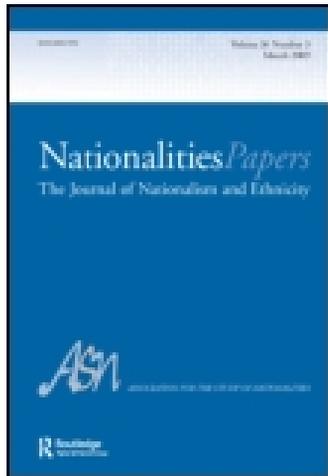


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The German overthrow of the Central Rada, April, 1918: New evidence from German Archives

Basil Dmytryshyn ^a

^a Emeritus, Portland State University

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THE GERMAN OVERTHROW OF THE CENTRAL RADA, APRIL, 1918: NEW EVIDENCE FROM GERMAN ARCHIVES¹

Basil Dmytryshyn

On 9 February 1918, at Brest-Litovsk, the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire) concluded an unusually favorable treaty with the government of the Ukrainian Central *Rada*. By its terms, in exchange for diplomatic recognition and military support against a Russian Bolshevik invasion of the Ukraine, *Rada* negotiators placed at the disposal of the Central Powers, but primarily Germany, a surplus of foodstuffs and agricultural products estimated at 1,000,000 tonnes. The *Brotfrieden*, or bread peace, as this arrangement is generally known, had three significant repercussions. First, it greatly undermined Leon Trotsky's bargaining position and obstructionist tactics, forcing the Bolsheviks to accept German terms on 3 March 1918. Second, by acquiring a rich granary, and thus no longer fearing defeat through starvation, it enabled Germany to break the iron ring of the Allied blockade. And, third, it made it impossible for the Ukraine to receive a favorable hearing or reception from the Western (French, English and American) Allies at the peace conference.

The task of enforcing the terms of this, to them highly favorable treaty, fell on German military and political "experts" who were especially selected and sent to the Ukraine. The German High Command was represented by its organizing wizard, General Wilhelm Groener; the government by Ambassador Adolf Mumm von Schwarzenstein. While the selection of Mumm seems to have been accidental, that of Groener was definitely not. His organizing ability, first on the Schlieffen Plan, then as Chief of the Transport Section of the German General Staff, and finally as head of the War Office under the Hindenburg Programme, qualified him unusually well for such an assignment.

Groener arrived in Kiev early in March 1918. Officially, his duties were limited to or camouflaged as leader of the First Army Corps (to which position he was appointed on 25 February 1918), under the command of General Alexander von Linsingen. However, according to instructions he received on 27 February 1918 from the headquarters of the German High Command at Kreuznach, Groener was to manage not only the military but also the political problems of the Ukraine.² This arrangement set the stage for conflict between the two generals. As commanding officer, Linsingen tried to control Groener's activities. He demanded, for instance, that Groener submit all his plans to him for approval. Groener resented this form of supervision and both generals sent complaints to Field Marshal Eric von Ludendorff,

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Quartermaster General, who, at that time, was the actual warlord of Germany. On 16 March 1918, Ludendorff elevated Groener to a position equal to that of Linsingen and granted him wider powers.³

This concession did not satisfy Groener. On 19 March 1918, he sent two complaints: one addressed to the Chief of German Railroads, von Oldershausen (upon whose recommendation Groener had been sent to the Ukraine); the other to Field Marshal Prince Leopold of Bavaria, the Commander-in-Chief, East. The essence of both letters was a stern demand to the effect that if the German High Command expected Groener to produce positive results in the Ukraine, von Linsingen had to be relieved of his command.⁴ Ludendorff gave Groener's demand favorable attention. Field Marshal von Eichhorn, Commander of the Northern Army Group, replaced von Linsingen on 28 March.⁵ Groener became von Eichhorn's Chief of Staff and in that position he was free to realize his ideas.⁶

The success of Groener's policy depended on two vital factors: cooperation between occupation authorities and the Central *Rada*, and peasant co-operation. Neither was forthcoming. Upon the return of its members to Kiev,⁷ the Central *Rada* isolated itself from German and Austro-Hungarian occupation authorities and embarked on the purely academic task of elaborating a constitution that would socialize all phases of the economic life of the country. By its action the *Rada* pushed the entire country deeper into chaos and inadvertently increased the power of local land committees. Inspired by the revolutionary turmoil, peasant members of these committees assumed the task of distributing land, livestock and food supplies of local nobles among themselves and refused to obey all orders from Kiev. The sudden enrichment caused the peasants to slack off in their work and to cultivate only as much land as they thought sufficient to support their own families. The greater portion of the land lay uncultivated because of uncertainty as to who would be in permanent possession of either the land or the crops. In some areas villages even formed alliances for the purpose of preventing the delivery of grain to German and Austro-Hungarian authorities.⁸

Because the prime objective of German occupation of the Ukraine was procurement of food supplies, the behavior of the peasant alarmed Groener. At first he sought to correct the situation through official protests to the *Rada* government. When there was no satisfactory response, Groener informed Ludendorff (and, through von Mumm, the German Foreign Office), on 23 March 1918, that it was his impression that as long as Germany supported the *Rada* government there was no possibility of securing the quantities of foodstuff which Germany had been promised by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk from Ukrainian peasants, and that to obtain them German policy in the Ukraine must be drastically altered. He suggested that German authorities in Berlin consider the possibility of replacing the socialist government of the *Rada* with a conservative one and warned that failure to do so would turn German occupation of the Ukraine into a "planless enterprise," whose main achieve-

ment would be the tying of German hands in the East while masses of German troops were needed in the West.⁹

