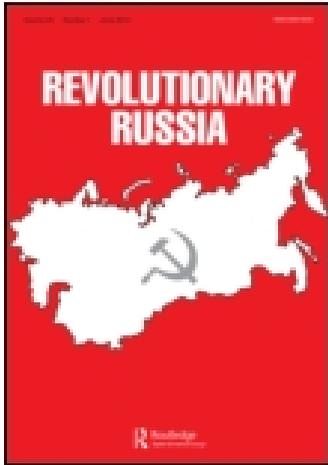


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Christopher Gilley

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Christopher Gilley

THE UKRAINIAN ANTI-BOLSHEVIK RISINGS OF SPRING AND SUMMER 1919: INTELLECTUAL HISTORY IN A SPACE OF VIOLENCE

This article examines the activity and propaganda of the leaders of independent military bands (in Ukrainian: otamans) during the risings of spring and summer 1919 against the Bolsheviks in the Ukraine. It uses the otamans as a case study to question recent interpretations of violence informed by the German-language ‘new sociology of violence’, according to which ideas are assumed to have little relevance to the exercise of violence. The article pays particular attention to how the stated goal of ‘soviets without Jews’ led to the pogroms committed by the otamans as a means of mobilising peasant support.

Introduction: the unimportance of ideas in a ‘space of violence’¹

‘Ideas do not kill’, claims the Berlin historian Jörg Baberowski:² they do not cause violence; the perpetrators of violence only appeal to them after the fact to legitimise their actions. The ‘motive’ does not steer the hand of the violent individual, he argues; if it did, all those sharing the same motive would be violent. Rather, violence occurs because a situation makes the use of violence to further one’s goals attractive, and actors take advantage of this opportunity. The outbreak of violence changes everything, depriving one of security from pain and death. The individual now has the choice of using violence to survive or becoming its victim; escape is rarely an option. This dynamic escalates violence, and thus violence becomes its own cause. Baberowski terms the area in which this occurs a ‘space of violence.’ His approach draws heavily upon the ‘new sociology of violence’ developed by German researchers such as Wolfgang Sofsky and Trutz von Trotha.³

Another Berlin researcher – Felix Schnell – has done the most to expound the concept of the ‘space of violence’ and apply it to an Eastern European historical case. He describes the ‘space of violence’ as an area where violence has become the form of social interaction offering actors the best chances of successfully pursuing their interests. Within it, violence is ‘contagious’: the threat of violence from others encourages individuals to use violence themselves; those disposed to violence can influence more easily those less inclined towards it. Such spaces often emerge following the weakening or collapse of state authority and disappear only with the re-establishment of a monopoly of force.⁴ The violence in the former Russian Empire was thus less the product of a

specific Russian mentality,⁵ and more a response to the dynamics created by a specific event, namely the end of the Romanov dynasty.

Schnell identifies the Ukraine during the Russian Civil Wars as a quintessential 'space of violence' and the *otamans* (singular: *otaman*; collective noun: *otamanshchyna*) as the actors who most typified the activity within it.⁶ *Otamans* were independent commanders who repeatedly switched their loyalties between the different warring parties in the Ukraine. The term *otaman* designated a Cossack leader. The use of the word sought to present the commanders as heirs to the Zaporozhian Cossacks, whom many Ukrainian nationalists saw as their Early Modern forebears.⁷ The most famous independent commander was Nestor Ivanovich Makhno, although, as an opponent of nationalism, he was never referred to as an *otaman*. A self-declared anarchist, Makhno commanded an army that at times numbered in the tens of thousands. It opposed the Whites in the south-east of today's Ukraine, sometimes as part of the Red Army. The Bolsheviks, however, dissolved their alliance with Makhno three times, forcing him to fight his erstwhile partners too. After Makhno, Nechypir Oleksandroych Hryhor'iev (Russian: Nikifor Aleksandrovich Grigor'ev) commanded the largest forces. He was a captain in the old army who served the German puppet ruler Pavlo Petrovych Skoropads'kyi, then the Ukrainian nationalist Symon Vasyl'ovych Petliura and afterwards the Bolsheviks, only to revolt against each of these in turn. Other *otamans* led smaller forces whose activity was largely confined to one region. Danylo Il'kovych Terpylo (pseudonym: Zelenyi), a former teacher from Kyiv province, fought for and against the Ukrainian nationalist and Bolshevik governments around the village of Trypillia, south of Kyiv. Il'ko Tymofeevych Struk was also a former village teacher who had risen to the rank of captain in the First World War. During the Civil War, he commanded an insurgent band near Chernobyl, north of Kyiv. All the bands led by the *otamans* carried out pogroms against the Ukraine's Jewish population.

Schnell depicts the *otamans* as violent charismatic leaders presiding over an inner circle of followers that spasmodically attracted peasant support by offering them a chance to kill, pillage and rape. The *otaman* bands emerged in response to the collapse of the power and authority of the old state as a means of guaranteeing their members survival in a 'space of violence.' The shared experience of violence, and not political programmes, held the groups together. Once inside the bands it was very difficult to leave, as those refusing to take part would become victims themselves. Plunder was not simply a means to an end but a goal in itself. The *otamans* did not commit pogroms in the name of an anti-Semitic ideology but in order to mobilise peasants to join their bands or out of frustration following defeats. The *otamans* had to resort to pogroms because their nationalist beliefs had little support among the rural population.⁸

This article examines the *otamans* at the time in which they had the greatest impact on the Civil War in the Ukraine as independent actors: during the risings of spring and summer 1919 against the Bolsheviks, an episode that Schnell does not study. It concentrates on the activity of the *otamans* Hryhor'iev, Struk and Zelenyi, as well as the All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee created by the left wing of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Workers' Party (the *nezalezhnyky* – 'Independentists'), which hoped to coordinate their activity. It gives an overview of their military campaigns in order to place them in the broader political context of the Civil War in the Ukraine. The article then analyses their political statements and asks how important these are for understanding and characterising the *otamans*.

There are few English-language or good Ukrainian-language accounts of these events. Those that do exist address the political views of the *otamans* only briefly. In his study of the Bolsheviks' 1919 campaign in the Ukraine, Arthur Adams argues that Hryhor'iev sympathised with the views of the left wing of the Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionaries (the *borot'bisty*) but could not dedicate himself to them because he had to ally himself to the force currently strongest in the Ukraine.⁹ Volodymyr Horak's account identifies the gulf between the goals proclaimed by Hryhor'iev and his activity. Hryhor'iev's real programme was unwritten and expressed in his deeds – although the author does not outline what he thinks this was.¹⁰ Chris Ford's examination of the Independentists portrays the All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee as the uncontested leader of the spring and summer rebellion against the Bolsheviks in Kyiv province. With the exception of Zelenyi, the *otamans* do not appear as actors in the events. He assumes that they supported the Ukrainian soviet platform of the Independentists.¹¹ By contrast, Mykhailo Koval'chuk has argued that the committee barely had any influence on the insurgency and there was little support among the insurgents for the idea of a Ukrainian soviet republic proposed by the Independentists.¹²

In part, the differing interpretations of the All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee result from the sources employed: whereas Ford draws on the writings of the left-wing Ukrainian intelligentsia, Koval'chuk primarily uses the memoirs of the *otamans* involved in the rising. Adams' study of Hryhor'iev also relied almost entirely on memoirs of participants. Horak refers to numerous archival documents in his bibliography, but his lack of footnotes makes it impossible to match his claims to their sources. This article tries to make up for this deficiency by employing a range of Bolshevik reports and letters alongside *otaman* declarations from the Ukrainian archives in addition to some memoir materials.

The Ukraine, spring–summer 1919: a space of violence

Even before the spring and summer 1919 risings against the Bolsheviks, *otamans* such as Hryhor'iev, Zelenyi and Struk had helped to shape the course of the Civil War in the Ukraine. At the end of 1918 they had risen against Skoropads'kyi, the German puppet ruler in the Ukraine, under whom requisitioning and the return of landowners had caused considerable dissatisfaction among the Ukrainian peasants. Without the support of his erstwhile sponsors, Skoropads'kyi had to flee the country. Hryhor'iev, Zelenyi and Struk all formally recognized the Directory of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR) led by Petliura as the new Ukrainian government. However, at the beginning of 1919, Hryhor'iev and Zelenyi withdrew their support from the UNR. Hryhor'iev formally joined the Red Army, while Zelenyi retreated to his home village of Trypillia and maintained friendly neutrality toward the Bolsheviks.¹³ Thus, in late 1918 and early 1919, the changes in loyalty of the *otamans* twice contributed to the collapse of two governments in the Ukraine.

