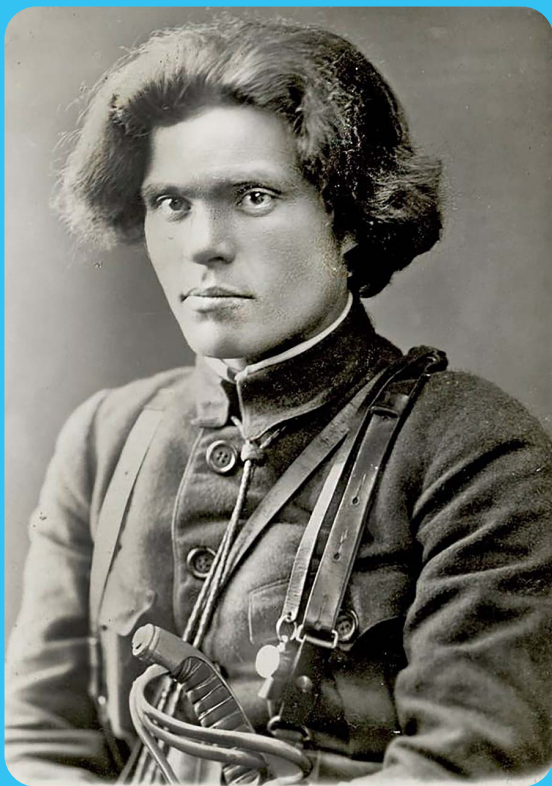


# The Makhnovshchina and Its Aftermath



*Documents from  
the movement  
and its survivors*

*From V. Voline's introduction to Peter Arshinov's History of the Makhnovist Movement:*

“The very term ‘Makhnovshchina’ acquires, in the work of this author, a broad and almost symbolic meaning. The author uses this term to describe a unique, completely original and independent revolutionary movement of the working class which gradually becomes conscious of itself and steps out on the broad arena of historical activity. The author considers the Makhnovshchina one of the first and most remarkable manifestations of this new movement and, as such, contrasts it to other forces and movements of the revolution. This underlines the fortuitous character of the term ‘Makhnovshchina.’ The movement would have existed without Makhno, since the living forces, the living masses who created and developed the movement, and who brought Makhno forward merely as their talented military leader, would have existed without Makhno. Even if the movement had had another name and its ideological orientation had been different, its essence would have been the same.”

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**Nestor Makhno  
Galina Kuzmenko  
Peter Rybin  
Vsevolod Voline**

# **The Makhnovshchina and Its Aftermath**

“Even a small group of people, weak in strength but strong in spirit, inspired by a great idea, can achieve great things.”

—*G. Kuzmenko*

**Black Cat Press  
Edmonton, Alberta**



# **The Makhnovist Movement and Its Aftermath**

by Nestor Makhno, Galina Kuzmenko, Peter Rybin, and  
Vsevolod Voline

Translated by Malcolm Archibald and Paul Sharkey.

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Cover graphic: in April, 1919, Nestor Makhno  
was photographed in the studio of F. E. Fain in  
Mariupol, shortly after the city was captured  
from the Whites.

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## Translator's Foreward

The Ukrainian peasant Anarchist Nestor Makhno (1888–1934) tried to write his memoirs in exile, and while he completed several manuscripts, was unable to continue the narrative beyond the end of 1918. But from his occasional writings (articles and letters) it is possible to learn more about his activities during the civil war (1918–1921). He also provided much of the material for Peter Arshinov's "official" history of the Makhnovist movement, including a text in epistolary form that describes his campaigning in 1921.<sup>1</sup> The most substantial piece of writing by Makhno other than his memoirs is his critique of the Soviet scholar M. A. Kubanin's history of the Makhnovist movement. This document, originally published in France as a brochure of about 20,000 words, is provided in translation in the current work.

Makhno's critique of Kubanin raised the ire of his former associate Vsevolod Voline (1883–1945) and the two Anarchists engaged in a pamphlet war; these bibliographic rarities are also included in the present volume. Voline outlived Makhno and managed to get the final word in the last essay in this volume, published for the first time.

Makhno's partner Galina Kuzmenko also left a substantial volume of writings about the civil war period which is little known other than her famous diary for February–March, 1920. The diary is translated here along with another of her texts ("The Death of My Father") that gives a picture of everyday life in revolutionary Ukraine.

Other than Galina's diary, the only diary of the Makhnovists to survive is by the anarcho-syndicalist Peter Rybin, who worked in the cultural-educational section of the Insurgent Army in the fall of 1920. His diary is reproduced in translation as well.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement (1918–1921)*, (Detroit/Chicago, 1974). Makhno's letter is found at pages 200–207.

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Vsevelod Voline, *Makhno. Contribution aux études sur l'énigme de la personnalité*, Vernon Richards Papers, F 166, International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam).

The translations of Peter Rybin's *Diary* and Galina Kuzmenko's *Death of My Father* were previously published online by the Kate Sharpley Library in a slightly different form. ([www.katesharpleylibrary.net](http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net))

Thanks to the University of Alberta Library for preserving Makhno's response to Kubanin; and to the International Institute for Social History (Amsterdam) for preserving the pamphlets by Makhno and Voline, as well as Voline's "enigma" text.

# **The Makhnovshchina and Its Erstwhile Allies—the Bolsheviks**

**A Response to M. Kubanin's Book  
“The Makhnovshchina”**

**by Nestor Makhno**



## Introduction to the Translation

In the 1920s a number of books and brochures about the Makhnovist movement were published in the Soviet Union. These works generally depicted the movement as *kulak*-based and ultimately reactionary, characterized by banditry and antisemitism. The response of the Makhnovists was to publish material intended to refute these charges, although they were hardly in a position to mount a full-scale propaganda campaign. The writings of Makhno himself in exile followed this apologetical strain. It did not help matters that he also had to defend his movement from fellow Anarchists who accused it of antisemitism and excessive violence.

An unusually serious Soviet treatment of the Makhnovist movement was the book **The Makhnovshchina**<sup>[1]</sup> by the Soviet agronomist Mikhail I. Kubanin. By carrying out a thorough study of the social and economic nature of the region where the Makhnovists were active, he was able to prove that their movement was neither antisemitic nor *kulak*-based. But Kubanin's analysis is constrained within the framework of Marxist-Leninist ideology, and while it draws on archival documents difficult to access even today, has more than its share of distortions of facts and rigid application of Leninist doctrine.

Makhno considered Kubanin's book sufficiently important to require a detailed critique. He found little to quarrel about in Kubanin's discussion of the economic basis of the movement, although he denied that the movement was incapable of expanding beyond a certain region of Left-bank Ukraine. Rather he was concerned to correct a number of factual errors and distortions found in the book.

Of particular interest to Makhno was Kubanin's use of the diary attributed to his wife, Galina Kuzmenko, described by Makhno as "a brazen Bolshevik forgery." With some justification, he complains:

"If it were anything other than that, how come they denied themselves the opportunity to photograph it and reprint it in the press?"

In fact after Kubanin's book appeared, the diary was locked away in a Moscow archive for 70 years, and while somewhat more accessible today, it has yet to be published in its original language (Ukrainian) in a manner that meets scholarly standards.

In 1968 the Soviet historian Sergei N. Semanov asked Galina about the diary, and she replied:

"Nestor very much wished that the history of the movement be recorded.

1 M. I. Kubanin, **Махновщина. Крестьянское движение в степной Украине в годы Гражданской войны** [The Makhnovshchina. A Peasant Movement in Steppe Ukraine during the Years of the Civil War], (Leningrad, 1927).



As part of the staff there was a high school student whose job was to keep a diary; this material was then handed over to Arshinov. I also kept a diary in a notebook I borrowed from Fenya Gayenko. She was a young woman, Lev Zadov's mistress, and on the first page of the notebook her name was written, but the entries were written by me. One day Fenya and I were travelling along a road in a cart when . . . Red cavalry appeared. They didn't touch us, but unharnessed the horses, leaving their own, worn-out nags. A suitcase with papers, including the diary, was in another cart, which they seized. Then some Soviet newspaper published an article about a diary belonging to Makhno's wife Feodora Gayenko. Arshinov angrily denied the authenticity of the diary, but in fact it was being kept by me."<sup>[2]</sup>

By the time Makhno was writing his critique of Kubanin, his marriage had already broken down and the couple were living apart. He went on believing that the diary was a forgery, and indeed there were distortions in the published versions (translations from Ukrainian to Russian) which could easily give rise to doubts about the genuineness of the document.

Makhno was also incensed by Kubanin's comments on the *kontrrazvedka*, the Insurgent Army's intelligence service, based on the protocol of the interrogation of Voline while he was a prisoner of the Bolsheviks in 1920. Unfortunately this document has still not been published, although it has been consulted by a few scholars. Makhno's relations with Voline had deteriorated over a number of years and by the time Kubanin's book appeared, the two Anarchists were constantly at loggerheads. Kubanin's provocation resulted in the exchange of pamphlets reproduced elsewhere in this volume.

\* \* \* \* \*

Who was Makhno's antagonist—Mikhail Kubanin? Born in 1898 in a village in Yekaterinskaya *gubernia*, like Makhno, he attended a technical high school. During the civil war (1917–1921), he served in the Red Army in Ukraine as a regimental commissar. After the civil war, he continued his education, becoming an agronomist, and writing *The Makhnovshchina* (1926).

In an application for an academic position in 1930, he mentioned that he had been an Anarchist in 1918. In the same year, he was sent on a mission to the United States to study vegetable production.

In 1934 Kubanin completed the requirements for a doctorate in economics, and was able to pursue a successful career as an economist, surviving Stalin's terror. But not for long. A former member of the Left Opposition and a former Anarchist who had been abroad, Kubanin was doomed. The final straw came when he was incriminated by testimony of the Soviet

2 S. N. Semanov, *Махно. Судьба атамана*. [Makhno. The Fate of an ataman.], (Moscow, 2004), p. 220.

agronomist Nikolai Vavilov.

From the protocol of the interrogation of N. I. Vavilov, April 23, 1941:<sup>[3]</sup>

Q. Do you happen to know Mikhail Ilich Kubanin?

A. Mikhail Ilich Kubanin, who was working prior to my arrest as an agronomist-economist in the economics institute of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, I knew approximately from 1927.

\* \* \* \* \*

Q. Did you know about Kubanin's visit abroad?

A. I was aware that approximately around 1930 KUBANIN was sent by the Narkomzem [People's Commissariat of Agriculture] of the RSFSR [Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic] to America to study economics and vegetable growing, after which he wrote the book "The Economics of Vegetable Growing in the USA."

Q. Did you give letters of recommendation to KUBANIN before his trip to America in 1930?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. For whom were these letters intended and for what purpose did you give them to KUBANIN.

A. As far as I can remember, the letters of recommendation I wrote were addressed to the head of the Bureau of the Plant Industry of the USA—TAYLOR, and a senior specialist in agricultural statistics of the USA—BEKKER. The purpose of these letters was to solicit aid for KUBANIN in the scientific work that he would be conducting in America.

Q. Did KUBANIN tell you about delivering these letters of recommendation?

A. I don't recall.

Q. Did you have any conversations with Kubanin about the results of his trip to America and his impressions about the state of agriculture in the USA?

A. Upon his return from America, KUBANIN told me that he was very pleased with the results of his trip, since he got a lot done and collected a lot of material for his scientific work. KUBANIN said that he learned a lot about farming, and, in general, he spoke enthusiastically about the state of agriculture in the USA.

Q. It is known to the investigating authorities that you had conversations with KUBANIN of a political nature. Why are you concealing this?

A. I met with KUBANIN only very rarely and I don't recall any conversations between us on political subjects. I remember only that in 1930 when N. P. MAKAROV was arrested, KUBANIN told me that something should be done to help MAKAROV, or at least mitigate his situation. There were no other conversations of a political nature between KUBANIN and myself.

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3 The protocol can be found here: <http://istmat.info/node/37089>.

- Q. When was the last time you saw KUBANIN and what was the nature of this meeting?
- A. The last time I saw KUBANIN was in late 1938 or early 1939 when I ran into him in a corridor at the Academy of Sciences, but we didn't speak to one another.
- Q. What else can you say about KUBANIN?
- A. I was aware that KUBANIN was close to N. P. MAKAROV and A. I. MURALOV, former People's Commissar of Agriculture of the RSFSR, subsequently Deputy People's Commissar of Agriculture of the USSR. Concerning his political convictions, so far as I know he was close to the Labour Peasant Party.

On April 23, 1941, Kubanin was expelled from the Communist Party; on April 28 he was fired from his job as an economist; and on May 5 he was arrested. The journal that published his articles, *Problems of Economics*, was closed down. On October 13, 1941, Kubanin was shot. There is some evidence that Stalin himself interfered in the case to ensure Kubanin's destruction.<sup>[4]</sup> Vavilov died in prison in 1943; having devoted his life to improving food production in the USSR, he may have starved to death. In 1956 all the accused in the case of the fictitious "Labour Peasant Party" were rehabilitated.

### Note on the translation

Nestor Makhno was not a skilled writer, although he liked to write and had a lot to say. He needed the assistance of expert editors, which was not always available to him. In his reply to Kubanin he is at times bombastic and repetitive and is partial to sentences that go on and on. Alexandre Skirda, who translated his major works into French, thought that Makhno's style derived from composing speeches—he was an effective orator. Skirda at times gave up the notion of trying to follow Makhno's writing too closely and instead summarized what he was trying to say.

Paul Sharkey, who has translated some of Skirda's works into English, was kind enough to provide Black Cat Press with his English translation of Skirda's French version of the reply to Kubanin: *La Makhnovchtchina et ses allies d'hier, les bolcheviks*.<sup>[5]</sup> Generally I'm uneasy about the sequence of translations—Russian to French to English—because it almost inevitably leads to distortions and outright errors; Skirda was apparently of the same opinion. But in working with Paul's translation, I found so much to admire in his rendition of the text, that I have tried to retain as much as possible of his translation, without sacrificing accuracy.

Malcolm Archibald, October, 2021

4 The agronomist N. P. Makarov (1886–1980) was repressed in 1930, but was able to resume his career in 1935. A. I. Muralov (1886–1938) was shot on the basis of a false accusation.

5 Nestor Makhno, *Mémoires et écrits*, ed. Alexandre Skirda, (Paris, 2009), pp. 425–457.

## Preface

A recent manifestation of Bolshevik literary creativity is the book of M. Kubanin titled *Makhnovshchina*.<sup>[6]</sup> This book was issued by a division of Istpart<sup>[7]</sup> under the direction of the veteran party worker-Bolshevik M. N. Pokrovsky.<sup>[8]</sup>

The source base of this book consists, on the one hand, of documents of the Bolshevik secret police (the former *Cheka*, now the GPU), and the written testimonies of Makhnovists and Anarchists—either those falling into the clutches of the secret police or those who allegedly voluntarily recanted and switched sides to the Bolsheviks.

Mind you, the author of this book does not limit himself to documents against the *Makhnovshchina* gleaned by the secret police. Being objective in the weighty Bolshevik sense of this word, he uses, for smearing the *Makhnovshchina* and me personally, items from Bolshevik publications directed against the *Makhnovshchina*, as well as articles by Anarchists and their fellow travelers from the camp of the “Nabatsi.”<sup>[9]</sup> He also uses excerpts from the diary of Makhno’s wife,<sup>[10]</sup> a work that is unfamiliar to me. And he also avails himself of the lies of a well known butcher of Ukrainian revolutionary villages, the Denikinist-Wrangelite General Slashchov, who has now gone over to

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6 M. I. Kubanin, *The Makhnovshchina: a Peasant Movement in Steppe Ukraine in the Years of Civil War*, (Leningrad, 1926)

7 Commission on the History of the October Revolution and the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks).

8 Mikhail Pokrovsky (1868–1932) was the most influential Soviet historian of the 1920s. In the 1930s his work came under attack and members of his “school” were persecuted.

9 The “Nabatsi” were members of the Confederation of Anarchist Organizations of Ukraine “Nabat” (1918–1921). Nabat (The Tocsin) was an urban-based organization that included various tendencies of Anarchism. Newspapers were published in several cities under the name *Nabat*.

10 Excerpts from the diary first appeared in 1920 (in Russian translation) in *The Struggle with Kulak Insurgency and Banditism* by Robert Eideman (1895–1937), a Red Army commander of Latvian origin. Kubanin quotes from a document in a Ukrainian archive, although it’s not clear if this is the original, a transcription, or a translation.

the Bolsheviks. . . .<sup>[11]</sup> And here and there in his book, by order of the Party, he inserts fictitious documents allegedly from my staff which he claims came into the hands of the Bolsheviks either through their intelligence operatives or directly from representatives of the *Makhnovshchina*.

The book was published in Leningrad by the Priboy publishing house, no indication of the date, 227 pages.<sup>[12]</sup>

Actually, this book is a specifically Bolshevik document, in strict harmony with the Bolsheviks' interpretation of the October Revolution and their own party's history. Owing to the purely subjective features of Bolshevism-Leninism, this study must of necessity bolster its position by Marxist methods of slandering those who do not accept Bolshevik party goals and the methods of action connected with them. These goals and methods are obstacles in the path of those who struggle for a free and independent life and for the realization and practice of their ideals.

On the one hand, Kubanin's book is an "essay" by a political scoundrel, unleashing a broadside against that which he neither understands nor tries to understand, but which is grasped by the broad working masses, cruelly persecuted by the political pricks of his party.

But parallel to this side of Kubanin's "essay," there is another side which, against the will of the author and the editor, M. N. Pokrovsky, reveals to the reader a number of points that are very valuable for us. Thus, for example, Kubanin tells us that the well known former head of the "soviet" government of Ukraine and the embodiment of Marxism-Leninism in that region—Christian Rakovsky—in his brochure *The Struggle for the Liberation of the Countryside*,<sup>[13]</sup> is lying.

11 Yakov Slashchov (1886–1929) was a White general who served under both White generalissimos Denikin and Wrangel and fought against Makhno in 1919. He returned to Russia in 1921 under an amnesty and taught in a military school before being assassinated in 1929.

12 Priboy was the first legal Bolshevik publishing house in Russia, founded in 1912. Kubanin's book was published in 1926 with a press run of 5,000.

13 Christian Rakovsky (1873–1941) was the most prominent member of the Soviet government of Ukraine in 1920, when his 59-page brochure was pub-

Or another admission:

“The *Makhnovshchina* was a progressive-revolutionary movement . . . it was comprised of the poor-to-middle peasantry and workers.”<sup>[14]</sup>

It became “counter-revolutionary and *kulak* in nature,” it seems, only when it began to struggle against Soviet power, against the Bolsheviks, etc.

Such an admission on the part of the Bolsheviks themselves, regardless of the false inferences they draw from it, enables a serious reader to reach their own correct conclusions about the Bolshevik lies and deceit in relation to the genuine revolutionary-liberatory movement of the Ukrainian toilers—the movement of the *Makhnovshchina*.

So we will not resort to Bolshevik methods and slander them. We will remain, as always, at our revolutionary post in dealing with jesuits—both open and hidden—and street hucksters who cover themselves with the mantle of one or other social ideal.

We will delve into the documents that are the building blocks of Kubanin’s *Makhnovshchina*. Throughout all the years of the *Makhnovshchina*, I devoted myself to it. Great sacrifices were made by many people in the name of the triumph of the ideas of this movement. So analyzing and critiquing this book is very important to me. Without my critique, I’m afraid that not only the Bolsheviks, but generally people who are well-versed in the history of the October Revolution, and the history of the *Makhnovshchina* in particular, will be confused and misled by someone else’s lies and wickedness. And it’s not only the confirmed enemies of the *Makhnovshchina* who are writing about it, but renegades who, as is well known, always adjust their lies to accommodate their new masters.<sup>[15]</sup> It’s my concern that well-meaning

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lished in Kharkov.

14 Kubanin, p. 46.

15 Makhno may have in mind here a book by I. Teper: **Makhno: from “United Anarchism” to the Feet of the Romanian King,**” (Kharkov, 1924). Teper, whose real name was Isaak Yakovlevich Gordeyev, worked in the cultural-educational section of the Insurgent Army, but at some point became an agent of the

readers will be misled by books like Kubanin's and publish their own erroneous works. The toiling classes deserve to know the real facts about the Great Russian-Ukrainian Revolution, and the social movements that took part in it.

*N. Makhno*

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Ukrainian GPU (secret police). He wrote a second book about the Makhnovist movement that was never published. Gordeyev's career in the GPU stalled in 1929 when he was arrested on an unknown charge.

## 1. The Capture of Yekaterinoslav and the Fables of the Bolsheviks about Their Role and the Role of their “Armed Forces” in this Event

Concerning the battles of the Insurgent-Makhnovist units with the troops of the Ukrainian Directory in December, 1918, the author of the book *Makhnovshchina* has little to contribute to this subject. What he has to say is mainly gleaned from the book of a certain Lebed,<sup>[16]</sup> a fellow party-member, and from the socialist newspaper *Nash Golos* [Our Voice]—according to Kubanin this newspaper was of Petliurist<sup>[17]</sup> orientation.

Before beginning to vilify the Insurgent-Makhnovists, Citizen Kubanin<sup>[18]</sup> cites a number of points from Lebed’s book, in particular:

“The Yekaterinoslav *gubrevkom*, composed of Bolsheviks and having its own troops, 1500 in number. . . . But all these forces, under the command of Kolos, were positioned along the railway line Prosyanyaya-Chaplino-Sinelnikovo, where they held the front against the attacking Whites.”<sup>[19]</sup>

If Kubanin’s *Makhnovshchina* was not—as I described it in the preface—a documentary study of the October Revolution and the history of the VKP(b),<sup>[20]</sup> it would be possible to pass in silence over the profound falseness and reckless tone of the Bolsheviks bragging about “their” underground *gubrevkom* with its armed forces under the command of Kolos. But once it’s a matter of the study of history, then truth is required and so I declare to posterity the following:

During this period, the underground *gubrevkom* was composed

16 D. Z. Lebed, *Results and Lessons from Three Years of the Anarcho-Makhnovshchina*, (Kharkov, 1921).

17 Symon Petliura (1879–1926) was Supreme Commander of the Ukrainian Army and head of the Ukrainian People’s Republic in 1918–1921. But in fact Kubanin clearly states that *Nash Golos* was a Menshevik organ.