Perhaps because he was too preoccupied with the military matters of the Western Front, Ludendorff made no immediate response to Groener's memorandum of 23 March 1918. The reaction of the German Foreign Office, however, was quick and negative. It held that any drastic change of German policy in the Ukraine or the suggested coup of the *Rada* government would represent not only open interference in the internal affairs of a friendly country, but an illegal act against the legitimate government with which Germany had concluded a peace treaty. While the Foreign Office deplored the *Rada's* inactivity, it advised its representatives in the Ukraine to use patience and persuasion, not force, in establishing contact with the *Rada* in order to secure the full advantage of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, even if it meant altering some provisions of military regulations. Above all, the Foreign Office insisted that German authorities in the Ukraine not interfere with Ukrainian laws concerning the principle of land ownership.¹⁰

In Groener's judgement the advice of the Foreign Office that occupation authorities treat the *Rada* government as Germany's equal partner and not interfere in the domestic affairs of the country, as long as it displayed loyalty to Germany and fulfilled its treaty obligations, was erroneous. In a memorandum to Ludendorff early in April 1918, he argued that the *Rada* government was not a government at all but a mixture of visionaries, idealists and *Kathedersozialisten* who commanded neither respect nor authority in the country. He maintained that equal treatment of what he called "a debate club of inexperienced petty politicians" was undermining the prestige of the occupation authorities and was making the procurement of food supplies from the peasants impossible.¹¹ Groener reiterated the same sentiments in two other communications to the Commander-in-Chief, East, on 15 and 18 April, saying that so long as the present *Rada* government remained in power there was absolutely no possibility of exporting any grain from the country.¹²

To realize that possibility (for after all the procurement of food, and not the protection of the Ukraine's independence, was the prime objective of German occupation of the Ukraine), at Groener's suggestion the Occupation Command set aside the warning from the German Foreign Office and on 6 April 1918, openly interfered in the domestic affairs of the country. The interference came in the form of a proclamation addressed to the peasants, bluntly declaring that the harvest was to belong only to those who had cultivated the land and that they were required to sell it to the German authorities and receive cash payments at fixed rates. The proclamation stated that those who had more land than they could cultivate were liable for punishment. It also declared that if peasants of a certain area were unable to sow all the land, the former landlords were required to attend to the sowing. In such cases, both peasants and local land committees were advised not only that they should not to interfere with the landlord's activities, but were instructed to supply him with the seed, horses and machinery needed for sowing and harvesting.¹³

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Dispossessed landowners greeted the 6 April 1918 proclamation with joy. The peasants received it with ominous silence which, thanks to revolutionary agitation, soon turned to bitterness and, in places, even to violence.¹⁴ *Rada* officials who learned of the content of the proclamation only after it was posted in public places, were stunned by the German action. On 13 April 1918, after unusually intemperate debates, the *Rada* denounced the German proclamation in a formal resolution. It reminded the Occupation Command: (1) that German military forces were in the Ukraine as invited guests and that as such their power was restricted rather than unlimited; and (2) that any arbitrary interference in the social, political and economic life of the country was contrary to the announced purpose of German military presence in the Ukraine, namely the re-establishment of order to facilitate speedy realization of the terms of the Brest-Litovsk treaty.¹⁵

The *Rada*'s criticism of German action disturbed Groener.¹⁶ This time even the Foreign Office instructed von Mumm "to protest strongly against the *Rada*'s resolution and to demand its withdrawal."¹⁷ To meet possible popular unrest, but primarily to terminate the *Rada*'s existence, Groener ordered the movement of German troops from various outlying posts into Kiev to reinforce its garrison there. On 14 April 1918, through the Divisional Commands, he informed them that their purpose lay not in shedding their blood in support and protection of the socialistically-inclined *Rada* against Bolshevik attacks, but in securing the fruits of the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty as quickly as possible in order to help the Fatherland.¹⁸

The sudden appearance of additional German military units in Kiev increased existing tensions, furthered confusion and uncertainty, and immediately became the source of all kinds of rumors and speculations. On 18 April 1918, the *Rada* government sent a stern protest to the German ambassador von Mumm asking him to explain Groener's action. The ambassador refused to respond,¹⁹ doubtless being aware that the move was a prelude to Groener's plan for overthrowing the *Rada*.

The first concrete step in that direction came on 21 April 1918, in the form of an instruction (*Richtlinien*) Groener sent to the Kiev garrison. In it he advised German forces: (1) to suppress disorders that might arise in connection with the planned overthrow of the *Rada* government; (2) to keep all officials of the *Rada* government and key members of land committees under close surveillance; (3) to arrest all persons acting in a suspicious manner immediately; and (4) to give maximum protection to German sympathizers and dispossessed landlords. To prevent the news about events surrounding the execution of the coup spreading from the city, German forces were to occupy and secure the radio station, telephone and telegraph agencies and all other communications media, and to sever all connections with western Ukrainian provinces (Galicia, Volyn, Podilia and Bukovyna) and with Soviet Russia. The entire plan was to be kept secret and carried out when the Occupation Command announced the watchword *Wechsel* ("Change").²⁰ The content of Groener's 21 April 1918 instructions left no doubt that the *Rada*'s days were numbered.

