THE TREATY OF BREST-LITOVSK: RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

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ABSTRACT Communist strategy combined anti-imperialism and the programme of building a planned non-market economy. Until 1918 the conjunction of these two aspects –conquering imperialism and building a new society on its ruins – was undoubted. As long as there were no victories, there could be no socialism. The proposals of a democratic peace put forward by the Bolsheviks in Brest had to ensure a moral victory over imperialism and at the same time to create conditions for the implementation of a constructive programme of socialism. The course of events confronted the Bolsheviks with an appalling dilemma leading to a severe internal crisis. In this article the confrontational motives of factions are discussed from the viewpoints of ‘dogmatism’ and ‘pragmatism’, and utopia and realpolitik. Attention is also drawn to the differences of the political stances time and again emerging in the history of Russia after the rise of St Petersburg. From the northern capital the situation was often seen differently than from Moscow. In Moscow the strategic threats from the Baltic region and from Ukraine were treated as equally dangerous. From the point of view of the northern capital the situation in Germany was more vulnerable and the loss of St Petersburg would mean ‘the end of the play’. Such a viewpoint, differing from Lenin’s position after the transfer of the government to Moscow (when Denikin and Kolchak presented a greater danger than Yudenich), strongly conditioned the strategic ‘blindness’ of the Bolsheviks overlooking the potential menace posed by the Ukrainian Central Rada.

The Ukrainian factor played a key role in events related to the Treaty of Brest. However, a detailed analysis of the proceedings shows that for a long time Bolshevik leaders treated this danger as a minor factor. In the negotiations attention was focused on the territories occupied by the Germans in the Baltic region, which was far less important strategically for Russia as a whole than the enormous area between Odessa and the Donets Basin fraught with danger in the aftermath of the agreement between the Powers of the Quadruple Alliance and the Ukrainian Central Rada (‘Council’) on 9 February 1918. Waiting for

a world revolution and stalling for time, Lenin and Trotsky were concerned about Germany, Austria and the Baltic lands and ignored the distant Ukraine with its grain, Black Sea ports, and the large coal reserves of the Donets Basin, bordering with the Ukrainian-speaking areas (their Ukrainian dependence was not obvious at that time). The underestimation of Ukraine's place in the Bolshevik policy in the Brest negotiations until the middle of January has not yet been adequately explained.

The behaviour of Bolshevik leaders is easy to criticise the more so as the consequences of their actions are now known – everyone is wise after the event. Soviet historiography presented Lenin's stance as more reasonable and condemned Trotsky's venture, while at the present time all Bolsheviks are accused of the failures of foreign policy. The range of incriminations is wide – from espionage on behalf of Germany to the betrayal of revolutionary ideals, and both allegations can co-exist in one particular work as well.¹ The adherents of traditional diplomacy also add their share by upbraiding Bolshevik diplomats for dilettantism and 'replacing diplomatic methods by ineffectual ideological charges against their counter-partners'² (although it is not at all clear whether the traditional professional diplomats could have acted more efficiently in those circumstances – after all it was they who instigated the fiasco of 1914).

These criticisms, however, do not make clear why the Bolsheviks preferred the Baltics to Ukraine between November 1917 and January 1918. They played a risky game of protracting the negotiations and awaiting a world revolution, and that resulted in the occupation of Ukraine and grave consequences for the Soviet republic.

Points of View Exploring this issue it is necessary to take into account various political outlooks, time and again surfacing in the history of Russia after the appearance of St Petersburg. In the northern capital the situation was viewed differently than in Moscow. Moscow treated the strategic threat from the Baltic lands and from Ukraine as equivalent. Meanwhile if the centre of the political universe was the northern capital, then the Baltic region and the situation in Germany seemed much more important, and the loss of 'Peter' meant 'the end of the game'.

¹ Iu. Fel'shtinskii, *Krushenie mirovoi revoliutsii. Brestskii mir. Oktiabr' 1917 – noiabr' 1918* (Moscow, 1992), pp. 22, 29–34.

² I. Mikhutina, *Ukrainskii Brestskii mir* (Moscow, 2007), p. 163.

In this situation delayed negotiations turned out to be a grave, albeit explainable, mistake. But for the Ukrainian factor, prolonging the negotiations would have been a safe course (and afterwards it was submitted as such in Soviet historiography). Soviet Russia was presented as a bearer of lofty principles of peace since that was important taking into consideration the strategy of 'the world revolution' and, for a start, a revolution in Germany. The revolutionary pacifism of the Left Social-Democrats was a consolidating factor of the rising Communist Party both in Russia and in other European countries.

A rigid adherence to the idea that the nightmare of the world war must be put an end to as soon as possible makes it clear why in August 1917 such representatives of the Left Social-Democrats as David Riazanov, Solomon Rozovskii and Iurii Larin joined the Bolsheviks [taking into consideration that that was not the only reason why Lev Trotsky should be added to this list of the American historian], and also why they and the leaders of moderate Bolsheviks such as Kamenev did not leave the Party at the beginning of November despite fundamental disagreements with the Leninist majority in the Central Committee on the composition of the government.³

Soviet foreign policy tried hard to be the vanguard of the solution of problems which were in the dreams of millions of people and which had been related to the socialist project since the late nineteenth century. This solution – a democratic peace without annexations and contributions – was a chance for an immediate suspension of hostilities at all fronts. This chance was realistic in so far as the initiators of peace demonstrated the absence of nationalistic egoism. Conversely, the power of right would be replaced by the right of power. Therefore it was worth risking Estonia, but not St Petersburg. Meanwhile the fate of Ukraine was an internal matter.

The attempts of the Ukrainian leadership to form its own national army contributed to the disorganization of the front. However, this was not a decisive factor in the shaping of the Ukrainian policy of the Soviet of People's Commissars.

Initially the Ukrainian Central *Rada* was not hostile as Kaledin's 'Southern Vandeia' or the direction enabling the Germans to threaten St Petersburg, the key point as regards the upholding of the power of the Soviet of People's Commissars. That was the viewpoint of St Petersburg which actually distorted a strategic alignment of forces. Nonetheless, this viewpoint most closely corresponded to the task of making the European peace.

³ A. Rabinovich, *Bol'sheviki u vlasti. Pervyi god sovetskoi epokhi v Petrograde* (Moscow, 2007), p. 205.

The Central Rada Enters the Game On 9 December 1917 Russia and the Central Powers began peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk. The Bolsheviks adopted a policy of delaying the talks in the hope of a world revolution. In order to assess the rationality of this tactics it is necessary to answer the following question: was there a chance to conclude an acceptable and not humiliating peace agreement? If it was, then it was feasible only in the first days of the negotiations when the diplomats of the Powers of the Quadruple Alliance experienced a certain shock as a result of decisive actions of the Soviet side. For Russia a declaration of self-determination of nations without determining a mechanism for such meant surrendering Poland, Lithuania and Courland under German control and thus ending the war, which in turn could determine the conditions of a peace settlement. The Ukrainian question was not yet on the order of the day, and on the southern flank of the front Austro-Hungary made no claims to Russia except peace and commerce facilities (it was suffering severe food shortages).