The third major intervention of the *otamans* began with a rising against the Bolsheviks in Kyiv province in late March 1919. Since the Bolsheviks had come to power at the beginning of the year, the peasants had chafed at the new government's requisitioning and conscription.¹⁴ Both the *otamans* and the Independentists sought to take advantage of this. At a meeting in Pereiaslav, a group of *otamans* including

Zelenyi and Struk agreed with *Otaman* Bohuns'kyi, the commander of the Red Army forces based in Zolotonosha, to advance on Kyiv from all sides.¹⁵ The insurgents also found allies among the Ukrainian intelligentsia. The Independentists had decided at the end of March to oppose the Bolsheviks in the name of a sovereign and independent Ukrainian Republic with a people's government made up of the country's labouring classes.¹⁶ They formed an All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee in Trypillia, Zelenyi's stronghold. The committee sent its representatives as commissars to the military units nominally under its command and published bulletins to keep the troops aware of developments.¹⁷

Zelenyi advanced from Trypillia north to Kyiv with a force of about 2,000 peasants, while Struk moved south with a slightly smaller force. Other *otamans* covered their flanks. Zelenyi and Struk sent delegates to nearby villages. They called on the locals to beat up Jews, and offered them weapons and the opportunity to pillage in return for marching on Kyiv. The *otamans* threatened villages that refused to send recruits. This would suggest, in keeping with the concept of the 'space of violence', that the peasant recruits faced the choice of becoming either the perpetrators or victims of violence. Bolshevik reports indicate that both commanders expanded their forces to about 12,000 over April and at the beginning of May. These consisted of a small band of more or less full-time partisans with firearms, supported by a much larger group of pitchfork-wielding peasants. They captured weapons from defeated Red Army units, including artillery.¹⁸ The advance from all sides cut off Kyiv, causing significant supply problems for the city.¹⁹

Numerous frictions existed between the rebels. The All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee claimed to be directing the revolt politically and, in order to establish control over the military side of the rising, it created a Main Insurgent Staff in April under the Independentist Iurii Petrovych Mazurenko.²⁰ However, the committee's leadership was illusory. The underground organisation of the Independentists in Kyiv noted that the rising exhibited 'disorganisation, lack of communication and, above all, the absence of a single will among the command.'²¹ Zelenyi, who was hosting the All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee in his stronghold, never joined it.²² Several of the *otamans* were unhappy with the committee's claim to leadership. In his memoirs, Marko Semenovich Shliakhovyi – a lieutenant of Zelenyi's – claims to have spoken out against the committee's opposition to the UNR, saying it would endanger the rising. Supposedly, his stance convinced some of Zelenyi's partisans to transfer themselves to his command.²³ Another of Zelenyi's allies – Ovsii Ivanovych Honchar – later told his Cheka interrogators a different story: like Shliakhovyi, he thought that the committee harmed the rising by fighting for its party interests rather than the country's liberation, and many peasants deserted as a result; however, in Honchar's version, Shliakhovyi, far from gaining enthusiastic recruits, was almost killed by his division and had to take refuge with Zelenyi.²⁴ Either way, both accounts indicate that there was disagreement between the political party and the military men involved in the rising.

Another problem was Bohuns'kyi, who was playing both sides. The Cheka had observed an anti-Bolshevik mood among the soldiers in Zolotonosha and they knew of Bohuns'kyi's meeting with Zelenyi. However, two weeks after this, Bohuns'kyi still maintained an outward loyalty to the Bolsheviks.²⁵ Certainly, there was disagreement among the Zolotonosha partisans. One Chekist reported overhearing a conversation between Bohuns'kyi's deputy Lopatkin and a member of the local executive

committee Hrudnyts'kyi, in which the latter urged the former to attack Kyiv, while the former said that he had already done everything he had promised. In a telephone conversation with Zelenyi, Lopatkin responded to the accusation that he had reneged on the offer to support the rising with the words 'that was then, but now . . .'. The commander of the Red Army in the Ukraine, Vladimir Alexandrovich Antonov-Ovseenko, sent a member of the Cheka called Urban to arrest Lopatkin. The latter only agreed to give himself up if Urban took responsibility for the regiment, which the Chekist did not dare to do. Nevertheless, Bohuns'kyi and Hrudnyts'kyi had to escape.²⁶ It seems that only this move by the Bolsheviks finally forced Bohuns'kyi to show his hand. Thus, following the concept of the 'space of violence', one might argue that Bohuns'kyi acted less out of a principled opposition to Bolshevism and more from a desire to avoid the Bolsheviks' punitive measures. The two co-conspirators started openly conducting anti-Bolshevik agitation, taking control of the lines of communication, engaging in pillaging and violence, and distributing weapons among the villages.²⁷

Bohuns'kyi did not remain loyal to the rebellion for long. At the end of April, he attacked Zelenyi's rear, forcing him to retreat to defend Trypillia. A punitive Bolshevik force also advanced on Zelenyi's stronghold, dispersing the partisans and taking the village. Zelenyi escaped with a small band of followers.²⁸ Even despite this treachery, the rebellion had already begun to lose momentum. The peasants had no reason to prefer Zelenyi's requisitioning to that conducted by the Bolsheviks, and Zelenyi came to inspire peasant hostility no less than the Bolsheviks.²⁹ To the north of Kyiv, Struk faced the same problems. His peasant soldiers refused to march against Kyiv without the weapons he had promised them, preferring to pillage and maltreat the population. Splits had appeared between Struk and his deputy 'Colonel' Klimenko. The latter left the rising with his followers after Struk had failed to reinforce them in battle.³⁰ The Bolshevik forces went on the counterattack, bombarding and then capturing Chernobyl', Struk's base, destroying his water transport and eventually forcing the insurgents to disband.³¹

The Bolsheviks had therefore dealt with the immediate threat in Kyiv province by the first weeks of May. However, no sooner had they stabilised the situation than a new and greater danger arose. For some time, tensions had existed between the Bolsheviks and Hryhor'iev, who commanded the Red Army's 1st Transdniprian Brigade, a 15,000-strong force with large numbers of machine guns and artillery. On the one hand, Hryhor'iev's troops had held congresses condemning the Bolsheviks' persecution of the Socialist Revolutionaries, calling for fair treatment of the peasants and demanding a united socialist front that included all parties standing on the soviet platform.³² On the other, reports flooded in to the Bolsheviks of the soldiers' poor discipline and political unreliability, including anti-Bolshevik and anti-Semitic agitation and pogroms. Hryhor'iev himself set a poor example through his consistent insubordination.³³

After much discussion, the Bolsheviks decided on 27 April to send Hryhor'iev to Bessarabia to fight the Romanians; they hoped to remove Hryhor'iev from a sensitive area and allow them to extract the more reliable units from his command. By 7 May, Hryhor'iev still had not transferred his troops to the Romanian front, and reports of pogroms and confiscations by his forces continued to flood in to Antonov-Ovseenko. Hryhor'iev met the Bolshevik commander's request for explanations with protestations of innocence and promises to obey orders. The next day, however, brought reports of Hryhor'iev's troops moving in unexpected directions and the proclamation of a *universal*

(a Cossack term for a decree) in the name of the *otaman* denouncing the Ukrainian Bolshevik government. Only after a long telephone conversation between Hryhor'iev and Antonov-Ovseenko on 10 May did the former openly declare his rebellion to his former superior.³⁴

The *universal* certainly had some impact. One report for the Bolshevik chief of staff described its effect upon soldiers in the Cherkasy region:

Strange as it may be, several copies of the *universal* were distributed among the soldiers waiting to depart. This *universal* is packed with many sweet slogans for politically unconscious elements and was at once understood by the soldiers and had a demoralising impact on them, such that they all proclaimed that they would not fight and would not leave the station and expressed the desire to unite with Hryhor'iev, despite the opposition in exposing this *universal* by the many orators here at the station.

In response to the commander's attempts to get them to fight, the soldiers replied that they would 'not march against Hryhor'iev' and the unit dispersed.³⁵ Similarly, as the Bohuns'kyi brigade was about to leave to fight Hryhor'iev, a commissar read out the *universal* with the goal of then revealing its political illiteracy. However, the commissar was unsuccessful in his criticism of the text and the soldiers were left with a positive impression of it. When they arrived at the front, these 'politically unconscious' elements abandoned their positions. After Hryhor'iev launched his own attack, they held a meeting to discuss whether to resist or not. As a result, Hryhor'iev took Zolotonosha and, aided by members of the Bohuns'kyi brigade, they committed a pogrom against Jews and soviet workers.³⁶ The Ukraine may have been a 'space of violence', but proclamations of ideas do, at times, seem to have affected the loyalties of those in it.