The Groener-planned overthrow of the *Rada* was simplified greatly by the

willingness of the Landowners' League (*Soiuz zemelnikh sobstvennikov*), that is, dispossessed large and intermediate Russian and/or russified landowners, to cooperate with German schemes. On 22 April 1918, the leadership of the League submitted a formal but simple programme of action to the Occupation Command. The programme called for the replacement of the *Rada* government by a German-appointed Governor-General who would head the Ukrainian armed forces and administer the country with the aid of a Board of Directors, whose members he would select personally. The programme stated that immediately upon the overthrow of the *Rada*, the Board of Directors would organize a new legislative assembly consisting of leaders of civic, professional, business, industrial and agricultural organizations to undo the excesses of the *Rada* and, above all, to re-establish private property. The League's programme also promised to repeal immediately all the regulations paralyzing grain exports, and expressed willingness to fulfill all obligations and provisions contained in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk between the *Rada* government and the Central Powers.²¹

There is no doubt that Groener was very pleased with the content of the League's programme of action. On 23 April 1918, he called a conference of top German military and political experts in the Ukraine to discuss the League's proposal. A few hours before the conference opened, Groener received a telegram from Ludendorff complaining of the critical food situation in Germany and on the Western Front and bluntly stating that all of Germany was looking toward Kiev to ameliorate the critical situation. Ludendorff urged Groener to put the *Rada* under powerful pressure or simply to overthrow it, and advised him that, regardless of what action he should decide to take, he could count on Ludendorff's support.²²

Working under the shelter of Ludendorff's message and the willingness of the Landowners' League to cooperate with his schemes, the Groener-sponsored conference prepared a statement on immediate and future German policy in the Ukraine. Its main points, which were to be presented to the *Rada* government for immediate acceptance, were: (1) that as long as German armed forces were in the Ukraine no Ukrainian army could exist; (2) that the *Rada* government could only have a police force and only with the consent of German authorities; (3) that all persons guilty of offenses against the occupation forces were to be tried by German courts martial; (4) that the *Rada* was to remove all suspicious persons from government positions; (5) that all laws that been enacted since the start of the war were to be replaced by regulations of the occupation forces; (6) that the *Rada* immediately rescind all orders and laws aimed at preventing the export of raw materials; (7) that the *Rada* solve the land question not through further socialization but through the return to private property, with the peasants paying for the land they had seized; and (8) that the *Rada* rescind its resolution against the proclamation of 6 April 1918.²³

These were not only very harsh, but insulting terms which no self-respecting government could accept. Aware that the *Rada* would reject these flagrant infringements on its authority, on 24 April 1918, on Groener's recommendation, the

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Occupation Command issued two instructions to the German garrison stationed in Kiev. The first, a supplement to the instruction of 21 April 1918, contained three secret watchwords: *Vorbereiten* ("Prepare"), *Durchführen* ("Carry out"), and *Nachrichtensperre* ("News blackout"). On *Vorbereiten*, German troops were to occupy Kiev's main centers of activity in the shortest possible time. To avoid confusion each unit was assigned a specific area of the city to seize and control. The first to be seized were government buildings and, in particular, those housing the *Rada*, the cabinet, the War Ministry and the General Staff, as well as all public utilities and communication facilities. On *Durchführen*, German forces were to disarm Ukrainian units inside and outside Kiev to prevent a possible armed conflict between Ukrainian and German forces. With this accomplished, the German troops were to impose the *Nachrichtensperre*.²⁴

Groener's second instruction of 24 April 1918, dealt with steps to be followed should there be a railroad strike or sabotage by Ukrainian revolutionaries. If either of the possibilities should develop, the instruction authorized German troops: (1) to occupy all vital railroad stations, railroad workshops and railroad warehouses; (2) to protect all persons willing to work and to punish agitators and strikers; and (3) in the event a strike could not be halted immediately, to secure control of and operate at least one rail line. German military regulations were to govern on that line and Ukrainian personnel was to be subject to them. Persons objecting to these regulations were to be imprisoned.²⁵

In the midst of these secret German preparations to overthrow the *Rada* government, Ukrainian authorities arrested the Jewish banker Abraham Iu. Dobryi, an influential figure in commercial and other transactions with the German authorities in Kiev. His arrest during the night of 24 April 1918 by the Ukrainian Ministry of Interior would probably have mattered little, had it not been undertaken in the name of a secret society dedicated to ending German restraints on Ukrainian independence. The idea of an underground movement alarmed the occupation authorities who immediately sent a strong protest to the *Rada* government, demanding a thorough investigation of the case, explanation of the action, and punishment of the offenders—all to be done within less than twenty-four hours.²⁶

When Ukrainian officials failed to meet this deadline, on 25 April 1918, at Groener's suggestion, von Eichhorn issued a public proclamation to the Ukrainian people. The proclamation strictly prohibited all meetings and public gatherings, suppressed freedom of speech and press, and stipulated that all persons found guilty of violating public order or committing offenses against either the occupation forces or individuals attached to them were to fall under the jurisdiction of German courts martial. These restrictions became effective immediately upon their publication, and the personnel of the 37th Army Corps was ordered to enforce them.²⁷