Meanwhile nobody wanted to make hay while the sun shone. The leaders of Soviet Russia were not yet aware of a possible danger of renewed hostilities in the situation of the demoralisation of their army and took a firm stand in the talks (in the second half of December, between the all-army congress on demobilisation on 17 December and his return from holiday on 28 December, even Lenin came to the conclusion that resistance was impossible⁴). On 17 (30, new style) December the German General Max Hoffmann commented indignantly that 'the Russian delegates spoke as if they were victors having invaded our country'.⁵ The Soviet representatives considered that Germany was greatly interested in peace and that alone presented a defence of Soviet position.

These considerations cannot be treated as fully ungrounded. Thus, on 22 December (4 January, new style) Chernin wrote waiting for the arrival of the Soviet delegation: 'Doubtless, if the Russians resolutely interrupt the negotiations, the situation will be distressing'.⁶

⁴ On this issue one must agree with Rabinovich that during his holiday in Finland Lenin finally made up his mind on the necessity of signing a peace agreement. Cf. Rabinovich, *Bolsheviki*, p. 218.

⁵ *Mirnye peregovory v Brest-Litovske s 9 (22) dekabria po 3 (16) marta 1918 g.*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1920), p. 94.

⁶ O. Chernin, *V dni mirovoi voiny. Memuary ministra inostrannykh del Avstro-Vengrii* (St Petersburg, 2005), p. 249.

When Trotsky arrived at Brest-Litovsk, the Germans (hereafter this word should be understood as 'including the allies of Germany'), cheered up loudly and their former nervous tension eased.

However as the Bolsheviks played their world game by appealing to the war-torn peoples and by reproaching the Allies for their unwillingness to join the negotiations, the diplomats of the Quadruple Alliance conceived the importance of the Ukrainian factor. On 18 (31, new style) December 1917 a delegation of the Central *Rada* arrived in Brest-Litovsk.

The Central *Rada*, an analogue of the Democratic Conference, was established in Kiev on 30 March 1917. It comprised the main (mostly Socialist) parties of the country. The Bolsheviks, too weak to take power in November, left the *Rada*.

The Central *Rada* came to power with its General Secretariat. Their members did not recognize the Soviet of People's Commissars and the Leninist government of All Russia. However, they were prepared to regulate their relations based on equality. After the October revolution they supported the project of a homogeneous Socialist government, which in their interpretation had to acquire federalist features. A new legitimate government of Russia had to represent not only leftist parties but also the main region of the country, including Ukraine. The project of a homogeneous Socialist government, enabling the prevention of a split of the country and a civil war, ended in a fiasco in the negotiations in St Petersburg, although for a time it was still a matter of topical interest for the Central *Rada*. Consequently, until the very January 1918 the adherents of this project – the Left Socialist Revolutionaries – served as an important bridge between the *Rada* and the Soviet of People's Commissars in which they participated. It is noteworthy that the Left Socialist Revolutionaries outlined the basis of the agrarian laws both in Russia and in Ukraine (in the capacity of the left wing of the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries), but the agrarian restructuring itself on the principles of socialisation and reconstruction was carried out resolutely only in Russia and not in Ukraine.

The point is that the leaders of the Central *Rada* were both nationalists and socialists, and that determined their main contradictions of their policies. In their aims they had to choose between national consolidation and social restructuring which inevitably destroyed the former.

The leaders of the Central *Rada* did not learn from the sad experience of the Provisional Government, which showed that in the circumstances of the revolution the delay of reconstruction led to a catastrophic reduction of the social basis of the power of the country.

The Third Universal Decree of the Central *Rada* proclaimed Ukraine an autonomous part of Russia and envisaged social reforms. However their implementation did not start. The delay of reforms greatly reduced the *Rada's* influence, and in the circumstances of the revolution the social factor was more important than the national issue. Meanwhile in the confrontation with the more radical bolshevism the Ukrainian Socialists endeavoured to exploit the national question.

The territorial extension of the country was the main issue in the national question. Already on 17 August 1917 after the negotiations between the Central *Rada* and the Provisional Government the boundaries of an autonomous Ukraine were demarcated and confirmed by the Provisional Government in 'the Provisional Instruction for the General Secretariat of the Central *Rada*'. According to this document the territory of Ukraine comprised the provinces (gubernias) of Kiev, Volyn, Poltava, Podolsk, and Chernigov. The *Rada* also accepted these boundaries, but this situation did not last long. In its Third Universal Decree of 7 November the *Rada* confirmed that it was seeking autonomy of Ukraine within federal Russia. The Third Universal Decree declared that the provinces of Kiev, Chernigov, Volyn, Podolsk, Poltava, Kharkov, Ekaterinoslavsk, Kherson, and the mainland part of Tavrida (except the Crimea) are Ukrainian territories. Thus, afterwards, claims were laid to a larger area.

Analysing the situation after the adoption of the Third Universal Decree, I. Mikhutina maintains that the statehood of Ukraine was a single-sided act and did not get any 'international legal formalization – neither recognition by other states, nor establishing boundaries by coordinated delimitations with its neighbours, and among them Great Russia'.⁷ At that time international recognition was out of the question – Ukraine had not declared its independence and the delimitation of its boundaries as an autonomous part of Russia could be classified as a purely internal matter of Russia. This question was viewed in this way in St Petersburg, and Ukraine was not yet treated as an agent in the international balance of power.

⁷ Mikhutina, *Ukrainskii Brestskii mir*, p. 50.

Lenin expressed his view on Ukrainian independence already in November: 'We shall tell the Ukrainians: as Ukrainians you can live your life the way you wish. However, we shall give a helping hand to Ukrainian workers and tell them: together we shall fight against our own bourgeoisie and yours'.⁸

On 3–5 December, the Bolsheviks and Left Socialist Revolutionaries suffered a defeat at the first Congress of the Ukrainian Soviets and withdrew from it. Accusing the Central *Rada* of the prevention of a part of delegates of eastern Ukraine from the participation in the Congress, they gathered in Kharkov on 11–12 December and proclaimed a Ukrainian Soviet republic. This new republic was supported by the military from Russia and the Donets Basin, inhabited by the Russians and Ukrainians, who proclaimed their own Donets–Krivoi Rog Soviet republic on 30 January. However, having received 'their own' Ukraine the Bolsheviks had also to acknowledge that 'their own' eastern regions with their mixed population belonged to Ukraine.

At present the war between the Ukrainian nationalists and the Reds in Ukraine in 1918 is usually referred to as 'Russian aggression'. But it must be borne in mind that the Red Army units consisted mainly of the inhabitants of Ukraine. It was they who rose in revolt for Soviet power.