There were, however, also defections in the opposite direction. Moreover, Hryhor'iev split his forces, sending two regiments to Katerynoslav, one to Kharkiv, another to Kyiv and yet another to Kherson and Mykolaiv. Initially, the various detachments moved quickly as there were few Bolshevik forces in the rear to oppose them. They captured numerous cities of central Ukraine where they committed deadly pogroms against Jews, Bolsheviks and soviet workers. Later research revealed Hryhor'iev's pogroms to be the most murderous of the period, on average claiming more than double the number of victims than those of the Whites. Both the rebels and the government organised meetings of local workers and peasants in order to mobilise the population for or against the rising. The Bolsheviks recalled troops from the western and south-western fronts and soon went on the counterattack. The rebels offered little resistance. More of Hryhor'iev's troops defected to the Red Army. By the end of May, the Bolsheviks had inflicted a decisive defeat upon Hryhor'iev's main force and taken back the last cities under the rising's control. Hryhor'iev's army broke down into small bands and scattered. Hryhor'iev himself remained in southern Ukraine conducting attacks on smaller Bolshevik detachments and positions, as well as destroying their lines of communication.³⁷

The Bolsheviks had contained Hryhor'iev's uprising. It gave, however, an opportunity for the insurgents in Kyiv to start a second rebellion. Zelenyi, for example, resumed his activity in the Kyiv region in June.³⁸ The Main Insurgent Staff, too, hoped to revive the revolt by bringing Hryhor'iev's detachments under its command. It entered negotiations with two former Hryhor'ievite commanders, the *otamans* Zalizniak and Iurko

Tiutiunnyk, who had brought their bands north. The staff saw the outcome of Hryhor'iev's rising as beneficial in two ways: it had dealt the Bolsheviks a considerable blow, while its defeat had ended Hryhor'iev's political pretensions and removed the more unreliable elements from his army.³⁹ However, the staff admitted it had little contact with many of the units that it claimed were under its command. For instance, it had repeatedly asked Struk and Zelenyi to maintain links with it, all in vain. In practice, the staff had contact with only a few smaller bands, particularly in the west of Kyiv province.⁴⁰ Later, under GPU interrogation, Tiutiunnyk claimed that the Main Insurgent Staff did not command the units directly, but rather provided general directives.⁴¹ The staff blamed the party leadership for not providing enough political workers to maintain regular postal correspondence with the *otamans*. In addition, they did not receive the party's publications and so were unsure of its views on the international situation; they had been reduced, as they put it, to fortune telling by the flight of birds and reading tea-leaves. Without further support, the staff claimed that the rising would continue in a disorganised manner under the leadership of separate *otamans* with entirely different slogans.⁴²

The *otamans* supposedly subordinate to the Main Insurgent Staff were also sceptical of the centralized command. Tiutiunnyk took a very dim view of Mazurenko, describing him as someone more interested in politics than the military matters he did not understand. Tiutiunnyk later claimed that in summer 1919 he no longer believed in an independent Ukrainian soviet republic. He only formally accepted the leadership of the Main Insurgent Staff in order to establish links to other insurgent leaders before joining the Directory. In Tiutiunnyk's account, he received command over the forces of the *otamans* Diiachenko and Zalizniak, both of which were happy to pillage and commit pogroms but were militarily unreliable. After establishing contact with the staff in mid-June, Tiutiunnyk captured Zvenyhorodka and positioned his troops for operations alongside the other *otamans* formally recognising the Main Insurgent Staff. However, a Bolshevik counterattack forced him to retreat and in the middle of July he decided to take what remained of his forces west to join up with the UNR in Vinnytsia region. This ended the rising in Kyiv province for an autonomous soviet Ukraine. Mazurenko and the other members of the committee sought refuge with the Ukrainian nationalist government in Kam'ianets-Podil's'kyi.⁴³ Zelenyi, too, had to leave his base near Kyiv. Pursued by the Red Army, he moved south-west in order to link up with the forces of the UNR.⁴⁴ Struk stayed in the Kyiv area and joined Anton Ivanovich Denikin's forces, transforming his band into the '1st Little Russian Insurgent Regiment.'⁴⁵ Further to the south and east, Hryhor'iev sought an alliance with Makhno, whom the Bolsheviks had outlawed in June. At a joint meeting between the two commanders, Makhno's staff shot Hryhor'iev. The anarchist took over the rest of Hryhor'iev's band.⁴⁶

Thus, by the middle of July, the Bolsheviks had crushed a series of challenges to their rule in the Ukraine. These outbursts were only three of the larger revolts that the Bolsheviks had faced in the Ukraine at this time; smaller outbreaks took place throughout the country. They forced the Bolsheviks to withdraw troops from the front against Denikin. This, in turn, enabled the White commander to break through into the Ukraine in summer 1919. Several months later, Trotskii wrote that 'not Denikin but the enormous uprising against us carried out by the well-fed Ukrainian peasantry forced us to retreat beyond the borders of the Ukraine.'⁴⁷ Hryhor'iev's revolt, in particular, demonstrated again to the Bolsheviks the dangers of *partizanshchina* (often

translated as ‘guerrilla-ism’) – the existence in the Red Army of independent local forces who often chose their own leaders and refused to recognise central control. It led to renewed calls to combat *partizanshchina* and was partially responsible for the Bolsheviks’ decision to turn against Makhno in June.⁴⁸ This coincided with the White offensive into the Ukraine, further depriving the Bolsheviks of forces to meet the Volunteer Army. For the third time in the space of a little over half a year, the *otamans* had helped bring down a government in the Ukraine.

Otamanshchyna: an intellectual history

The risings, therefore, were conducted by disparate groups of autonomous commanders who worked poorly together and regularly shifted their allegiances. The All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee’s claim to lead the insurgency was nothing more than a claim. The idea that the risings in Kyiv were a Marxist-led ‘Ukrainian Kronstadt’⁴⁹ is highly questionable and can only be supported by an uncritical reading of the depiction of the events by the Independentists. For those using the ‘space of violence’ as a theoretical model, this is perhaps further indication that ideas were unimportant to the activity of the *otamans*. Certainly, peasants in the Ukraine may well have faced the choice of becoming either the victim or perpetrator of violence. However, many *otamans* published leaflets and appeals stating a set of political goals. These belong to the few documents created by the *otamans* themselves at the time of the Civil War.⁵⁰ To ignore them means to disregard an important source of *otaman* self-depiction. One can only assess and problematise their value as sources after an analysis of their content.

Most leaflets were printed on relatively thick, coloured paper between A5 and A4 in size. However, some leaflets studied for this article have not been preserved as leaflets but as typed copies: either Bolshevik agents typed up their content to pass on to their superiors, or they were in collections of materials assembled for a history of the Civil War. Indeed, some leaflets may originally have been nothing more than a few words typed on a piece of paper.⁵¹ The leaflets were distributed in a number of ways: one contemporary describes Hryhor’iev’s proclamations appearing on telegraph poles,⁵² while a report by Bolshevik agitators tells how Zelenyi passed on his proclamations to a Red Army detachment via a peasant women.⁵³ Struk published a leaflet which asked his ‘brother insurgents’ to read it and pass it on to others because the insurgents did not have as much money as the Jews.⁵⁴ The addressees were often mentioned in the title of the leaflet: many bear appellations ‘To the Insurgents’, ‘To Red Army Men’ or ‘To the Peasants and Workers of the Ukraine.’ Most of the leaflets had the moniker of the *otaman* in whose name it was issued at the bottom, and some those of his lieutenants. There is, however, no indication as to whether the *otaman* himself was responsible for the exact wording of the text.

