict with the Rada as a conflict between the Russian and Ukrainian peoples, because that makes it easier for them to incite the workers and peasants of the kindred peoples against one another, to the glee of the oppressors of these peoples.⁴⁵

Indeed, Stalin again declared that the Bolsheviks advocated free self-determination and would not object if "the Ukrainian people were to secede and form an independent state."⁴⁶

On 17 December Lenin, frustrated by Ukrainian nationalists, issued a provocative ultimatum to the Rada. He recognized the right of the Ukrainian people to "national independence, but accused the Rada of conducting a deceptive

double-dealing bourgeois policy, which has long been expressed in the Rada's non-recognition of the Soviets and of Soviet power in the Ukraine. This ambiguous policy, which has made it impossible for us to recognize the Rada as a plenipotentiary representative of the working and exploited masses of the Ukrainian Republic, has lately led the Rada to steps which preclude all possibility of agreement.⁴⁷

Lenin closed by demanding a "satisfactory answer" within forty-eight hours, or the Bolsheviks would "deem the Rada to be in a state of open war with Soviet power in Russia and the Ukraine."⁴⁸ According to historian Robert Sullivan, the ultimatum was an attempt to "excuse their armed intervention in the Ukraine as a defense of the Ukrainian people—the workers and toilers— against the Ukrainian oppressors."⁴⁹

In a questionable effort to achieve power legally, the Bolsheviks sponsored an All-Ukrainian Convention of Soviets, which was convened in Kiev on the same day the ultimatum was issued. The convention was designed to circumvent Rada control and support. The Rada, forewarned and recognizing the threat, flooded the convention with its supporters. Led by the Russian Artem Sergiev, frustrated Ukrainian-Bolsheviks left Kiev, moved to Kharkiv and reopened their conference. They named

themselves the Rada of People's Secretaries.⁵⁰

Soviet forces, about 12,000 troops, were also beginning their advance into Ukraine. To oppose them, Symon Petlura, the Ukrainian minister of war, had at his disposal only about 15,000 men, consisting of peasant militia, the *Sich* Riflemen, a unit of former Galician prisoners of war, and hundreds of young *gymnazium* students who were sent directly from their schools. Petlura was a leading civic and political activist, journalist, and the foremost organizer of Ukrainian military units. Before the revolution he was an active member in the Revolutionary Ukrainian Party. Later, he joined the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party and was profoundly committed to social justice and the right to self-determination. He was the editor of the highly respected journal *Ukrainskaia Zhyzn* [Ukrainian Life] which was produced in Moscow beginning in 1912. At the outbreak of war in 1914 he was conscripted into the army and assigned to auxiliary service on the south-western front to organize and train combat units of Ukrainian troops. He therefore was one of the few members of the Rada to fully understand the necessity of military might and in the initial days of the revolution he recruited Ukrainian soldiers and was chosen head of the Ukrainian General Military Committee.

Faced with the advancing Soviet forces and almost certain military defeat the Rada had no alternative but to promptly conclude a peace treaty with the Central Powers and sought their aid against the Bolsheviks.⁵¹ Soviet and Central Powers peace negotiations were already underway at Brest-Litovsk when the Rada sent its own delegation. It was recognized by both Count Ottokar Czernin,⁵² the Chairman of the negotiations, and, with some reservations, Leon Trotsky, the Soviet delegation leader. The arrival of the Ukrainians at Brest-Litovsk altered the complexion of the peace negotiations.⁵³ To the Germans it meant extra

pressure on the Soviets to proceed swiftly and while the Austrians, who rejected the theory of self-determination because of the large number of Czechs, Slovaks, Serbs, and Ruthenians living within Austria-Hungary's borders, hoped that Vienna would be spared from imminent food shortages by access to Ukrainian food supplies.⁵⁴ Trotsky never considered the Rada representatives a threat to his negotiating position, which was decidedly weak, and he was quite vituperative in his disdain for the Rada and its negotiators. He considered the Ukrainians sycophants of the Central Powers and "democratic simpletons," and their ideology to be a variety of "Kerenskyism."⁵⁵