Faced with the crisis of their policy in Kiev the Bolsheviks started to escalate the conflict. Early in December that was not yet inevitable. According to Georgy Chicherin, 'the trouble is that Trotsky likes theatrical thundering ... Meanwhile Il'ich likes toughness, rigour, ultimata, etc.'. ⁹

In its manifesto of 4 December 1917 the Russian Soviet government acknowledged the right of Ukraine to independence and at the same time rejected the right of the Central *Rada* to represent the Ukrainian people. The Central *Rada* responded that it sought autonomy within the federal Russian state. Thus, although not recognizing each other de jure the governments of Russia and Ukraine did not differ radically in their views. Russia would not object to a legitimate Ukrainian government's demanding independence, and Ukraine was ready to remain a constituent part of Russia if its legitimate democratic government was restored.

⁸ V.I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (henceforth – PSS), vol. 35, p. 116.

⁹ Cited in Mikhutina, *Ukrainskii Brestskii mir*, p. 79.

The Central *Rada* was charged with the disorganisation of the front, with the forced dispersal of the soviets and in particular with the refusal 'to let the forces pass in the campaign against Kaledin'.¹⁰ Thus, in December the question of the *Rada* for the Bolsheviks was an internal rather than external political issue.

Formally this manifesto almost equalled the declaration of war on the Central *Rada*. But it was only a formal threat. 'Thundering' stopped short of war at that time. The relations between the Soviet of People's Commissars and the Central *Rada* were not yet severed, and the two parties conducted negotiations on grain delivery for roubles to Great Russia and to the front. Simultaneously the incorporation of the *Rada* representatives into the Russian delegation for peace talks in Brest-Litovsk was discussed.¹¹ And there were no military activities, instead only separate clashes between the representatives of Soviet power and the Central *Rada* were taking place in eastern towns. Discords among them could be postponed for the period of the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk – that was important for the survival of the two regimes.

The Central *Rada* laid claim to an autonomous participation in the Brest-Litovsk negotiations without proclaiming its independence. From the legal point of view such claim was logical. The Central *Rada* based its right of participation on the fact that there was no legitimate government accepted by the whole of Russia. *Rada*'s note of 28 December declared: 'Peace deal on behalf of the whole of Russia can be brought about only by a government (which must be federal) which would be acknowledged by all regions of all republics of Russia or by a united government'.¹² Since a legitimate government of all of Russia did not exist before the establishment of the Constituent Assembly, the *Rada* was right in considering the Soviet of People's Commissars in St Petersburg one of the parts of the government on the territory of Russia. Consequently, both the *Rada* and the Soviet of People's Commissars had equal rights in the negotiations.

Additionally, unlike professional diplomats the Bolshevik leaders had to link their aims of foreign policy with the task of retaining power. In November and December 1917 the principal threat and

¹⁰ Lenin, *PSS*, vol. 35, p. 144.

¹¹ I.N. Ksenofontov, *Mir, kotorogo khoteli i kotoryi nenavideli* (Moscow, 1991), p. 106.

¹² *Mirnye peregovory*, p. 51.

the centre of the consolidation of armed anti-Bolshevik forces was the Don River Basin, and it was crucially important not to let the *Rada* consolidate with them. Therefore, the Bolsheviks had to be extremely cautious and appeasing in their relations with the *Rada*.

Initially the aims of Soviet Russia and the Central *Rada* coincided in the Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations with regard to the aims. Soviet Russia, sticking to the principle of self-determination, did not further its own interests but the national strivings of the nations of Eastern Europe including those of Ukraine. However, in the negotiations those principles were subjected to a rigorous test. Firstly, they clashed with the principle of territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal matters of sovereign countries (presenting a danger to the frontiers of Austro-Hungary). Secondly, in the conditions of occupation the mechanism for the operation of the principle of self-determination was far from clear. In the words of the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister Ottokar Czernin 'in actual fact, both sides fear each other's terror while both of them are willing to resort to it'.¹³ It was a frank admission, taking into account the fact that Soviet Russia had not yet engaged in terror.

The Germans initially valued the chance to make peace with the Bolsheviks, and in order not to lower their status they accepted the position of the Russian delegates with regard to the Ukrainian mandate.¹⁴

Nevertheless, as soon as the Soviet delegation manifested its toughness in defending its principles, the situation changed. Having noticed the independence of the Ukrainian position, the diplomats of the Quadruple Alliance decided to exploit their disagreements.

'Trotsky's Mistake' On 28 December Trotsky was forced to acknowledge Ukraine as an equal negotiator. This step is often treated as a mistake, a slip in the diplomatic play. Nonetheless, it is important to note that in his confession Trotsky did not identify the Republic of Ukraine with the Central *Rada* since 'the Republic of Ukraine is in the process of its self-determination'. According to Mikhutina, that enabled Trotsky 'to postpone the issue of the subjection of the Republic of Ukraine, its government and its diplomatic emissaries', but the head of the Soviet delegation repudiated this chance of his own free will without being pressurized by anybody or anything

¹³ Chernin, *V dni*, p. 246.

¹⁴ Mikhutina, *Ukrainskii Brestskii mir*, p. 65.

...'.¹⁵ This is not a valid reproach. First, Trotsky simply postponed the question of Ukraine's subjection (subsequently that was used by the Soviet delegation). Second, Trotsky was not competent to determine the status of the Ukrainian government and its representatives. He could not drive out the government of the Central *Rada* from Kiev and its representatives from Brest-Litovsk. Trotsky foresaw how things would turn out and understood that the Germans could deal with the Ukrainians if they wanted to. Meanwhile the manifestation of 'imperialism' on the part of the Russian representatives in Brest-Litovsk could seriously handicap both the achievement of a compromise with the *Rada* (if it was at all feasible) and the struggle for Ukraine in case the talks foundered. The *Rada* representative Golubovich insisted on the existence of two 'separate independent delegations of one and the same Russian front of the former Russian empire'.¹⁶ And Trotsky could not but be reconciled to it.

'Trotsky is considered to have made a mistake ...', comments the American historian Yuri Felshtinsky. 'However, Trotsky's judgment cannot be treated as hasty'. The validation of the Ukrainian delegation was reached after lengthy talks on 26 December (8 January, new style).¹⁷

Trotsky's decision on Ukraine was not made only on his own. Before presenting his position at the sitting of 30 December he consulted the Soviet of People's Commissars whether to recognize the *Rada* the official authority in Ukraine.¹⁸ In the aftermath of the consultations Trotsky acknowledged the right of the People's Republic of Ukraine to participate in the negotiations. Subsequently this manoeuvre of his was accepted without protest by the Soviet of People's Commissars and Lenin personally. Lenin understood Trotsky's motives; at that time St Petersburg was engaged in the struggle for changing the course of the People's Republic of Ukraine. It was in agreement with the formula proposed by Lenin and accepted by the Soviet of People's Commissars on 30 December: 'Meanwhile the national requirements of the Ukrainians, the independence of their people's republic, and its rights to federal relations

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 148.