As the head of the Main Insurgent Staff and a member of the Independentists, Iurii Mazurenko sought to represent both the left wing of the Ukrainian Social Democrats and the *otamans* he aspired to lead. In an ultimatum to Khristian Rakovskii, the head of the Bolshevik government in the Ukraine, Mazurenko charged the Bolsheviks with being nothing but Russian invaders hiding behind the slogans sacred to the insurgents: the power of workers’ and peasants’ soviets, the self-determination of nations up to independence and the struggle against imperialism and the oppressors of the working

masses. The Bolsheviks belied their claims to these slogans through the violence and oppression they employed against Ukrainian workers and peasants in taking their produce for Russia; they contradicted soviet power by creating a commissar and Cheka state, in turn helping the counterrevolution by undermining the social basis of support for the revolution; they proved that they were not Ukrainian by treating the country as a colony of Russia – for example by attacking the Ukrainian language and schools. At the same time, Mazurenko blamed on the Bolsheviks the fact that ‘relations between Jews and the rest of the population of the Ukraine [had] deteriorated terribly’: ‘behind you remain only the Jews, but behind us stands the whole of the Ukrainian population – thus all the blood and the curses of the Jewish population fall upon your head.’ The Ukrainians, by contrast, had been the first to introduce personal national autonomy. He demanded that Rakovskii stop calling his government Ukrainian, that he cease removing goods from the country and that he withdraw his troops – although those on the front against Denikin could remain.⁵⁵

The declaration was typical of those issued by the insurgents in that it sought to connect the creation of an independent Ukrainian soviet republic with the immediate concerns of the peasants – requisitioning and the violence of the local representative of the Bolsheviks’ power. However, unlike other *otaman* statements, it referred – albeit somewhat fleetingly – to the question of language and schools and praised the Central Rada’s minorities policy. Both aspects reveal Mazurenko’s intelligentsia background. More characteristic of the *otamans*, yet perhaps unusual for a member of the Marxist intelligentsia, was the depiction of the Jewish population as being the basis of Bolshevik support in the Ukraine. The text therefore appears to be a compromise between the intelligentsia interests of the Independentists and the desire to mobilise the peasants by appealing to their desires and prejudices.

Otaman Bohuns’kyi and Hrudnyts’kyi also issued a declaration in the name of an All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee calling for the creation of an independent Ukrainian soviet socialist republic. As with Mazurenko’s ultimatum, this incorporated many of the demands of the leftist Ukrainian intelligentsia. Indeed, Hrudnyts’kyi, like Mazurenko, was an Independentist. Bohuns’kyi and Hrudnyts’kyi wanted the independent Ukrainian soviet socialist republic to be part of a voluntary federation of all peoples, each retaining autonomy in national-cultural and economic spheres. Local power would be based on worker-peasant soviets free of party dictatorship. This power should be in the hands of local people, meaning Ukrainians, whom they defined as those living in the Ukraine. The fellow socialist republics should not interfere in one another’s internal affairs. Bohuns’kyi and Hrudnyts’kyi described themselves as ‘Ukrainian Bolsheviks’ and declared themselves the enemies of any speculators regardless of their nationality – Ukrainian, Russian or Jewish. They opposed both ‘our Petliura’ and the ‘second Petliuras’, i.e. the Bolsheviks, who were Russian or Jewish. They therefore called on everyone who ‘does not want to be under the yoke (of foreigners), who does not want to be oppressed by Russian and Jewish false socialists and other traitors to socialism’ to take up arms in order to introduce a regime of ‘genuine worker-peasant soviets’ and not ‘the current counterfeit soviets.’⁵⁶

The construct of the ‘two Petliuras’ indicates how the Directory leader’s name had become a byword for an unsatisfactory regime after the revolt against the UNR in early 1919. At the same time, the authors used the supposed equivalence between Petliura and the Bolsheviks as a means of arguing that the latter’s mistakes were a product of

their alleged Russian or Jewish nationalism. Consequently, the authors could both claim to oppose nationalism while also calling for national political goals in the form of Ukrainian cultural and economic autonomy; they denounced the rule of foreigners at the same time as portraying themselves as good internationalists. Entirely in keeping with this was the definition of Ukrainians as people living in the Ukraine, which allowed Russians and Jews to be included among those local people who would have power in a future independent Ukrainian socialist soviet republic.

The leaflet opened by addressing the readers, i.e. the peasants who overthrew the Hetmanate and the Directory, by telling him what they wanted:

You stand for the power of councils [*rady*] (soviets), for the power of labouring people and, indeed, that power should satisfy you, but various provocateurs, who want to return everything to the old order, took power into their own hands.

Thus, when Bohuns'kyi and Hrudnyts'kyi declared that they were in favour of soviet government, they could underline the community of interests between themselves and the readers. The authors then told their audience what the peasant response had been: a revolt, which the All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee had come to head. In turn, this had named Bohuns'kyi and Hrudnyts'kyi as the main military revolutionary staff to give the movement leadership and save the socialist revolution in the Ukraine.⁵⁷ By presenting the *narod* as the initiators of the rising who, via the committee, had chosen Bohuns'kyi and Hrudnyts'kyi as its leaders, the authors were describing what they hoped to achieve by publishing the leaflet, namely the support of the peasants and workers, as an established fact. This form of rhetoric appeared in many of the warlord appeals.

Zelenyi also published declarations ending with the slogans 'Long live the Independent Ukrainian Socialist Republic!' and 'Long live the peasant, workers' and soldiers' power of soviets!'⁵⁸ However, the proclamations themselves did not openly argue for the advantages of the soviets as a system of power or describe what a future autonomous soviet Ukrainian republic would look like. Instead, the leaflet 'Brothers – Peasants!' emphasised the theme of betrayal: the Bolsheviks had come as brothers, but had established their government without the peasants' permission while also renegeing on their promises to give the peasants manufactured goods. In the flyer 'To the Labouring Peasantry and Workers', he concentrated more on the violence employed by the 'Russian Communists' against the poor peasants: theft, shootings, burning down villages and conscription. The response to this betrayal and violence was the peasants' rising, which Zelenyi called upon others to join. Like Bohuns'kyi and Hrudnyts'kyi, he thus presented his rising as a spontaneous event of which he was merely a cipher.⁵⁹ Zelenyi sought to reap the peasants' anger at War Communism.

Zelenyi's lieutenant Shliakhovyi suggested that Zelenyi was only a lukewarm supporter of the Independentist programme: Shliakhovyi claims to have turned to his commander with doubts about the All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee; to this, Zelenyi replied that when he arrived in Kyiv with the peasants:

... they [the peasants], can have the regime they choose themselves; if they want the soviets, then [let it be] the soviets, if the Directory, then the Directory, and if the Hetmanate, then the Hetmanate; in a word, I – although I am not a very literate man – will sign up with both hands to that which they desire and choose.⁶⁰

This account does not contradict the information gleaned from Zelenyi's leaflets but rather emphasises that the *otaman* saw himself as the direct agent of the Ukrainian people's will. If Shliakhovyi's account is accurate, it would indicate that Zelenyi adopted the slogan of soviet Ukrainian government because he believed that the Ukrainian people wanted it or, at least, that it was the programme most likely to attract their support.

The fact that Zelenyi mainly appealed to peasant concerns and soviet slogans to mobilise support does not mean that he did not have a Ukrainian national identity. Of course, the self-designation '*otaman*', as mentioned earlier, indicated an attempt to present oneself as a successor to the Zaporozhian Cossacks, whom many Ukrainian nationalists hailed as their Early Modern precursors. A song celebrating the feats of Zelenyi's troops titled '*Otaman Zelenyi's Army is So Strong*' declared that '*With the Cossacks we fought together to defend the Ukraine*' and proclaims '*We gain glory and honour for our people*.' Those who followed Petliura, by contrast, did so only for money.⁶¹ The text seems less aimed at mobilising individuals outside the band; the constant use of the words '*we*' and '*our*' suggests the audience was those already serving Zelenyi and that the text's goal was to encourage an *esprit de corps*. However, like other *otamans*, Zelenyi understood the *narod* whose will he expressed to be the *labouring* people. In an appeal to the soldiers of the Red Army, Zelenyi insisted that none of his supporters owned more than three *desiatin* of land; the fact that they had fought against Petliura in the name of soviet power proved that they were poor peasants. He vigorously rejected charges that the insurgents were kulaks or counter-revolutionaries; such accusations were an excuse for the Bolsheviks to shoot poor peasants.⁶² The Ukrainian people was therefore as much a socio-economic as a national category.

A national element was also present in Zelenyi's identification of the enemies of the people. The oppressive government in the Ukraine was headed by 'the Romanian Jew Rakovskii' and the ruling party were 'Russian Communist-Bolsheviks.' The Jews were, for Zelenyi, particularly suspicious. In the orders issued after taking Rzhyshev in June 1919, Zelenyi told the city's inhabitants that all the Jewish population had run away. He described this act (which, if his claim was true, was most likely an attempt to escape a feared pogrom) as a provocation by the Jews. He ordered Jews not to flee. All members of the Jewish population that supported Rakovskii's government were to give up their weapons by 4.30 p.m. Those failing to do so would be shot. Zelenyi's suspicion of Jews was evident in the primary targets of his violence: the *otaman* was one of the most active pogromists of the period. Another enemy of the people was political parties. Zelenyi claimed these were just the *pany* – lords – in another guise. He demanded that 'power not be in the hands of any parties, but in the hands of peasants and poor peasants.' The majority of party members were not workers or peasants. While they made calls for class struggle, when they acquired power they exploited the peasants and workers in pursuit of their own class interests. Parties could not give land to the peasants; only the peasants could do this for themselves when they took power into their own hands.⁶³ Thus, Zelenyi defined the enemies of the Ukrainian people by both class and nation.