In an effort to strengthen their position, and to counter some Soviet objections, in mid-January the Central Rada issued its Fourth [and final] Universal. The Rada unequivocally declared the Ukrainian People's Republic "independent, subject to no one, a Free, Sovereign State of the Ukrainian People."⁵⁶

On 9 February 1918 a peace treaty was concluded between Ukraine and Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey.⁵⁷ Ukraine was recognized as a sovereign state in return for allowing Germany and Austria-Hungary to export large amounts of foodstuffs and raw materials.⁵⁸ A monthly delivery schedule was to be concluded at a later date [9 April 1918]. It was, in many regards, more a shopping list than a peace treaty, and in the words of John Wheeler-Bennett, "From eggs to manganese, the long list of supplies required read like the inventory of a sublimated 'mail order' house. But the Germans and Austrians were to find it more of a 'cash and carry' establishment."⁵⁹ Provisions were also made for the regulation of trade and the exchange of prisoners of war. The boundaries of the Ukrainian state were provisionally established, which included the old Austro-Hungarian boundary plus the Kholm district and the city of Brest-Litovsk.

On the same day the peace was signed, Soviet forces from Kharkiv drove the Central Rada and its supporters from Kiev. The city was plundered and its citizens terrorized. Several thousand Ukrainian people were reported as being "slaughtered" by the Bolsheviks.⁶⁰ The beleaguered Rada was able to return only behind Central Powers bayonets.⁶¹ As a result, the Central Rada had little true control and, in addition, the peasantry was reluctant to release its grain and Austria was demanding its due. Accordingly, there was increased friction between the Central Powers and Ukraine. It was also evident that the Rada's relationship with the peasantry—its vital base of support—was rapidly eroding.

After only two months the Central Powers had grown restive and disenchanted with the Central Rada's social and economic policies and the Rada's extrinsic weaknesses. Indeed, in early April Austria was advocating its removal from power. While Germany agreed, it did not appear to them that there was any suitable replacement in the offering. Fortuitous, though ephemeral, events soon eased German and Austrian concerns. On 29 April 1918 General Pavlo Skoropadsky led a *coup d'état* in Kiev, during which he was proclaimed *Hetman* of Ukraine by the congress of the conservative All-Ukrainian Union of Landowners.

The Rada and its laws were abolished and all legislative and executive powers were transferred to the Hetman, who was also declared commander-in-chief. Newspapers were closed and public gathering and strikes were outlawed. The name of the state was also changed to, simply, the Ukrainian State.

During the short era of the Hetman government, it was never able to fully implement its ambiguous social and economic plans, nor could it assuage the general discontent of the masses. It did, however, normalize

relations, as much as possible, with the Central Powers and Soviet Russia, which signed a preliminary peace treaty on 12 June 1918. But Skoropadsky's rule was abhorrent to most Ukrainian nationalists because of its apparent indifference to Ukrainization of the government, his willingness to use Russians and other non-Ukrainians for administrative duties, and his receptive reliance for German military protection.⁶² It was equally despised by the Ukrainian peasantry because of the de-nationalization of land.⁶³ In addition, Germany and Austria extracted increased trade concessions, further exacerbating Ukraine's weakening economic situation.

Skoropadsky's position, which was always tenuous, deteriorated rapidly with the defeat of the Central Powers. As the German and Austrian armies withdrew from Ukraine, the Hetman declared he would attempt to form an autonomous Ukrainian state within a federated non-Bolshevik Russia. This further angered Ukrainian nationalists, many of whom decided to act.

On 14 November 1918 forces led by Petlura raised the standard of revolt and within one month they had marched triumphantly into Kiev. Also created was the Directory, made up of a small group of nationalists which was ostensibly to govern Ukraine until stability and peace was achieved. On January 22, 1919 Western Ukraine [Eastern Galicia] united with Russian Ukraine and the Ukrainian National Republic was created. On 2 February the Directory was forced to flee Kiev and Soviet forces captured the city 3 days later. In April 1919 Petlura succeeded Volodymyr Vynnychenko to the chairmanship of the Directory. Amid the confusion of retreat and the fratricidal destruction of Trotsky's Red Army and General Denikin's White Guard,⁶⁴ Petlura's government never implemented any of its program. Indeed, the additional disorder wrought by anarchists, such as Nestor Makhno,⁶⁵

only exacerbated Petlura's problems.