¹⁶ *Mirnye peregovory*, p. 54.

¹⁷ A.O. Chubarian, *Brestskii mir* (Moscow, 1963), pp. 126–127.

¹⁸ *Protokoly zasedaniia Soveta narodnykh komissarov RSFSR. Noiaabr 1917 – mart 1918* (Moscow, 2006), p. 172.

are recognized by the Soviet of People's Commissars in full and do not arouse any controversy'.¹⁹

Nonetheless, who was competent to represent the population of Ukraine? At the elections to the Constituent Assembly the parties of the Central *Rada* (mainly Socialist) polled a significant majority of the vote. However, a fourth of the electorate, living in big towns and on the left bank of the Dnieper, voted differently. The Central *Rada* had a claim on vast areas up to the Donets Basin and Kursk, where its rule had never been recognized. Laying claim to the eastern territories, the *Rada* 'acquired' the Left-Bank population, still more indifferent to the national idea than the inhabitants of the Right Bank.

As long as the Central *Rada* was in Kiev, the Bolsheviks could not but recognize its authority, at least conditionally. Non-recognition of the *Rada* did not forfeit its right to represent Ukraine *de facto*, instead such attitude threw the country into the arms of the diplomats of the Quadruple Alliance. The Bolsheviks counted on a delay and even prevention of the passing over of the *Rada* to the side of the Germans. At that time the Soviet of People's Commissars still hoped to come to an agreement with the Central *Rada* (if possible, to have it more left-sided) maintaining contacts with it through the Left Socialist Revolutionaries. Nevertheless, the conflict arising, the representatives of the Central *Rada* decided to come to an agreement with the states of the Quadruple Alliance.

The diplomats of the Alliance, despite their former statements, were ready for such contacts. Already on 21 December (3 January, new style) Chernin wrote that if the Russians were not going to resume negotiations, 'we shall get in touch with the Ukrainians'.²⁰ Perceiving the importance of the Ukrainian factor in the talks, the Austro-German side started to provoke Ukraine into declaring its independence in order to have a chance to sign a separate peace with it. Formally Ukraine was requested to have its status defined. The recognition of this independent status had to be recognized internationally in a treaty with the Quadruple Alliance.²¹ Thus, the Germans instigated Ukraine to secede from Russia in order to control it as their protectorate.

¹⁹ Lenin, *PSS*, vol. 35, p. 212.

²⁰ Chernin, *V dni*, p. 248.

²¹ *Mirnye peregovory*, p. 77.

Strategic Duality On the day of the Constituent Assembly, 5 (18, new style) January 1918, General Max Hoffmann presented the Soviet delegation with a map on which the line of the German sphere of influence actually coincided with that of the front. The 'self-determination' of the territories to the west of the line – Poland, Lithuania and Courland – was the concern of Germany.

Trotsky bought time for the Soviet side. A heated discussion about what to do next ensued in the parties of the Bolsheviks and Left Socialist Revolutionaries. The capitulation to the Germans was unacceptable to the majority of the Bolsheviks and Left Socialist Revolutionaries, and they were supported by the representatives of other parties.

Patriotic feelings of the population of Russia and the principles of the revolutionaries were hurt by the German ultimatum. Complying with it meant a defeat on the international scale – a betrayal of the German left and additional resources for strengthening the German regime.

In the Bolshevik party, the Left Communists led by Nikolai Bukharin opposed this 'filthy' peace treaty with the imperialists most fiercely. Historians habitually criticize them for their extremism. However, a typical negative assessment of the position of the Left Communists for 'their not having left the state of bookish circle-style doctrinairism'²² is rather superficial. The Left Communists just 'went along with the tide' of the mass mood, unfettered by the regulations of circles and doctrines.

Lenin decided to challenge these mass moods by accepting the German ultimatum. He considered that Bolshevik units and the disorganized old army would not be able to withstand the German onslaught.

It is noteworthy that while coming out in favour of the acceptance of the ultimatum, Lenin still ignored the Ukrainian factor (though, at that time he could already deliberately pass over that danger in silence). He argued that to continue the war meant to fight for the liberation of Poland, Lithuania, and Courland. Meanwhile Ukraine did not feature in this list – it was an example of the country self-determining as a Soviet republic.²³

In general, Lenin was not interested in future boundaries (on the threshold of the world revolution all of them were relative); he

²² Mikhutina, *Ukrainskii Brestskii mir*, p. 176.

²³ Lenin, *PSS*, vol. 35, p. 251.

was more concerned with a peaceful respite for the organization of a principally new non-marketable economy of new Russia on the basis of a nationalized industry and the natural exchange of products between town and village. With several months at his disposition he could expect to ensure a sound economic basis for the new army and guarantee the invincibility of socialism.²⁴ This strategy, however, contained no less doctrinairism than the ideas of the Left Communists. The Bolshevik doctrine, initially seeming integral, began to disintegrate in the face of the Brest-Litovsk challenge.

The Communist strategy combined anti-imperialism and a programme of the construction of a non-marketable planned economy. Until 1918 the connection between these two components – the defeat of imperialism and the building of a new society on its ruins – seemed inseparable. As long as there were no victories, there could not be socialism. The proposals of the democratic world, put forward by the Bolsheviks in Brest-Litovsk, were meant to secure a great moral victory over imperialism. But German imperialism was not going to surrender. Thus, a choice had to be made. Lenin considered that any peace treaty was acceptable in order to begin the construction of socialism. Then an instructive example would lead to the triumph of Communist ideas all over the world. The Left Communists led by Bukharin and the Left Socialist Revolutionaries maintained that capitulation to imperialism would make the advance to the new society impossible. Russia would be dependent on imperialism, which additionally would deprive the country of a part of its resources without which any economic recovery would be simply impossible. The Left Socialist Revolutionaries were also aware of severe food shortages if German requirements were satisfied, and the peasantry whose interests the Left Socialist Revolutionaries represented in the workers'-and-peasants' union would have to suffer for it.

Trotsky endeavoured to draw together the positions of the Left and Right Bolsheviks by means of a risky play of foreign policy. If the disintegration of the army was inevitable, it had to be disbanded and thus backing from soldiers in the internal struggle be gained (this stake soon proved correct). Resistance was impossible, but the situation of the enemy was also too difficult to continue the war. Risks could be taken by refusing to sign a peace treaty and hoping for better times (both for Germany and Russia). Then a difficult

²⁴ Ibid.

choice, differentiating the Communist idea and tearing the Party apart, would be out of the question. It was a risky game, but it was worth the candle. Trotsky's slogan was 'neither war nor peace, but the army should be disbanded'.

On 11 January the Central Committee approved Trotsky's plan by nine votes to seven. According to Rabinovich that did not mean that Trotsky 'was given the nod for the declaration of "either war or peace"'.²⁵ Lenin insisted on protracting the talks until the German ultimatum. Trotsky agreed with it since the situation in Europe was changing every day. Additionally, counter to the decision of the Central Committee, Lenin persisted in accepting the capitulation on Germany's conditions, while Trotsky adhered to his plan.