Upon learning of the content of the 25 April 1918 proclamation (after it was posted in the streets), the *Rada* government repudiated it and immediately protested to von Eichhorn and von Mumm. Von Eichhorn responded on the night of 26 April

1918 by ordering German military forces in the Ukraine to implement the *Vorbereiten* and *Durchführen* plans of 24 April. During the same night Groener met with the nominal leader of the Landowners' League, General Pavlo Skoropadskyi. Of Ukrainian origin, Skoropadskyi came from a wealthy and distinguished family. During the war he served as an officer of the Chevaliers Gardes Regiment, and following the collapse of the *ancien régime*, the Ukrainian Free Cossacks selected him to be their *hetman*. German authorities were pleased with Skoropadskyi's leadership of the Landowners' League because they expected that his personal relationship with von Eichhorn—their wives were sisters—would incline him to follow von Eichhorn's advice in all important decisions affecting German-Ukrainian relations.

In his meeting with Groener, Skoropadskyi, swearing on his word of honor, vowed to accept all of the obligations of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, pledged to dissolve the *Rada*, and agreed to postpone the election of the Ukrainian Constituent Assembly until order was completely restored throughout the country, and then allow it only in agreement with German occupation authorities. Skoropadskyi also promised to remove all questionable and undesirable persons from government positions, to dissolve all local land committees, and to set aside all of the *Rada*-imposed barriers on export of grain and raw materials. He likewise consented to put free enterprise into effect immediately, to restore private property, and to force Ukrainian peasants to pay for the land they had seized from the landowners. Finally, Skoropadskyi acquiesced in the matter of supremacy of the rules and regulations of the occupation forces and of all offenses against them being subject to punishment by German courts martial.²⁸

For his part, Groener agreed to the formation of an Ukrainian army headed by Skoropadskyi. He emphasized, however, that its organization could be undertaken only in complete agreement with the German High Command. Groener also promised Skoropadskyi German military assistance, the extent of which was to be worked out later, and assured him that he could count on German help in the event disorders accompanied his formal assumption of power.²⁹ This Groener-Skoropadskyi arrangement was very one-sided and pro-German and reveals quite clearly that Skoropadskyi was either a very naïve or obtuse person who, by his action, assisted the Germans in their overthrow of the *Rada* government. The overthrow took place in the morning of 27 April 1918, when German forces, executing von Eichhorn's order of 26 April 1918, calling for the implementation of the *Vorbereiten* and *Durchführen* plans, occupied the *Rada*'s building, arrested some of its members, dispersed the rest, and seized control of the city.

Meanwhile, under German military protection the Landowners' League hurriedly organized a convention in Kiev. Its purpose was to demonstrate that the overthrow of the *Rada* was a Ukrainian and not a German affair. This pretense was absurd, since, as noted earlier, Groener masterminded the coup. The convention formally opened in the late afternoon of 28 April 1918. Heavily armed German units joined

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several hundred Tsarist officers to provide safety to the assembled delegates and to bar unwelcome visitors. Most of the activity of the convention took place on 29 April 1918. In the morning session speaker after speaker denounced the *Rada*'s land policy and demanded that the *Rada* be replaced by a hetmanship headed by Skoropadskyi. Early in the afternoon, surrounded by an escort of officers, Skoropadskyi himself appeared at the convention. He was greeted enthusiastically, was seated at the presiding table, and soon thereafter the chairman proclaimed him "the illustrious *hetman*." Skoropadskyi then delivered a brief speech in which he stressed that he accepted the authority the convention was willing to entrust to him, not for his own benefit but for the well-being of the country. Later he was carried on the shoulders of the crowd to St Sophia Square where the creation of the hetmanate was celebrated.³⁰

In an official report, dated 29 April 1918, Groener gave his government a somewhat different account of developments. There had occurred, he wrote, strong agitation in the Ukraine aimed at driving the occupation forces out of the country before the Brest-Litovsk treaty obligations were fulfilled. Occupation authorities had tried to restore order, but unfortunately met constant opposition from the *Rada* government, which had not only failed to support German action but had also taken an active part in the anti-German agitation. One manifestation of this unfriendly attitude, Groener went on, was the arrest of the banker Dobryi, a real friend of Germany. This action had to be considered provocative, the more so since the order for Dobryi's arrest originated with the *Rada* government. To prevent anarchy from developing, German military authorities were forced to take necessary precautions, including the establishment of courts martial. Because subsequent German investigation of Dobryi's case, Groener concluded, implicated many Ukrainian government officials, German military forces were compelled to pay a visit to the *Rada* building where some of the plotters were hiding.³¹ Groener's report included absolutely no hint of his careful planning for the *Rada*'s demise long before the Dobryi case occurred.