Petlura had always sided with the Entente during the war and looked for their support during this hopeless period. The allied intervention failed to produce any stability, or peace, in Ukraine. Indeed, a memorandum produced in January 1919 by the Political Section of the British Delegation at Paris described the quandary for the western Democracies,

The Ukraine presents a problem of particular difficulty, as the situation is changing constantly. There is in the Ukraine a large element of lack-land peasants who would welcome Bolshevism if that would secure them the land, while there is also a powerful element of large landed proprietors who are naturally ultra-conservative. . . . If the Associated Governments support the peasants we are liable to assist the spread of Bolshevism . . . the Ukraine must be left like Great Russia to arrange her own affairs. . . . The overthrow of the Skoropadsky Government deprives Ukraine of any authority with whom the Associated Governments could maintain any kind of relations. For the moment General Petliura [sic] . . . appears hardly distinguishable from the Bolsheviks either in principle or in practice.⁶⁶

Petlura was powerless to control events and his troops' morale was evaporating, thus he was compelled to retreat into Poland for sanctuary and assistance. A military alliance between Poland and Petlura was signed on 22 April 1920 and operations commenced almost immediately. On 7 May Polish-Ukrainian forces recaptured Kiev, however this initial victory was quickly reversed when Soviet forces

regrouped, counterattacked, and expelled the Ukrainian forces from their native land. An armistice signed 12 October 1920 between Poland and Soviet Russia ended the last vestiges of hope for Ukrainian independence and sentenced many Ukrainian nationalists, most of whom never fully understood their opponents Machiavellian tactics or extralegal activity, to exile.

As case studies, the events in Ukraine and Central Asia are interesting examples of Bolshevik relations with two of Russia's larger national groups. Bolshevik theory was designed to incorporate various nationalities into a new union, not simply mollify them. In practical application, however, the Bolsheviks were compelled to use any means necessary to protect the interests of the proletariat in both regions. That required flexibility and opportunistic actions. They used the theory of self-determination to enlist support among populations that were devastated by conflict and ravaged economies. The Bolsheviks did not completely abandon self-determination, as their actions in Finland indicated, but by insisting that it be subordinated to whatever they believed best served the interests of the proletariat, the principle was reduced, for all practical purposes, to a slogan of opportunity. Indeed, while the right to self-determination could be widely employed for tactical purposes and propaganda, the means of directing, or arresting, its actual consummation was provided for in the supreme position ascribed to the rather arbitrary interests of the proletariat, which would be served through centralization and unification.

The most striking similarity between the two movements was the land question. Kazakhs and Ukrainians desired independent access to the land, albeit for different reasons, and both believed reapportionment of the land would greatly aid their nation. Control of the land, however, was never completely under the control of Alash

Orda or the Central Rada. In Ukraine the land was fought over by all, including Austrians and Germans. In the Steppe, the land, in the mind of Kazakhs, had been illegally seized and Alash wanted it returned. This was problematic because those Russians occupying the land were disinclined to cooperate.

Another interesting similarity was Central Power and Allied interests in both regions. In Ukraine Germany and Austria desired the agricultural products Ukraine rich soil could provide their armies. In Central Asia the interest, while strong, was not as omnipotent. Central Power activity was more the result of freed POWs, rather than active intervention. The Allied powers, however, sent agents, such as Captain F. Bailey of England and Roger Culver Treadwell of America, to the region to ascertain the degree of German influence and prevent the sale of Central Asian cotton to the Central Powers. Unlike in Ukraine, or even the Caucasus', there was a very limited intervention.

As contemporaneous movements, Alash Orda and the Central Rada provide interesting examples to examine Bolshevik nationality policy. In addition, they are good case studies

to review the Russian Revolution and Civil War in the periphery, not simply from a Russian view. What is revealed is that both movements had, with hesitation and trepidation, declared their independence. They attempted to end the fighting within their disputed borders and create an atmosphere of democratic reform that would remove the hated vestiges of tsarist rule. They were, however, unable to remove their struggle from the larger one, namely the First World War, and clearly lacked the means to assert their national interests beyond the interests of the Russian state.