Even if his risky design turned out wrong, Trotsky nonetheless saw advantages in his line (when it became clear that the Germans were ready to renew their assault, Trotsky put forward these arguments as alibi): it was important that the Bolsheviks concluded a peace treaty not on their own initiative but yielding to coercion: 'it would be clear to everybody that we had no other way out. That alone would deliver a blow on our backstage relations with Hohenzollern'.²⁶

Trotsky, who would become the leader of the Left Communists in the twenties (by that time Bukharin had turned abruptly to the right), became a centrist in 1918. Felshtinsky maintains that

taking into account the standards of the revolutionary time, Trotsky's position seems temperate. He did not bring disgrace on Russian Bolsheviks in the eyes of the 'German proletariat' by signing a peace treaty with the Kaiser's imperialist government and did not indulge in Bukharin's unrestrained adventurism without having adequate resources'.²⁷

The fact that Trotsky's position was more modest does not mean that that it was more realistic than that of the 'left-wing' Bolsheviks (Bukharin, et al.) or 'right-wing' Bolsheviks (Lenin, et al.). Trotsky counted on the German incapability to continue the offensive. This shaky presumption served the basis for the immediate demobilization of the army (and that was taking place at the time when the threat of hostility continuation required combat-capable units at least for the defence of the cities and towns for the siege of which the Germans had no time).

²⁵ Rabinovich, *Bol'sheviki u vlasti*, p. 223.

²⁶ Trotsky, *Moia zhizn'. Opyt avtobiografii* (Moscow, 1990), vol. 2, p. 109.

²⁷ Fel'shtinskii, *Krushenie*, p. 15.

The positions of both Lenin and Bukharin were not based on reckless stakes – they considered that in any case it was necessary to be prepared for the German assault and either to throw oneself on the mercy of the conqueror (Lenin) or to put up resistance (Bukharin). There was no other way out, and at least that was by and large confirmed by the events of 18 February to 3 March.

In this situation Lenin was the leader of the right wing of the Party relying largely on the Right Bolsheviks who had been his main opponents in October and November 1917 (it was no accident that it was Zinov'ev who was the first in the Central Committee to propose to sign a peace treaty without delay since delay would merely exacerbate the situation).²⁸

In this situation the Left Communists supported Trotsky, although the agreement between the two sides was not total. Trotsky hoped that the Germans were too weak to attack and that a respite could be achieved without disgrace, while the Left Communists considered that the Germans could strike, but it was possible and necessary to offer resistance and thus influence the world revolutionary movements.

Since the differences were not discussed openly at the Third Congress of the Soviets, Lenin as head of the government received *carte blanche* which he was not given by the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks, all the more so by the Left Socialist Revolutionaries. Thus he could 'legally' present his Party comrades with a *fait accompli*, while Trotsky, as a politically independent minister, could do the same with respect to Lenin, the Germans, and the whole world.

Felshtinsky calls into question 'popular opinion that on his return to Brest-Litovsk for the renewal of negotiations late in January (new style), Trotsky had guidelines of the Soviet government on signing a peace treaty'.²⁹ There were no official documents of the Soviet of People's Commissars or of the Central Committee containing such indications, however Lenin made a mention of his personal agreement with Trotsky. What kind of agreement could that be? Lenin claimed that it related to a surrender after the German ultimatum,³⁰ Trotsky asserted that the talk was about an inevitable disruption of

²⁸ *Sed'moi ekstrennyi s'ezd RKP(b). Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1962), p. 66.

²⁹ Fel'shtinskii, *Krushenie*, p. 233.

³⁰ *Sed'moi ekstrennyi s'ezd RKP(b)*, p. 111.

the negotiations and the signing of the peace treaty only after a German ultimatum.³¹

In the further course of events Lenin and Trotsky acted without any coordination, one in St Petersburg, the other in Brest-Litovsk.

After Trotsky's departure on 21 January Lenin again convened the Central Committee, which then agreed to the idea of delayed discussions and even tended to conclude peace if the Germans presented an ultimatum. Meanwhile it seemed that in that situation the Germans were far from an ultimatum.

The famine in Germany and Austro-Hungary became unbearable. If the question of peace had depended on the population, peace treaties without annexations and contributions would have been concluded immediately. Strike actions were taken in Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, and Warsaw.

As soon as the strikes came to an end in Vienna on 9 (22, new style) January (following the promise of the authorities to make peace and increase rations for the workers), they spread to Germany on 15 (28, new style) January. In Vienna and Berlin the workers formed councils on the pattern of Russian soviets. Thus a revolutionary situation arose in the countries of the Quadruple Alliance.

The short-lived European revolutionary wave in January played a nasty trick on the Bolsheviks making them come to an agreement on the issue of delaying the talks in the hope that the problems in Germany and Austro-Hungary would result in a revolution. 'Any information, even the most insignificant about any signs of revolutionary resentment abroad was picked up rapturously by the Bolshevik press in St Petersburg ...'.³² News from home influenced the position of the diplomats of the Quadruple Alliance. Chernin admitted: 'the catastrophe caused by the supplies running out was imminent'.³³

In the Final Homestretch in Brest-Litovsk and Ukraine However, as before, the decisive factor was in the hands of German generals, and they were not going to let 'the trophy of victory' slip. The position of the German military elite was adventurous because delaying a peace treaty in the conditions of severe food shortage and, what is more, when the Russians offered an honest peace,

³¹ Ibid., pp. 66, 68.

³² Rabinovich, *Bol'sheviki u vlasti*, p. 225.

³³ Chernin, *V dni*, p. 254.

was fraught with revolution. Nevertheless, the generals were ready to risk, and not only because of the Baltic region. In that play the stake was Ukrainian food supplies.

The negotiations between the Central *Rada* and the Quadruple Alliance was a rescue for both sides. The Germans needed to end the talks in Brest-Litovsk as soon as possible and to have access to food supplies, and the *Rada* sought to fence itself off the Bolsheviks (including the Ukrainian ones) by German bayonets.

The Ukrainians made a favourable impression on their partners in Brest-Litovsk. 'They are much less revolutionary-minded, they are more concerned with their motherland and much less with socialism',³⁴ Chernin wrote. The Germans, however, were drawn to them because of their food supplies and a deep rupture in the Russian diplomatic front rather than their patriotism.

Initially it seemed that the relations between the negotiators were based on partnership. The Ukrainians, led by V. Golubovich, could bargain and even rather hard, mainly at the expense of Russia. They required the recognition of the frontiers of Ukraine, including the north of the Caucasus and even an enclave in Siberia.

Neither did the Ukrainian delegates forget the Ukrainians to the west of the front. They required reunion with the Ukrainian part of Galicia and with the Kholm region and Polesie, also claimed by the Poles. Chernin reminded the Ukrainians that Austro-Hungary adhered to the principle of 'non-interference in the internal matters of other countries'.³⁵ However, an agreement was finally reached about the formation of an autonomous Galicia within Austro-Hungary and a promise to make the Poles yield in contentious issues. Foodstuffs were urgently needed.