Meanwhile, on 30 April 1918, the new hetman issued his first proclamation to the Ukrainian people. In it he praised "the mighty support of the Central Empires" and bitterly accused the *Rada* of incompetence, charging it with responsibility for anarchy, economic disorganization, unemployment, and the threat of starvation. Faithful to the promises he had made to Groener on the night of 26 April 1918, Skoropadskyi declared in his proclamation that he was dissolving the *Rada* and the land committees; that he was postponing the election for the Constituent Assembly until order in the country was completely restored; that he was nullifying all the decrees of the *Rada*; and that he was restoring private property. Finally, Skoropadskyi assured the Ukrainian people that he would re-establish freedom of trade, and promised that he would also give attention to the needs of peasants and workers.³²

After he had announced the immediate and long-term intentions of his government, Skoropadskyi submitted a list of proposed cabinet members for Groener's

approval. Groener, however, refused to endorse it because all were politically Right-oriented, and he feared that this factor alone was sufficient to cause violence throughout the country. He also hoped that a coalition government (consisting of Right, Centrist and Left parties) would soften the criticism of his own role in the overthrow of the *Rada* by demonstrating that the coup was really the work of the Ukrainians themselves and not the Germans. Finally, Groener expected that a Right–Center–Left coalition government, because of internal struggles, would place German authorities in an indirect but perhaps more absolute control of the country.³³

With that in mind, on 2 May 1918 Groener met with spokesmen of several Ukrainian socialist-oriented political parties. During a rather brief conference it became evident that German authorities would have to agree to three conditions before these parties would join a coalition government. These conditions were: (1) that German authorities restore the republican form of government in the Ukraine; (2) that they replace Skoropadskyi's programme of action, announced 30 April 1918, with a democratic constitution; and (3) that they not only remove the hetman from power, but expel him from the Ukraine.³⁴ To Groener these conditions were, of course, unacceptable. He replied that since the *Rada* government was hostile to Germany its return to power was out of the question. Moreover, he said that since Kaiser Wilhelm II himself had accepted Skoropadskyi as the new head of the Ukraine, his removal was impossible. Groener then insisted that the change of government in no way violated Ukrainian independence, and assured his non-cooperative guests that he had instructed Skoropadskyi on how to keep the Ukraine independent.³⁵ On that note Groener abandoned his brief search for a coalition government for the Ukraine, and on 3 May 1918 approved Skoropadskyi's proposed cabinet. On the same day the Occupation Command outlawed strikes and sabotage in areas controlled by its forces, and announced that anyone caught in such activities would receive the death penalty.³⁶

Groener's replacement of the *Rada* by Skoropadskyi placed the Ukraine economically and politically under complete control of German military and political "experts." The repercussions of this change were felt immediately both in the Ukraine and in Germany. In the Ukraine, the change of government and policy inaugurated a period of sporadic peasant insurrections which continued throughout 1918 and which played beautifully into the hands of Bolshevik and anarchist agitators. In Germany, Groener's replacement of the *Rada* increased the *Reichstag's* criticism of the military appreciably.³⁷ Thanks, however, to their conviction that the future of German policy in the Ukraine was being decided on the Western Front, German military leadership turned a deaf ear to all critics and opponents of their action in the Ukraine.³⁸ It should be noted that there is no evidence in Groener's papers that German military authorities in the Ukraine shared any information with their allies (Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire, signatories to the Brest-Litovsk treaty), about German plans to overthrow the *Rada*.

After their carefully-planned and masterfully-executed coup of the *Rada*, German

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authorities in the Ukraine adopted a policy of support and guidance of their puppet hetman. Materially, this policy was a success, as the Germans were able to procure large quantities of foodstuffs and raw materials both for German military use and for German civilian consumption.³⁹ Politically, however, because of its reactionary nature, this policy paved the way for the Bolshevik return to the Ukraine. Moreover, because it was based on German military force, the policy of support could have been maintained only by the application of that force. As long as Germany was victorious the policy of German military and political experts in the Ukraine was tenable. When the hoped-for victory on the Western Front failed to materialize, German authorities dropped the pretense of support and guidance of their puppet hetman in favor of an unabashed bleeding of the Ukrainian economy. The end came on 1 February 1919 when, in accordance with Articles XII through XV of the Armistice of 11 November 1918, signed between the defeated Germany and the victorious Allies, the last German military units departed from the Ukraine.⁴⁰ With them, disguised as a German lieutenant, went Hetman Skoropadskyi.

While many Ukrainians applauded the withdrawal of German forces, their brief presence in the country, resulting in the replacement (at the end of April 1918) of the *Rada* government by the puppet Skoropadskyi regime, had three immediate and long-term tragic repercussions for the Ukraine. The first was the accelerated growth of nationwide political and social anarchy. During and after the occupation, hundreds of self-appointed partisan-type leaders known as *otamany*, who challenged every authority, mushroomed throughout the Ukraine. The most notorious were Nestor Makhno, a russified peasant and avowed anarchist, and Matvii Hryhoriv (Grigoriev), a former tsarist officer. The home base of their operations was in Southern the Ukraine.⁴¹

Both Makhno and Hryhoriv (as well as hundreds of other local *otamany*) attracted diverse followers. These men had neither a common credo nor a *Weltanschauung*. Some favored Ukrainian statehood. Others sympathized with the Bolsheviks. Most, however, defended only their personal and local interests, that is, they sought to establish and protect their claims to the land they had recently seized from Russian nobles. Many of these men despised all city folk, but especially merchants, intellectuals and Jews. Because members of each group subscribed to plunder, destruction, pillage and rape, and because each group frequently changed its ideological loyalty and action, the Ukraine became engulfed in greater anarchy and upheaval than any other country in Europe experienced at that time. The resulting political, social and economic chaos made it impossible for any government to govern the country.⁴²

There were, nevertheless, a few Ukrainians who, following the departure of Skoropadskyi and of the German forces, made an attempt to govern the country. The burden fell on the Directory that emerged as the *bona fide* government of the Ukraine, assuming responsibility but having no authority. The country, as noted earlier, was in total chaos. Government leaders, like the self-appointed local *otamany*, were young, unknown and inexperienced men. In the prevailing chaos they

could not command any widespread loyalty at home or respect abroad. The reason was that some members of the government, led by Volodymyr Vynnychenko, a left-wing writer, insisted that the Ukraine must adopt Lenin's political, social and economic model; while others, led by Semeon Petliura, and a number of pro-socialist-oriented politicians, favored an independent the Ukraine allied with Western powers. The resulting deadlock over the Ukraine's future added to the confusion in the country.