18 Makhno denigrates Kubanin by referring to him as “Citizen” rather than “Comrade.”

19 Kubanin, p. 41.

20 All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks).



of working class Bolsheviks and Left SRs. I had a liaison from my own staff in this organization in the person of Comrade Aleksey Marchenko.<sup>[21]</sup>

The commander of the Bolshevik detachment Kolos<sup>[22]</sup> had at his disposal at this time between 250 and 300 men, who were not engaged in military action along any front, unless you count his using this detachment to drag elements of both the big bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie into the town of Sinelnikovo in order to extort money from them for his party. This was what was going on before I arrived at the outskirts of Yekaterinoslav and worked out a plan of a attack across the Dnieper bridge against the troops of the Directory.

There was no front at that time along the line Prosyanyaya-Chaplino-Sinelnikovo. Rather, the front was along the line Chaplino-Grishino-Ocheretyanaya, and it was held by detachments of the Insurgent-Makhnovists under the command of Comrade Petr Petrenko.<sup>[23]</sup>

Two weeks before this, Kolos showed up on this military sector of the Makhnovists, but his presence was completely superfluous, since the Makhnovists were able to successfully pressure the White bands in this broad sector without any help from him.

A no less gross distortion of the truth with the mixing-up and rearrangement of facts in regard to the roles of the Makhnovists and the Bolsheviks in the capture of Yekaterinoslav is another statement by Kubanin on page 41, where he emphasizes:

21 Aleksey Ivanovich Marchenko (1887--1921) was born in Gulyai-Polye into the family of a *batrak*. He joined the local Anarchists in 1917. In the World War, he served as a non-commissioned officer. In the Insurgent Army he held various command posts, before being killed in battle in January, 1921.

22 Grigoriy Avksentevich Kolos (1892--1937), a railway worker, joined the Bolshevik Party in 1917. In 1920-21 he commanded Red forces fighting the Makhnovists. Shot in 1937.

23 Petr Petrenko (1890--1921), an anarcho-communist from 1918, came from the family of a *batrak* in the village of Bolshe Mihailovka. In the World War he served as a lieutenant and was awarded a Cross of St. George. He held various command positions in the Insurgent Army before being killed in battle with Red cavalry on August 20, 1921.

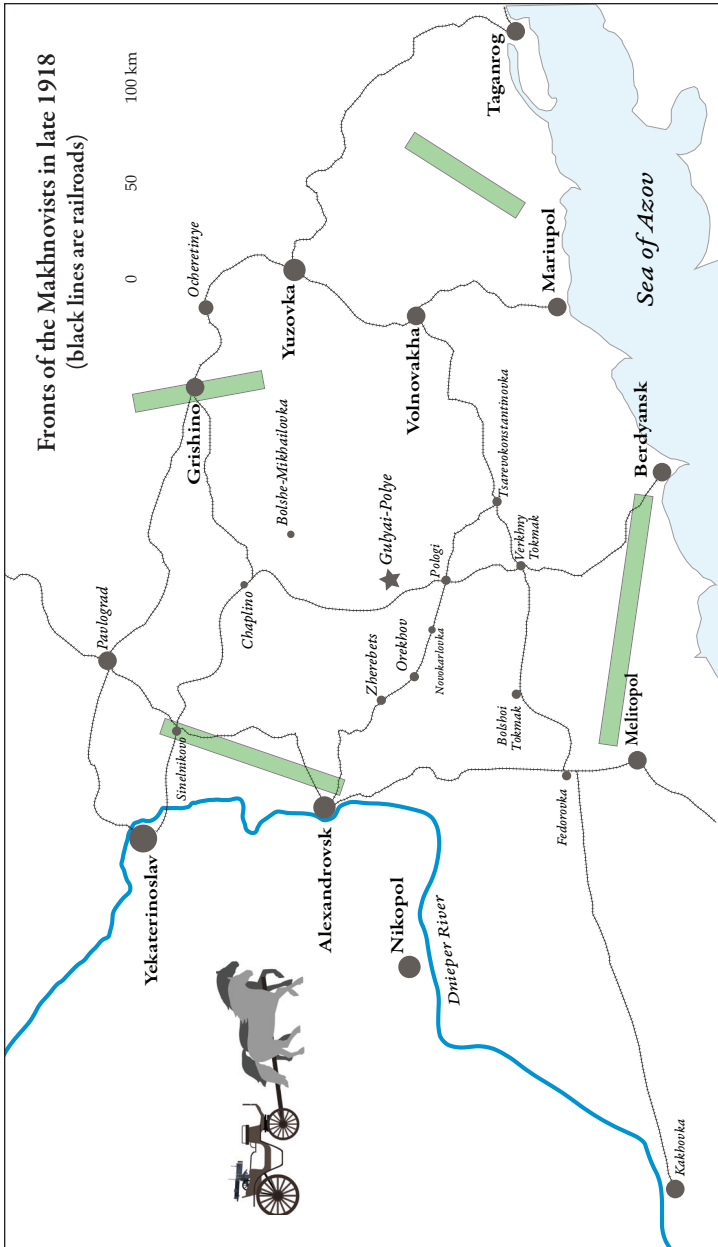
“Makhno and his forces obeyed the headquarters of the detachment [evidently Kolos’s—N. M.] and the Yekaterinoslav *gubrevkom* . . . Comrade Kolos assigned Makhno and part of his forces to serve under Teslenko to help with the attack on Yekaterinoslav, while the rest remained at the front.”

In my own complete notes about the movement of the *Makhnovshchina*, I will touch on this in detail. Now I will just say concerning Bolshevik support, that from December 27, 1918, when our unified forces (Makhnovists—including Anarchists, Bolsheviks, and Left SRs) began our assault on the city of Yekaterinoslav, the Bolsheviks had no independent units operating in the region. In fact, they didn’t have any armed forces operating between Yekaterinoslav and Odessa, Kiev, Poltava, or the Crimea. And from December 27, Kolos’s detachment, the Left SR detachment, and the whole *gubrevkom*, were subordinate in operational terms to me and my unified headquarters staff.

The battle for Yekaterinoslav lasted four days and four nights. And only at the end of the battle, or at least near its end, did the Bolshevik Party’s Provincial Committee arbitrarily execute an “end-around” and, by-passing my staff and our unified command, appointed their own members as commandant of the city, commissar of post and telegraph, commissar of railways, chief of the militia, and other bosses. All these Bolshevik Party flunkies either purchased or confiscated for themselves ministerial file cases, and with them under their arms showed up at my headquarters, which was located on the second floor of the Yekaterinoslav train station.

Let these flunkies tell the story about what I said to them when, upon learning that they had been chosen by their party’s Provincial Committee, I chased them not only out of the headquarters, but completely off the station floor. I will go into this in detail when I get a chance. Now I am limiting myself to what is necessary in responding to Kubanin.

At that time, the Bolsheviks clearly demonstrated that they wanted to become the political masters of the toilers of the whole of the Yekaterinoslav region. But since they didn’t have the forces



to raise themselves to this level, they tried to achieve this at the expense of the Makhnovist-Insurgents. They assigned some of their own party members to be in charge of the whole province, and presented them to the toilers as such, without asking the toilers about their wishes and whether they would accept these people and take orders from them. And they did this despite the fact that I did not allow these party bosses access to power. They sent a delegation headed by a certain Grisha to tell me that they “had received a dispatch from Moscow from V. I. Lenin, who remembers you, Batko Makhno, for the information you provided him about the retreat of the Red Guard and Anarchist detachments from Ukraine under the onslaught of the German armies.”<sup>[24]</sup> He confirms you as commander-in-chief of all the Soviet forces in the Yekaterinoslav region. On the basis of this dispatch from Comrade Lenin, we speedily announced the make-up of the Provincial Military-Revolutionary Committee with Nestor Makhno as the commander-in-chief of all the Soviet armed forces in the Yekaterinoslav region. The list of members of the Committee has already been published, as you know, in the Menshevik newspaper *Nash Golos*.<sup>[25]</sup>

The Anarchists, Left SRs, and even the Bolsheviks themselves, will recall what I said at the time about this appointment as commander-in-chief. I told them: there are no Soviet troops here. The main forces here are the revolutionary Makhnovist-Insurgents, whose goals are known and understood by everyone. They are fighting against State power in any way, shape, or form and for the freedom and independence of workers in pursuing the cause of the Revolution, especially in its Anarchistic tendencies—the expropriation for community use of all the tools of production and means of consumption and the safeguarding of these direct conquests of the toilers from encroachment by the State.

“And for me,” I added, “it’s completely incomprehensible how

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<sup>24</sup> Makhno describes his meeting with Lenin in June, 1918, in Volume 2 of his memoirs: **Under the Blows of the Counterrevolution**.

<sup>25</sup> *Nash Golos* (Our Voice) was published in Kharkov. Kubanin notes that coverage of these events in the Bolshevik press was lacking, which accounts for his citing a Menshevik publication (p. 41).

Comrade Lenin could have come up with the notion of appointing me as commander-in-chief of forces which are too slender in numbers to require a commander-in-chief.”

Then I proposed to the Anarchists, Bolsheviks, and Left SRs, that instead of the committee cooked up by the Bolshevik Party, we organize a Provisional Revolutionary Committee in conjunction with the Yekaterinovslav unionized workers and the Insurgents. This Committee would be put together on a party basis with five representatives from each of the political and trade union organizations. The tasks of this Committee would include: organizing the population of the city for the purpose of self-defence, and convening a provincial congress of peasants and workers which would chart a course for defending revolutionary gains and planning a new social system compatible with these gains.

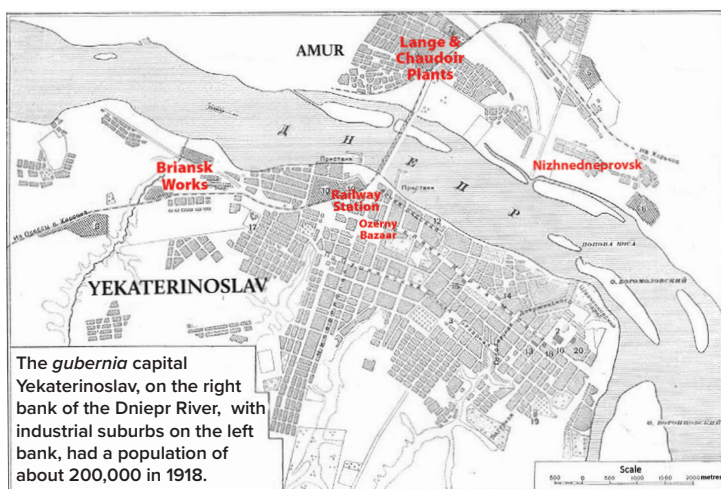
“It’s incumbent upon us revolutionaries,” I told the comrades present, “to try as hard as possible not only to connect organizationally with the toilers and draw them into meetings, assemblies, and congresses, but also to sway them as much as we can towards broadening and deepening the social character of the Revolution.”

The Bolsheviks, upon hearing me out, weren’t inclined to back down very far, but most of us didn’t feel a need to indulge them. So, in order not to be left out of the action groups being formed, they took part on an equal basis, along with all the other organizations, in the Provisional Revolutionary Committee proposed by me.

Also completely inaccurate is the item in the Menshevik newspaper *Nash Golos*, cited by Citizen Kubanin, about the actions of the Makhnovists and Bolsheviks in Yekaterinoslav, which says that a “provincial military-revolutionary committee was organized there, which included Makhno as a member and military commissar.”<sup>[26]</sup>

The reader is already aware that I was not a member of the underground Provincial *Revkom*, although I did have a political liaison

26 Kubanin, p. 43.



agent in it. In the Provisional *Revkom*, organized at my initiative on party bases, I not only was not a member, but also was not even present at its first meeting. During four days and nights of continuous fighting in the streets of the city, where I spent most of the time in the front lines without an opportunity to rest or sleep, I became so worn out that the entreaties of the Bolsheviks, Left SRs, Anarchists, and Insurgents could not suffice to drag me to a meeting of this committee. In a state of physical exhaustion, I collapsed onto a cot for several hours.

The Bolsheviks invited me to the second meeting of the Committee, in the hopes that I would exert an influence on the Insurgents and Anarchists, whose hostility to the Bolsheviks led to the inevitable failure of the latter to gain the post of chairperson for their own representative. The negative relations between the Bolsheviks and the Anarchists/Insurgents also threatened to deny the Bolsheviks the posts of vice-chairperson and secretary of the Committee in the elections.

Having revived somewhat, I went to the Committee to find out if all the worrying and hand-wringing of the Bolsheviks regarding their position on the *Revkom* corresponded to reality. I found that the Anarchists did not take part in the election of the chair-

person, while the trade unionists and peasant-Insurgents voted for an old, experienced comrade from the Left SRs, instead of the kid, quite lacking in initiative, put forward by the Bolsheviks. The position of secretary of the Committee was assigned to the Anarchists, while the Bolsheviks, without any discussion, were awarded the position of vice-chairperson.

Further in my conversations with the Bolsheviks, I became convinced that they were dissatisfied not only with the Anarchists and the Insurgents, but also with me, because I neglected to put pressure on the Insurgents and the Anarchists (at least the ones who listened to me) to support Bolshevik positions in the Committee. But since I was, first and foremost, a kind of revolutionary commander rather than a political puppet of the sort that is accustomed to arranging their own personal comfort by pleasing everyone, I didn't bow to the dissatisfaction of the Bolsheviks. And this freed me from engaging in unnecessary conversations on Committee issues.

The information that Kubanin draws wholly or in part from Lebed's book is also entirely false:

"Negotiations over the allocation of appointments took on the acute form of petty-minded haggling. The Bolsheviks were ready to decline [power, that is—NM] and appealed to the revolutionary consciences of the SRs and of Makhno."<sup>[27]</sup>

It must be plain from all of the above that it was the Bolsheviks who were haggling for a role on the Committee and no one else.

Similarly, the words that Kubanin puts in the mouth of the Bolshevik S. are a disgrace:

"Overnight, Makhno shot a number of looters, but hardly chosen at random; his 'sons' went unscathed."<sup>[28]</sup>

Actually, those guilty of any acts of pillage or violence were shot without any distinctions made. Obviously, to the immense shame of the Bolsheviks, the looters were mostly individuals hastily enlisted into their improvised Kaidatsky detachment, whom the

<sup>27</sup> Kubanin, p. 44.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

Bolsheviks themselves arrested and dubbed with the label “Makhnovists.” I was present in person at my headquarters when these individuals admitted that they had no idea as to the positions manned in the town by the Makhnovists, nor the names of their commanders and units. On the other hand, they were familiar with their own unit’s positions and their own officers, as well as the date when they enlisted in this unit and



*Roman Samokysh*

were issued with weapons. The Bolsheviks will remember as well as I do that to their great shame they were obliged to concede that these looters were, for the most part, their own fresh recruits who had to be killed. (My future writings will set out the details of the capture of Yekaterinoslav for all the world to learn.)

The conclusion that Kubanin draws from the reports from his party comrades—the Lebeds and company—to the effect that the Petliurist Colonel Samokysh<sup>[29]</sup> capitalized on the Anarchists’ haggling over power in order to drive the disunited Makhnovist forces out of Yekaterinoslav, is likewise inaccurate. Actually, had the Makhnovists really fallen apart without a fight during their occupation of the city, as he claims, we might wonder what the still united Bolshevik armed forces, about the numbers and quality of which Kubanin regales us, were doing to contest territory with the Directory’s troops—who were in cahoots with the White formations.

Here is what drove us out of Yekaterinoslav. When the Bolshevik Provincial Party Committee found out that its representatives had failed to secure appointments from the Revolutionary Committee which might have allowed them to enforce their dictatorial and police directives, they quietly made up their minds

**29** Roman Samokysh (1885–1971) fought in World War I as an officer in the armed forces of Austria-Hungary, before being captured by the Russians. In 1918 he helped organize the military forces of the Directory of the Ukrainian National Republic (UNR), headed by Symon Petliura.

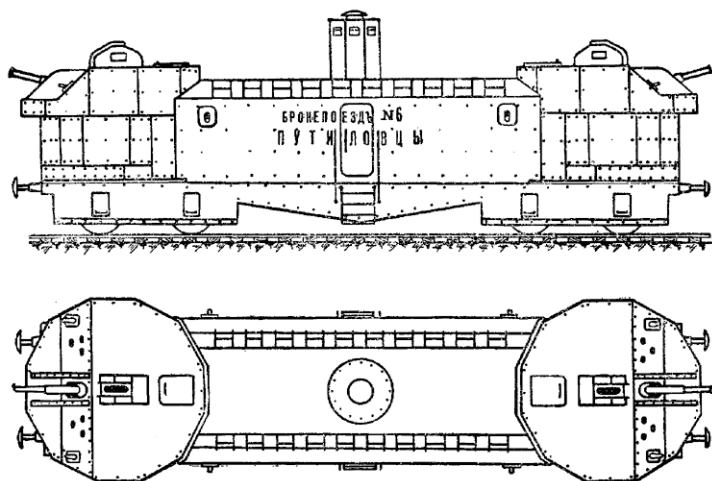


to turn on us, on the *Revkom*, on my staff, and on myself. If it were not for us, the Directory's troops would not have allowed anyone near the Dnieper bridge which the daring Makhnovist Insurgents crossed, some by train with Kalashnikov<sup>[30]</sup> after having captured the railway station in a surprise raid, and others following me in the capture of the armoured train guarding the far side of the bridge, an operation which required face-to-face combat, and turning the train's guns on the enemy.

Plainly the Bolshevik troops—and that includes the detachment of Kolos—were acting in concert with their Provincial Committee. Over four days and four nights of ferocious street fighting, that detachment for the most part stood off and then, once the enemy had been driven from the city, I myself dispatched it to the Yekaterinoslav–Verkhovtsevo railway line to monitor the beaten enemy's movements. Whereupon Kolos mounted an armoured platform and provided me with accurate information about the enemy's movements. But once it became known to everyone that the city's Revolutionary Committee was not under the control of his party comrades, Comrade Kolos began to pass on his intelligence belatedly or indeed severed all communications. When all is said and done, he let the Petliurist reinforcements—Colonel Samokysh's Galician Riflemen—get so close (on the Verkhovtsevo flank) that he did not leave himself enough time to alert me and then began to fall back with his detachment. I had this from his own lips once he was close to the Briansk factory (known these days as the Petrovsky works).

I caught on that there was something at the back of all this, although in the confusion of the moment, I could not determine what. Nevertheless, I made every provision to confront Samokysh's onslaught. At which point, the much-vaunted Bolshevik Novomoskovsk Regiment (which for reasons unknown to me Kubanin renames the 1<sup>st</sup> Soviet Regiment) of some 80–90 men from the town of Novomoskovsk under the command of

30 Aleksandr Kalashnikov (?—1920) was secretary of the Gulyai-Polye Group of Anarchists in 1917–1918. He held command positions in the Insurgent Army in 1919–1920 and was killed in battle in June, 1920.



*Armoured platform.*

Lantukh,<sup>[31]</sup> being charged with defending the streets leading from the Briansk works along with a good machine-gunner section, was panicked by its own practice rounds and scuttled across the Dnieper bridge, shooting into the air before dumping their rifles into the water. Their panic and flight took place around the railway station in full sight of the inhabitants, while the Makhnovists were on the other side of town and unable to shoot the panicked soldiers and their leaders.

Kolos and his detachment must remember that rout too, for, as soon as he realized what was happening, he hurriedly fell back to the approaches to the Dnieper bridge without forewarning me.

When I found myself stranded with my liaison unit and a few medics, with enemy shells and bullets flying all around the railway station, I instructed the commanders of the Insurgent-Makhnovists not to advance to engage the enemy but to hurry to take control of the bridge as the Petliurists might overrun it at any moment!

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31 Novomoskovsk was about 25 km northeast of the centre of Yekaterinoslav. The Red commander Lantukh wrote memoirs in the 1920s, and was shot in 1938.

And that, without too much superfluous detail, to be sure, is an accurate picture of the facts and circumstances that allowed Colonel Samokysh and other Directory commanders to stroll right up to Yekaterinoslav and retake the town with no great resistance from us.

## II. The Makhnovshchina and Its Struggle Against the German Occupation

As a grassroots, revolutionary mass movement, the *Makhnovshchina* rankles Kubanin. Thus he writes:

“The Makhnovists played an active part in the struggle against the region’s Germans. Furthermore, while occupying a position close to Chaplino, they disarmed German units retreating to Germany.” What we were after, he stresses, were “the arms, munitions and clothing of the beaten German army [Kubanin forgets to mention by whom it was beaten—NM], weakened and withdrawing from Ukrainian territory. In pursuit of these, the peasantry joined the struggle, entire villages at a time.”<sup>[32]</sup>

It’s true that the peasantry stood up to the German-*Hetmanist*<sup>[33]</sup> reaction and its main support, the counter-revolutionary 600,000-strong force of the Austro-German Expeditionary Corps. But who was it that stirred up the peasantry against that organized, disciplined, and better-armed counter-revolutionary force? Kubanin does not say. It was the group of Anarchist revolutionaries who put the liberation of the oppressed toilers above any partisan interest. Which was not what the Bolsheviks chose to do when they signed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with the emperors Wilhelm of Germany and Karl of Austria, affording those hangmen the right to overrun an entire revolutionary country—Ukraine—just as long as they did not direct their forces northwards against Russia and the Red powers-that-be.