The strikes in Vienna and Berlin were the trump card both for Bolsheviks and the Ukrainians who, according to Chernin 'became categorical very quickly' and began simply to dictate their terms.³⁶ In his dispatch to Berlin Richard Kühlmann wrote: 'the Ukrainians are clever, secretive and go to extremes in their requirements'.³⁷

On 3 (16, new style) of January the Austro-Hungarian diplomats got an agreement, favourable for Ukraine: the new state was given

³⁴ Ibid., p. 250.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 256.

³⁷ *Sovetsko-germanskije otnosheniia ot peregovorov v Brest-Litovske do podpisaniia Raspal'skogo dogovora* (Moscow, 1968), vol. 1, p. 228.

the territory to the east of the river Bug and to the south of the line Brest-Litovsk – Pinsk. The autonomy of Eastern Galicia as part of Austro-Hungary was guaranteed by a secret annex; when the Ukrainian government became a puppet one, it was revoked by the Austro-Hungarian side.

The information about the German-Ukrainian talks began to reach Trotsky already on 22 December (4 January, new style) from the German press. On 6 (19, new style) the Germans openly informed about their negotiations with Ukraine; consequently the conflict between the Central *Rada* and the Bolsheviks became unavoidable. The diplomatic alliance with Russia was officially broken off by Golubovich. The negotiations in Brest-Litovsk reached the final stage.

As a result of the discussions during the break of the negotiations on 23–29 January (4–5 February, new style) between the German high command on one side and the governments of Germany and Austro-Hungary on the other, the latter agreed to hasten the signing of a separate peace treaty with Ukraine and afterwards to present an ultimatum to Trotsky, in other words, to end the peace conference in Brest-Litovsk in a week's time. The terms of the ultimatum which Kühlmann had to deliver to Trotsky were the following: either Trotsky accepts the peace demands or warfare will be renewed.³⁸

By presenting his plan of ending the war without signing peace ('neither war, nor peace') Trotsky aimed, besides everything else, to get ahead of the German-Ukrainian agreement since the *Rada* 'was carrying out a treacherous policy'.³⁹

After the severance of relations with the *Rada* the Soviet government tried to show that the *Rada* was not the only one to represent Ukraine. On 8 (21, new style) January a delegation of Soviet Ukraine as a member of the All-Russian Soviet delegation arrived in Brest-Litovsk. The Germans, however, preferred to deal with that Ukrainian government which seemed more acceptable to them.

On 19 January (1 February, new style) Trotsky declared that the delegates of the Central *Rada* could not represent Ukraine and a separate peace with Ukraine was impossible without Russia's participation. Meanwhile, the Austro-Hungarian side ignored this tactical move.

As long as the General Secretariat of the Central *Rada* was in Kiev, it was considered the government of Ukraine in Brest-Litovsk as well.

³⁸ Rabinovich, *Bol'sheviki u vlasti*, p. 232.

³⁹ Ksenofontov, *Mir, kotorogo khoteli*, p. 199.

Faced with the increasing Soviet influence in Ukraine, the Central *Rada* nevertheless declared the independence of the Ukrainian People's Republic on 9 January 1918. However, in the conditions of sharp social problems and the struggle of social projects the national idea turned out to be a weak mobilizing factor. Consequently, the prestige of the *Rada* was declining sharply.

On 15 (28, new style) January a pro-Soviet uprising broke out in Kiev, but it was suppressed by 22 January (4 February, new style). Since then the conflict between the *Rada* and Soviet power had developed into a war.

In the civil war between pro-Soviet eastern Ukraine and the adherents of the *Rada* Kharkov was supported by Soviet Russia (what's more, Soviet Ukraine was lawfully part of Russia).

It is noteworthy that the Soviet side comprised both the Ukrainians and representatives of other nations from the eastern Left Bank and other more eastern lands. It was just the *Rada* which had endeavoured to have as many eastern lands as possible – it was these territories that rose against Kiev then.

On 15 (28, new style) January Soviet troops entered Bakhmach. Practically their movement was unopposed. On 16 (29, new style) January the *Rada* forces were defeated at Kruty.

The importance and significance of social factors over those national ones became evident soon after the outbreak of the war. Social conflicts determined the course of events in Ukraine, at that time acquiring its national and juridical statehood. The national factor, however, influenced the social processes, and vice versa, the national background, conditioned by the development of Soviet democracy, developed and penetrated the political forces created on behalf of social aims. In 1919 the political tide turned against the Soviets. But this course of events required more time, and the *Rada* was unable on its own to withstand the onslaught from the Soviet revolution in 1918.

The majority of the population of eastern Ukraine as well as of Kiev and Odessa being mostly Russian-speaking did not consider the Ukrainian state their own. For them the war against Ukrainian nationalists was a war against the endeavours to destroy the established national traditions and against the delay of social changes. Afterwards Ukrainian hetmans easily changed the yellow-blue colours of their banners into red and vice versa. Armed Ukrainians were interested in the social contents of statehood rather than in its

national aspects. Neither was the peasantry aware of the advantages of national statehood. On 8 February 1918 Kiev was taken by the Red forces under M.A. Murav'ev.

‘Neither War nor Peace’ The representatives of the Central *Rada* signed a peace treaty with the states of the Quadruple Alliance on 9 February 1918. Mikhutina considers this agreement ‘an illegitimate act’,⁴⁰ the more so that Soviet forces had taken Kiev on 26 January (8 February, new style). The Central *Rada* fled to Zhitomir. But then it was recognized in an international treaty. This fact conditioned Ukraine’s fate, including the lands that in no way were related to the *Rada*.

According to the peace treaty between the Quadruple Alliance and the Central *Rada* Ukraine got hold of the Kholm region and a part of Podlasia. The *Rada* undertook to deliver one million tons of foodstuffs to Germany, and that had to defuse the social crisis there. The formation of an autonomous Galicia in Austro-Hungary was envisaged by a secret appendix (subsequently this contract was revoked). The *Rada* called on the German troops to oust the Bolsheviks from Ukraine. The policy of Ukrainian nationalists became clearly pro-German oriented until the Second World War.

The representatives of Germany were ready ‘to settle accounts’ with Russia. On 8 February Chernin wrote that ‘doubtless the Brest intermezzo was rapidly coming to an end’.⁴¹

On 9 February Wilhelm demanded that his diplomats issued an ultimatum to Trotsky and required to hand over the whole Baltic region from Pskov to Narva.⁴² Kühlmann had a difficult task of persuading the emperor to delay in order to use Ukraine as a trump card and to make Trotsky capitulate on the terms of 5 January (at that time Wilhelm’s demands seemed quite unrealistic for signing a peace treaty without continuing the war which was highly undesirable for Germany as well).