Like the *otamans* involved in the Kyiv rising, Hryhor'iev also consistently depicted himself as fighting for the Ukrainian labouring people. In December 1918, while serving the Directory, he issued an open letter to the German forces garrisoning Mykolaiv,

accusing them of being the lackeys of the Russian and Ukrainian bourgeoisie and betraying Marxism and European democracy:

I, *Otaman* Hryhor'iev, in the name of the partisans under my command, the workers and the people rising up against the yoke of the bourgeoisie, declare to you with a clear conscience that here in the Ukraine you are a blind weapon in the hands of our bourgeoisie, that you are not democrats but traitors to European Democracy.⁶⁴

While on the side of the Bolsheviks, Hryhor'iev's proclamations of March to the French and Volunteer forces in Odessa used the same language. He called on the soldiers in the city to join the labouring people; the cause of the bourgeoisie and officers was lost. His declaration hailed the onset of a new revolutionary period: 'Almost the entire world has awoken. The people [*narod*] have understood that all people [*liudy*] are people [*liudy*], that they can no longer be slaves, that they are ready to make any sacrifices for their freedom.'⁶⁵

This theme remained evident in Hryhor'iev's *universal*, addressed to the suffering Ukrainian people, in which he declared the goals of his May rising against the Bolsheviks. The *otaman* listed the indignities inflicted by the tsarist, Hetmanite, Petliurist and Bolshevik regimes on the 'best sons of the earth' in order to relate his political goals to the peasants' experience of requisitioning and violence. Political speculators had promised the people land and freedom, but instead violently imposed the commune, Cheka and commissars upon them. Hryhor'iev called upon peasants and workers to rise up and take power into their hands to replace the dictatorship of individuals and parties with the living dictatorship of the labouring people. There should be no violence from the left or right, but only the power of soviets of the people of the Ukraine.⁶⁶

By calling his declaration a *universal*, Hryhor'iev indicated his considerable level of ambition. This was the term for decrees by the Zaporozhian Cossack leaders and the word that the nationalist Central Rada had used recently for their declarations of autonomy. The *otaman*, perhaps, sought not only to present himself as a successor to the Early Modern warriors, but also to imitate the Ukrainian nationalist body's state-building act. The uprising should also be a nationwide rebellion: Hryhor'iev told the Ukrainian peasants to form military units, capture railway stations, establish contact with his staff and march on Kyiv and Kharkiv. Thus, unlike many other *otamans*, Hryhor'iev was not only interested in representing local interests but in taking power throughout the country. At the same time, Hryhor'iev promised modern political rights (freedom of speech, association, to strike and so on), proportional representation of all nationalities in the future soviet government (which, for him, meant 80 per cent of places going to the Ukrainians, five per cent to Jews and 15 per cent to others) and the inclusion of all parties supporting the soviet platform.⁶⁷ On the one hand, the *universal* apparently crams in a whole range of political slogans to which the peasants had been exposed since 1917. On the other, it seems to seek to project a statesmanlike image according to which Hryhor'iev was a possible future ruler of all the Ukraine.

Hryhor'iev outlined a more detailed plan for the rising in his 'Order No. 2.' This was a 23-point series of instructions for the people of the Ukraine to create a new regime themselves, with surprisingly detailed instructions on how this was to take place: for example, partisan units created by a voluntary mobilisation should occupy their district capital; they in turn should choose a head of partisans for the district,

who would hand out 500 roubles to each partisan; each district capital should also create a commission of 20 members to collect weapons and equipment for the army; each village, district and provincial soviet should reform along the lines set out in the *universal*; the various provincial and military organs created must establish links with Hryhor'iev's staff.⁶⁸ In effect, Hryhor'iev was calling upon Ukrainians to spontaneously create a new soviet administration at all levels and then subordinate it to himself. Before dismissing this as blind stupidity or extreme naivety, one should consider what it reveals about Hryhor'iev and the context of his rising. First, it underlines the impression gained from his *universal* that Hryhor'iev had broad ambitions that covered the whole of the country. Second, it reminds us of the populist assumption of most Ukrainian political actors during the Civil War that only the spontaneous support of the people was the guarantee of success. Indeed, recent history had seemed to confirm this. The Directory had come to power at the end of 1918 on the back of a peasant rising against the Hetmanate. If the strategy had worked once already, one can understand why Hryhor'iev expected it to be successful again. Third, Hryhor'iev had little choice other than to rely on the will of the people: he could hardly conquer all of the Ukraine with an army of just 15,000 men.

Hryhor'iev was responsible for some of the worst anti-Semitic violence of the period, and the *universal* has often been described as a call to pogroms.⁶⁹ Certainly, the *universal* referred to the Chekists and commissars as coming from Moscow and 'the land where Christ was crucified.' Hryhor'iev thereby combined two anti-Semitic canards – one traditional, one modern – that of Jewish deicide and that of Jewish Bolshevism. Yet, the *universal* did not explicitly call for pogroms, stating, on the contrary, that agitation against separate nationalities would be 'halted by force of arms.' Similarly, Hryhor'iev's Order No. 2 threatened the perpetrators of pogroms with death. In both Russian and Ukrainian versions of the *universal*, Hryhor'iev used the term *ievrei* (Ukrainian) and *evrei* (Russian) rather than *zhyd* (Ukrainian) or *zhid* (Russian).⁷⁰ In Russian, *zhid* is an anti-Semitic epithet, while *evrei* is a neutral term. Although its connotations changed in the twentieth century, in 1919 the Ukrainian word *zhyd* was, as in Polish, the normal translation for 'Jew.'

However, after the dispersal of Hryhor'iev's main forces at the end of May, the declarations became more decidedly anti-Semitic, closing the gap between his pogromist activity and stated programme with regard to the Jewish population. The term *zhyd/zhid* replaced *ievrei/evrei*. In one Russian-language leaflet, Hryhor'iev revealed that he was aware that *zhid* was a problematic word in Russian, but robustly defended its use in Ukrainian. Addressing the Jews he wrote:

You do not like the word '*zhid*', but it is not my fault that the dictionary of the Ukrainian people cannot find another word for you. Keep in mind that only the Great Russians call you '*evrei*', but all other peoples, and we Ukrainians, call you '*zhidy*', but for [using] the word '*zhid*', Ukrainians are dragged into the Cheka and shot there.⁷¹

Hryhor'iev's later preference for the word *zhid/zhyd* – in both Russian (where it is an anti-Semitic epithet) and in Ukrainian (where, at the time, it was not) – indicates that the use of the word *evrei/ievrei* in the *universal* was a conscious choice with a specific purpose. It may have been part of his attempt to project a more statesmanlike image in the *universal*.

Unsurprisingly, Hryhor'iev denied committing pogroms. However, the leaflet in which he directly addressed the question of responsibility for them only underlined his anti-Semitism. Hryhor'iev claimed that he had killed communists but not committed pogroms. He shifted blame for these attacks on communists onto the 'zhid' Rakovskii, who had outlawed Hryhor'iev and his partisans and called for them to be killed. The only answer to this, argued Hryhor'iev, was to kill all communists (although he also maintained that he had spared those who were unarmed). Similarly, the pogroms – which his troops had supposedly not committed – were the fault of the Jews:

I turn to the Jews and loudly declare to the entire world that the pogroms and slaughter of Jews are the fault of the Jews themselves who have crawled by any means into the [Bolshevik] leadership and Cheka.

Comrade Jews. You know very well that in the Ukraine you only make up five or six per cent, but the Cheka and commissars are 99 per cent Jewish. And, here it is, your 99 per cent of the Cheka Jews have led you to pogroms. This is how the people deal with the Jewish commissar; for this reason it beats up Jews.