But what of those objectives that Kubanin mentions? Let me state that the confiscation of Austro-German weaponry was a deliberate revolutionary act on the part of the peasant masses, perfectly in tune with their liberation struggle against the authority of *pomeshchik* and *kulak*, against the power of the State and its servants, whether bourgeois governments or socialist ones.

32 Kubanin, p. 45.

33 During the occupation of Ukraine in 1918 by the Germans and Austro-Hungarians, a puppet government was installed in Kiev headed by Pavel Skoropadsky, who assumed the title of *Hetman*, a borrowing from the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Throughout history, for as long as its enslavement has lasted, the Ukrainian peasantry has rejected the exploitation of the labour of others, has resisted external pressure, and has kept faith with the spirit of freedom. That spirit demolished the walls of the reaction at the time of the worker-peasant revolution and has opened up a broad bridgehead for the conquest of the widest possible rights. Which is how the peasantry's closeness to libertarian ideas was brought to light. And how, among the Ukrainian peasantry in particular, an understanding of revolution as a social instrument was developed and how the corresponding goals came to be embraced.

This craving for a radical revolution struck fear into politicians of every persuasion, as well as into certain Anarchists and Syndicalists awash with anti-peasant prejudices. Befuddled by city life where authoritarian and hierarchical principles ruled the roost, how could they have understood this driving force? Yet it was this force that informed the struggle and it was out of this struggle that the *Makhnovshchina* emerged before it earned the hatred of the Bolsheviks and the bourgeoisie.

Right up until the early days of the revolution, the toilers had endured shameful slavery under the yoke of the German industrialists and the *pomeshchiks*, as well as the Jewish and Russian factory-owners and bankers, abetted by the Russian and Ukrainian police. It was as a genuinely grassroots movement of the labouring people that the revolutionary *Makhnovshchina* rose up to defend their downtrodden rights in the face of the Austro-German reaction. It did likewise, first against the White Cossacks of the Don and Denikin and then against the counter-revolutionary Bolshevik dictatorship. And this in spite of its technical weakness—lack of weaponry—that on occasion curtailed its theatre of operations.

In keeping with the Bolshevik version of events, Kubanin depicts the *Makhnovshchina* as a passing phenomenon dropped by chance into the revolution and, for him, the very naming of its chief inspiration and guide—the Gulyai-Polye Peasant Anarcho-Communist Group—is out of the question. As for me, who

headed that group, the feeling is that Kubanin would have expelled me from it, had that been possible. It's easier for him to drag me through the mud, leaving him a little more free to spit on the movement. He hasn't a good word to say about me and snipes at me from every angle, insofar as his pen will allow.

"In the wake of the retreating Germans", he writes, "came the Whites . . . . The Makhnovist peasantry took them on as well. A front formed along a line connecting Pologi–Volnovakha–Bolshey Tokmak–Orekhov. Here Makhno, not for the first time, betrayed his Anarchism by adding the question of a compulsory draft to the agenda of a meeting of his headquarters and commanders. But the Anarchists present—Vengerov, Uralov, M. Chernyak<sup>[34]</sup> and others—opposed this and had it thrown out . . . . Makhno was relying on the peasant mind-set, but the Anarchist intellectuals, all in the name of their sacred precept of repudiating all compulsion, allowed the Whites to get the better of the Makhnovists."<sup>[35]</sup>

Here, Citizen Kubanin is telling the truth when he reports that the Makhnovist peasantry joined the fight against the Whites when, flying in the face of normal Bolshevik practice, he accurately identifies the front line held by the Makhnovists against the Whites. But only to peddle yet more nonsense about me regarding some Anarchist campaign against a compulsory draft which he has cooked up, and for which I am supposed to have been lobbying. His aim in this being to draw a veil over the crime committed by his own party and by the Red Army headquarters at the time of the Denikinist army's temporary victory over the *Makhnovshchina*.

Neither I nor my staff nor the commanders of the Makhnovist army were aware of any initiative I am alleged to have taken in

34 Vengerov, from a poor Jewish family, served on the secretariat of the Nabat Confederation of Anarchists of Ukraine. Mikhail Uralov, a Russian worker and sailor, held command positions in the Insurgent Army in 1919. Max Chernyak (1883–after 1930), a returnee from the USA, where he lived in Brooklyn and worked in a barber shop, also held command positions in the Insurgent Army.

35 Kubanin, p. 45.

regard to compulsory mobilization. Any more than we heard tell of some Anarchists who had joined us—M. Chernyak and Vengerov, in particular—supposedly making a speech attacking me in front of the commanders, something which the latter would never have countenanced from any birds of passage.

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At the time of which Kubanin is speaking, the Makhnovist army numbered more than 30,000 combatants and more than 70,000 reservists, organized in every village and hamlet and in touch with local staff sections. Since we were short of arms, the latter looked after their domestic chores, on constant stand-by to relieve front-line units at the drop of a hat. The Makhnovists could call on enough revolutionary peasant volunteers to take on Denikin. But the Bolshevik party and its “soviet” state were so afraid of the revolutionary Ukrainian peasantry and its organizing on its own initiative under the banner of the *Makhnovshchina*, that they pulled out all the stops in order to sabotage the supplies of shells, rifles, and ammunition provided for in our agreement. It was chiefly this that gave the Denikinist generals the whip hand for a time in the spring of 1919.

It would not require much ferreting through the archives of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Red Army to unearth my unceasing requests for cartridges and shells. As for rifles, the Bolshevik government never sent us a single one; we had taken ours off the Germans, the supporters of the *Hetman*, and the Denikinists. It turned out also that the cartridges sometimes were misdirected for two or three weeks at a time. Hadn’t I warned the Red command that the staff of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army had evidently been infiltrated by Denikinist agents and weren’t some actually uncovered at one point? But by then the damage had already been done. Not having the documentation to hand, I cannot say anything more on that score,<sup>[36]</sup> but

36 Some of the documentation Makhno refers to has been published in V. Danilov and T. Shanin, ed., **Nestor Makhno. The Peasant Movement in Ukraine 1918–1921. Documents and Materials.** (Moscow, 2006). On April 19, 1919, Makhno sent a telegram to his superior officer A. Ye. Skachko asking that his brigade be relieved, “for with Italian rifles without bullets, and without machine guns against the enemy’s dozens of machine guns, we can’t

Kubanin and his confederates must be well aware of the reasons why the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army was re-launched as the 14<sup>th</sup> once Voroshilov<sup>[37]</sup> assumed command.

And wasn't it because of provocation by the Red bigwigs that the Makhnovists were left cartridge-less in their trenches for two or three weeks at a stretch and sustained countless losses?

True, it's difficult for Bolshevik hacks to do the necessary research and tackle the most serious issues relating to the *Makhnovshchina*, and above all to give close scrutiny to the hostile action mounted behind our backs by our revolutionary allies, to wit, their very own party! Apparently, they were not issued with any directives to that end and therefore they had to write as much as possible about the all-powerful central command of the Red Army so that its brilliance would not be forgotten. And so Kubanin carries on with his own cock-and-bull story:

"The detachment would have been crushed, had not the Red Army, arriving from the North, stepped in at precisely that point . . . ."<sup>[38]</sup>

Hear that, reader? A detachment! Yet a few lines earlier the talk was of "the forces manning the Pologi-Volnovakh-Bolshoy Tokmak-Orekhov front." Now, though, we have a mere detachment under threat of annihilation, but rescued by the Red Army!

But let's leave that to one side; let's try to objectively examine the Red Army's arrival in Ukraine in January-February, 1919. It comprised a brigade of 12 armoured trains commanded by the sailor L.,<sup>[39]</sup> plus a detachment of infantry. These two elements were placed under the command of Dybenko.<sup>[40]</sup>

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hold out." (Danilov and Shanin, p. 122.) The Makhnovist brigade had been issued 3,000 Italian rifles.

**37** Kliment Voroshilov (1881-1969), Soviet political and military leader, was a commissar in the government of Soviet Ukraine in early 1919, as well as holding military posts.

**38** Kubanin, p. 46.

**39** Semyon Mikhailovich Lepetenko (1899-1938). A Bolshevik from 1917, he wrote a memoir about his command of a brigade of armoured trains. He was shot in 1938.

**40** The sailor Pavel Efimovich Dybenko (1889-1938) joined the Bolshevik





In March, 1919, the Bolshevik commander Pavel Dybenko posed with Nestor Makhno at the Dolgintsevo railway station in Krivy Rog, Ukraine.

They had made the trip from Kursk to Kharkov without having to fight, the Insurgent peasants having cleared a path for them. The Anarchist Cherednyak's detachment had occupied Kharkov. From Kharkov to the Lozova railway station, the Insurgent peasants had again cleared a passage for them, mainly under the leadership of Anarchists and Left SRs. From Lozova as far as Sinelnikovo and beyond, out as far as Chaplino—Grishino—Volnovakh—Verkhniy and Bolshoy Tokmak, the entire territory had been liberated from the Germans and Whites by the Makhnovist-Insurgents.

So the revolutionary toilers had smoothed the way for the Bolsheviks. The only assistance they could have rendered us Makhnovists was to provide us with cartridges, artillery pieces, and shells. However, they had no field artillery nor did they have any rifles to spare. And they gave us only 100,000 cartridges. As for us, placing the revolution's interests above our ideological differences, we raised no objection to our detachments—the 4<sup>th</sup> and

Party in 1912. He owed his general-rank appointment possibly to his Ukrainian name and the influence of his wife Alexandra Kollontai, a prominent Bolshevik. Dybenko was shot in 1938.

6<sup>th</sup> Insurgent Regiments—being posted to the Crimea to fight under Dybenko's command.

The facts above, which are unanswerable, prompt me to ask Citizen Kubanin and the whole Bolshevik leadership: in this specific instance, who was helping whom? Who is it that should be counted as the political adventurer defaulting on his most elementary obligations so as to misrepresent the history of the revolution? Was the political adventurism to be found on the Makhnovist side? Let the reader be the judge of that. We stuck to the course of revolution, loyal to our purposes—the purposes of the oppressed and the exploited. We can be taken to task for stumbling. For having been ruthless or too soft on our enemies. But at no point were we ever traitors, oppressing the toilers. We sacrificed our lives in a frontal, direct confrontation with all manner of tyrants, taking the initiative and summoning the toilers to a free and radiant future for the good of mankind's present and future fortunes. Achievable we contend, only through the effort and steadfast determination of the oppressed—the peasants, workers, and working intelligentsia—without going to the extremes of making them into idols with some sort of entitlement to oppress others in their turn.

### III. The Makhnovist Army and Its Behaviour Towards the Jews, according to Kubanin

On page 163 of his book, Kubanin turns to the subject of anti-semitism. He writes:

“In relation to the Jews in 1918–1919, neither the Makhnovist army overall nor its leading cadres displayed any antisemitic tendencies.”

Here Kubanin is completely correct. But I have to add that Makhnovist revolutionaries have never been antisemitic, neither prior to 1918–1919 nor since, right up to the present day. Through lies and cowardice, a number of politicians—many of them drawn from the family of the Jewish people—have peddled the worst slanders about the Makhnovists: they have charged us with the blackest misdeeds against the Jewish people, depicting us as its enemies and alleging that we assaulted and abused peaceable Jews in Ukraine. Whereas in actuality we always executed the perpetrators of any such deeds. And it is representatives of the Jewish people that level these criminal accusations against us! Which gives us the moral right to hold in contempt hucksters who, in the full knowledge that we are not pogromists, persist in denouncing us as such. And how could we not bear a grudge against such quick minds, well able to reflect and reason, capable of researching the matter of the revolution and its relation to Ukrainian reality, but who persist in suggesting that, when all is said and done, we just might have perpetrated or encouraged such actions? They are drawn from the most cultivated sectors of Jewish society. Having read my *Appeal to the Jews of Every Country*,<sup>[41]</sup> and my article on *The Makhnovshchina and Anti-Semitism*,<sup>[42]</sup> they should feel a compulsion to verify the facts set out in both texts and proclaim the truth loudly and clearly to the Jewish people. But not one of them has done so thus far, nor yet

41 *Dielo Truda*, № 23-24 (April–May, 1927), pp. 8-10.

42 *Dielo Truda*, № 30-31 (November–December, 1927), pp. 15-18. Both of Makhno's articles about the Jewish question are available in English translation in *The Struggle Against the State and Other Essays*, ed. Alexandre Skirda, (AK Press: San. Francisco/Edinburgh), 1996.

stopped heaping calumny upon us.

Kubanin writes (on the very next page, p. 164):

“When Kamenev paid a visit to Gulyai-Polye (Kamenev, Voroshilov, Mezhlauk, and Dyshlovsky came to see me in May, 1919—NM),<sup>[43]</sup> the very first thing he saw at the railway station was a placard, hand-written by one Insurgent: ‘Beat the Jews and save Russia!’ Makhno had the man shot for that monarchist slogan.”

Which is true, in part: I did have the author of that placard shot, but it was not at the Gulyai-Polye railway station nor in Kamenev’s presence. The latter saw neither the placard nor the scene in question: it was I myself who briefed him on the dismal facts. Kubanin is deliberately mistaking the place and timing of the incident. His aim is to tarnish Gulyai-Polye’s revolutionary honour and its inhabitants, but all he has managed to do is lose his own honour as a worthy Bolshevik, for neither Kamenev nor those accompanying him can claim to have been present at the time the incident occurred. It was a worker from the railway station in Pologi who had written the placard, a fellow by the name of Khizhny (as to his political affiliations, they are well known to the entire working population of Pologi—he and his elder brother were Bolsheviks) and he had erected it at the Kirilovka station on the Chaplino-Berdyansk line. Moreover, he was shot at that location.

Kubanin links this incident to the pillaging of the Gorkaya Jewish settlement<sup>[44]</sup> and to the murder of several Jewish families by Insurgents who had been granted a month’s furlough and were under the direct authority of the pro-Bolshevik district commissar in Novouspenovka. Besides, the Bolsheviks themselves had insisted on his appointment to that post (which the local population considered unnecessary) and I had him shot, too, for this

43 At that time, Lev Kamenev was one of the five members of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Russian Soviet Republic; Kliment Voroshilov was Commissar of Internal Affairs of Soviet Ukraine; Ivan Mezhlauk was supervising logistics for the Red Army; Dyshlovsky is unknown, but Makhno may have meant Semyon Dukelsky, a prominent *Chekist*.

44 Also known as Nazarovka, this settlement was located about 25 km north-east of Gulyai-Polye. Founded in 1859, it had a population of about 450 in 1919.

infamy. Kubanin checks nothing—when even non-Makhnovists could have enlightened him—and makes do with slander:

“In the spring of 1919, a 22-man detachment from Novouspenovka under the command of Makhnovist staff member Dermenzhi, carried out a pogrom in the Jewish settlement of Gorkaya . . . . But Makhno, not antisemitic himself, and who condemned antisemitism in his own press, displayed no enthusiasm for pursuing his close collaborators . . . . In spite of Dybenko, who was insisting that Dermenzhi be punished for the pogrom, Makhno never lifted a finger.”<sup>[45]</sup>

In this particular instance, I am more galled than ever by Kubanin’s cheek. It speaks of the vitriol of the Bolshevik bigwigs who sought to inspire among the Jews—supporters of a very understandable thirst for vengeance against the enemies of their people—anger and hatred towards myself. Kubanin is blatantly playing the provocateur here. Not that he is the first. This was also the case with a Jewish Anarchist from the renowned American Yiddish newspaper *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, one Yanovsky.<sup>[46]</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the murder of Simon Petliura, there was an upsurge in Jewish nationalist zeal, in which a number of right-wing and left-wing elements alike had a hand. Yanovsky was very well aware that the real pogromists were strolling around the capitals of Europe unmolested, but he was in need of a culprit so as to alert the entire world to the tragedy experienced by a segment of the Jewish population in Ukraine. In his article *The Assassination of S. Petliura: My View*,<sup>46</sup> he wrote of the Makhnovists:

“Of course, Trotsky is not answerable for the pogroms carried out by the Red Army. But Petliura is not the sole culprit. The bands led by Makhno are also guilty of spilling Jewish blood.”

I do not know for sure by whom or how these charges have been raised at a time when, in France, every single Jew was itching to act as his people’s avenger and strike at just about anybody and

<sup>45</sup> Kubanin, pp. 164-165.

<sup>46</sup> Saul Yanovsky (1864–1939) was born in Pinsk (now in Belarus) and emigrated to the USA in 1885. Starting in 1890, he edited major Anarchist periodicals in the Yiddish language, first in London, then in New York.

was dreaming of becoming a hero—another Schwartzbard.<sup>[47]</sup> Yanovsky's opinion is the opinion of a provocateur, but a provocateur of quite a different stripe than Kubanin. Yanovsky imagines that History will not reveal the truth about his "opinions" concerning "Makhnovist pogroms," and so he ventures to expose the meanness of human nature by expressing his views from afar about that which he knows not, instead of remaining silent.

On the other hand, Kubanin's hostility towards the enemy is barely disguised and his purpose is deliberately to spit on the Makhnovist movement and, if there were hired killers around to go out and kill Makhno, he would willingly sing their praises and congratulate himself with a clear conscience that the falsehoods emanating from his pen would have served some purpose.

As to the looting of the Gorkaya Jewish settlement, I have already explained myself in the article *The Makhnovshchina and Antisemitism*.<sup>[48]</sup> Of course, at that time I never suspected that among the Bolshevik ranks there were not only writers of the *smenovekhovtsy* type—Veresaev, Pilnyak, and others<sup>[49]</sup>—lying to the Russian toilers about Makhno and the *Makhnovshchina* in their own works, but also Party historians who would disregard reliable documents about the relation of Makhno and the *Makhnovshchina* towards pogroms against Jews. Now I notice that we are dealing with one such here in the shape of Kubanin and I want to set the record straight.

Kubanin's assertion that Dybenko demanded that I punish Comrade Dermenzhi for staging a pogrom is completely untrue. And here is why: (1) At the time of the pogrom in Gorkaya, on the night of 12 May, 1919, I was already a divisional commander and answerable not to Dybenko, but to the high command of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Red Army directly. So Dybenko could not have given

47 The anarchist Sholem Schwartzbard assassinated Symon Petliura in Paris in 1926. Schwartzbard was acquitted following a sensational trial.

48 See footnote № 42.

49 The *Smenovekhovstvo* movement (from *smena vekh*, literally, change of sign-posts) among Russian emigrés promoted reconciliation with the Soviet regime. Vikenty Veresaev (1867–1945) and Boris Pilnyak (1895–1938) were popular writers in the early Soviet Union.

me any orders. (2) Comrade Dermenzhi<sup>[50]</sup> had been a tried and tested revolutionary ever since the mutiny on the Potemkin, on which he had been a serving seaman. In 1919, since he was not as yet a member of my staff and, besides, not being a native of Novouspenovka, he could not have been in command of that detachment of furloughed local Insurgents, much less ordered a pogrom. Being in charge of telephone and telegraph communications along the Front, he could not in any case have absented himself and been anywhere near the Gorkaya settlement, which lay some 80 or 90 kilometres behind the front lines. (3) Finally, those who took part in the pogrom, namely, 15 men, with the district commissar at their head, were tracked down on my instructions and arrested on the very same day.

The panel which tried them was made up of five people: three Makhnovist Insurgents, the Bolshevik Petrov from the Politburo of the Red Army, and his intelligence agent Nikolai Chubenko (brother of Alexey Chubenko, the Anarchist). Its determination was that all 15 should be sent to the front lines, where they would exculpate their guilt by fighting in the front ranks against Denikin. But this decision required my review, and I rejected it, insisting that the case be re-examined in my presence. I then insisted to the panel on May 13, 1919, that those responsible for the foul deed, committed on liberated territory, should be condemned to death. I also said as much at a gathering of the citizens of Gulyai-Polye. My motives were those of a revolutionary Anarchist, conscious of my own responsible role in the movement, which affected the lives of millions of peasants.

The guilty Insurgents were transported by automobile to the outskirts of Gulyai-Polye and shot as murderers who had destroyed the innocent lives of Jewish families in the colony of Gorkaya.

That decision was a tough one, but appropriate, given the reality in which we, the Makhnovists, were operating. Our friends and enemies alike were aware of this. It seems that Jewish so-

**50** The anarcho-communist Dermenzhi (~1880–1921), an ethnic Moldovan, held a succession of command posts in the Makhnovist Insurgent Army. Makhno is mistaken about his involvement in the Potemkin mutiny. (Thanks to A. V. Dubovik for this information.)

cial and political activists, both in the USSR and abroad, as well as Kubanin, were the only ones not to know of this dramatic incident. And they, in the most despicable form, employ various kinds of vile fabrications concerning the antisemitic, pogrom-perpetrating character of the *Makhnovshchina* and its encouragement by Makhno himself. Thereby they ascribe someone else's criminal acts to the best peasant revolutionaries, in the process making use of the most refined jesuitical slanders.

It's a fact that Kubanin, like the party that has deployed him to write the history of the *Makhnovshchina*, has no hesitation in contradicting himself. On the very next page (p. 165), he writes:

"Meanwhile, despite these few isolated incidents, the Makhnovist movement was not, all in all, anti-semitic; it never orchestrated great pogroms like Petliura's army did on the direct instructions of its commanders."