However, Trotsky did not wait for the unavoidable ultimatum. On 10 April he declared that he refused to conclude an annexational peace treaty and at the same time he announced about the suspension of hostilities and the demobilization of troops. ‘We cannot bless violence. We leave the war but are forced to sign no peace treaty’.⁴³

⁴⁰ Mikhutina, *Ukrainskii Brestskii mir*, p. 231.

⁴¹ Chernin, *V dni*, p. 263.

⁴² *Sovetsko-germanskie otnosheniia*, p. 312.

⁴³ *Sed'moi ekstrennyi s'ezd RKP(b)*, p. 283.

Lenin disagreed with Trotsky's plan of disbanding the army and even tried to stop it. However, few were the means of influencing the mass of the soldiers, and the front began to disintegrate. The Germans could not afford a long continuation of the war on the eastern front either. Nevertheless, they could venture a short-term invasion of Russia.

On 13 February the German Crown Council decided to launch a limited offensive from Narva to Pskov. Being under threat from the West the Germans did not plan a siege of St Petersburg any more. Lenin, however, was not aware of that. For him the siege of St Petersburg and the collapse of the revolution were synonyms. For the Left Communists it was merely a Kutuzov-style retreat to Moscow.⁴⁴

When seen through the perspective of years it can be maintained that militarily the 'left' were closer to truth – the Germans could not conduct a prolonged offensive against Russia. The mobilization of only over 10,000 soldiers for the Red Guard was not effective, but together with the armed bands of the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, they could defend St Petersburg. The experience of the Austro-German occupation of Ukraine showed that the Red Guard could not mount any resistance to the Germans. Meanwhile the occupation of vast regions required considerable armed forces, scarcely sufficient for the control of grain-producing Ukraine. To engage such forces for the occupation of the enormous territories up to Moscow was both senseless (the mobilization of foodstuffs in Russia was more difficult) and impossible (the Western Front lacked military forces).

However, viewing the situation from the perspective of St Petersburg rather than from Moscow, Lenin considered that the revolution – read here: 'the power of the Soviet of People's Commissars in St Petersburg' – was in mortal danger and could be suppressed by German bayonets. Besides, there were other factors determining Lenin's position.

The German menace was an important factor which restrained the internal conflict in Russia (at least among the Socialists) when the Constituent Assembly was dissolved. This was attested by the first comments in the All-Russian Central Executive Committee about Trotsky's *démarche*. The representative of the Socialist Revolutionaries N. Pumpianskii approved the decision not to sign a peace treaty,

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

but denounced the disorganization at the front. The Left Socialist Revolutionary Shteinberg responded by calling in the conditions of the time ‘to suspend the civil war in the democracy’⁴⁵ (‘civil war’ was used here as a figurative expression for ‘political dissidence’). In Lenin’s view such tendencies were more dangerous than the German assault since they were fraught with tendencies to change power in the style of a homogeneous socialist (and possibly even democratic) government. On 18 February the Soviet of People’s Commissars rejected the proposal of the Left Socialist Revolutionaries about signing a defence agreement with the moderate Socialists.

In the opinion of the Left Communists, following his opportunistic policy Lenin was forming a new social basis for the regime, and that was more dangerous than a political coalition with the ‘opportunists’:

The social basis of such policy was the process of the degeneration of our party from purely proletarian into ‘nationwide’, and that was normal taking into account its gigantic growth. The masses of the soldiers, desiring peace at any price, under any conditions, and even ignoring the socialist character of the proletarian regime, exerted their impact; and the party, instead of raising the masses of the peasantry to its level, lowered itself to their level and was transformed from the vanguard of the revolution into the middle-class (*‘sredniak’*).⁴⁶

Nevertheless, power for Lenin was a dominant position enabling the Bolsheviks to act freely by turning either to the right or to the left. Meanwhile a coalition deprived them of such possibilities.

A continuation of the war was unacceptable for Lenin since it made impossible the implementation of some organizational and economic tasks on which he counted so much and which required the expansion of the political support of power with its possible turn to the right. All that conditioned the toughness of Lenin’s position.

However, in one very significant respect Lenin was ready to change his standpoint. On 10 March the capital moved to Moscow. Since then the strategic situation of the Soviet system had been much more stable and Lenin had felt more secure in the conditions of armed struggles on many fronts. Moscow rather than St Petersburg became a more comfortable centre of the world Communist project both for Lenin and his political followers.

During a period of respite from 10 to 17 February, when it was not clear whether the Germans would reopen hostilities, Lenin and Trotsky came to a temporary agreement. Lenin was willing to wait

⁴⁵ Rabinovich, *Bol’sheviki u vlasti*, p. 242.

⁴⁶ *Kommunist*, Martch 08 1918.

and see whether the Germans would renew warfare, and if they did, Trotsky would be ready to support Lenin's position. Lenin and Trotsky shared the same viewpoint – the loss of St Petersburg would mean the downfall of revolution.

It is noteworthy that the St Petersburg Bolshevik Committee supported the Left Communists for whom the perspective of the world revolution was more important than the fate of the revolution in Russia. However, these attitudes would soon separate from those of the St Petersburg Soviet, more adequately reflecting the mood of the revolutionary activists.⁴⁷

At the session of the Central Committee on 17 February, Trotsky gained the upper hand by a margin of one vote, and a decision was made to wait until the issue of the German offensive became clear enough. However, Trotsky's vote helped Lenin to win in another important issue: if Germany resumed warfare, its old ultimatum had to be accepted. The fact that the ultimatum could be different was not taken into account.

On the night of 19 February, the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks decided to sign a peace treaty by seven votes to five (Trotsky was already on Lenin's side). This decision was also supported by the Central Committee of the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, but the session was attended only by less than a half of the members. The Soviet of People's Commissars took their decision with great difficulty, too. Then the talk concerned the German ultimatum of 5 January, while subsequently the Germans put forward new demands – they laid claim to the whole of the Baltic region.

On 23 February, in order to discontinue 'the policy of the revolutionary phrase' of the Left Communists, Lenin threatened to leave the Central Committee. This threat enabled Trotsky to base his consent to more drastic terms of the treaty so as to avoid a party split set off by Lenin.

With Trotsky's help having pushed through the Central Committee the decision about the peace treaty on German terms, Lenin assumed authoritarian power in which a domineering group of leaders occupying posts simultaneously in the Bolshevik Central Committee and in the Soviet of People's Commissars could adopt decisions in formally democratic Soviet institutions. Although the quorum of the Central Committee of the Party of the Left Socialist Revolutionaries came out against this peace, the fate of the treaty was decided by the

⁴⁷ Rabinovich, *Bol'sheviki u vlasti*, pp. 287–292.

Bolshevik party. The Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' (Bolshevik) Party forced the Bolshevik faction of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee into submission. Thus, on the night of 24 February the decision was forced through the All-Russian Central Executive Committee by a narrow margin (the issue of capitulation was not even opened up for discussion at the session of the Soviet of People's Commissars) despite the resistance of the Left Socialist Revolutionaries and some Left Communists, who, like Bukharin, decided to ignore the Party discipline.