NOTES

1. For a description of Allied and Central Power activities and objects in Ukraine and Central Asia during the First World War see Oleh S. Fedyshyn, *Germany's Drive to the East and the Ukrainian Revolution, 1917-1918* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1971).; Peter Hopkirk, *Like Hidden Fire* (New York, 1994).

2. Helene Carrere d'Encausse, *The Great Challenge: Nationalities and the Bolshevik State, 1917-1930* (New York, 1992): 97.

3. *Ibid.*, 11-25.; Anson Rabinbach, *The Crisis of Austrian Socialism: From Red Vienna to Civil War, 1927-1934* (Chicago, 1983): 14-16.; Mark E. Blum, *The Austro-Marxists, 1890-1918: A Psychobiographical Study* (Lexington, 1985): 90-101.; Alfred D. Low, *Lenin on the Question of Nationality* (New York, 1958).

4. Munif al-Razzaz, *The Evolution of the Meaning of Nationalism*, translated by Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (Garden City, NY, 1963): 48.

5. Martha Olcott, "The Emergence of National Identity in Kazakhstan," *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 8 (Fall (1981): 288.

6. Kermit McKenzie, "Chokan Valikhanov: Kazakh Princeling and Scholar," *Central Asian Survey* 8 (1989): 1-30.

7. George Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan, 1896-1916* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969): 58-60.

8. This was clearly a result of the close cooperation then existing between Kazakhs and Tatars in the field of book publishing and converting simply into the area of newspaper publishing. The most prominent press was in Kazan and operated by a Tatar named Karimov. In Orenburg a wealthy merchant, Ahmed Bay, provided 500 rubles in his will be allocated annually to assist young writers, regardless of topic. Many of the works being published by Kazakhs consisted of short stories, history, prose, and poetry. See Azade-Ayse Rorlich. *The Volga Tatars: A Profile in National Resilience* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986): 73-74.

9. See Hasan Oraltay, "The Alash Movement in Turkestan," *Central Asian Survey* 4 (1985): 41-42.

10. See A. Zhamanqulov, "'Aiqap' zhurnaly koshpeli Qazaq sharualaryn qonystandyru turaly." *Qazaq SSR ghylym_akademiasyning khabalary* (1967): 35-43.

11. See Akhmet Baitursunov, *Kazakcha Alifbesi* (Orenburg, 1914) Reprinted in Bishkek, 1991. This was an early Kazakh educational primer produced in the Arabic script.

12. M. Dulatov, "Akhmed Baitursunovich Baitursunov." *Trudy Obchshstva Izucheniiia Kirgizskogo Kraia* 3 (1922): 22.

13. Edward Sokol, *The Revolt of 1916 in Russian Central Asia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953). Sokol believes the primary grievance among the rebels was economic. The summer harvest was approaching and many believed the loss of so many men would prove difficult to overcome. In addition, livestock in the region had drastically reduced since 1914 and the government

had reduced its grain consignments to Turkestan.

14. S. Brainin and Sh. Shafiro, *Ocherki po istorii Alash Orda* (Moscow, 1935): 129-30.

15. Martha Olcott, *The Kazakhs* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987): 135.

16. Brainin and Shafiro, *Alash Orda*, 130.

17. Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 138-39.

18. Turar Ryskulov, *Revoliutsiya i korennoe naselenie Turkestana* (Tashkent, 1925): 3-5.; Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 140.

19. For a copy of Alash Orda's program see Brainin and Shafiro, *Alash Orda*, 133-35.

20. There were rival Kazakh groups, though none with the prominence of Alash Orda. The best known was *Ush Zhuz* (Three Hordes) based in Tashkent, which counted among its members Saken Seifullin, Turar Ryskulov, and Kolbai Togusov.

21. Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 142.

22. *Ibid.*, 146.