How come this down-playing of the slanders gushing from him only a few lines earlier? Doubtless in order to distinguish the years 1918–1919 from the period that came later, the point being to highlight their revolutionary character because the Makhnovists later turned on the Bolsheviks. This is necessary for Kubanin in order to, on the one hand, demonstrate his objectivity to the reader; and, on the other hand, to encourage others to follow him along incorrect, mendacious approaches to the study of the *Makhnovshchina* and its role in the revolution in Ukraine. As the following fable makes plain:

"But things were different by 1920 when the Makhnovists had to give up on their hopes of establishing an autonomous republic and when, out of disappointment, representatives of Anarchism like Baron, Mark Mrachny, and others quit the movement. Whereupon the Makhnovist command and Makhno himself turned to the Ukrainian chauvinist intelligentsia. Anarchists still loyal to the movement like Arshinov<sup>[51]</sup> and Dmitriy Popov<sup>[52]</sup> (a

51 Peter Andreyevich Arshinov (1887–~1938) was Makhno's companion from his prison days in Moscow. In the Makhnovist movement, his responsibilities were mainly in the cultural-educational section.

52 The Left SR Dmitriy Ivanovich Popov (1892–1921) held a number of re-



former Left SR) were too weak to resist the chauvinist ideology that swept through the high command with Makhno's wife leading the way."<sup>[53]</sup>

Can anyone be such a ninny as to believe such nonsense? Yet in this Bolshevik author such nonsense is blended with a semblance of critical awareness, enough to sucker even a neutral reader in accordance with the Party's directives and interests.

I will have no difficulty in demolishing this Bolshevik claptrap. The social character of the *Makhnovshchina* was rooted in contemporary class antagonisms viewed through a revolutionary Anarchist looking-glass. The aim of the *Makhnovshchina* was to achieve genuine freedom and independence for toilers both through the expansion of the revolution and through the construction of a new society that might, in accordance with its outlook, establish freedom and equality for all.

Individuals were to band together outside of the State and its repressive institutions into communal associations, in accordance with their dispositions, interests, and personal and social needs. Whereby, all together, well cognisant of their responsibilities regarding respect for individual and collective happiness throughout the land, they might guarantee everyone an equal measure of freedom and social justice.

In order to achieve these ends and let the hard-working population of Ukraine share in this ideal, the Makhnovist command and I myself had no need to look to any chauvinist intelligentsia. The vanguard of the *Makhnovshchina*, as a social-revolutionary movement of the broad, toiling masses of Ukraine, was composed of peasants, workers, and members of the working intelligentsia who came out in favour of the expulsion of parasitic idlers from the body of society and who reckoned that their own duty lay in participation in this venture to emancipate humankind. We felt that this was the only real way to achieve the liberation of mankind.

sponsible positions in the Makhnovist movement in 1919–1920. In the fall of 1920 he took part in negotiations with the Bolsheviks which led to a temporary alliance.

53 Kubanin, p. 165.

Kubanin has his own self-serving interpretation of the *Makhnovshchina*'s aspirations to extract wide-ranging local autonomy from Bolshevism. He clings to lies of his own manufacture when he talks of ideological Anarchists like Baron, Mrachny, and others (the reader, under this "and others" should imagine an empty space). Aron Baron<sup>[54]</sup> asked to withdraw from the soviet of the *Makhnovshchina* so that he could return to Kharkov, while Mark Mrachny<sup>[55]</sup> was never part of the movement. Then Kubanin refers to the supposed inability on the part of those who stuck with the movement, Arshinov and Popov in particular, to resist the inroads made by the wave of chauvinism, headed by Makhno's wife, which then, allegedly, swamped much of the Makhnovist command.

I declare that Kubanin is up to his ears in lies here as well, because for me and for all the members of the Peasant Group of Anarcho-Communists, the ideological heart of the Makhnovist movement, it was well known that Comrade Arshinov, like the majority of Russian and Ukrainian Anarchists of that time, was living illegally in one of the large cities. And by the time that Arshinov rejoined us, Popov was no longer around. He had been dispatched with Comrade Kurilenko<sup>[56]</sup> to Kharkov, both of them acting as envoys of the Makhnovist army to the *Revvoensoviet* of the Southern Front.

As for Makhno's wife, I must say that she, being completely non-political, had absolutely nothing to do with politics before or during the Revolution, had not belonged to any political groups before or during the Revolution, and made scarcely any effort to enquire into their goals or the reasons for their ideological differences and mutual strife. Not being a member of the

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54 Aron Baron (1891–1937), one of the founders of the Nabat Confederation, joined the Makhnovist forces in the summer of 1920 order to conduct cultural-educational work. Like other Nabatsi, he soon developed differences with the Makhnovist commanders over the future direction of the movement.

55 Mark Mrachny (1892–1975), one of the activists of the Nabat Confederation, in fact spent a week with the Makhnovists in the spring of 1919.

56 The Anarchist Vasilii Vasilyevich Kurilenko (1891–1921) came from the family of a *batrak*. He held a number of command posts in the Makhnovist Insurgent Army and was particularly valued for his administrative and organizational skills.

high command, she could scarcely have wielded any ideological-political influence there, even had she so desired and had she had any sympathy with Petliura or other chauvinist factions. But that was not the case.<sup>[57]</sup>

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**57** Makhno overstates the case for his wife's lack of political involvement. She was known for her Anarchist sympathies in Gulyai-Polye even before her marriage, and was described by Viktor Belash, chief-of-staff of the Insurgent Army, as a "tireless defender of women and their access to education." In the fall of 1919 she was elected president of the Teachers' Union of the Makhnovist "republic" as the Anarchists tried to revitalize and reform the education system in the region they controlled. See V. M. Chop, *Halyna Andriyivna Kuzmenko – Head of the Teachers' Union of the Gulyai-Polye Republic (1919–1920)*, *History and Culture of Prydniprovya* 1, (Dnipropetrovsk, 2004), pp. 128-134.

#### IV. The Diary of Makhno's Wife. The Testimonies of "Representatives" of the Makhnovshchina. The Testimony of the "Theoretician" of United Anarchism, a Certain Voline (according to Kubanin) to the Bolshevik Authorities Following His Arrest.

As we know, the Bolsheviks have claimed possession of Makhno's wife's private journal. They use it in order to justify their efforts to blacken the *Makhnovshchina* and its leaders before the masses. Their efforts are intended to undermine the ideological basis of the *Makhnovshchina* as a revolutionary-liberatory anti-statist movement of the Ukrainian labouring masses. But as to the name of the diary's author, they cannot agree.

Thus a certain Yakov Yakovlev, a notorious liar and the author of a pamphlet hostile to Anarchism, *Anarchism in the Russian Revolution*,<sup>[58]</sup> credits this journal to Makhno's wife—*Feodora Gayenko*. As for Kubanin, he postdates it and credits it to Galina Kuzmenko.

Everyone in my close entourage knows that Feodora Gayenko<sup>[59]</sup> was never my wife. Only the criminal-political adventurism of the Bolsheviks could incite them to depict her as such and credit her with this "private journal" in order to compromise the Makhnovist movement and myself.

Others are then free to credit it to someone else without any explanation, and tinker with the dates without any explanation! It's almost as if they are telling the reader: *Look, here's a new document attacking Makhno and the Makhnovshchina. Its author is*

<sup>58</sup> Yakov Yakovlev, *Русский Анархизм в Великой русской революции* [Russian Anarchism in the Great Russian Revolution], (Moscow, 1921), 84 pp. Ya. F. Yakovlev (1896–1938) was an important Soviet politician and bureaucrat. He was shot in 1938.

<sup>59</sup> Feodora (Fenya) Gayenko (1892–1921) was Galina Kuzmenko's best friend and constant companion during the civil war. She had gone to teachers' college with Galina and, after first belonging to the Socialist-Revolutionaries, joined the Anarchists in June, 1919. She was killed in battle with the Reds on August 19, 1921.

*Makhno's new 'wife'—Galina Kuzmenko.*

\* \* \* \* \*

The truly anti-revolutionary, party-fraudulent behaviour of the Bolsheviks is exposed by their dishonest manipulations of this “private journal.” It’s clear that the Bolsheviks, upon getting hold of this “diary,” were not in the least concerned about its frivolous content or how to identify its real author. They decided to make use of the passages most injurious to us, along with their own added colour, while ascribing the document to the person closest to Makhno. Not knowing the name of Makhno’s “wife” (their expression), they came across the name Feodora Gayenko, arbitrarily anointed her Makhno’s wife, and ascribed to her this ill-fated “diary.”

Adhering to their own party goals, the Bolsheviks, of course, don’t try to figure out what the *Makhnovshchina* was in reality—what kind of role it played in the general process of the Great Revolution and the defense of this process (and under what sort of conditions!) from the counter-revolution. Also they don’t deal with their alliances with this movement and their crimes in relation to the revolutionary process. They have gleefully seized upon this “diary” and made in it their own entries (this is evident from the excerpts presented to us by the Bolsheviks) not only without any discussion, but without precise information about all that they have inserted here. But the Bolsheviks are committed to this day to the nonsense of the “diary.”

Such behaviour by the Bolsheviks in this instance exposes the absence of revolutionary honour and responsibility in the upper echelons of their party in relation to the revolutionary *Makhnovshchina*. This irresponsibility in the life and activity of the Bolshevik elite has prevented them from applying common decency to the discussion of this “diary” of Makhno’s “wife.” And so they decided to scream about this “diary,” write all sorts of excerpts allegedly from it in their press, and concoct all sorts of fables which they claim are relevant to the “study” of the *Makhnovshchina* and its role in the Revolution.

But back to the contents of this “journal,” and more precisely to the extracts cited by Yakovlev and Kubanin. For a start, as leader of the revolutionary *Makhnovshchina*, it falls to me to rebut what is said about me personally.

\* \* \* \* \*

I am supposed to have been a habitual drunkard, roaming the streets in the villages or hamlets playing the accordion to entertain myself and the inhabitants. I do not know how to play that instrument and have never in my life played it, although I do like to listen to it in the right hands.

Let me be even more categorical in my denial that the Makhnovist Insurgents—those nameless revolutionary fighters—having volunteered to serve in the movement’s army, were ever paid a thousand roubles a head or any wage like it. That was a ploy favoured only by the Bolshevik command at the time we were manning the Front together in the spring of 1919 against the White Don and Denikin. The aim being to kill off the spirit of freedom and volunteer service in the Insurgents, to sow disunity in their ranks, and then to bring them under the direct command of the Bolsheviks. Moreover, I drew up a report for the Mariupol congress of the Insurgents on this very question of pay, and the assembly took a severe line on the issue. It was decided that it should be done away with once and for all.

\* \* \* \* \*

No Makhnovist has any recollection of Semyon Karetnik, one of the movement’s most committed Insurgents and one of the finest men seconded to its leadership, getting drunk, climbing in behind the first machine-gun he came across while our units were resting up, and opening fire on their positions or on a village. Semyon Karetnik and the other adjutants who, one after another, took up positions of responsibility, embraced as their golden rule the precept that I had passed on to them:

*“When you hold a position of responsibility, never delegate the proper management of fighting units to anybody else, especially in the run-up to each operation. Always go and check it out yourself.”*

That rule was especially enforced with regard to the machine-gun units, which, during a march or a change of position, always had to follow me in the vanguard of the army. In such cases Semyon Karetnik without fail inspected these units, especially in winter-time, when the slightest frost could cause the machine-guns to seize up. The gun crew members only watched, and helped him when necessary.

In regard to such cases, the author of the diary, rendering convenient benefit to the Bolsheviks for the “study” and “defining” of the revolutionary *Makhnovshchina*, recorded the actions of Semyon Karetnik without checking on their purpose. Or perhaps the diarist wrote with an unconscious malicious intent, calculating on the future failure of the Makhnovist movement in achieving practical results.

Those are the facts. Let me say it again: the “private journal” of Makhno’s wife, in the round as well as in the detail, is riddled with lies. A brazen Bolshevik forgery. If it were anything other than that, how come they denied themselves the opportunity to photograph it and reprint it in the press?

But of course they did nothing of the sort! Nor is there anything surprising in this for, during the ten years they have been ruling this country, they have fallen into the habit of forging everything. So much so that the Ukrainian peasant masses have come to look upon them as “licensed liars.”

And this doesn’t just apply to the hatred inspired by their party’s political despotism. On the subject of the Makhnovists, the masses see their lies and don’t believe any of the information they give out, even when they occasionally write the truth about something or other.

For instance, I have had it in writing from Ukraine that the Bolshevik press has published the fact that I am living in France, but the peasants do not believe a word of it:

“The Bolsheviks are lying, Batko Makhno is close by, in Romania, and he will be back with us shortly . . .”

This peasant distrust for anything the Bolsheviks tell them is a re-

sult of their slanderous campaign against the Makhnovist movement and me personally—they are lying through their teeth to the Ukrainian toiling peasantry.

Kubanin goes on to quote a litany of incidents supposedly reported to the Bolshevik authorities by “representatives” of the *Makhnovshchina*. Which representatives? Nobody knows. The contents are as follows:

“On December 12, 1920, in the village of Andreyevka, on Makhno’s orders, 30 members of a detachment of *komnezamozhniks* and collaborators of the Berdyansk *Cheka* were put to the sword.”<sup>[60]</sup>

“On March 14, 1921, in the village of Rubashevka, Melitopolsky *uyezd*, on the instructions of Zinkovsky<sup>[61]</sup> and Makhno’s wife, a *komnezamozhnik* and three members of the militia were killed.”<sup>[62]</sup>

“On March 30, 1921, in the village of Verbovoye in Bolshe-Tokmasky *uyezd*, on instructions from Zinkovsky and Galina (Makhno’s wife), the chairman of a *komnezam* and two soviet officials were killed.”<sup>[63]</sup>

As to these three incidents, the first I am going to leave to one side for the moment and I will come back to it in greater detail anon. The other two are lies, for Zinkovsky and Makhno’s wife (members of the Anti-Makhnovist Commission<sup>[64]</sup>) could not have been in that location. On March 10, Galina Kuzmenko, being very weary, had stayed over at a German colony<sup>[65]</sup> near Novospasovka to rest up. So she could not have been on Commission business on March 14.

60 Kubanin, p. 143.

61 Lev Nikolayevich Zinkovsky (1893–1938), a factory worker from the Donbas region and an Anarchist from 1913, held various responsible positions in the Makhnovist movement, including in the *kontrrazvedka*.

62 Kubanin, p. 144.

63 Kubanin, p. 144.

64 The Anti-Makhnovist Commission was set up in an effort to curb the excesses of the Makhnovist *kontrrazvedka*, which was deprived of its punitive functions.

65 Probably the Evangelical Lutheran settlement of Neu-Hoffnung.



On that date, a Makhnovist mixed<sup>[66]</sup> unit launched a daring counter-assault against the Red Cavalry's 9<sup>th</sup> Division near the village of Komar in Mariupolsky *uyezd*.

This village lies over a 100 *versts* from the village of Rubashevka in Melitopolsky *uyezd*. In the course of the counter-assault, which I commanded in person (as was well known to the Red command), I was gravely wounded. As chief of my personal guard, Zinkovsky was standing beside me at the time. Could he have been over a 100 *versts* away at the same time?

Likewise, with regard to the third incident cited: on March 30 our group was in the *Grishino-Izyum* region. Galina was resting in Novospasovka, which is to say 120 to 140 *versts* away. There was no telephone connection to allow the Anti-Makhnovist Commission to reach Galina Kuzmenko regarding official business. Nor did she have a partisan detachment at her disposal, capable of flying from Novospasovka to the village of Verbovoye (approximately 69 *versts* distant) and bringing her the chairman of the *Komnezam* and the Soviet officials so that she, upon conferring with Zinkovsky (whose location she was unaware of from one day to the next), could order that these people be killed.

These clarifications speak volumes as to where and by whom these incidents have been manufactured. In all likelihood, the GPU gave Kubanin the whisper that these supposedly Makhnovist actions “*were all the talk among the kulaks at the time when the poor peasantry was resisting them.*”<sup>[67]</sup>

In order to afford his charges some credibility, Kubanin again quotes from the “private journal” of Makhno’s wife, despite the inconsistencies it contains, as I have just been pointing out, in terms of names and dates.

“Makhno’s wife tersely records in her diary:

‘Early in the morning on February 23, 1921 [*sic*],<sup>[68]</sup> at about ten o’clock, our boys caught and shot two Bolshevik agents.

66 That is to say, made up of a mixture of infantry and cavalry (A. Skirda).

67 Kubanin, p. 143.

68 The year should be 1920. Makhno repeats Kubanin’s error.

‘On February 25 we halted in the village of Malorosskoye. There we captured and shot three agents who were requisitioning grain,’<sup>[69]</sup> and so on.

As for these different points, let me say just one thing: if my complete memoirs ever come out in more favourable times, I will re-establish the facts in detail, day by day, covering the period from late 1920 until the autumn of 1921, in terms both of operations and also of the various locations where the main forces of the (Makhnovist) Insurgent Army of Ukraine operated against agents, informers, and Bolshevik provocateurs in general and against those of the Red Army in particular. For the time being, I consider myself morally in the right to accuse Citizen Kubanin of having mined this wretched “private journal” for something with which to defame the movement of the *Makhnovshchina* and me personally. For in February, 1921,<sup>[70]</sup> the Insurgent troops (or the main body of them at any rate), among whom I was on permanent attachment to the staff, did not make a single halt in the village of Mayorsk. The Red Army high command could confirm this easily: it was monitoring our movements and knew all there was to know about the locations where we fought. But the mendacious Kubanin is not interested in establishing historical truth.

And now to the crux of the matter. Have the Makhnovist Insurgents ever denied that sometimes, along the way, they wiped out Bolshevik agents overseeing requisitioning, plus their militia and the chairpersons of their requisition commissions? No, never! The Makhnovist Insurgents never denied this and never intended to deny this. On the contrary, we always said—yes, we killed agents of the *prodrazverstka*, and yes—somewhere or other we shot the chairpersons of *komnezams* and members of the militia. But we didn’t shoot them because they were from the ranks of the poor. The Makhnovists themselves were overwhelmingly from the poor. And none of the agents of the Bolshevik dictatorship were in that category. We sometimes annihilated these agents only because of their ferocious treatment of the working

<sup>69</sup> Kubanin, p. 146. The diary actually says the halt was in the village of Mayorsk.

<sup>70</sup> Thanks to Kubanin, Makhno continues to be confused about the year.

peasantry, and their provocative role in the villages in relation to those toilers who objected to the violence and looting of the authorities generally. Is anyone supposed to believe that in them we were hitting out at representatives of the poor peasantry from whose ranks we ourselves came, unlike the Bolsheviks? They also paid the price for having denounced to the *Chekists* wounded or ailing Makhnovists who had sought refuge in their villages.

For the society that was conceived and “flourished” under the heel of the *Chekists*, provocateurs were necessary. They were despised by the toilers and they knew it. The provocateurs had no hesitation in handing honest workers, accused of being enemies of the revolution, over to *Chekist* detachments who killed them and threw their bodies in a ditch or locked them up in a prison and killed them there without bothering to establish their relation, if any, to the Makhnovist movement. Goaded by the Bolshevik authorities, *Chekist* detachments became more and more frenzied in their actions and after killing the oldest member of a family, would confiscate all the family’s property and torch their home.

In the face of such treachery and all manner of provocation, the Makhnovists spared neither poor nor rich, reckoning that the incipient new society they were building to replace the current rotten, slave-based society had no need of individuals of that stripe. A free society needs labour, and all those who participate in this effort must have an equal right to decision-making on how to build this society and equal access to the benefits accruing to this society.

In the Bolsheviks’ eyes, however, only those who deferred to their authority could have anything to contribute to the advent of the new social order. Only their compliant slaves would get to savour its benefits with them. This profoundly false conception of working class socialism-communism led the Bolsheviks to depend on predators and provocateurs for bringing to life their system of Bolshevik-Communist society, at least in the initial stages of development. Solidly organized, fine political jesuits, they had the knack of quickly conjuring up whatever traitors

and provocateurs they needed, even within the ranks of the poor peasantry. We fought against them but I know of no instance when we mowed them down in batches or in a row the way their detachments did when they captured Makhnovist peasants, even if the latter had surrendered without a fight.

Most often, we arrested Bolshevik agents—militia men and chairpersons of *komnezams*—on the basis of tip-offs from the populace they were oppressing. Under our commissions of inquiry, the arrestees and the toiling population were all questioned and the facts established in detail. Most of the arrestees were then freed with a warning that they were to give up their filthy mission, on pain of being shot.

There were cases when captured Bolshevik agents were shot immediately upon being interrogated by the staff, but this happened only in the case of military counter-intelligence agents and members of punitive detachments or punitive organs.

Citizen Kubanin argues that in the village of Andreyevka on December 11, 1920, some *Chekists* from Berdyansk plus a 30-strong detachment of *komhezamozhniks* were shot on my orders. But on the day in question, and I remember it perfectly well, I passed through the village of Alekseyevka-Berestovaya with the bulk of my forces and we halted in Novospasovka. The following day, we occupied Berdyansk. It was not until December 14 that we arrived in Andreyevka and found no enemy detachment there. Later we got to grips with the 40<sup>th</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Red divisions. The Red command knows that after some fighting the whole of the 42<sup>nd</sup> and half of the 40<sup>th</sup> fell into the hands of the Makhnovists' cavalry and infantry. Our prisoners having been relieved of their weapons, we moved out that night for the village of Konskiye. There, after we had helped ourselves to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Division's and 9<sup>th</sup> Cavalry's supply train, we halted for a little rest.

But why would Kubanin rack up such nonsense, the reader may be wondering?

Actually he is lying quite deliberately. Because he is keen to cover up the crimes carried out by the Berdyansk *Chekist* detach-

ment (which he describes as a detachment of *komnezamozhniks*) which was in fact encircled and wiped out, on my orders, in Andreyevka in the spring of 1921.