The first to try to take advantage of the existing confusion and chaos in the Ukraine were the French who, in December 1918, landed some 60,000 troops in Odessa and other ports on the Black Sea. Their mission was to prevent the spread of Bolshevik ideas from reaching Western Europe.⁴³ The second group to take advantage of the chaos was composed of Lenin's followers in Moscow who were encouraged in their designs by numerous left-wing politicians in the Ukraine, most of whom were either Russian or pro-Russian. Bolshevik forces invaded the Ukraine at the end of 1918, and during 1919 inflicted enormous damage on the country.⁴⁴ The third group to take advantage of the situation in the Ukraine consisted of forces whose aim was to re-establish Imperial Russia. The movement's most prominent leaders were Generals Anton I. Denikin and Piotr N. Wrangel.⁴⁵ During 1919 and 1920 their forces, as well as those of various *otamany* and Lenin's Bolshevik followers, masterminded many pogroms against the Jews, against Ukrainians seeking independence, and against other "undesirables." However, since the Petliura administration was technically in charge of the Ukraine, his government received full blame for the pogroms.⁴⁶ Finally, in 1920 Polish forces entered the Ukraine at Petliura's invitation. Their entry united all anti-Ukrainian forces (from monarchists to anarchists), who subjected the country to additional hardships, including mass starvation.⁴⁷

The Western world (*i.e.*, Britain, France, the United States and other countries) was unaware of these tragic events in the Ukraine because they had neither diplomatic nor media representation there. the Ukraine was also constrained in the international arena by several other things. Foremost was the fact that, before and during the First World War, Russian official propaganda portrayed the Ukraine as a German or Austro-Hungarian creation. Many Western leaders, as well as influential representatives in the media and academia, subscribed to this notion. As evidence they cited the 9 February 1918 Brest-Litovsk treaty between the Central Powers and the Ukraine.

During this critical period in their history, Ukrainians were additionally impeded by two influential groups. The first consisted of Russian Imperial diplomats stationed in the Western world, who had access to their Western counterparts and who worked tirelessly to preserve the territorial integrity of Imperial Russia. Since there were few in the West who were aware of the existence of the Ukraine or the aspirations of its people, most agreed with Russian ambitions. The other impediment that handicapped Ukrainians was an influential segment of Polish aristocrats who sought to re-establish

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the Polish Commonwealth in its pre-1772 frontiers—from the Baltic to the Black Sea and from the Oder to the Dnieper River. Since this ambition coincided with French designs for post-First World War Europe, the French favored these Polish intentions.

Next, after the deeply ingrained anti-Ukrainian sentiment that worked against the Ukraine in the international arena, was the absence among Ukrainians of knowledgeable and experienced individuals with impeccable credentials or reputation similar to that enjoyed by Thomas G. Masaryk, the acknowledged leader of Czechoslovak independence. This was because of the lack of opportunities for educating Ukrainians in Imperial Russia and in Austria-Hungary before the First World War. The few spokesmen who emerged on the scene after the collapse of Imperial Russia were young, unknown and inexperienced. Many were committed to diverse ideological trends and did not subscribe to the old dictum that politics is the art of compromise. Most had no contacts in the Western world, very few among them spoke English or French, and all of them carried a pro-German stigma. These Ukrainians (and many other East Europeans as well) failed to realize that the collapse of the German and Austro-Hungarian empires ended the preeminence of not only Berlin and Vienna but also of the International Socialist movement, and that future centers of power and influence would be Paris, London, Moscow and Washington.

Under those circumstances, the Ukrainians had no chance of receiving a fair hearing or open-minded reception at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. This became clear from a statement made by Robert W. Seaton-Watson, a leading British Slavic scholar and an advisor to Prime Minister Lloyd George, to historian Myhailo S. Hrushevsky, President of the *Rada*, (whom the Germans had overthrown in April 1918): “there was no sympathy for an independent the Ukraine in either England or France and that the Entente felt duty-bound to stand by the Old Russia.” The same sentiment was also expressed by Robert H. Lord, a prominent Harvard Slavicist and an advisor to President Woodrow Wilson, who told Hrushevsky that “the Germans had created the Ukrainian movement and that the Ukrainians were incapable of governing themselves.”⁴⁸ In short, the Ukraine paid a very heavy price for its brief but very tragic “German connection” at the end of the First World War.