23. Olaf Caroe, *Soviet Empire: The Turks of Central Asia and Stalinism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967): 104.

24. See Steven L. Guthier, "The Popular Base of Ukrainian Nationalism in 1917." *Slavic Review* 38 (1979): 30-47.

25. Edwin Bjorkman and others. *Ukraine's Claim to Freedom*. (New York: Ukrainian National Association and the Ruthenian National Union, 1915): 102-05.

26. Michael Hrushevsky, *A History of the Ukraine*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941): 513.; Steven L. Guthrie, "The Popular Base of Ukrainian Nationalism in 1917." *Slavic Review* 38 (1979): 31.

27. In 1911 Interior Minister Peter Stolypin's executive order banned all Ukrainian language publications. See Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957): 83-86.

28. Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine*, 31-32.

29. *Ibid.*, 31-34.

30. Nicholas Czubatyj, "The National Revolution in Ukraine, 1917-1919." *The Ukrainian Quarterly* 1 (1944-1945): 19.

31. Julius Epstein, "German-Ukrainian Operations During World War I." *The Ukrainian Quarterly* 15 (1959): 162-68. At the time of this document's writing, December 1, 1915, there were about 40,000 Ukrainian prisoners, interned in three special camps [at Rastatt, Wetzlar, and Salzwedel] apart from Russians. Members of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine were charged to carry out the propaganda by the German Ministry of War. In addition, the Union openly acknowledged it received financial support from the Central Powers, which it regarded as a loan to be later reimbursed by the government of a free Ukraine.

32. *Ibid.*, 166-67.

33. Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine*, 521.

34. Pipes, *Formation of the Soviet Union*, 54.; M. Grushevskii, "Ukraintsy" in A. I. Kastelyanskii, ed. *Formy natsional'nago dvizheniya v sovremennykh gosydarstvakh'* (St. Petersburg, 1910): 307-30. In 1910 Hrushevskii argued for greater cultural autonomy for the Ukrainian people within a federated democratic Russia.

35. Wolodymyr Stoiko, "The Relations Between Ukrainian Central Rada and the Russian Provisional Government." *Nationalities Papers* 3 (1975): 34.; Taras Hunczak, ed., *The Ukraine, 1917-1921: A Study in Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1977): 33-60.

36. Pipes, *Formation of the Soviet Union*, 57.

37. "Universals" were originally decrees issued by Polish monarchs. In the Seventeenth century this term was adopted by the Hetmans of the Cossack Host. For a sympathetic and nostalgic appraisal of the First Universal see Boris Martos, "First Universal of the Ukrainian Central Rada: A Personal Memoir," *The Ukrainian Quarterly* 24 (1968): 22-37.

38. This declaration on the part of the Rada was not unusual, given the make-up of the body. Hrushevsky was a strict constitutionalist and his wishes were the guiding spirit in matters of law.

39. Hunczak, *Ukraine, 1917-1921*, 385-87.

40. Stoiko, "Relations," 38-39.

41. *Ibid.*

42. See Alfred D. Low, *Lenin on the Question of Nationality* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1958).; Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question: Selected Writings and Speeches* (New York: International Publishers, 1942).

43. The Russian colonization process in Turkestan between 1896 and 1916 had introduced a large number of Ukrainian peasants to the region. A similar program was undertaken by the Soviets in the 1950s during the Virgin and Idle Lands resettlement program. According to the 1989 Soviet Census there were approximately 1,000,000 Ukrainians living in Kazakhstan.

44. Hunczak, *Ukraine, 1917-1921*, 387-91.

45. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniya*. 4 (Moscow, 1947): 7.

46. *Ibid.*, 8.

47. V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*. [Complete Collected Works] 35 (Moscow, 1962): 361-62.

48. *Ibid.*, 363.

49. Robert S. Sullivant, *Soviet Politics and the Ukraine, 1917-1957* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962): 28.

50. Czubytyj, "National Revolution," 32-33.

51. Petlura was opposed to negotiating with the Central Powers and resigned as Minister of War in Protest. See Alain Desroches, *The Ukrainian Problem and Symon Petlura*. (Chicago: Ukrainian Research and