The story goes like this: throughout the winter and into the spring of 1921, this detachment had combed the region rounding up wounded or ailing Makhnovists being cared for in the villages or hamlets there. During one of its operations in Novospasovka, it happened upon the home of the wife of a veteran Insurgent—she had an infant just a few months old in a cradle. The *Chekists* were drunk. They bundled her out into the yard to put her up against the wall and shoot her, just for being the wife of an Insurgent, and then they remembered the baby. They fetched the child which they shoved into its mother's arms. Sobbing, she clutched it to herself and then the *Chekist* leader gave the order for them to be shot. One volley and the mother fell, still clutching her bullet-riddled child. The *Cheka* chief and the regular Berdyansk *Chekists* left the bodies lying on the ground next to a shed. Some neighbours rushed to the spot and found the child dead but the mother merely wounded in the chest. The Bolsheviks will not be in a position to deny these facts.

When I got word of this monstrous atrocity, I ordered a special unit from Kurilenko's group to trap that *Chekist* detachment at whatever cost. At the same time, the Insurgent Army's composite group, commanded by Comrade Petrenko, arrived on the scene. Petrenko was briefed that the *Chekist* detachment had reached the Andreyevka–Popovka area. I ordered a unit to make its way by night to where the *Chekists* from Berdyansk had to be billeted and to deal with them at any cost. They were located by daybreak and within the hour had been attacked and wiped out almost to the last man in the streets of Andreyevka.

I was involved in this operation personally. The surviving *Chekists* thought to pledge us their allegiance, thinking that might save their skins after which they could rejoin the *Cheka* at the first opportunity. I interrogated them about their misdeeds. They remained close-mouthed until we told them that we were not Makhnovists but Budyonny's cavalry and, in order to con-

vince them, we showed them our uniforms and red-starred caps. Whereupon they relented and recounted their crimes to us, including the killing of a child a few months old carried out in Novospasovka, simply because the child's father had shunned the Leninist lie and was one of our people. The *Chekists*, following the precepts of police generally, were intent on infecting the peasantry with the poison of the criminal ruling power. But they were unable to do so. The father of the mangled child was a stubborn peasant who dared to fight for freedom and independence for himself and others. We had followed this path together with the Bolsheviks in the first months of the Revolution, but since then they had trampled these goals into the dust.

The trial did not take long: the *Chekists* were executed on the spot in the streets of Andreyevka. Thus, by concealing their crimes in Novospasovka and confounding our reprisals with *kulak* reprisals against the poor peasants, Kubanin is deliberately misrepresenting the facts.

Personally, I have my doubts about the Bolshevik *Chekists* generally and the Berdyansk *Chekists*, in particular (or *komezamozhniks*, as Kubanin refers to them), having been poor peasants.

But, suppose that this is so—that the detachment of Berdyansk *Chekists* annihilated by a detachment of revolutionary Insurgent-Makhnovists was composed solely of the poor. Then we have a situation where some elements of the poor are encouraged and directed by the leaders of the Bolshevik Party to commit crimes against other elements of the poor, who don't recognize the right of Bolshevism-Leninism to be introduced into their lives in an arbitrary fashion, by way of the annihilation of those who dissent against the Bolshevik view of the goals and practical tasks of the Revolution. When the Leninist poor commit crimes, the non-Leninist poor must react ruthlessly. This ruthlessness is dictated by life itself on the basis that the poor, as a class of toilers, are acknowledged by all revolutionaries as the best part of humanity, as that force whose cultural and technical development is critical to achieving victory in the Revolution, by

way of replacing the exploiting bourgeois-capitalist society with a free society of toilers. And the poor, as a force directly interested in and consistently devoted to the liberation of each and every person on the planet; the poor, on whose shoulders is placed the great historical mission of playing the role of liberators, and not oppressors of mankind, must not disunite its forces at the whim of a party. The poor, as a class of toilers, must be able not only to preserve the forces of their own ranks, but also respect and defend in these ranks the principles of life, especially the principles of freedom and equality of opinions.

Throughout the great Russian-Ukrainian revolution, the Bolshevik Party consciously rode roughshod over these principles and rights; as for the poor peasants who have followed its lead, they have done so blindly, being duped and exploited.

The Anarchists and the poor who have supported them were the first to bridle at the Bolsheviks' jesuitry and for their pains they were the first to fall into disgrace in the Party's eyes. The Bolsheviks have pursued us in a way not dreamt of in the socialist world's teachings; they have no match when it comes to methodically discrediting their erstwhile allies, pinning all manner of imaginary crimes on them.

It was only to be expected that such provocations would draw appropriate responses. This has conjured up a dismal atmosphere in the toilers' ranks. The poor peasants under the banner of the revolutionary *Makhnovshchina* have had to answer the shameless Bolshevik authorities blow for blow. And the Berdyansk *Chekists* paid the price in one such riposte. I, personally, do not deny the ruthlessness of this blow by the Insurgent-Makhnovists against the Berdyansk *Chekists*, but it was provoked by worse blows on the part of the *Chekists*' units and the Red Army against the Insurgent-Makhnovists; against the broad, peasant, toiling masses, who support the idea of the Makhnovist movement; and against the innocent children of the peasant masses.

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Later on, Kubanin tackles the question of the Makhnovist intelli-

gence service [*kontrrazvedka*]. Of course he is not specific about its being an operational agency with entirely military objectives. Quite the opposite. He is at pains to show that it was comparable to the *Cheka* and guilty of even worse misdeeds. In support of his contention, he invokes a deposition made by the “theoretician” of Nabat-style Anarchism, Voline (V. Eichenbaum) as recorded by the investigator of the 19<sup>th</sup> Red Army revolutionary tribunal at the time of his arrest. That deposition, according to Kubanin, includes the following statement made by Voline:

“Apropos of abuses committed by the Makhnovist army’s *kontrrazvedka*, I have no direct knowledge. But lots of people came to me to complain about it and this forced me to intervene constantly in the affairs of the *kontrrazvedka*. I had to appeal to it as well as to Makhno personally. However, the military situation and my own intellectual activity within the movement prevented me from probing the complaints about these abuses. The number of plaintiffs nevertheless prompted me to suggest to the movement’s revolutionary military soviet that a panel be set up to look into matters in which the populace and the intelligence service were at loggerheads. Here I clashed with Makhno and Zinkovsky. In my own view, the *kontrrazvedka* was an abomination and I did all in my power to put paid to its abuses.”<sup>[71]</sup>

Although the style and vocabulary of this deposition bear certain similarities to Voline’s, I would question its authenticity. I know him and know what he is capable of. Nevertheless, I reckon Kubanin is misrepresenting the text. I cannot imagine Voline having become such a pitiful figure whilst in the clutches of the Bolshevik authorities as to blacken the name of the Makhnovist army’s *kontrrazvedka*, to which he so often had recourse during his time among us. He left the Makhnovist army under an escort from the finest personnel of this agency in November, 1919, in order to go to the area where he actually surrendered to the 14<sup>th</sup> Red Army. Furthermore, it was on the back of that agency that he earned or tried to earn himself a reputation in the eyes of the Bolsheviks’ Yekaterinoslav *gubnarkom*. For it was actually he who

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71 Kubanin, p. 116.



brought one of its members, a certain Orlov, to me so that I might, on behalf of myself and the high command, issue him with a warrant on the basis of which they could impound for their own use valuables and a substantial sum of money discovered in the private residence of Prince U...v, who had fled to the Denikinists. It was he, with this Orlov, who asked me to issue instructions to the *kontrrazvedka* to take part in this operation or at least be made aware of the operation that the Bolsheviks were going to take over, so that they would not be mistaken for Denikinists and arrested. I categorically refused and sent Orlov packing. As for Voline, I held him back in order to give him a dressing-down. I told him what I thought of the entire episode, both in terms of politics and the revolution and from my own viewpoint.

As you can see, I have grounds for questioning the authenticity of Voline's deposition targeting the Makhnovist *kontrrazvedka*. However, whilst stating my misgivings, I cannot but place a degree of credence in the document published by Kubanin. And here is why: it is a fact that Voline was arrested and carried off by the 14<sup>th</sup> Red Army, so he will, of necessity, have been subjected to interrogation. Besides, whether here or in exile, Voline has told his political disciples that in the Makhnovist army he fought against some kind of "Makhnovist prisons." One of these acolytes blurted out about this in the presence of foreign comrades in 1927 at a meeting of the International Committee for the Defence of Anarchists.

Which is why I wonder: in this specific instance, should Citizen Kubanin be accused of forgery? We Makhnovist peasants cannot allow our revolutionary honour to be besmirched. We were harsh at times, but were never lacking in honour, and we know how to confound liars.

As things stand, I shall therefore refrain from reaching any definitive conclusions about this deposition of Voline as described by Kubanin. Should he get wind of my reply, Kubanin would probably consider it necessary to have a photographic reproduction of the document bearing Voline's signature published in the press. If that happens, then I and the Makhnovists will draw the

necessary conclusions, both in respect to Voline as the source of this testimony and to Kubanin as the one making use of this testimony.

I should now turn to the Makhnovist army's *kontrrazvedka*, all manner of tales having been peddled about it by, among others, Anarchists and quasi-Anarchists. I believe that it will not be superfluous for me to touch upon this organ in this essay, since I was, and remain, foreign to fantasies, both in thought and in practical activity, and am only interested in seeking Anarchist truths. And that is why I am able to speak about this organ as the truth requires.

What was the *kontrrazvedka* and what was its function? And what did it do that, according to Kubanin, Voline had grounds for repeatedly clashing with Makhno and Zinkovsky? And why the latter, who was never in charge of that service? We cannot find anything specific about this in Voline's deposition, unless Kubanin has held something back.

Our intelligence service proved vitally necessary in the revolutionary armed struggle against the armed counter-revolution, no matter what some armchair Anarchists, bereft of any connection with real life, may think about it. The duties of this organ of the Makhnovist army included a number of practical tasks: collecting intelligence about enemy forces—their strength, weaponry, movements, behaviour towards the populace of a given locality and the latter's attitude towards them; familiarizing itself with the operational plans of enemy command staffs, their commanders, their technical resources; identifying the units committed, etc., etc.

At no time and nowhere will armed revolutionary formations and their operational command staffs be able to manage without such "discreditable" agencies, the use of which is forced upon them by the course of events.

Intelligence-gathering is vital, not just in enemy territory but also in more friendly territory, especially in areas close to the front. Headquarters needs to have precise and timely details about

provocative actions being carried out there by the enemy, their impact on the morale of the population, and how and where he is deploying his secret agents. All of which had to be forwarded without delay by the Makhnovist *kontrrazvedka* to the high command, so that it could thwart operations mounted in its rear or on its flanks.

Within its remit, the Makhnovist *kontrrazvedka* was entitled to carry out searches of suspect homes within the combat zone as well as to apprehend and question anybody to whom the local populace might alert it or who was behaving in a suspicious manner. In the latter case, nothing could save this person or group of persons from being detained and having their persons and quarters searched.

In the course of its activities, the *kontrrazvedka* occasionally made mistakes that forced us to apologize to persons who had wrongly fallen under suspicion. However, abolishing such organs would have been the height of stupidity for revolutionaries engaged in the great struggle of the toilers with Capital and its servant—the State—and instead of this playing at cat-and-mouse.

As a result, that service was and will be, should the need arise, a vital adjunct to the operations of the Insurgent Army. It never organized local branches among the peaceable population who were busy building a new life for themselves, and never issued them with instructions the way the *Cheka* and the intelligence networks of Denikin and Wrangel did.

The reader is now informed as to the true nature and role of the *kontrrazvedka*.

## V. The Makhnovshchina's Leaders, Tutors and Instructors

When he turns to the matter of the leaders of the *Makhnovshchina*, Kubanin is at pains, like Marxists generally, to downplay the peasantry's capabilities. Those capabilities are quite beyond the understanding of folk like him or, indeed for many in the Anarchist ranks. The peasantry finds within itself the forces to develop revolutionary ideas and the organizational basis for embarking on the path of struggle for, and defense of, the idea of a free society. Loyal to Marxist dogma, Kubanin relates negatively to the peasantry. In his eyes, it cannot be revolutionary as a class (even though it is incomparably more so than Marx and Lenin themselves ever were); he cannot see that, along with the urban proletariat, it is equally essential to the success and economic well-being of the revolution. Without this equal involvement, the revolution can never completely triumph in its main sphere of struggle—the economic, where delaying reconstruction that is responsive to the new requirements of the revolutionary regions poses a threat both to the revolution and to the direct bearers and defenders of its ideas. According to Kubanin, the peasantry does not have it within itself either to play its part in the revolution untutored or to organize itself for the purposes of construction. He blithely contends:

“Its [the *Makhnovshchina*’s] military leadership was vested, not in the hands of peasants, but, much more interestingly, in the hands of workers or semi-workers. Makhno, organizer and chief leader of its army, had been a painter in a factory; Belash was a railway mechanic; Chubenko was a railwayman; Arshinov, Makhno’s, teacher and mentor, was a former worker; all in all, the group heading up the *Makhnovshchina* was made up of déclassé ex-workers.”<sup>[72]</sup>

Had this claptrap not come from the pen of a Bolshevik, we might marvel that folk in possession of all of the documentation on the inception and composition of the *Makhnovshchina* could be so wide of the mark here. It’s characteristic that they bring to

72 Kubanin, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

the forefront people who may have played a secondary role in the movement for a time, but who were hardly movers and shakers. But all of the foregoing is written to order, perhaps even traced out on the canvas beforehand; the Party has no wish to have the truth come out about the revolutionary liberation movement that so emphatically snuffed out the Denikinist counter-revolution and helped the Red Army to see off Wrangel and Petliura.

The Bolshevik authorities are afraid of the *Makhnovshchina*'s becoming a rallying point for those who have seen through their own counter-revolutionary role, of their managing to turn them against it with the very same zeal and commitment to the toilers' cause. Which is why it moved quickly to send against us its blind instruments—the Red Army soldiery and domestic repression units—in order to drown the *Makhnovshchina* in blood.

Despite Kubanin and other slick liars of his ilk, I must set the record straight. By the time that Belash joined the *Makhnovshchina*, the latter was already a mighty and organized revolutionary force manning a broad front against the counter-revolutionary forces of the White Don and General Denikin, that were attacking on the Grishino, Taganrog, Berdyansk, and Melitopol sectors. At the same time, we had to contend with troops of the Ukrainian Directory led by Ataman Horobets, who were supporting the Denikinists in Yekaterinoslav.

Comrade Arshinov, whom Kubanin and the like persist in describing as my “teacher and mentor,” turned up even later.

Having remained, from first to last, at the head of the *Makhnovshchina* and its vanguard Insurgent Army, naturally I did my utmost to attract as many Anarchists as possible—at least ones who were more or less knowledgeable about Anarchism and its immediate tasks in the revolution.

I was delighted when I saw like-minded comrades taking their places in the midst of the Insurgents; I held them in high regard and respected them. I even allowed them to concern themselves over-much with matters that the movement had entrusted to my care as the first among equals in the ranks of its founders and

leaders. But since most of these comrades were only temporary visitors, vanishing as suddenly as they had come, the mass of the Insurgents regarded them as a transient element and paid them little heed. They reserved their love and trust for those who, whilst spreading the good news, spelling out and explaining the tasks to be carried out in the revolution, also had it in them to pick up a rifle and fight alongside them and risk victory or defeat.

This was the viewpoint from which my comrades and I at the head of the movement reckoned how we should treat the Anarchists coming to us from the towns only to go back again so soon. The ones that joined us in order to carry out serious work, rather than those looking for a temporary and comfortable shelter from persecution by the various urban powers-that-be, were accorded our trust and supplied with the resources they needed.

It is nonsense to believe, as Kubanin implies, that anybody could have entered the movement and finished up leading it. This is to ignore the psychology of the Insurgent peasant masses; they have never doffed their caps to the first comer purporting to be their mentor.

Back to comrade Arshinov, my teacher and guide, according to Kubanin and his ilk.

Actually Comrade Arshinov came to join me around the end of April, 1919; he became my personal secretary and in that capacity was involved mainly in the organization of the movement in the rear.

For a time, thanks to his efforts and our support (my support and support from the Gulyai-Polye group) he carried out important work by bringing out the Insurgent newspaper *Put k svobod-ye* [The Road to Freedom] of which he was editor-in-chief. He contributed to the cultural and educational efforts organized behind the front lines by Comrade Budanov<sup>[73]</sup> and the Gulyai-Polye group and then taken in hand and carried on by the

73 Avraam Budanov (~1886–1929) came from the Bulgarian minority in southeastern Ukraine. An anarcho-communist from 1905, he was active as a labour organizer in the Donbas region in 1917–1918 before joining the Makhnovist movement.

Ivanovo-Voznesensk Anarcho-Communist group which joined the Insurgent movement, with comrades Makeyev, A. Chernyakov, and others.<sup>[74]</sup>

However, Arshinov was passing through, like most of the Anarchist ‘townies’; he was always gone as quickly as he had arrived, with perhaps one exception. So his participation in the movement lasted only a few months, whereas our titanic struggle lasted for entire years.

The main direction of the Insurgent movement, its army and its various ramifications—administrative, economic, operational, combat organization and oversight—was in the hands of workers and peasants throughout. The Karetnik brothers, F. Krat, Moshchenko, A. Marchenko, Isidor Lyuty, the Makhno brothers, Tikhenko, Gavrilenko, and so many, many others were all peasant-Anarchists and, for the most part, *batraks*.

Comrades Seregin, V. Danilov, and Ya. Domashenko were workers.

Having acknowledged me as the first among equals, the group controlled all of the levers of the movement’s leadership through me. Any Anarchists arriving from the cities had to bear this in mind, and adhere to the general revolutionary positions of this group and the resultant plan of the movement, even if they had something of their own to propose.

It is true to say that Comrade A. Chubenko was a great help to us—the comrades from the group and myself—in our earliest operations against *Hetman* Skoropadsky and the Germans in 1918. A locomotive mechanic, he had the right to travel the country, ferrying whatever was needed out to the comrades in Russia and bringing back shipments from them into Ukraine. In June, 1919, he was appointed my adjutant before falling into the clutches of the Bolsheviks at the start of 1920, and languishing in their jails until October. At the time of our treaty with the Bolsheviks against the Wrangel threat, I insisted on his being freed

<sup>74</sup> In April, 1919, a group of 36 Anarchists from the Russian industrial city of Ivanovo-Vosnesensk joined the Makhnovist movement. Makayev was killed fighting the Whites in November, 1919.

and he rejoined our ranks. He then worked in a different sector: his technical skills allowed him to demolish obstacles hampering our troop movements, etc.

It's also true that Viktor Belash joined us at the beginning of 1919. Initially he was a rank-in-file Insurgent with the Tikhenko-Puzanov-Kurilenko group, then represented that group on the operations branch set up at my headquarters. He was then elected commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade of my division, a post he held from May through to June, 1919. Once the Bolshevik authorities declared us—the movement and myself—outside the law, he remained with the Bolsheviks as an ordinary soldier with an infantry company tasked with guarding a battery. That autumn he rejoined the *Makhnovshchina* and served for two months as chief of staff of the Insurgent Army before he fell ill. He stayed in a village before returning to the movement in 1920.

Over the years, whilst our alleged teachers, trainers, and leaders came and went, the movement evolved, constantly growing in terms of both ideas and organization, while fighting all counter-revolutionary authorities with the same gusto with which it had started out. Which amounts to proof that it was at all times directed by the very same people who had launched it under the theoretical and organizational supervision of the intrepid, unflappable Makhno.

So much for the presence within the *Makhnovshchina* of worker leaders, teachers and instructors and of Makhno himself. Plainly, had the revolutionary Ukrainian peasantry had to wait for its trainers to show up and lead it from without, it would never have been able to beat the *Hetman* and his Germans, the Ukrainian Directory, Petliura, Denikin, and Wrangel. But in fact the peasantry raised in its midst revolutionary sons who devoted themselves to serving the revolution and the ideals of genuine liberation.

But this the Bolshevik hacks cannot admit: all their writings and conclusions about the peasantry and its revolutionary role amount to nothing more than a ragbag collection of bare-faced lies.



## VI. The Pseudo-Makhnovists

Kubanin portrays a whole series of bravos as Makhnovists—Volodin, Grishin, Prochan Savchenko, Khmara, Yatsenko, Golik (not to be confused with Lev Golik from Nikitovka, former chief of the *kontrtrazvedka* of the Makhnovist Army), and Nikita Chaliy. Now Chaliy was a real Makhnovist. Misled by the provocations of the Bolsheviks and Wrangelians who put it about that “Makhno has entered into an alliance with Wrangel against the Bolsheviks,” he actually defected to Wrangel’s camp. If Kubanin lumps them all together under the common designation ‘Makhnovists,’ his purpose is yet again to blacken the name of the *Makhnovshchina* in the service of his own party’s interests.

Take Volodin, for instance—a one-time Red Army commander who defected to the Makhnovists in August, 1919. He vanished in November that year, only to pop up again during the summer of 1920 in Wrangel’s camp, leading an autonomous detachment. And as for Savchenko, Yatsenko, and the others, these were Denikinists whom Wrangel had authorized to operate posing as Makhnovists so as to recruit the working population to his side. (This ploy by Wrangel of operating among the peasants whilst posing as Makhnovists fighting the Bolsheviks is what prompted us to systematically eradicate Wrangelians, emissaries included.)

Khmara was a Petliurist agent who acted in concert with Wrangel in the Zaporozhye region and then retreated with him, first to the Crimea, and then to Constantinople. It was only in exile that he distanced himself from his erstwhile patrons.<sup>[75]</sup>

Nikita Chaliy, a Makhnovist drawn from a family of poor peasants from a the hamlet of Mirgorodshcha,<sup>[76]</sup> was a fine partisan. He courageously carried out the missions that the Insurgent Army high command entrusted to him in the Whites’ rear, during both Denikin’s and Wrangel’s day. However, the provocations

<sup>75</sup> Ivan Khmara, whose real surname was Markov, ended up in exile in Poland, like Makhno. The two men became friends. While living in exile, Makhno was known to fraternize with former enemies, to the consternation of some of his Anarchist comrades.