This puts Hryhor'iev's apparent promise that Jews would make up 5 per cent of a future government into perspective: it was intended as much as a limit on Jewish participation in government as a guarantee. Earlier, Hryhor'iev, like other *otamans*, had stylised the Bolshevik regime as Russian and Jewish. Here, Hryhor'iev reformulates that, presenting the Bolshevik regime, in the Ukraine at least, as almost entirely Jewish. While the Jews had the responsibility for the pogroms, Hryhor'iev shifted the agency for them to the people. In doing so, he both tried to deflect the charges of anti-Semitic violence and sought to find acceptance for his acts by presenting them as the will of the people, while also seeking the support of those with anti-Jewish prejudices. The leaflet then called upon all Jews fighting against him to lay down their arms. If they did not do this inside a week, they would be beaten and their property and homes would be destroyed.⁷² Thus, Hryhor'iev marked out Jewish supporters of the Bolsheviks for special punishment, while also providing his followers with a justification in advance for their attacks on Jewish property.

The connection of anti-Semitism with support for the soviets is not surprising. Many Bolshevik agents in the Ukraine reported that the peasants wanted the soviet form of government but without the commune and the Jews. One soviet worker in Hostomel near Kyiv mentioned a peasant asking 'What kind of soviet power defends Jewish speculators?' as typical. A peasant conference in the area had passed a resolution recognising soviet power in principle if it did not interfere in local politics while complaining that 'Great Russians and Jews have taken all power into their hands.'⁷³ Another report described how several Bolshevik agents took part in a village meeting in order to try to explain what Communism was. The peasants answered that they had been happy at the arrival of Bolshevism and the soviet regime. They had thought that they would receive manufactured goods in return for bread. Instead, they had received only Jews. The peasants then demanded the expulsion of Jews from soviet organs.⁷⁴ Many peasants, in trying to understand why the soviets they supported were not meeting their desires, seem to have turned to the centuries-old scapegoat for an explanation – the Jews.

Not all the warlords involved in the risings called for the creation of an independent Ukrainian soviet socialist republic. *Otaman* Struk, in a Russian-language text addressed to peasants, workers and citizens, declared that his insurgents were defending their 'native land and Orthodox faith' and hoped to replace the Communists and foreign yoke with 'genuine people's power.' The text did not explain what this native land was – whether it was Russia or the Ukraine. The leaflet was full of religious references, for example to the imminent arrival of Easter and to the ringing of the church bells that would welcome the insurgents into Kyiv. Indeed, Struk, far from asking the workers and peasants to take up arms against the Bolsheviks, called on them to remain at their work; if the insurgents needed help, Struk would ask them to pray for the success of his partisans.⁷⁵ His appeal to Red Army men struck a very different note: here, Struk presented his partisans as the representatives of Ukrainian workers and peasants and denied that there were any bourgeoisie or capitalists among their ranks. They were fighting for the desires of the people of the Ukraine, for land and freedom; only the Ukrainian people could achieve this, not the Chinese and Latvians in the pay of the Rakovskiis and Kheifetses who dominated the Bolshevik government. The Red Army men should therefore ask themselves whether they were really fighting for people's power and join the ranks of the insurgents.⁷⁶

The differences in the two texts arise, perhaps, from the different audiences: Struk seems to have issued the first as he was marching on Kyiv and may have been trying to calm the city's population regarding the intentions of the insurgents; the second sought to win over Red Army men by appealing to their assumed sympathy for the hopes and desires of the labouring people. Struk's call to the Red Army seems much more typical of those made by the *otamans*, yet, unlike those of Zelenyi, Hryhor'iev or Bohuns'kyi, it did not mention the soviets. The common element in the two declarations is xenophobia: both define the enemy as foreign and Struk's insurgents as true representatives of the native people. The description of Rakovskiis and Kheifetses in the second text as enemies is probably an example of barely concealed anti-Semitism as the reader was presumably supposed to identify these as Jewish surnames – a rhetorical trick evident in other declarations. In pluralizing the name of the leader of the Ukrainian Bolsheviks (who, as has been seen, other *otamans* attacked as a 'Romanian Jew'), Struk made clear that he was against not only Rakovskii but also people 'like him.'

Christopher Read describes Hryhor'iev as having 'set out as a leftist loosely associated with the Reds and Makhno, but . . . changed sides becoming an anti-Bolshevik, anti-Semitic nationalist.'⁷⁷ However, an examination of Hryhor'iev's declarations indicates that there was no transition as leftism was, for Hryhor'iev, not incompatible with opposition to the Bolsheviks, anti-Semitism or nationalism. This was largely true for most of the *otamans*. One sees this in the similarities between the declarations. All depicted themselves not just as fighting for the labouring Ukrainian people, above all the peasants, but also as being a direct expression of the spontaneous will of the Ukraine's rural poor. Apart from Struk, they declared themselves to be the supporters of socialism and the soviet form of government or the opponents of bourgeois imperialism. With the exception of the Independentists Mazurenko and Hrudnyts'kyi, they did not appeal to the traditional concerns of Ukrainian intelligentsia nationalism such as the Ukrainian language and schools. Nationalism primarily appeared in the identification of the enemy of the people, who was defined in terms of nationality – Russians, Chinese and Latvian members of the internationalist brigades and, most fatefully, Jews. The

otamans presented the Bolsheviks as betrayers of the socialist revolution, as Russian and Jewish nationalists or as ‘lords’ pursuing their class interests. The *narod* for whom the *otamans* fought was both an ethnic and a socio-economic category. The aspects of Bolshevik rule they condemned were the Cheka, the commissars, requisitioning, conscription and the supposed overrepresentation of Jews in the organs of soviet power. In this way, *otamans* sought to connect their programmes to the peasants’ experiences and perceptions of Bolshevik rule. Most *otamans* exhibited scepticism towards parties in general. At the same time, many stressed their opposition to the nationalist regimes of Skoropads’kyi and Petliura. In this way, the *otamans* presented themselves as left-wing Ukrainian opponents of a supposedly Russo-Jewish, pseudo-socialist Bolshevism.

The Bolsheviks summarised this programme under the slogan ‘For the soviets but without Communists.’ This actual wording does not appear in any of the leaflets studied for this article. However, the fact that the Bolsheviks coined a phrase to summarise the position is a reminder that the stance was not unique to the Ukrainian *otamans*. Throughout the territory of the former Russian Empire peasant insurgents issued declarations supporting the soviets as a system of government, but opposing the way in which the Bolsheviks had abused them. For example, one group of partisans in the Samara region declared in March 1919 that they had risen ‘not against the Soviet power, but against the Communist band . . . which instead of genuine teachings have pillaged and ravaged the peasant population, set up a dictatorship and have not tried to understand the labouring peasantry.’ The anti-Semitic image of Jewish Communism also appeared in Russian partisan declarations. At the same time, many peasants, especially in Siberia, called for the restoration of the Constituent Assembly. This did not represent a different programme from those in favour of soviet power. Rather, as Erik Landis has argued, by demanding a new Constituent Assembly peasants sought to identify themselves as the heirs of the 1917 Revolution and challenge the Bolsheviks’ claim to be its sole agents.⁷⁸ While the Ukrainian *otamans* do not seem to have referred to the Constituent Assembly in their leaflets, the function of the calls for soviets without Communists or the restoration of the Constituent Assembly were the same: to present oneself to the ‘labouring people’ as a revolutionary alternative to Bolshevism. In this way, the *otamans* appealed to widely held peasant desires. Nevertheless, tensions existed between the *otamans* and their peasant followers, as the following section will discuss.

Conclusion: ideas and violence

In itself, a more or less common ‘programme’ was not enough to guarantee coordinated action between the *otamans*. The risings were riven by splits between the various leaders. Bohuns’kyi, for example, expressed one of the most comprehensive visions of an autonomous, soviet and socialist Ukraine free of the Bolsheviks. However, he only joined the rising when threatened with arrest by the Bolsheviks and soon betrayed it (although the co-signatory of his declaration Hrudnyts’kyi became one of the most committed participants of the anti-Bolshevik insurgency).⁷⁹ The *otamans* repeatedly changed their allegiances between the warring parties in the Ukraine. There were also discrepancies between their deeds and words. The *otamans* resorted to the pillaging they decried. The independent commanders certainly used violence to mobilise peasants – either by forcing peasants to join the bands against their will or by offering them the

chance to kill and steal, above all from Jews. At first glance, this all seems to support the view that the political statements of the *otamans* are unimportant or had no impact on the real activity of the independent commanders.