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NOTES

1. This essay is based almost entirely on the unpublished papers of German General Wilhelm Groener, chief representative of the German High Command in the Ukraine in 1918. Until 1945, his papers were in the Heeresarchiv in Potsdam. After the collapse of the Third Reich they were brought to the National Archives, Washington, DC, where, in 1948, they were microfilmed (35 reels) and made available to scholars. The title of the microfilm is *Papers of General Wilhelm Groener*, File Microcopy No. 137. Washington: National Archives, 1948. The bulk of the material dealing with the Ukraine is on reel XXVII, folders 254-I and 254-II.

- Hereafter, they will be referred to as *Groener Papers*. In 1954 these papers were returned to Germany. Literature on German occupation of and involvement in the Ukraine in 1918 is abundant in Soviet and non-Soviet publications. Representative samples of Soviet works include: V. Manuilov, ed., *Pid hnitom nimetskoho imperializmu* (Kiev, 1927); M. Gorky, I. Mints and R. Eiderman, eds, *Krakh germanskoi okkupatsii na the Ukraine (po dokumentumokkupantov)* Moscow, 1936). A German edition of this work was published in Strasbourg in 1937, entitled *Die deutsche Okkupation der the Ukraine: Geheim-dokumente* (hereafter cited, *Deutsche Okkupation*); and I Premysler, "Geramskaia okkupatsiia na the Ukraine v 1918 godu," No. 1 (1938), pp.75–84. Representative non-Soviet works include: Xenia J. Yudin, "The German occupation of the the Ukraine in 1918," *Russian Review*, I (November, 1941), pp. 89–105; Henry Cord Meyer, "Germans in the the Ukraine, 1918: Excerpts from unpublished letters," *The American-Slavic and East European Review*, IX (April 1950), pp. 105–115; Ihor Kamenetsky, "The Ukrainian central Rada and the status of German and Austrian troops after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk," *Ukrainskyi Istoryk*, 20 (1983), pp. 119–127; Stefan Horak, *Der Brest-Litovsker Friede zwischen der the Ukraine und den Mittelmächten* (Erlangen, 1949); and Oleh Fedyshyn, *Germany's Drive to the East and the Ukrainian Revolution 1917–1918* (New Brunswick, 1971).
2. *Groener Papers*, I, 528.
 3. Supreme Command to Groener, 16 March 1918, *ibid.*, XXVII, 255.
 4. *Ibid.*, XXVII, 255.
 5. Major-General Max Hoffmann, Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief, East, made the following observation on this change: "This method of creating a sphere of authority for Groener was simple, but a trifle high-handed. I have never regarded Linsingen as a great commander—still, for the past three years he has been one of our most distinguished generals. I find it rather difficult simply to send him a telegram to the effect that 'His Majesty has no further use for your services'." *War Diaries and Other Papers* (London: 1929), I, 212.
 6. British historian John W. Wheeler-Bennett erroneously maintains that it was von Eichhorn, not Groener, who was the master of the Ukraine. See his *Brest-Litovsk: The Forgotten Peace*, March, 1918. 2nd edn (New York: 1963), p. 315.
 7. The Rada left Kiev for Zhytomyr on 9 February 1918, before the advancing Russian Bolshevik forces and returned to the capital early in March 1918, following the occupation of the city by German forces.
 8. "Bericht uber die Lage in der the Ukraine, April, 1918," *Groener Papers*, XXVII, 254-I.
 9. Groener to Ludendorff, 23 March 1918, *ibid.*, XXVII, 254-I.
 10. Bussche to Mumm, 26 March 1918, *Deutsche Okkupation*, pp. 32–33.
 11. Groener to Ludendorff, April, 1918, *Groener Papers*, XXVII, 254-I.
 12. *Ibid.*, XXVII, 254-II
 13. *Ibid.*, XXVII, 254-II
 14. See especially "Auszug aus den Berichten ... uber die Wirkung des Befehls des Generalfeldmarschalls von April 6 1918, betr. Landbestellung," 16 May 1918, *ibid.*, XXVII, 254-II
 15. *Ibid.*, XXVII, 254-II.
 16. Groener to his wife, 21 April 1918, *ibid.*, I, 546.
 17. Mumm to Groener, 19 April 1918, *ibid.*, XXVII, 254-II.
 18. Eichhorn's Army Group to Divisional Commands, 14 April 1918, *ibid.*, XXVII, 254-II.
 19. Mumm to Foreign Office, 18 April 1918, *Deutsche Okkupation*, p. 53.
 20. Eichhorn's Army Group, Ia, No. 254–18, Kiev, 21 April 1918, *Groener Papers*, XXVII, 254-II.
 21. *Ibid.*, XXVII, 254-II.
 22. *Ibid.*, I, 546–7.