<sup>76</sup> Located in Poltavskaya gubernia.

of the Bolsheviks and of Wrangel himself (the press on both sides insisted that Makhno had joined Wrangel to oppose the Bolsheviks), caused Chaliy to go off the rails and wind up in Wrangel's camp as commander of the 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade, known as the '*Batko Makhno*' brigade. This unit was recruited by the Wrangelian command as a means of lending weight to the Bolsheviks' and Wrangel's own provocation relating to some supposed alliance between Makhnovists and Whites.

We called him to order when he happened to be present for one of our engagements against the White troops in October, 1920. Chaliy's eyes were opened to his mistake and he immediately sought me out. He wanted to die as a Makhnovist at the hands of Makhnovists in reparation for the error that had carried him into Wrangel's camp. Acutely conscious of the interests of the revolution and a military commander above all else, I declined his offer and instead assigned him the mission of running Wrangel to ground and fetching back to me all of the staff officers that the White high command had assigned to his brigade.

Whereupon Chaliy made his way back to their camp and then, on the night of 17–18 October, fetched all of these White officers to my headquarters: a colonel, some captains, and some lieutenants. They were interrogated in my presence by my aide Semyon Karetnik and representatives from the staff of the Southern Front, including Vassilyev.<sup>[77]</sup> These officers briefed us on the deployment of the White forces, especially the invincible Drozdov Division<sup>[78]</sup> and, without waiting for a combined offensive with the Red Army, I ordered Petrenko's group, made up of mixed infantry, machine-gun, and artillery units, along with Marchenko's cavalry, to swoop down on the famous Drozdovians who had hitherto been relentlessly beating back the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Red Divisions, even though the latter outnumbered them by a ratio of 2 to 1.

The Insurgents attacked the White division—Wrangel's pride

**77** Aleksandr Filippovich Vasilyev (1902–1984), a career officer in the Red Army, later fought against Makhno.

**78** Named after the famous White General Mikhail Drozdovsky (1881–1919).

and joy—with help from Chaliy, who guided them through the enemy deployment. They smashed that elite unit in a way that the Red Army had never managed to do. And the Red Army commanders, as well as the Drozdovians, Kutypov,<sup>[79]</sup> and Wrangel, got the message. And the Makhnovists, as well as the staff of the Southern Front of the Red Army, retained documentation on our trophies taken in this attack on the Drozdovians, as well as Chaliy's role in planning the offensive.

But Citizen Kubanin has opted to turn a blind eye to these documents, as befits a representative of the party working in the research department for the study of the documentary history of the October Revolution and his own party. He has busied himself, quite unsuccessfully, in collecting elements entirely foreign to the *Makhnovshchina* and its ideas and passions and trying to impose them on Chaliy, someone who was prepared to fearlessly die for these ideas and passions. This won't do—Chaliy's every step refutes the role Kubanin tries to pin on him.

Only Marxist-Leninists can generalize from historical facts in this manner. Only they can deliberately misrepresent the facts to suit their own purposes, even when they have access to authentic documents about the Revolution, and about the role in it of revolutionaries and the masses who took up their cause. Consulting these documents and letting others know what's in them would be the responsible thing to do—both to their own and future generations. But the Bolsheviks are capable only of distorting the facts. Party considerations prevent them from giving a complete and balanced exposition. For once the Party has adopted a mendacious position towards a movement hostile to it, that position remains flawless and unassailable, as demands the interests of the Party.

Is it possible to come across such an abomination anywhere in other socialist movements? So far it is noticeable only in the practice of Marxism-Leninism.

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79 Alexander Pavlovich Kutepov (1882–1930), White general.

## **VII. Makhno's Alliances with the Bolsheviks and the Treachery of the Latter**

“On three occasions Makhno entered into alliances with the Soviet authorities,” Kubanin writes on page 98 of his book. “In 1918 and early in 1919, at the time of the fight against the *Hetman* and Krasnov (ataman of the Don *Cossacks*); then, in late 1919, against Denikin who had overrun southern Russia; and, finally, in 1920 against Wrangel.”

These three alliances were complete secrets from the *Makhnovshchina* and its leaders, even if Kubanin would like to persuade the reader of their grand political significance.

In actual fact, there were only two alliances: one in the spring of 1919 against the counter-revolution of the Don *Cossacks* and Denikin; and the other in October, 1920, against Wrangel.

In 1918 an alliance with the Bolsheviks was out of the question, for the *Makhnovshchina* was the only organized revolutionary force of toilers in Ukraine. The Bolsheviks did not have any base of this sort and the *Makhnovshchina* had no interest in concluding an alliance with them. I set this all out clearly in Chapter 1. Things were different when they brought in their forces from Russia; that would have been during the early months of 1919. The *Makhnovshchina* then entered into an arrangement with them. They were to keep us supplied with weapons and munitions, in return for which the Makhnovist movement was brought under the overall command of the Red Army.

The Bolsheviks broke this alliance with the police methods they deployed against the working population of the Makhnovist region who had embarked on the free construction of their social and economic life, dispensing with the tutelage of the Bolshevik Party and State. And by systematically sabotaging the supply of arms and munitions to us, they often left the Makhnovists to launch attacks on Denikin with only five cartridges for each rifle. If successful, we could only drive the enemy from their position and seize their cartridges. But if we failed, we sustained heavy losses and were compelled to retreat, leaving behind our own

trenches and thousands of wounded.

Plainly, the purpose of the Bolsheviks in such direct or indirect treachery was to annihilate the *Makhnovshchina* physically and discredit its social ideals by portraying them to the Russian toilers as the ideals of *kulaks* and counter-revolutionaries.

In spite of everything, keeping faith with its revolutionary aspirations as a movement of the downtrodden, and knowing its place and role in the mainstream of the Revolution, the *Makhnovshchina* did not entertain any sort of connivance with the Bolsheviks' enemies, recognizing that the Bolsheviks were already the dominant organized force in the vanguard of the Revolution.

Noting the crimes brazenly committed by the Party, the *Makhnovshchina* reckoned that it was morally justified in struggling against Bolshevik perfidy. Our response was three-fold: (1) the temporary withdrawal from our armed forces of the upper tier of commanders, including myself; (2) the consequent transfer of our armed forces to the command structure of the Bolsheviks; (3) the monitoring of the Bolsheviks' operational actions with the goal of verifying that they were consonant with the great tasks set by the Revolution.

True, the Bolshevik military and civilian authorities were ecstatic about this withdrawal by the Makhnovist command, confident that it would guarantee them complete control of the armed forces and of the territory. "We will triumph in both the Ukrainian cities and in the countryside," the Bolsheviks at the top gloated. And they set about trying to mollify the Insurgent units by giving them names like "Red Eagles," etc.

Sergeant-Major Trotsky was so delighted to see me step down from command of the Insurgent Army, that at first he didn't know what to do. But once he had gathered his wits, he issued an order to Voroshilov, the commander of the 14<sup>th</sup> Army:

"Seize Makhno and bring him to headquarters alive."

Unfortunately for Trotsky, I was briefed on this order by Red Army divisional commanders the moment they received it. So Voroshilov was unable to lay hands on me. On the contrary,



*Kliment Voroshilov*

he and his gang of *Chekists* came within an ace of losing their lives, for the Denikinists surrounded them along with their armoured train, the “Rudnev.”<sup>[80]</sup>

And it was I that rescued my would-be “hangmen” by sending them four ma-

chine-guns and a cavalry squadron at a time when I had already resigned my post and was heading along the front with a small detachment. The Denikinists were repulsed by the Makhnovists, and the armoured train was saved as well as Voroshilov and his *Chekists*.

I recall how happy Army Commander Voroshilov was and how he thanked me through my adjutant and how he sent me a messenger with a letter expressing his regard for me effusively and beseeching me to come and see him so that we might discuss together an entire series of plans with an eye to concerted action. To which I answered: *“I am aware of Trotsky’s orders and the role in which you have been cast, Comrade Voroshilov. It must weigh on your conscience. Which is why I think it impossible that I should study the plans of which you speak. Instead, let me put mine to you: it is my intention to infiltrate behind Denikin’s lines and harry his troops. This is vitally important, now that he has launched a strong offensive on all fronts.*

*“Your former comrade in the fight for the triumph of the revolution,*

*Batko Makhno, 15 June 1919.”*

That very same night, 15–16 June, the very same Voroshilov gave the order for members of my staff—Mikhailov-Pavlenko and Borbyga—to be arrested. And had them shot the following day.<sup>[81]</sup>

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80 Named after a young Bolshevik Red Army officer killed by White Cossacks while defending Tsaritsyn in October, 1918.

81 Mikhalev-Pavlenko was Deputy Chief of Staff of the Division for Oper-

With the acquiescence of Lenin's government, the Red Army Supreme Command proclaimed us outlaws— the Makhnovist movement and myself—stupidly hoping that the armed Insurgents still under their orders would suffer this in silence, even if they were not in sympathy with the order. When the stubborn Insurgents found out about this criminal ordinance, that very day they executed the man appointed by the central authorities to replace me<sup>[82]</sup> and insisted of their commanders that they make immediate contact with Batko Makhno and ask him what they should do now:

“Remain under the imbecilic command of these Reds, out-and-out traitors to the Revolution as they are, or embark, starting right now, upon an implacable struggle against these criminal Red fools every bit as ferocious as the battle against Denikin?”

So even as the Bolsheviks were proclaiming us outlaws, their regiments and brigades were clamouring to be placed under the command of Batko Makhno. For, as their resolutions put it,

“All around us we see nothing but betrayal of the Revolution.”

Even the brigade named after Lenin himself passed a resolution insisting that “Batko Makhno be allowed to assume command of the revolutionary forces against Denikin.”

There was a moment when the Red Army's Bolshevik commanders were hesitant, unsure of what to do. Comrade Gope, the military commissar of the city of Aleksandrovsk, came to see me at 1 a.m. and pleaded with me “to assume operative and organizational direction of the defense of Aleksandrovsk and the Aleksandrovsk–Melitopol bridgehead region in order to allow Dybenko's Crimean Army to escape from Crimea and cross to the left bank of the Dnieper.”

I declined upon discovering that they had no troops in reserve which would be needed, if I accepted the proposition, to relieve ations; Burbyga was Junior Assistant Chief of Staff of the Division. Both were Anarchists.

**82** The Bolshevik A. S. Krusser was appointed commander of Makhno's Red Army brigade on June 8, 1919. On June 9, Krusser was killed during an encounter with White forces, apparently by “friendly fire.”

the Makhnovists and adjacent units of the Red Army at the front so they could prepare for the defence of Aleksandrovsk and its environs. The Makhnovist units were experienced and battle-hardened. I also considered it my duty to insist of the Bolshevik high command, through Comrade Gope, that they explain to the toilers the folly that impelled them to declare myself and the Insurgent movement outside the law, at the same time as they were offering me a responsible post in the defence of the region. Failing which I could not carry on fighting Denikin side by side with the Bolsheviks and their specialists. Whereupon I was outlawed a second time.

The Bolsheviks openly called upon Red Army soldiers and Insurgents to assassinate me at the earliest opportunity, promising them impunity and indeed a reward for their pains. At the same time, Denikin was also posting a reward for anybody who would eliminate me. Under these circumstances and despite requests from Red soldiers and Insurgents that I should lead them, I abandoned the plan to wreak havoc in Denikin's rear. Instead I focused my attention on the best means of recapturing the Ukrainian revolution's initiative against the Whites. Failure in this project—so I told those closest to me at the time—would enable Denikin to take advantage of the Bolsheviks' politicking and strategy and gain such a solid foothold in Ukraine that all hopes of routing them would be gone for at least a year. And that would have serious implications for the toilers in Russia as well.

Which is why I re-established close liaison with those Insurgents who had stayed with the Red Army and explained to the Red soldiery and labouring population just what the Bolsheviks were doing with the achievements of the Revolution. Was that justified? The reader will discover that in the next chapter.



## VIII. The Makhnovshchina's Parochialism and Its Role in the Crushing of Denikin.

All of the Bolshevik historians dealing with the *Makhnovshchina* try to reduce it to a tiny sphere of influence, scarcely deserving of any serious attention from them. This is exactly what Citizen Kubanin does. Instead of studying the *Makhnovshchina* soberly as he ought and dealing with it exhaustively, if only as a spokesman for his party, he pretends not to know that its theatre of operations expanded considerably from its area of origin.

From September–October 1918 on, the *Makhnovshchina's* armed forces led the fight against the *Hetmanate* and the Austro-German Expeditionary Armies and ventured far beyond their home districts. By November, 1918, the *Makhnovshchina* was manning an extensive front against the White Don and Denikin, and acting in pursuit of goals that were far from parochial. I know (and am stunned that the Bolshevik historians do not) that that front was made up of four sectors: the three sectors facing Denikin: Melitopol–Berdyansk, Taganrog, and Grishino; and the sector facing the Ukrainian Directory, that stretched from Aleksandrovsk to Sinelnikovo.<sup>[83]</sup> This last sector was not very active, to be sure, but even so our high command had to maintain sufficient manpower there until a favourable opportunity arose to eliminate the enemy. And when that opportunity arrived, the *Makhnovshchina* liquidated the enemy in this sector, and not at all in the pursuit of parochial goals.

The *Makhnovshchina* was guided by its conception of the Revolution, of the freedom and independence of the toilers of both the countryside and the cities. The *Makhnovshchina* was well aware that the introduction of these ideals into the lives of working people would only be possible through the complete and decisive physical annihilation of the armed forces of the counter-revolution acting on the whole of revolutionary territory. And the *Makhnovshchina* set about carrying out this task. The length itself of the front lines manned by the *Makhnovshchina* should be enough to dispel allegations about its supposedly parochial char-

83 See map p. 9.

acter and show that it operated across a vast swathe of Ukrainian territory to physically annihilate the counter-revolution, both internal and external. The movement by no means confined itself to the goals of a certain locality.

Kubanin avoids using real documents from the archives describing the goals and actions of the *Makhnovshchina* and substitutes instead his own “truths,” or rather fantasies. I’ve stressed that the physical annihilation of the forces of the counter-revolution, in the opinion of the *Makhnovshchina*, must be the primary and immediate task of the armed forces of the Revolution, on the whole of its territory. The *Makhnovshchina* did this in Ukraine. If Kubanin had bothered to delve into all the proclamations and correlate them with the activities of the *Makhnovshchina* and its armed forces, it would not be difficult for him to become convinced of the falsity of his analysis.

But he opts instead to argue: “Whenever he fights and even in the event of victory, Makhno doesn’t pursue the enemy, but scurries back to his home territory.”<sup>[84]</sup>

And to reinforce this contention, he adds:

“In August 1919, under pressure from the Denikinists, Makhno ranged a considerable distance from home territory in order to mount a vast raid across Donetskaya, Yekatarinoslavskaya, Poltavskaya, and Kievskaya *gubernias*. However, once he had defeated Denikin, Makhno hurried to return to his own region.”<sup>[85]</sup>

This crude line of argument, awash with inaccuracies and mistakes as to the timing and purpose of the raids, is in any event bereft of logic of any sort. Actually, in August 1919, the Makhnovists did not venture into Donetskaya province, let alone Yekaterinoslavskaya or Poltavaskaya provinces, for, despite the slanders peddled about me and the movement, at my insistence the Makhnovist army was still under the Bolshevik high command in the fight against Denikin. It was only when the Bolshevik field-marshal—*feldwebel* to us—Leon Trotsky blatantly told Lenin and his confederates that he needed to be authorized to settle

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84 Kubanin, p. 3.

85 Ibid.

accounts with the *Makhnovshchina*, that he changed tack and started to act along such lines, announcing “Better that the entire Ukraine should be given up to Denikin than that the *Makhnovshchina* be allowed to grow and gain in strength” . . . “For we will find it easier to defeat Denikin,” etc., etc.<sup>[86]</sup>

When the Red Army command began to pull back from its quite impregnable positions along the southern Dnieper and head for northern Ukraine, ostensibly to straighten the Front, the aim was actually to evacuate the whole of Ukraine, abandoning the defenceless labouring population to the clutches of Denikin’s executioners. At which precise point I decided with my staff to strike before another day was out. Insurgent commanders attached to the Red Army—A. Kalashnikov, Budanov, Lev Golik, and Dermenzhi—were passed my order to seize the Red Army command staff and its commander-in-chief, Kochergin.<sup>[87]</sup> That order, bearing my signature, read:

“All untrustworthy political commissars and commanders to be placed under arrest and handed over to comrade Kalashnikov, my acting deputy as general commanding the Front; next, once new, more reliable commanders have been appointed, a

**86** Emma Goldman claimed that Trotsky made such a statement at a public meeting in Kharkov in early June, 1919 (*My Disillusionment in Russia*, New York, 1923, p. 99). On June 2 Trotsky published an article entitled *The Makhnovshchina in V Puti* (En Route), an agitational newspaper published on his personal train. This article caused consternation among both the Makhnovists and the Bolshevik military brass for its intemperate attack on the Bolsheviks’ Anarchist allies at the height of a White offensive. The Ukrainian historian V. F. Verstiuk discovered an unedited version of Trotsky’s article in the archives that includes the following passage: “Our opponent’s offensive brings up the issue of liquidating the Makhnovshchina . . . . At the present moment, the enemy has captured more than half the territory where Makhno enjoys popularity, cutting him off from his social base. The present moment is most propitious for us to liquidate the Makhnovshchina . . . . Based on political considerations, the surrender of Gulyai-Polye [to the Whites] is desirable for us.” (*The Makhnovshchina: a Peasant Insurgent Movement in Ukraine 1918–1921*, Kyiv, 1991, pp. 103–104). Trotsky issued an order for the liquidation of the *Makhnovshchina* on June 3, 1919.

**87** G. A. Kochergin (1885–1934) commanded the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> brigades of the 58<sup>th</sup> Division of the Red Army. Taken hostage by the Makhnovists in August, 1919, he later escaped.

counter-attack is to be mounted against Denikin's divisions and in this decisive operation not a single enemy of the Revolution is to be spared, even should he come from the ranks of the poor."

This operation was carried through resolutely and without bloodshed. The best Bolshevik units arrested their commissars and shipped them off to Comrade Kalashnikov's headquarters. And so the Makhnovist Army seized back the initiative in the struggle of the Ukrainian toilers against the counter-revolution in the form of Denikin's army.

The outcome of this gambit was common knowledge not only to the Makhnovists and Bolsheviks, but also to Denikin and the Entente powers who were supplying him with weapons and munitions. It was known to the whole civilized world that was seriously following the tragedy of the Ukrainian-Russian Revolution of this period. (Or, if this world was not aware of what was going on, then it knew nothing of the Ukrainian-Russian Revolution.) The result of the Makhnovists seizing the initiative from the Bolsheviks in the struggle with Denikin was the complete annihilation of the Denikinists in Ukraine. Our retaliation triggered a rout and utter confusion in the Denikinist high command which was forced to scuttle out of Taganrog together with the Entente's representatives and flee to Rostov-on-Don. The annihilation of the Denikinist forces in Ukraine had immediate repercussions for their front in the environs of Moscow. Our onslaught was so sudden and so forceful that the Denikinist high command (not without advice from the Entente) was forced to recall its best troops, then marching on Moscow, back to Ukrainian territory in an effort to wrest back control from us. That area was of crucial importance to them if they wished to keep in contact with the Western bourgeoisie; and it was equally important to the latter, for it was there that they were hoping to put paid to the Russian-Ukrainian Revolution and snuff out its subversive ideas. But the Bolsheviks saw to that instead and killed off the Revolution.

That Denikin's defeat was the doing of the revolutionary army of the Ukrainian peasants and workers is not denied by Kubanin, although he hastens to add that:

“By the end of 1919, the Makhnovist Army, having laid Denikin low, was itself laid low by typhus. . . .”<sup>[88]</sup>

It has taken the Bolsheviks fully eight years to acknowledge this fact, having most likely grown weary of unrelentingly slandering the *Makhnovshchina*. But let me say it again: it was only able to defeat Denikin by wresting the battle initiative away from the Bolsheviks. Had it not, the Reds’ silly intrigues towards us would effectively have abandoned to the Whites not merely Ukraine but also central Russia and Moscow itself, solely because, like Trotsky, they were afraid of seeing the *Makhnovshchina* “grow and gain in strength.” Once the Makhnovist army had seized back the initiative, it took them a mere two months to stymie and demolish the counter-revolutionary forces in the land. The Bolsheviks cannot openly admit that, given their politicking, their anti-revolutionary rationale, and the way in which this adventurist-intellectual caste conceives of the Revolution’s interests and the role played by the revolutionary peasant rank-and-file.

The fact is, though, that the Makhnovists afforded priceless assistance to the Russian peasants and workers by obliging Denikin to halt his march on Moscow, hotly pursuing a retreating Red Army, as he attempted to preserve his rear from the mortal wounds inflicted by our units. Which then enabled the Red Army to turn around and counter-attack, in those specific areas where the Denikinists had weakened their positions so as to funnel help to their rearguard. Which is how the Makhnovists rescued the Tula–Moscow Red front and paved the way for the smashing of the White counter-revolution.

The inconsistency of Bolshevik historians becomes apparent in the light of the facts, as does their stunning inability to grasp the reality of the Russo-Ukrainian revolution and understand the actual role played by the Insurgent Revolutionary Army (Makhnovist) of Ukraine. They are forced to wallow in pointless speculation about its parochialism and attempts to bury the *Makhnovshchina* under a mass of lies along with all who refuse to bow the knee to their power.