Nevertheless, the leaflets are revealing. They demonstrate that the *otamans* saw their main potential source of support as the peasants. These sought defence against and revenge for the Bolsheviks' violence, requisitioning and conscription, alongside, in many cases, a chance to enrich themselves at the expense of the Jewish population. The *otamans* hoped to translate this into broader opposition to the Bolsheviks. The two thereby entered into an uneasy alliance with one another. This created considerable problems for the *otamans*: in order to conduct a large-scale campaign against Kyiv, they had to resort to the very measures that had caused unrest in the first place. This inherent tension was one of the reasons for their failure to maintain a large-scale movement.⁸⁰ Moreover, the leaflets indicate that the *otamans* believed that they could only mobilise support through leftist slogans. As several scholars have noted, the peasants and workers of the former Russian empire held a common desire for peace, land, bread and local power, alongside a distrust of non-labourers.⁸¹ The leaflets show that the *otamans*, too, were aware of this.

Certainly, leaflets and slogans alone could not gain the allegiance of peasants, who judged the legitimacy of a programme by the ability of its proponents to meet their material promises.⁸² However, they do seem to have had an impact on other insurgents, as the response to Hryhor'iev's *universal* in Cherkasy shows. Bohuns'kyi may have betrayed the spring rising in Kyiv province, but his partisans certainly remained susceptible to Hryhor'iev's propaganda of the soviets without Jews and the commune. It is therefore impossible to dismiss out of hand the possibility that the leaflets accurately represent the self-image of the *otamans*. This, in turn, does seem to have had an impact on the alliances made by the *otamans*. While the *otamans* repeatedly changed sides during the Civil War, they normally oscillated between the Bolsheviks and the UNR. Both groups promised social and national liberation: the former had proclaimed the right of national self-determination up to secession,⁸³ while the Ukrainian nationalist movement often depicted itself as socialist.⁸⁴ Thus, the changes in allegiance did not require considerable shifts in the declared programmes of the *otamans* and, from the perspective of the bands, could be presented as responses to the failure of the Bolsheviks and UNR to meet their promises. Indeed, most of the leaflets distributed by the *otamans* during the spring and summer risings of 1919 described the Bolsheviks as traitors to their own ideals. Very few *otamans* fought for the Whites. Struk was one of the exceptions, and he was unusual in using the slogan of Orthodoxy rather than soviet power.

The *otamans* did indeed resort to violence to mobilise local peasants. Nevertheless, the activity of Hryhor'iev, Struk and Zelenyi reveals how violence, ideas and desire for material gain combined to produce some of the worst pogroms of the period. Perpetrators of violence refer to ideas to justify their acts not only after the fact, but also before and during them in order to spur on others and categorise potential victim groups.⁸⁵ By issuing proclamations that identified the Jews as the enemies of the Ukrainian people and encouraging peasants to commit pogroms, the *otamans* appealed to the rural population's existing prejudices and offered them a means to enrich themselves, while also connecting both aspects to the wider goals of the *otamans* in opposing the Bolsheviks. For this reason, anti-Semitic propaganda and pogroms were such powerful tools during the Civil War in the Ukraine, especially

given that many peasants had already linked the failure of the soviets to the supposed overrepresentation of Jews in them.

Therefore, approaches using the ‘space of violence’ as a theoretical model cannot give a full picture of the Ukrainian *otamans* without reference to the ideas expressed in their leaflets. Even its adherents, despite the theory, must make recourse to ideas. Thus, Schnell argues that the *otamans* used pogroms to mobilise the rural population because their nationalism did not attract the peasants.⁸⁶ If this were the case, one could claim that the pogroms can be traced back to ideas as they arose from the differences between the warlords’ and the peasants’ beliefs and worldviews, alongside the attempts of the former to bridge this gulf. In fact, Schnell’s interpretation misses how most *otamans* appealed to a leftist identity and peasant concerns rather than nationalism alone to garner support; convinced of the unimportance of ideas, he does not employ the leaflets as a source. Nevertheless, a close examination of the declarations alongside the descriptions of the pogroms reveals how anti-Semitic rhetoric and the desire for ‘genuine’ soviet power intertwined with the attempts to mobilise the peasants. This underlines the impossibility of separating ideas from the concrete situation in which violence develops: the peasants’ prejudices and desires helped create the situation that led to the pogroms. Ideas on their own may not kill, but they do shape the context in which killing takes place.

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Notes

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2. Baberowski, *Verbrannte Erde*, 362.
3. Baberowski, ‘Einleitung’, 7–27 and idem, ‘Verwüstetes Land’, 169–87. For earlier expositions of this theory, see idem, ‘Gewalt verstehen’ and idem, *Verbrannte Erde*, 211–21, 362–68.
4. Schnell, *Räume des Schreckens*, 19–25.
5. Cf. Buldakov, *Krasnaia smuta*.
6. Schnell, *Räume des Schreckens*, 256 ff. A possible translation of ‘*otaman*’ is ‘warlord’ (although Schnell himself avoids the word); this article will use the terms ‘warlord’ and ‘*otaman*’ interchangeably.
7. On the attempts by the *otamans* to establish themselves as the heirs to the Zaporozhian Cossacks, see Gilli, ‘Ukrainskaia atamanshchina’, 175–77.
8. Schnell, *Räume des Schreckens*, 256–62; on Makhno, see 315 ff.
9. Adams, *Bolsheviks in the Ukraine*, 154–55.
10. Horak, *Povstantsi Otamana Hryhor’ieva*, 138–39.
11. Ford, ‘Outline History’, 218–21 and idem ‘Crossroads’, 597–602.

12. Koval'chuk, 'Rol' vseukrains'koho revkomu', 94–107.
13. Kasianov, 'Die Ukraine', 163–64.
14. Hanzha, 'Antyselians'ki dii bil'shovits'koho rezhima', 154–57.
15. 'Rozmova z Otam. Zelenyi', *Ukrains'kyi kozak*, no. 53, 21 September 1919, 1; 'Spohady povstantsiia' (Memoirs of Marko Shliakhovy; typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 269 ark. 11.
16. Koval'chuk, 'Rol' vseukrains'koho revkomu', 96.
17. 'Spohady povstantsiia', TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 269 ark. 22, 29, 31.
18. For Zelenyi, see the following operative and reconnaissance reports from April and May: TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 263 ark. 193–94, 270, 279–80. For Struk, see the reports from the same period: TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 154 ark. 134–35 and spr. 263 ark. 273–74, 275–76.
19. Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski*, 328.
20. Announcement to the Ukrainian Labouring People, undated (handwritten copy), DAKO f. R-1 op. 4 spr. 1 ark. 24–25.
21. Letter from the Operative Staff of the Kyiv Revkom to the Main Staff of the Forces of the Independent Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, 15 April 1919, DAKO f. R-1 op. 4 spr. 1 ark. 22.
22. E. I. Honchar's Declaration to the Chairman of the Gubcheka, 9 September 1920, HDA SBU f. 5 spr. 66646 tom. 20 ark. 26.
23. 'Spohady povstantsiia', TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 269 ark. 31, 36–38.
24. E. I. Honchar's Declaration, HDA SBU f. 5 spr. 66646 tom. 20 ark. 25ob.
25. Telegram from the Poltava Cheka to Podvoiskii, 13 April 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 263 ark. 302–33.
26. Bulletin, Central Bureau for Communication and Information of the Narkomvoen Ukraine, 13 April 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 263 ark. 258–59. Report by the Reconnaissance Section of Okrvoenkom, 19 April 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 263 ark. 277–78.
27. Bulletin, Central Bureau for Communication and Information of the Narkomvoen Ukraine, 17 April 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 263 ark. 307–08.
28. 'Rozmova z Otam. Zelenyi', 2; 'Spohady povstantsiia', TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 269 ark. 41. Telegram from the Narovenkom Information Bureau to the Head of the Reconnaissance Section, 10 May 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 268 ark. 181. See also *Grazhdanskaia voina na Ukraine*, tom 1, kniga 2, 15, 30.
29. Political Report, 6 May 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 268 ark. 173.
30. Reconnaissance Report, 7 May 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 263 ark. 275–76.
31. *Grazhdanskaia voina na Ukraine*, tom. 2, 14–15.
32. Telegram to Rakovskii from Aleksandriia, 21 February 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 260 ark. 99.
33. Telegram from Antonov-Ovseenko to Rakovskii, 27 April 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 153 ark. 142. Telegram from Aleksandriia *uzd* Cheka to the Government of the Soviet People's Commissars, 17 April 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 264 ark. 296–298; Telegram from Skachko to Rakovskii, 11 April 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 265 ark. 18; Anotonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski*, Tom. 4, 37. *Grazhdanskaia voina na Ukraine*. tom 1, kniga 1, 330.
34. Adams, *Bolsheviks in the Ukraine*, 280 ff.