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23. Groener to the Commander-in-Chief, East, 23 April 1918, *ibid.*, XXVII, 254-II.
24. Eichhorn's Army Group, Ia, No. 274/18, Kiev, 24 April 1918, *ibid.*, XXVII, 254-II.
25. Eichhorn's Army Group, Ia/Tech. No. 276/18, Kiev, 24 April 1918, *ibid.*, XXVII, 254-II.
26. Eichhorn to the Commander-in-Chief, East, 25 April 1918, *ibid.*, XXVII, 254-I.
27. Eichhorn to the Commander-in-Chief, East, 25 April 1918, *ibid.*, XXVII, 254-I.
28. Eichhorn to the Commander-in-Chief, East, 30 April 1918, *ibid.*, XXVII, 254-II.
29. Eichhorn to the Commander-in-Chief, East, 30 April 1918, *ibid.*, XXVII, 254-II.
30. For an account of these developments, see Sviatoslav Dolenha, *Skoropadshchyna* (Warsaw, 1934), pp. 10–11; and James Bunyan, *Intervention, Civil War, and War Communism in Russia, April–December, 1918: Documents and Materials* (Baltimore, 1936), pp. 14–15.
31. Eichhorn's Army Group, Zentral Abteilung Tgb. No. 268, "Innere Lage, April 29, 1918," *Groener Papers*, XXVII, 254-II.
32. Bunyan, *op. cit.*, pp. 14–15.
33. Eichhorn's Army Group to the Commander-in-Chief, East, 4 May 1918, *Groener Papers*, XXVII, 254-II; see also "Bericht uber die Lage in der the Ukraine, May 18, 1918," *ibid.*, XXVII, 254-I.
34. Pavlo Khrystiuk, *Zamitky i materialy do ukrainskoi revoliutsii* (Vienna, 1921), III, pp. 8–9.
35. *Groener Papers.*, XXVII, 254-II.
36. *Deutsche Okkupation*, pp. 77–78.
37. For a discussion of the Reichstag's criticism of the military, see *The New York Times*, 6, 7 and 8 May 1918; also Ralph H. Lutz, ed., *The Fall of the German Empire* (Stanford, 1932), I, pp. 846–860; and Germany, Reichstag. *Verhandlungen des deutschen Reichstags*, CCCXIII, pp. 5618–5712.
38. An exception to this rule was General Max Hoffmann who, on 6 May 1918, made the following observation in his diary: "I am afraid that this policy will lead to the collapse of the the Ukraine which cost us so much trouble to create. The efforts of the G.H.Q. [Groener] and Eichhorn are, though they do not know it, driving the the Ukraine back into the arms of Russia. At the moment this does not greatly matter, but for future purposes I should have thought it useful to have preserved the the Ukraine as an independent entity." *War Diaries*, I, p. 217.
39. For figures on German exports from the Ukraine after April 1918, see August Skaleit, *Die deutsche Kriegsernährungswirtschaft...* (Stuttgart, 1927), pp. 235–239; Ottokar von Czernin, *Im Weltkriege* (Vienna, 1919), pp. 345–346; and Germany, Reichstag. *Untersuchungsausschuss uber die Weltkriegsverantwortlichkeit...* (Berlin: 1925–1929), III, pp. 31 ff.
40. For an account of the German evacuation from the Ukraine, see G. Frantz, "Die Ruckfuhrung des deutschen Besatzungsheeres aus der the Ukraine 1918/1919," *Wissen und Wehr*, XV (July 1934), pp. 445–464.
41. There is no study of Hrihoriv in English. The best work on Makhno is M. Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1917–1921: An Aspect of the Ukrainian Revolution* (Seattle, 1976).
42. Literature (monographic and periodical) for this period of Ukrainian history is quite extensive. The best studies are those by: John S. Reshetar, Jr., *The Ukrainian Revolution, 1917–1921: A Study in Nationalism* (Princeton, 1952); Jurij Borys, *The Sovietization of the Ukraine, 1917–1923* (Toronto, 1982); Ivan Majstrenko, *Borotbism: A Chapter in the History of Ukrainian Communism* (New York, 1954); and Taras Hunchak, ed., *The the Ukraine, 1917–1921: A Study in Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1977).
43. Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War, including the Ukraine, has produced rich literature. The most prominent studies are: John Bradley, *Allied Intervention in Russia* (New York, 1968); George A. Brinkley, *The Volunteer Army and Allied Intervention in South*

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- Russia, 1917–1921* (South Bend, IN, 1966); and George F. Kennan, *Decision to Intervene* (Princeton, 1958).
44. The best study of this episode in Ukrainian history is Arthur E. Adams, *Bolsheviks in the the Ukraine: The Second Campaign, 1918–1919* (New Haven, 1963).
 45. In addition to the works noted above, see Anton Denikin, *The White Army* (London, 1930); and Piotr N. Wrangel, *The Memoirs of General Wrangel* (London, 1929).
 46. There is a sizeable periodical literature on the pogroms. The most comprehensive study in English that treats this problem, as well as other issues, is Peter Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1919–1920* (Berkeley, 1969).
 47. For a first-hand account of events leading to the entry of Polish forces into the Ukraine, see Josef Pilsudski, *Year 1920 and Its Climax Battle of Warsaw During the Polish–Soviet War, 1919–1920* (London, New York, 1972). The other study dealing with this problem is by Piotr S. Wandycz, *Soviet–Polish Relations, 1917–1921* (Cambridge: 1969). For an account of the famine during this period, see Harold H. Fisher, *The Famine in Soviet Russia, 1919–1923* (New York, 1927).
 48. As cited in Thomas M. Primak, *Mykhailo Hrushevsky: The Politics of National Culture* (Toronto, 1987), pp. 192–193. See also David Saunders, “Britain and the Ukrainian Question, 1912–1920,” *English Historical Review*, 103 (1988), pp. 40–68; and L. Sonevytsky, “The Ukrainian Question in R. H. Lord’s Writings on the Paris Peace Conference of 1919,” *Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the USA*, 10 (1962–63), pp. 68–84.