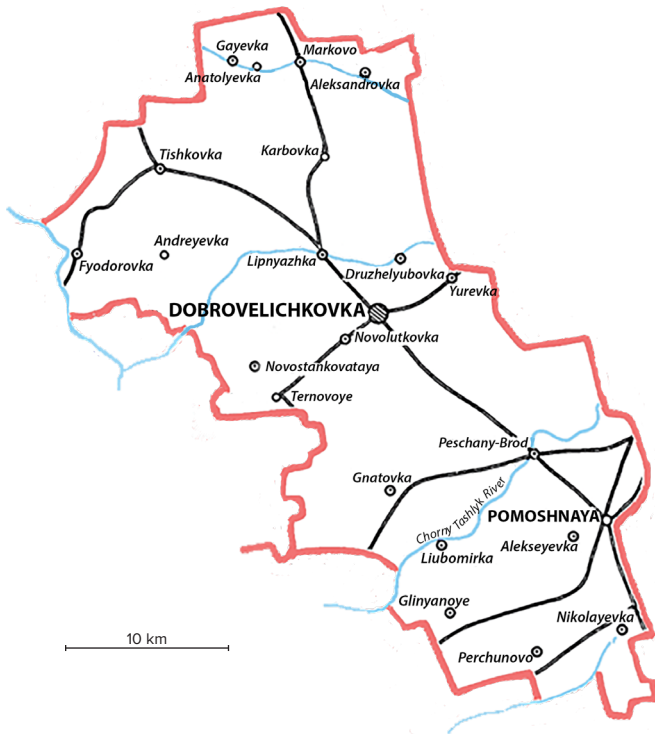
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88 Kubanin, p. 191.

# **The Death of My Father**

**by Galina Kuzmenko**

## Dobrovelichkovka County in central Ukraine



## Introduction to the Translation

**G**alina Kuzmenko (1894-1978) is best known to history as the wife of the Ukrainian peasant Anarchist Nestor Makhno, but she was an important figure in his movement in her own right. A teacher by profession, she was elected to important positions within the Makhnovist “republic,” including chairperson of the teachers’ union, and was known as a fiery advocate for women’s rights. Her long life was full of tragedy, and the article below describes one particularly poignant episode, the death of her father, an old school reactionary who had to pay the price for raising a daughter who became a revolutionary.

At the height of the Russian Civil War in the summer of 1919, the Makhnovists were being pushed westwards under pressure from the resurgent White Volunteer Army. At the same time, the Makhnovists had to contend with remnants of the Red Army, who were fleeing Ukraine from south to north while seizing all the movable goods they could lay their hands on. As Makhno retreated, his forces entered the region of his wife’s home village.

Galina Kuzmenko’s memoir first appeared in 1937 in *Probuzhdenie* [The Awakening], a Russian-American Anarchist journal published in Detroit. Her grim tale displays all the horrors of civil war, and is worthy of the renowned Soviet writer Isaac Babel, who portrayed the Makhnovists as villains. But Babel worked up his material in a comfortable railway carriage far from the front line, while Galina was often in the thick of the action.





My father, Andrey Ivanovich Kuzmenko, was the son of former serfs from the village of Peshchany-Brod,<sup>[1]</sup> Kherson province, Yelisavetgrad region.

After his military service, he married an orphaned peasant girl from Kiev province, Domnikiya Mikhailovna Tkachenko, and started a low-level job in the gendarme corps [security police]. He worked as a clerk in the gendarme offices in the larger stations of the South-West Railroad. After 20 years of loyal service, he received a 1,000 ruble bonus, and quit his job in the spring of 1908.<sup>[2]</sup> He went back to his native village and recovered from his brothers the allotment of six *desyatins*<sup>[3]</sup> he had inherited from his father. He built a house, bought some cows, and began to farm.

The couple had three children: two sons—Nikolai and Stepan—and me, the daughter and youngest in the family. My older brother, Nikolai, had already left the family and volunteered for military service by the time my father quit his job. At the beginning of the Great War, he enrolled in an officers' school, graduated, and was sent to the front. He rose rapidly in the service and by 1916 was already a staff captain. Then he suffered a serious wound and concussion in battle and as a result became 90% disabled.

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1 Literally "Sandy-Ford." The village's population in 1919 was about 3,000.

2 According to other accounts, Andrey was dismissed because of his fondness for vodka. See Grigoriy Guseynov, *Peshchany-Brod and Its Environs*, (Dnipropetrovsk, 2007), p. 171.

3 About 16 acres.

My second brother, Stepan, graduated from a technical school, got married, and stayed close to our parents, helping them with the farming.

I attended a two-room school and, well-prepared, I passed the exam for admission to the Dobrovelichkovka Teachers' College for Women, where I spent four years until my graduation.<sup>[4]</sup> For all the years I studied at the seminary I had a government scholarship, and I lived away from home and wasn't materially dependent on my family. Besides my stipend of 15 rubles per month, I was able to earn a little money tutoring classmates and children. Only infrequently, on long holidays and during summer vacations, did I visit home.

In 1916, upon graduation from the seminary, I moved to Yekaterinoslav *gubernia*, where I accepted an appointment to a two-class school<sup>[5]</sup> in Gulyai-Polye.

In early 1919, without the knowledge or consent of my parents, I married Nestor Makhno.



In the summer of 1919, Nestor Makhno handed over command of his units to the Bolsheviks and, with a small detachment, departed Yekaterinoslav *gubernia* for Kherson province. The Red Army High Command declared him an outlaw.

At that time, I was also a member of Nestor's detachment.

This was in August, 1919. Our detachment was stationed in the village of Peshchany-Brod and in neighbouring villages and *khotors*.

Units of the Red Army, pressured by the White forces of Denikin, were retreating from the south. While retreating, they tried to carry off from Ukraine as much as possible in the way of pro-

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4 This college, founded in 1912, had 145 students divided into four classes.

5 A two-class school was designed to provide four years of education, usually for ages 8 to 12. Each class was divided into two sections with a single teacher. The purpose of such schools was to impart basic, sustainable literacy skills.

duce, coal, machinery, etc. In some districts, the retreating Red Army soldiers burned stooks standing in the field and stacks of unmilled grain in retaliation against peasants in revolt. News about all this reached our village. The peasants were worried and restless.

I recall a huge meeting in the village where the Makhnovists urged the peasants to take over the railway station (seven kilometres distant) and stop the trains carrying troops, munitions, equipment—generally everything the Red Army was trying to remove from Ukraine. The peasants could use these resources themselves to resist the White menace pursuing the Reds.

One night soon after this appeal, the whole population of the village set out for the railway line at Pomoshnaya Station, armed with pitchforks and shovels, to disarm the Red soldiers and unload the trains.

My father was poorly informed about ongoing events, was reluctant to change his mind about anything, and did not take part in the exodus to the railway line.

Our staff received news that a major surge of retreating Red troops was approaching from the south. With our meagre forces it made no sense to engage them in battle and we were compelled to retreat further away from the railway line. Our village would soon be overrun by both Red and White forces.

I knew what had happened in Gulyai-Polye, where our enemies had dealt brutally with the families and relatives of Makhnovist Insurgents. I felt strongly that my parents would be in great danger after our departure from the village. Also living with my parents at that time was my younger brother Stepan and his wife Claudia. My older brother Nikolai had been arrested by the Bolsheviks in Kiev and was sitting in prison.

Two hours before our departure, I left the centre of the village, where Nestor was based, and went to my parents' place on the outskirts. My brother Stepan and his wife readily agreed to leave with us. I expressed all my misgivings to my father and mother. I advised them to either leave with us, or else go into hiding some-

where. I told them what had happened in Gulyai-Polye where the Germans and *haidamaks* had dragged Nestor's sick brother Yemelyan from his home and shot him only because he was Nestor Makhno's brother. And Yemelyan had never taken any part in the movement. Later, White officers seized the wife of Savely [Savva], another of Nestor's brothers, and after torturing her for a long time, they stabbed her with bayonets, cut off one of her breasts, then dragged her into the garden and shot her.<sup>[6]</sup> After listening to all this, my father responded firmly:

"I won't leave my own home. Are the Bolsheviks and Whites really not human beings? Do they really not understand that I can't be responsible for the actions of my daughter? She hasn't lived here for seven years now and hasn't paid any attention to her parents for a long time. I'm even less responsible for the actions of her husband, whom she married without asking me.<sup>[7]</sup> In my opinion, Stepan and Claudia shouldn't be leaving either. The weather's good and we need to harvest the wheat and prepare for threshing."

I replied: "You shouldn't be worrying about the wheat and the threshing when it's a matter of life and death. . . . I understand perfectly well that you aren't guilty of anything. But the times are such that there are brutal people about who don't care who's guilty and who isn't. They're liable to do anything. You do as you wish, but take to heart my advice and my warning."

Mother listened to our conversation quietly, but only sighed heavily and wiped a few tears that rolled down her cheeks with the corner of her apron.

"And why suddenly out of the blue do I have to abandon my

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<sup>6</sup> According to an alternate source, Savva's wife Feodora was buried alive.

<sup>7</sup> Galina and Nestor never submitted to either a religious or a civil marriage ceremony. She lied to her father about this to try to placate him, but he insisted on seeing a marriage certificate. Nestor and Andrey only ever met once, and the encounter did not go well. Andrey tried to chase Nestor off his property, calling him a bandit and cut-throat; Nestor threatened to have Andrey shot as a counter-revolutionary. See Lev Yarutskiy, *Makhno and the Makhnovists*, (Mariupol, 1995), p. 152.

house and everything in it, along with the other farm buildings and the planted garden? And what's going to happen to the cow, the pigs, the chickens, and the ducks? . . . And where are we going to go? It doesn't make any sense. No, no, I'm not leaving my own home. I haven't offended anyone and I'm not guilty of anything. I'll take my chances with everyone else, but I'm not leaving my own hearth and home . . .," ranted my father.

Meanwhile my brother and his wife were getting ready to leave. We said goodbye to the old folks and joined the detachment withdrawing towards the town of Dobrobelychovka. And on the very same day Red units entered the village of Peshchany-Brod.

Several days passed. I heard no news about my parents and was tormented with the question—what's happening with them?

As the Red troops retreated from the Nikolayev–Znamenka military zone, the Insurgent forces left by Nestor at the front, led by Kalashnikov and Budanov,<sup>[8]</sup> found the moment propitious for a coup. They seized the initiative by arresting Red commanders and transferring the Red troops to Nestor's command.

Resisting the onslaught of the White Denikinist forces while falling back, the Insurgent units approached the Pomoshnaya–Peshchany-Brod–Novoukraina region. Here Red units tried to strike them in rear, but were beaten off and forced to withdraw.

One day Grigoriy Makhno, Nestor's brother and his chief of staff, came to our quarters and said to me:

"I have some unpleasant news for you, Galina. The staff has received news that your father has been shot by the Reds, and his house looted and burned."

This grievous news about the death of my father lay like a heavy stone on my heart. . . . I was sick with agonizing grief to think that, directly or indirectly, I was the cause of his untimely and violent death. He was a completely innocent old person.

<sup>8</sup> The Anarchist Aleksandr Kalashnikov (?–1920) came from a working class family in Baku. Avraam Budanov (~1886–1929) was an anarcho-communist from 1905. A skilled worker, he was active as a labour organizer in the Donbas region before joining the Makhnovist movement.

“And what about my mother?” I asked in a trembling voice.

“Her fate is unknown,” he replied. And noting the anguish on my face, he gently put his hand on my shoulder and said:

“I know how hard this is for you. But be brave, Galina, keep your spirits up. In our current situation, we revolutionaries are exposed to all sorts of perils and must be prepared for anything.”

When he left, I went into the next room where Fenya,<sup>[9]</sup> my brother Stepan, and his wife Claudia were, and told them what had happened. Claudia dropped the sewing she was working on and burst out sobbing. My brother paced about the room, then stopped in front of the window and stared into the distance, lost in gloomy thoughts. Fenya, who was sitting on a small bench and had been reading out loud before Grigoriy’s arrival, dropped her book on the floor, and sat motionless, stunned by the news. I sat down on a chair in the corner and bowed my head in my hands. . . .

“Why, oh why, did I not force them to come with us?” I was overcome with remorse. “I was well aware that they were in mortal danger.”

Feeling guilty of the premature and violent death of my father, not knowing the fate of my mother, and feeling terribly anxious for her—this was an unbearably heavy burden. . . .

On the following day, Grigoriy Makhno came by again and told us that the staff had received more information about the events in Peshchany-Brod. Together with my father, five other people were shot: three teachers from the two-room school, the former village *starosta* [mayor], and one youth—a 16-year-old boy—who, upon seeing his beloved teachers taken to be shot, intervened and tearfully reproached the Red soldiers:

“Why are you taking the teachers?! They haven’t done anything wrong. Let them go.”

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9 Fenya Gayenko (~1892–1921) was Galina’s best friend and inseparable companion throughout the civil war. They had studied together at the teachers’ seminary.

To which they replied:

“So you feel sorry for them? Well, you can join them.”

They shot him as well.

As for my mother, the peasants told the following story: upon seeing her home in flames, and learning that Father had been shot, she was overcome with grief and lost her mind. She was spotted running along the bank of the river, apparently deranged.

She threw herself in the river and drowned.

Still more painful, still heavier, was the weight on my heart. . . .

No more father and mother. . . . And along with Father was pitilessly and cynically destroyed the most popular teacher and social activist in the village, Daniil Savvich Marutsenko, with his wife and fellow-teacher Aleksandra Efimovna, and his brother—also a teacher—Yevfim Savvich. I studied under Daniil Savvich for three years. His students loved him. Many were the enlightening conversations I had with him, and many were the good books he gave me to read. He prepared me for the seminary without charging anything, and then helped me with my application. For his warmth, attention, and kindness, and for his help and good advice, I loved him not less than my own father.

And the village *starosta*, a quiet, well-respected peasant, was someone I knew personally.

I knew young Kavitsky well, and remembered him as a bright kid in the first class when I, being in the senior class, had to substitute for his regular teacher who was sick.

And now all these dear, wonderful, and totally innocent people, together with my parents, were blood-stained corpses. . . . And what share of the guilt for their deaths was owing to me? . . .



On the very same day, only slightly later, news arrived at the staff headquarters that Peshchany-Brod was already cleared of Reds and re-occupied by the Makhnovists.

At the headquarters was Nestor, just arrived from somewhere,

preoccupied and in good spirits about something. He was completely absorbed in the flow of news coming into headquarters: news about events at the front, and about the arrival of more and more new Insurgent detachments. He was rushing around so much, I wasn't able to exchange more than a couple of words with him.

Quickly grabbing a bite to eat, he issued an order for an automobile. He intended to go to Peshchany-Brod to greet the newly-arrived units there. When the automobile pulled up, I got in without saying anything to anyone.

A minute later, Nestor came out of the HQ with Lepetchenko and Petya Liuty,<sup>[10]</sup> armed to the teeth—they accompanied him everywhere.

Upon seeing me sitting in the automobile, Nestor said, rather gruffly:

“What are you doing here? Get out of the car! We're not just going for a drive, this is military business.”

This rudeness, this incomprehension of my situation and natural desire to see the remains of my family home with my own eyes and search out all the details of the death of my father and mother, I found very offensive, and painful to experience. I wasn't able to restrain myself any longer. The tears began to flow. Through the tears I sobbed:

“If you won't take me with you, I will go on foot to Peshchany-Brod. I must see everything and find out everything that happened there to my parents.”

Seeing me weeping and only now grasping my state, Nestor, already speaking softly, said:

“Well, that's fine, let's go. Really, what else can you do?”

He got in the car and sat next to me. Leaning over, he kissed me

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<sup>10</sup> Aleksandr Lepetchenko (1890–1920), one of the Gulyai-Polye anarcho-communists, was Makhno's adjutant. Isidor (“Petya”) Liuty (1893–1919) was another member of the Gulyai-Polye Group of Anarcho-Communists.



on the cheek and said:

“Forgive me, Galya. I’m been so swallowed up by events these last few days that I forgot about your grief.”

Lepetchenko and Liuty got in next to the driver and we took off.

The distance from Dobrobelychovka to Peshchany-Brod is 15 kilometres.

Along the whole length of the road carts were moving, filled with Insurgents, equipment, and refugee families fleeing from Gul-yai-Polye.

Nestor frequently stopped to talk with Insurgents or with Gul-yai-Polye peasants, trying to find out details about the coup engineered by Kalashnikov and Budanov in Novy Bug and everything else that was going on.

Each of these stops was agonizingly long for me. I was entirely wrapped up in my personal worries and all these people and events were of little interest to me for the moment. Before my eyes flashed carts, horses, and oxen with dusty, sun-burned people. I heard their cheerful shouts of welcome. Some came up to the car to shake our hands or hurriedly tell us stories about their experiences on the road. I saw all of this in a sort of fog, answering greetings and smiling mechanically, while burning with the desire to reach my village as soon as possible.

On the road we overtook my brother Stepan, who was jolting along on a dilapidated horse without a saddle. Upon learning that the Makhnovists had occupied our village, he also, like myself, was trying to get home as quickly as possible.

Finally our car crossed the last *balka* [ravine] not far from our village and climbed to a hilltop, from where we could see the whole village sprawling on both sides of the Chorny Tashlyk River for a length of four or five kilometres. Upon seeing the village, my heart beat faster.

Descending the hill, we entered the village and stopped not far from the old church on the edge of the marketplace.

Nestor and the comrades got out and went to one of the huts to

see the local commander.

I stayed in the car with the driver. Nestor shouted:

“Wait for me. I’ll be back soon and we can go on together.”

A crowd of children gradually formed around the car—an automobile was a rarity in our village in those times. And soon grown-up peasants were attracted as well. They greeted me with friendly smiles.

“How are things going here these days?” I asked.

“Oh, what trouble we’ve had.”

“God forbid such happenings!”

“Would to God such devils were never born!”

“The village has never seen such a calamity.”

“Only three days after you left the village, a unit of the Red Army military police suddenly arrived and set up shop here. They were furious that the villagers had gone to the railway to disarm the Red soldiers. And on the day they arrived, they arrested six people including our *batko*. And in the evening they used whips to force everybody to come to the town hall for a meeting. The arrested persons were brought there. Some sort of commissar did the talking.<sup>[11]</sup> He abused us, calling us bandits and counter-revolutionaries. He threatened to kill everyone and burn the village, unless we supported the Reds. And just to show that he meant business, he was going to execute the hostages who had been arrested. And in fact that very same night these unfortunate people were shot.”

“Where were they shot?”

“Over there by the two-room school.”

“Did they bury them?”

“Early the next day the villagers dug a large pit in the cemetery, placed all the bodies in it, and covered them with dirt.”

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11 Although Galina doesn’t name him, other sources identify the commissar as the prominent Bolshevik Vladimir Zatonsky (1888–1938).

From the crowd of peasants an old man pushed his way forward, his face swollen and covered with bruises, and said:

“And just look at me. Those devils did this to me all over. They insisted that I hand over weapons. I didn’t have any weapons. I swore to them and crossed myself—to no avail. The bastards wouldn’t believe me. They began to beat me. They beat me on the head, on the back, they pulled off my trousers and whipped me. They threw me on the ground, beat me with ramrods, and stomped on me. While some of them were beating me, others were going around looking for weapons and robbing the farms. They helped themselves to anything they wanted, these bandits.”

“‘Tell us—where did you hide the rifle and ammunition? We’re going to beat you until you tell us,’ they screamed, and kept beating me.

“Some old women and children were running around me, sobbing and begging them to leave me alone. But my tormentors paid them no heed. Finally they put a shovel in my hands, whipped me on the back, and announced: ‘We’re going to shoot you. Dig a hole for yourself, you bastard!’

“They forced me to dig. . . . So long as we live, we’re going to remember those ‘defenders of the workers and peasants.’”

And two big tears rolled slowly from his blackened eyes, down his swollen cheeks, and into his thick, bristly beard.

“They stomped on me, too, the degenerates,” said one of the women, and pulled back the embroidered sleeve of her homespun blouse, revealing a bloody welt on her arm.

“I was silent for a long time, gritting my teeth, as I watched them steal the grain, the piglets, and the chickens. But when they smashed my trunk and began to take my towels, skirts, and my last blouse, I couldn’t hold back and began to scold and curse them. One of them jumped up, beat me with a rope and shouted: ‘Be quiet, you witch! Or we’ll shut you up for good, you damned Makhnovist!’”

“Oh, how they threatened and beat our peasants. . . . And the

grain, along with anything else valuable, they carted away," lamented another old-timer.

"And what happened to my mother?"

"According to what I heard, the poor dear was not shot, but lost her mind. She ran along the river bank and threw herself off a cliff into the water."

"Did they drag her out, bury her?" I asked.

"Probably they've already buried her."

"I don't think so, I think she's still in the morgue at the clinic. You should go there to see for yourself."

At that time an old woman who had been standing quietly a short distance away while stroking her chin and listening, pushed her way towards me. Nodding to me, she said:

"Don't go until you hear what I have to say, daughter."

I jumped out of the automobile and went with her off to the side. Glancing around to make sure that no one was listening, she whispered:

"Your mother is alive. The Bolsheviks searched the whole village looking for her—they wanted to shoot her. So we old folks, to throw them off the scent, deliberately put it about that she had lost her mind and drowned. The Reds believed us and quit looking for her. In fact she is alive and hiding in the gardens on the outskirts of the village." She nodded towards the part of the village where we lived.

The old woman's words made me unspeakably happy.

I hurriedly kissed her and thanked her from the bottom of my heart for the good news. Then I rushed into the hut where Nestor was. Greeting the new commander in a perfunctory manner, I told Nestor that my mother was alive and was hiding in the gardens and that I wanted to go look for her right away. He agreed, and so I was driven to our homestead, located about two kilometres distant.

Upon approaching the homestead, I was surprised to see that our

hut was standing untouched, since I was expecting to see only its burned-out ruins. Telling the driver to return to Nestor, I entered the courtyard. There to greet me with an angry bark was our dog Riabko, but when she recognized me, she wagged her tail, howled with joy, and licked my hand. On the doorstep sat our old gray cat, Vaska. When he saw me, he arched his spine, raised his tail, and began to rub against the door post, meowing plaintively.