35. Report for the Chief of Staff, 10 May 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 265 ark. 159–60.
36. Report for Rakovskii by Shishkovskii, member of the Zolotonosha *uezd ispolkom*, undated (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 265 ark. 200–01.
37. Adams, *Bolsheviks in the Ukraine*, 307–12, 349–58; Horak, *Povstantsi Otamana Hryhor'ieva*, 144 ff, 176 ff. On the statistics for the pogroms, see Abramson, *Prayer for the Government*, 116.
38. Short Characterization of the Insurgent and Bandit Movement in Kyiv Oblast, March–July 1919, TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 154 ark. 244, 248.
39. Letter to the Kyivan Revolutionary Committee, undated but clearly after May, DAKO f. R-1 op. 4 spr. 1 ark. 43.
40. Letter to the Kyivan Revolutionary Committee, DAKO f. R-1 op. 4 spr. 1 ark. 43–43ob.
41. Bozhko, 'Heneral-khorunzhyi', 46.
42. Letter to the Kyivan Revolutionary Committee, DAKO f. R-1 op. 4 spr. 1 ark. 44.
43. Koval'chuk, 'Rol' vseukrains'koho rekomu', 101–05. The quotation is on p. 101.
44. 'Rozмова z Otam. Zelenyi', 1–2.
45. 'Ataman Struk', *Kievlianin* (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 153 ark. 145.
46. Diary of Chubenko (Adjutant of Makhno) (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 153 ark. 82–84.
47. Quoted in Koval'chuk, *Bez peremozhstv*, 29.
48. 'Iz vseukrainskogo s'ezda predstavitelei volostnykh ispolkomov', *Bol'shevik*, No. 46, 7 June 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 259 ark. 236–37; 'Ot partizanshchyny k distsiplinirovannym batal'onam (beseda s tov. Podvoiskim)', *Izvestiia*, no. 62 (89), 11 June 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 259 ark. 253–54.
49. Ford, 'Crossroads', 597, 599.
50. Several *otamans* survived to write memoirs, but these, of course, targeted post-Civil War concerns.
51. Such an appeal is mentioned in the memoir by A. Taranenko, GARF f. 5881 op. 2 d. 673 l. 1 ob.
52. Memoir of A. Taranenko, GARF f. 5881 op. 2 d. 673 l. 1 ob.
53. Report for the Commissariat of War by Agents along the Route from Kyiv to Veitsenfeld, 1 May 1919, TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 263 ark. 270–71.
54. Leaflet 'Do povstantsiv', TsDAHO f. 1 op. 18 ark. 63 ark. 1.
55. Leaflet, 'Ul'timatum holovi tak zvanoho 'Ukrains'koho robitnycho-selians'koho uriadu' Raskov'skomu', 25 June 1919, TsDAHO f. 57 op. 2 spr. 355 ark. 1.
56. Leaflet, 'Do selian i robitnykiv ukrainy', TsDAHO f. 57 op. 2 spr. 398 ark. 9.
57. Leaflet, 'Do selian i robitnykiv ukrainy', TsDAHO f. 57 op. 2 spr. 398 ark. 9.
58. Leaflets, 'Braty – seliane!', TsDAHO f. 1 op. 18 spr. 63 ark. 12, and 'Do trudovoho selianstva ta robitnykiv', TsDAHO f. 1 op. 18 ark. 63 ark. 13.
59. Leaflets, 'Braty – seliane!'. TsDAHO f. 1 op. 18 spr. 63 ark. 12 and 'Do trudovoho selianstva ta robitnykiv', TsDAHO f. 1 op. 18 ark. 63 ark. 13.
60. 'Spohady povstantsiia', TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 269 ark. 34–35.
61. 'Iaka syl'na armiiia otamana Zelenoho', TsDAHO f. 1 op. 18 spr. 63 ark. 30.
62. Leaflet, 'Tovarishchi Krasnoarmeitsy', TsDAHO f. 1 op. 18 spr. 63 ark. 8; Leaflet, 'Do trudovoho selianstva ta robitnykiv', TsDAHO f. 1 op. 18 ark. 63 ark. 13.
63. Order No. 1 to the Garrison of Rzhyshev, 30 June 1919, TsDAHO f. 1 op. 18 ark. 63 ark. 10 and leaflets, 'Braty – seliane!'. TsDAHO, f. 1 op. 18 spr. 63 ark. 12, 'Do

- trudovoho selianstva ta robitnykiv', TsDAHO f. 1 op. 18 ark. 63 ark. 13. For an estimate of the number of pogroms committed by Zelenyi, see Abramsom, *Prayer for the Government*, 117.
64. Telegram from Ataman Grigor'ev, TsDAHO f. 57 op. 2 spr. 266 ark. 8.
 65. Order by Ataman Grigor'ev, 20 March 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 267 ark. 161–62.
 66. Leaflet, 'Universal', TsDAHO f. 57 op. 2 spr. 398 ark. 2.
 67. Leaflet, 'Universal', TsDAHO f. 57 op. 2 spr. 398 ark. 2.
 68. 'Order No. 2', 20 May 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 265 ark. 31–34.
 69. Schnell, *Räume des Schreckens*, 258.
 70. Leaflet, 'Universal', TsDAHO f. 57 op. 2 spr. 398 ark. 2; 'Order No. 2', 20 May 1920 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 265 ark. 34.
 71. Leaflet, 'Seliane rabochie i krasnoarmeitsy', 11 June 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 264 ark. 116–18.
 72. Leaflet, 'Seliane rabochie i krasnoarmeitsy', 11 June 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 264 ark. 116–18.
 73. Report by Lebedin for Kondratov (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 268 ark. 4–5.
 74. Operative Report for Kyiv Military *okrug*, 14 April 1919 (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 263 ark. 220.
 75. Leaflet, 'Krest'iane rabochie i grazhdane' (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 268 ark. 39.
 76. Leaflet, 'K krasnoarmeitsam' (typed copy), TsDAHO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 268 ark. 36–38.
 77. Read, *War and Revolution*, 156.
 78. Kondrashin, 'Lozungy i programa', 87–88, 90–91; Landis, 'Waiting for Makhno', 218–19. The quotation is in the Kondrashin article on p. 87.
 79. Hrudnyts'kyi acted as a warlord in his own right, later allied himself to the anarchist insurgent commander Nestor Makhno and then took part in the All Ukrainian-Insurgent Committee that sought to coordinate the pro-UNR insurgent units in 1921. See: Report on the local situation up to 6 May 1919, TsDAVO f. 5 op. 1 spr. 17 ark. 65; 'Protokol zasidannia predstavnykiv Revoliutsiino-Povstanches'koi Armii Ukrainy (Makhnivtsiv) i Okruhemisariiatu Borot'bystiv', *Shliakh do voli*, no. 2, 27 November 1919, 4; Hrudnyts'kyi's Confession, HDA SBU f. 6 spr. 74760 tom. 3 ark. 78–86.
 80. Vladimir Buldakov also sees the warlords as a separate set of actors to the peasants who used the latter's propensity to violence. He writes that 'Undoubtedly, the requisitioning and punitive campaigns – of the Provisional Government, the Bolsheviks, the occupiers, the Whites – with time flowed into the consciousness of the peasants into a single series of the violence of "strangers" against the village. Various *bat'ki* and *atamany* could successfully manipulate the aggressiveness of the peasantry, accepting its almost zoological character' (Buldakov, *Krasnaia smuta*, 455). Many leaflets certainly presented the violence against the village by everyone from the Germans to the Bolsheviks as part of one continuum. However, as this article has shown, their success in channelling the resulting peasant aggressiveness was often only short-lived because of the tensions discussed here.
 81. For more, see Figes and Kolonitskii, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution*, 108–09, and Read, *War and Revolution*, 99–104, 106.
 82. Rosenberg, 'Paramilitary Violence', 29–30.
 83. Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas*, 12–13.
 84. Most of the Ukrainian nationalist parties created at the beginning of the 1917 Revolution proclaimed themselves to be socialist (see Borys, 'Political Parties'). In particular, the UNR sought to take a turn to the left in April 1919 with the creation of a socialist

- government under Borys Martos in order to garner support (see Bohachevsky-Chomiak, 'The Directory', 96–98). Cf. Christopher Read, *War and Revolution in Russia*, 128, 138, who assumes Ukrainian nationalism was inherently right wing.
85. Baberowski almost admits this himself. He acknowledges that the dehumanisation of the victim precedes violence, yet does not explain how this can take place without reference to ideas or the categories they create. Baberowski, 'Einleitung', 15.
86. Schnell, *Räume des Schreckens*, 364.

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