The Bolshevik Bureau of the Moscow Region presented the most categorical declaration in the Left-Communist spirit on the distrust of the Central Committee. The Bureau considered that in the current situation the loss of Soviet power could be put at risk since after the signing of such a treaty this regime would be 'merely formal'.⁴⁸ It was only after the signing of the peace treaty that in its regional Party conference on 4-5 March the Moscow organization retreated in the face of the danger of a split and agreed with the 'respite'.

Although at that time the Germans had suspended hostilities at the St Petersburg front, the delegation of the Soviet of People's Commissars signed the 'filthy' Brest-Litovsk treaty on 3 March 1918. Under its terms Russia ceded Finland, Ukraine, the Baltic provinces and parts of the Caucasus and also pledged itself to pay war indemnities.

The German occupation of Ukraine (at the invitation of the Central *Rada*) and its subsequent expansion along the Don severed the contacts between the centre of the country and grain-producing regions. It aggravated the problem of food supplies and worsened the relations between the town and the countryside. The representatives of the peasantry supporting the Soviet regime and the Left Socialist Revolutionaries launched a propaganda campaign against the Bolsheviks in the soviets. The capitulation to Germany hurt the national feelings and set millions of inhabitants irrespective of their social origin against the Bolsheviks. Felshtinsky considers that Ukrainian bread was a myth.⁴⁹ Chernin, however, argues that despite all difficulties of extorting foodstuffs from Ukraine 'without this support we could not at all hold out until the new harvest'.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ V.V. Anikeev, *Deiatel'nost' TsK RSDRP(b) v 1917-1918 gg. Khronika sobytii* (Moscow, 1974), p. 210.

⁴⁹ Fel'shtinskii, *Krushenie*, p. 167.

⁵⁰ Chernin, *V dni*, p. 265.

Besides, Russian towns were deprived of these foodstuffs and that worsened their already stressful situation and to a great degree led to a conflict between the Soviet regime and the Russian peasantry and consequently with the Left Socialist Revolutionaries representing the peasants in the system of Soviet power.

From the viewpoint of the Left Socialist Revolutionaries and their followers, the Bolsheviks 'betrayed' the idea of the world revolution. 'The fraternal Ukrainian people' was made an object of German pillage. Ukrainian bread was used to save the German Empire. Meanwhile who could feed the proletariat of Russian towns? The grain-producing regions of Russia, primarily Siberia and the Don Basin, had to maximize the extraction of foodstuffs. The dictatorship was becoming anti-peasant. And that resulted in the further worsening of relations between the Bolsheviks and the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, which in July 1918 led to an uprising and the defeat of the Left Socialist Revolutionaries.

In March Ukraine and Belarus were occupied by the Germans. The Moor did his job and could go: the Central *Rada* attempted to demonstrate its independence. It was overthrown by the Germans, and on 29 April 1918 the government of hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky was formed; it was supported by German troops and Russian officer units. There was lots of armed resistance organized by the nationalists, Bolsheviks, Left Socialist Revolutionaries, anarchists, etc. in the country, but the occupiers could not be driven out. The Germans themselves withdrew following a revolution in Germany and Austro-Hungary and after the defeat in the First World War. However, after their retreat Ukraine was involved in a civil war, at that time raging in Russia.

The Great Russian Revolution resulted in a complicated interweaving of social and national conflicts on the territory of the Russian Empire. Besides, in each region the combination of these two components was different. In some cases the social issues predominated over the national ones and that conditioned the weakness of national regimes (e.g., the Central *Rada* in Ukraine at the beginning of 1918). In other cases, for instance in Poland, the national factor was dominating. There were also other much more complex situations in which the national aspect acquired greater significance in the conditions of social discontent (e.g., Right-Bank Ukraine in 1919) or the national liberation movement initiated the process of social radicalization and segregation (e.g., Middle Asia).

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BREŠTO TAİKA: RUSIJA IR UKRAİNA

Santrauka

ALEKSANDRAS ŠUBINAS

Ukrainos veiksnys turėjo esminę reikšmę sudarant Brešto taiką. Tačiau bolševikų vadovybė gana ilgą laiką neįžvelgė iš Ukrainos jai kylančios grėsmės. Pagrindinis derybų objektas buvo Vokietijos okupuotos teritorijos Pabaltijyje. Tai paaiškinama specifiniu strateginės perspektyvos išsikreipimu žiūrint iš Petrogrado, kai „šiaurinė sostinė“ orientavosi į politinę Baltijos regiono erdvę kur kas labiau, nei į Rusijos pietų regionus, objektyviai daug svarbesnius sovietiniam projektui. Toks dar nuo Petro I laikų paveldėtas matymas buvo viena bolševikų nesėkmės Brešte priežasčių, lėmusių ir konfliktą su Centrine rada. Tik po Brešto taikos sudarymo „piterietišką“ matymą pakeitė „maskvietiškas“, bolševikų strategijos požiūriu labiau pasvertas. Europietiško „fluso“ (tėkmės) išnykimas bolševikų politikoje vėliau turėjo įtakos pasaulinės revoliucijos strategijai ir SSSR užsienio politikai.

Tuo metu ukrainiečių tautinė vadovybė nesugebėjo pasinaudoti palankiomis aplinkybėmis, susiklosčiusiomis Sovnarkomui ėmusių spręsti kitas problemas. Siekdama nacionalinės konsolidacijos, ji neįvertino socialinių veiksnių reikšmės ir tapo bejėgė prieš spaudimą iš Rytų, kuriame aktyviai dalyvavo ir Ukrainos gyventojai, palankesni sovietų valdžiai, o ne nacionalistams (pastarųjų aljansas su austrų-vokiečių bloku, kaip vienintele priedanga nuo bolševikų ir nuo radikaliosios ukrainiečių visuomenės dalies, nulėmė tragišką Ukrainos likimą). Procesai Ukrainoje atspindėjo bendresnes konfliktų Rytų Europoje 1918–1920 m. tendencijas. Tačiau kiekvieno regiono nacionalinė ir socialinė kova turėjo savitumą. Ten, kur socialiniai klausimai jaudino gyventojus kur kas labiau nei nacionaliniai, buvo silpni ir nacionaliniai režimai (pavyzdžiui, Ukrainos Centrinė rada). Kitur nacionaliniai veiksniai vyravo prieš socialinius, pavyzdžiui, Lenkijoje. Tačiau buvo galimos ir sudėtingesnės situacijos, kai nacionalinio veiksnio vaidmuo labai sustiprėdavo dėl socialinio nepasitenkinimo (pavyzdžiui, dešiniakrantėje Ukrainoje 1919 m.) arba socialinę radikalizaciją ir atotrūkius sąlygodavo nacionaliniai procesai (pavyzdžiui, Vengrijoje 1919 m.).