I opened the unlocked door and went inside. Devastation everywhere. The floor was covered with rags, straw, and books. Cupboards, drawers, and chests had been opened. Everything of any value had been taken by the Red Army soldiers. The rest was broken or ripped up and scattered about.

It was sad and painful to see my parents' hut ransacked and empty. I went outside. Then I saw my mother coming along the street together with my brother. While Nestor and I had paused along the road, my brother had overtaken us by a wide margin and had already succeeded in finding Mother. I ran to meet them and flung myself at Mother to kiss her. She was wearing an old, gray dress, caked with dirt, and a shawl pulled over to one side of her head. From under the shawl dangled disheveled gray hair. Her face was pale and very dirty. She looked at me with a cold, blank stare and pushed me away when I went to kiss her. Then she glanced around and suddenly, strangely, started laughing.

"Play music! Play! I'm getting married," she cried. She stepped away and started to dance in the road.

My brother and I glanced at each other but didn't say anything. We understood that she had endured so much in the last few days that her nerves had given way.

I took Mother by the arm and began talking to her:

"Take it easy, Mummy, There's no music here. You don't need to dance."

"Why is there no music? Did the musicians not show up yet? You know it's my wedding today, and the guests have already arrived," she announced imperiously.

She started singing one of the wedding songs, disengaged herself from my hand, and began dancing with even more energy.

A bunch of kids began to gather around us. We were approaching our courtyard. I grabbed Mother firmly by one arm, while my brother took the other arm. Mother resisted and began to drag her feet on the ground. Realizing, however, that we had her in a strong grasp, she stopped resisting, and quietly, calmly moved along. We brought her into the yard, took her into the garden, and sat her down in the midst of the melons and sunflowers. Some neighbours approached. One of them brought a pail of water, soap, and a towel. Another brought pumpkin turnovers with sour cream.

I washed Mother and combed her hair. I fastened the shawl properly on her head.

She looked tired. She never said a word, and allowed herself to be cleaned up.

The neighbours expressed their good wishes to her and began to tell the story of how the Red Army soldiers had taken over our farm.

“They beat your father severely with ropes. He began to argue with them, saying he wasn’t guilty of anything, but his words of protest were answered with crude sneers and new beatings. In the end, he was quiet. He wiped away tears with his fist and submitted to everything that they demanded.”

“Don’t argue! Harness the horses!”

“You’re treating me in an illegal fashion. Prove that I’m guilty, judge me in a court, and then shoot me, but you have no right to beat me,” said Father.

“Look at that, he wants a court. . . . We can flog you to death without a court, you tsarist dog, and we can take all your valuables and burn your hut,” he was told.

“That’s violence, robbery, lawlessness,” protested Father.

He was rewarded with new blows and yelled at:

“Load up the wagon with the goods! And be quick about it, old boy!”

“He harnessed the horses to his wagon, the poor fellow, and helped the Reds load it with stuff from his hut,” continued another neighbour.

“The Reds spread out to the cattle sheds and the barns. They took the pigs. They chased the ducks and hens around the courtyard and shot them. One of them set fire to some straw. He placed the burning straw on the front steps of the hut and then began to climb the stairs to the loft with a burning bundle to set fire there as well. So we, neighbours, rushed to him and the grannies began to drag him down from the staircase while asking him not to do this.

“God forbid that you should do this,” they said. “It’s summer now with a hot wind blowing. If you set fire to one hut, the whole village will go up in flames.”

“Go to hell, let it burn, I don’t care,” replied the Red. But other Reds intervened and said:

“They’re right, Vanka, And if the village burns down, we won’t have a place to spend the night.”

“And Vanka reluctantly threw his burning bundle of straw on the ground. And we stamped out the fire with our feet.”

“Then the fully loaded wagon with your father on board was driven out of the courtyard.”

“The Red soldiers searched for your mother for a long time. They looked high and low in the gardens, and fired their guns into clumps of tall weeds and marsh grass along the river. They questioned everyone they met if they had seen where the old witch was hiding.”

My brother told about his long and futile search that day in the gardens where Mother was hiding. He kept shouting:

“Mama, where are you?! Come out! The Reds aren’t here any more. It is I, Stepan. I’ve come for you.”

He covered the whole garden in this manner, but there was no response to his shouting.

He had already made his mind that she wasn't there, and went back to talk to the peasant who had pointed out where to find his mother. My brother told the peasant that he had looked everywhere in this garden, but she just wasn't there. (Our gardens in the Ukrainian black earth region with their corn stalks, sunflowers, and other plants that exhibit luxuriant growth are in no way similar to the gardens in France, which could hardly provide a hiding place for a person.)<sup>[12]</sup>

"You didn't search well enough. She must be there," answered the peasant and went with my brother into the garden.

For along time they walked together and called Mother, but there was still no answer.

Then they split up and, starting from opposite ends of the garden, began to search it carefully, walking in parallel lines two or three steps apart.

After covering a good third of the garden in this manner, my brother finally bumped into Mother. She lay immobile, pressed to the ground among thick, tall sunflowers. She lay face down, with her hands covering her face. At first, my brother thought she was sleeping. But looking more attentively, he realized she was hiding, curled up like a ball, and that she had covered her face with her hands from fear.

The peasant, who was the owner of the garden, approached and the two of them tried to persuade her to get up. But she wouldn't listen, and continued to lay on the ground without moving.

It took a considerable effort to convince her that the danger was past, that she had nothing to fear, and no longer needed to hide. Finally she allowed them to remove her hands from her face, open her eyes, and sit up. . . .

While all these stories were being told, Mother was sitting quietly.

Her gaze wandered without resting on any person or thing. It

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12 In the 1920s–1930s Galina Kuzmenko lived mostly in France.



seemed as if nothing was registering; she neither heard or understood anything we said, and was wholly absorbed in her own worries. Only towards the end of my brother's tale, her face became attentive and focused.

And suddenly, her lower lip began to tremble, and tears flowed from her eyes.

She wept, softly at first, and then with loud sobbing. She cried for a long time.

By relieving her burden with tears, she seemed to come to her senses. We suggested that she eat. She ate the warm turnovers with sour cream. My brother went down to the river to his own garden and brought back tomatoes, cucumbers, and a melon. The three of us had a bite to eat—all of us were hungry.

While eating, Mother told how soon after my brother and I had left, several cavalrymen had ridden into the courtyard.

Mother was in the hut at the time, busying herself with the stove. Father was in the courtyard, getting ready for threshing.

At first Mother thought that our Insurgents had returned, and looked out the window. The cavalrymen moved towards Father, surrounded him, and asked:

"Does Andrey Kuzmenko live here?"

"He lives here," answered Father.

"Are you Andrey Kuzmenko?"

"I am Andrey Kuzmenko."

"You filthy swine! . . ."

The whip in the hand of one of the troopers whistled through the air and stung Father in the back.

"Why are you doing this, gentlemen!?" began Father, raising his hands to protect his face and head. But a torrent of blows rained down on him.

"So, you filthy cop, you still love 'gentlemen' [*gospoda*]. Come on, comrades, let's show him some gentlemen!"



Galina's mother hid from the Red soldiers in a stand of rushes along the river. Upon seeing and hearing all this, Mother remembered my warning and, without lingering, rushed into the small room in the back of the hut that had a window. Jumping out of the window, she bent over double and ran down a ditch choked with weeds towards the river bank. Concealing herself in a thick stand of reeds, she sat in the mud and water and waited.

Soon she heard the clatter of horses' hoofs, the voices of the Red soldiers, and shots fired. Bullets whistled over her head, and two of them hit the water near where she was sitting.

When the shooting stopped, she still remained in the same place, afraid to move. She thought that the Reds had settled in somewhere and were waiting for her to emerge from her hiding place.

It was only in the middle of the night, exhausted and so cold from the night air and the water that her teeth were chattering, that she decided to come out onto the river bank.

She looked around. Not a soul to be seen. She decided not to return home, and made her way along the river through the gardens. On the following day, she encountered a woman in one of

the gardens. This woman told Mother that her husband had been shot the night before, and that she was still being searched for by the Reds. The woman advised her not to show herself to people. This good person brought her a coat and some footwear.

All these days and nights she had spent in various gardens, where the peasants brought her food to eat. But she had no appetite.

The neighbours listened to Mother's tale and wiped away tears. And really, her story about her experiences, about her anxiety, fear, grief, tears, and desperation, about all that she felt and endured during the last few days, was impossible to listen to without shuddering and being overcome by feelings of pity for her. . . .

Meanwhile, the automobile arrived back at our courtyard. Mother and I said goodbye to our good neighbours, and asked them to look after the hut, the cat, and the dog. Then we got in the car, and after picking up Nestor along the road, returned to Dobrovelichkovka.

My brother stayed behind in Peshchany-Brod with the intention of finding out everything he could about the death of Father and viewing the grave where he was buried.



On the following day, my brother returned to Dobrovelichkovka. He had been able to meet and talk with many fellow-villagers. He visited the cemetery and saw the grave where Father and the others were buried.

He was able to tell us some more details by no means lacking in interest.

The peasants told him that after the big wagon was loaded with our family's goods, some of the Reds sat in it, tying their horses to the back. Father was ordered to sit up front and drive the horses to the town hall.

As they drove along our street past the hut of his first cousin Dionisy, Father turned to the Reds sitting in the back and asked for permission to halt for a minute to get a drink of water. Permission was granted.

He stopped the horses and waved to his cousin sitting on the front porch. The cousin came out to the gate. Father asked him to bring a mug of water to drink. His brother went in the hut, returned with a mug of water, and gave it to Father. Father took it with trembling hands, and drained it through lips swollen from the beating he had received. Handing back the mug, he said:

“See, brother, what kind of world we live in! . . . I raised a daughter, I taught her, I helped her make her way in the world, and now I must die because of her. . . .”

And upon saying this, he began to weep. . . .

“Hey, you, you’ve had your drink, now let’s get moving! There’s nothing to talk about,” cried the Reds in the back.

“Thank you, cousin, farewell!” he said to Dionisy, and got the horses moving again.

When they arrived at the town hall, Father was ordered to get down from the wagon. One of the Reds led him into the courtyard where he joined the other prisoners.

The prisoners were present at the meeting that night and heard the death sentence pronounced on them from the mouth of the Red leader. None of the peasants were allowed to approach and talk to them. Only among themselves did the prisoners exchange a few remarks.

Late at night, after the meeting, they were led to the other side of the village to be shot up against the shed of the school watchman.

Among the prisoners was one of the village’s priests, wearing only underwear. But it seems that one of the Red soldiers took pity on him and whispered along the way:

“Scram, Father, I won’t notice.”

So the priest slipped away in the dark.

Upon arriving at the shed next to the school, the prisoners were halted, and it was announced that they would be placed against the wall one by one and shot. The prisoners began to say goodbye to one another and exchange kisses. Especially poignant were the

mutual farewells of the brothers who were teachers and the husband and wife.

My father, being very religious, had spent almost the whole march praying, and lamenting that he was dying without making a sacramental confession.

He was the first to be stood against the wall to be shot. He was ordered to face the wall.

"I'm ready to die and can look death straight in the eye," replied Father. And after crossing himself, he raised his hands and turned his eyes to the sky, praying:

"Lord, I commit my soul to your hands. . . ."

The command rang out, then a volley, and, flailing his hands about, he collapsed on the ground.

The second to be stood against the wall was young Kavitsky.

"Butchers! . . . You're shooting the innocent! . . ." he was able to shout before they shot him.

Then it was the turn of Alexandra Efimovna. Another volley and, pierced by several bullets, she fell.

After her came her husband, Daniil Savich, who fell like a heavy sack at the feet of his wife.

Several minutes later the Reds, shouldering their rifles, took off for their quarters to rest, leaving six corpses by the street next to the shed.

At dawn of the following day, by order of the Red commander, several peasants were ordered to take wheel barrows and shovels and collect the bodies for burial.

The peasants decided to bury them in the cemetery and dug a large pit not far from the gate.

Before taking them to the cemetery, they began to undress the corpses and remove their footwear. The undressing of corpses was normal for those times, since clothing and shoes were terribly scarce. When they touched the woman, however, they discovered that her body was warm and that she was breathing weakly.

What were they to do with her? They couldn't bury her—she was alive, and possibly might recover. It was also impossible to tell the Reds that she was alive—they would finish her off. A decision had to be made in a hurry—one of the Reds was liable to approach at any minute.

So what to do?

Hurriedly they decided to carry her to one of the closest huts, that of a poor widow where Red soldiers were not billeted.

The widow gasped when she saw they were carrying in a corpse. But when it was explained to her that this was not a corpse, but a living being, and that she might be able to save her, the widow rushed back in her hut and set up a cot with a clean sheet. The unfortunate victim was carefully laid down and left there under great secrecy. The other victims were undressed, transported to the cemetery, lowered into the pit without coffins, and the pit was filled in.

After sharing out the clothes of the dead people, the peasants agreed to keep quiet about the woman teacher and work out a plan to get her to the hospital.

A couple of hours later, while the Red soldiers, after a good night's rest and a bite to eat, were occupying themselves with stealing goods, beating peasants, and generally suppressing any sign of rebelliousness, a wagon with the injured woman was traveling along the streets of the village to the hospital. It was necessary to proceed along the main street. Several times the driver was challenged by Red soldiers, who asked:

"Where are you going? What are you carrying?"

To which the driver replied:

"Well, look here, something terrible has happened. This woman fell out of a loft. She's unconscious and I don't know whether or not she can be helped. So I'm taking her to the clinic to see what they say."

At the hospital, the excellent doctor, who was a friend of the teacher's, had already been warned. When they carried in the

heavily wounded victim, she was placed in a separate room. Her wounds were bandaged, and she regained consciousness. Bullets had passed through her neck and shoulders in several places, but none of the wounds was mortal. However, because there was nerve damage, one side of her body was paralyzed.

My brother visited her in the hospital and spoke with her. The doctor expressed hope for her full recovery.

She said that when she recovered, she would go back to her own family.

She was really glad to see my brother and willingly told him about my father's last moments.



The building that housed the two-class school attended by Galina Kuzmenko now has a memorial plaque dedicated to her. The plaque reads: "In this building, previously a *zemstvo* school, from 1907 to 1911, the well-known public figure Galina Andriyivna Kuzmenko (1896–1978) was a student."

### Translator's Epilogue

Galina's brother Stepan joined Makhno's army briefly, but then had to go into hiding and did not survive the Civil War. Her mother and her other brother Nikolai died in the 1930s, apparently of starvation. Galina and her daughter Yelena were arrested in Berlin at the end of World War II by Soviet authorities and sentenced to terms of imprisonment and exile. Released in 1954, Galina tried to return to her roots in Peshchany-Brod, but no one there would receive her and she ended up spending a night in the Pomoshnaya railway station. She was also rejected by Nikolai's son in Kiev, who met her at the train station and asked her to go away. Her final option was to go live with her daughter in distant Kazakhstan. It was only in 1976, two years before her death, that Galina received an invitation from a member of Nestor's family to visit Gulyai-Polye, where she received a warm welcome.

Galina Kuzmenko is honoured today in Peshchany-Brod as one of the most notable inhabitants of the village. An annual festival is held to commemorate her (fictitious) wedding to Nestor Makhno.





# **The Diary of Galina Kuzmenko**

**(February 19–March 28, 1920)**



## Introduction to the Translation

In late 1920–early 1921, the Soviet authorities began publishing excerpts from the purported diary of Makhno's wife, identified as Fenya Gayenko. The Makhnovists angrily denied the authenticity of the diary. Forged documents were a common weapon in the Russian civil war: for example, the Ukrainian nationalists propagated Trotsky's fake "Instructions to Communist-Agitators" and the Whites published fictitious Bolshevik decrees proclaiming the "socialization" of women and children. But almost half a century later, Galina Kuzmenko told Soviet historian S. N. Semanov that the diary was indeed hers:

*"I . . . kept a diary in a notebook I borrowed from Fenya Gayenko . . . her name was written on the front page but all the writing in the notebook was mine. Once Fenya and I were travelling along a road in a wagon—I don't remember exactly when, but it was cold and I was wearing a fur cap. Suddenly Red cavalry appeared. They left us alone, but unhitched the horses, leaving us their own worn-out nags. A suitcase which contained the diary was in another wagon which they seized. Then some Soviet newspaper published an article about the diary of Makhno's wife Fenya Gayenko. [Peter] Arshinov denounced it, but in fact it was my diary."*

The incident in question took place on March 28, 1920, and the troops belonged to the Red 13<sup>th</sup> Army. One of the Army's commanders, Robert Eideman, had the diary translated into Russian by his intelligence section and published part of it in a brochure that quickly went through several editions.

The independent Russian researcher V. N. Litvinov passionately denied the authenticity of the diary, believing that it was either a fabrication of the Cheka or was written by Galina's close friend Fenya Gayenko after she was taken prisoner by the Reds.<sup>[1]</sup> Litvinov claimed that "almost two-thirds of [the diary] is dedicated to a description of Makhno's drunkenness." This is an exaggeration—drunkenness is mentioned only in the entries for March 6-7 and 12-13. As A. V. Shubin has noted,

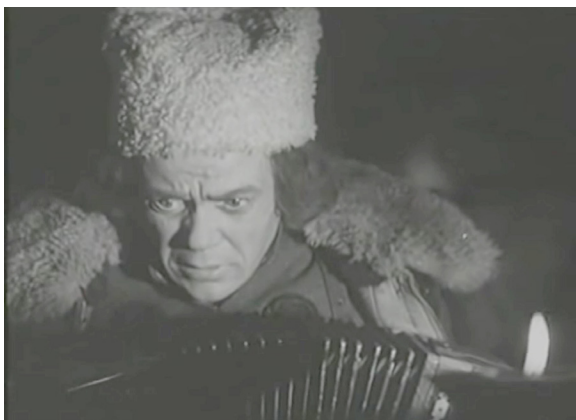
*"Concerning the contentious fragments compromising Makhno personally, they need not affect our interpretation of the military and social politics of the movement, just as the scandals connected with the personal image of contemporary politicians have little relation to the description of their political trajectory."<sup>[2]</sup>*

1 V. N. Litvinov, *An Unsolved Mystery—the 'Diary of Makhno's Wife'*, was originally a samizdat text. An English translation can be found here: <https://nestormakhno.info/english/litvinov-diary.htm>. Litvinov (1930–1985) had access only to bowdlerized Soviet versions of the diary.

2 A. V. Shubin, *An Anarchist Social Experiment*, (Moscow, 1998), p. 12.

In any case, the translations of the diary published in the USSR (1920 to 1990) include subtle distortions that have affected the historiography of the movement. Examples:

Ukrainian original	Soviet Russian version
Our host is a very nice person. Today he brewed some <i>samogon</i> and treated us. Nestor drank some and was rather cheeky with me. (March 6)	The owner here is a very nice person. Today he brewed some moonshine and treated us to it. Nestor had a little too much and behaved very rudely towards me.
<i>The Ukrainian original suggests Nestor may have been teasing his wife, whereas the Russian versions goes so far as to imply date rape.</i>	
"This is for you not saving your rifle . . ." (March 7)	"This is for you not taking up a rifle . . ."
<i>Galina observed villagers being beaten by Makhnovists; the Soviet version suggests the reason was refusal to join the Insurgent Army. The Ukrainian original indicates it was for losing their rifles, a serious offence for soldiers. The Makhnovists did not punish peasants for refusing to join their army.</i>	
[The Batko] wandered in a tipsy state along the street, dancing to accordion music. (March 13)	[The Batko] wandered in a drunken state along the street with an accordion, dancing.
<i>The Ukrainian original presents a normal picture of village life, while in the Soviet version Makhno is making a fool of himself in public. It is well established that Makhno did not play the accordion.</i>	



Boris Chirkov as Nestor Makhno in the 1942 epic *Aleksandr Parkhomenko*. Chirkov's Makhno is an accordion-playing, alcoholic psychopath.

\* \* \* \* \*

Galina's diary has yet to be published in an authoritative edition in the language in which it was written—Ukrainian. The English translation presented here was translated from a Ukrainian version published in the Kharkiv magazine *Berezil* in 1991.<sup>[3]</sup> The editor Volodomir Kobzar wrote:

*"... the diary entries are given exactly according to the original, which is found in the Central State Archive of the October Revolution of the USSR. . . ."*<sup>[4]</sup>

Alas, it seems that this statement is at best misleading, and that Kobzar never consulted the original, which is in a Moscow archive, but found a typewritten copy in a Ukrainian archive. Nevertheless, Kobzar's version is believed to be the most accurate version available in print at the present time.<sup>[5]</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The diary in unabridged form describes a mixture of military actions, travels back and forth across a limited region close to Gulyai-Polye, and the feelings of a young woman caught up in a vicious civil war. The atmosphere of the diary is quite remarkable: scenes of idyllic rusticity are interspersed with episodes of sheer terror and horror. It's impossible to imagine a *Chekist* writing such a document, especially the following:

*Our boys were frozen and exhausted by the time this affair ended, but the reward for this labour and suffering for each Insurgent was the consciousness that even a small group of people, weak in strength but strong in spirit, inspired by a great idea, can achieve great things.*  
(February 20—21).

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3 V. Kobzar, *The Diary of Galina Kuzmenko*, *Berezil* №3 (1991), pp. 128-143.

4 Ibid., p. 133. The archive mentioned is now the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF).

5 Thanks to Ukrainian researcher Yuriy Kravets for this information; he is preparing a definitive edition of the diary at the time of writing.



Galina Kuzmenko

### **February 19, 1920.**

Today in the morning we left the village of Husarka. At 11 a.m. we arrived in the village of Kinski Rozdori. Here our boys disarmed 40 Reds. Several boys from this village joined our detachment. We didn't stay here long, about three hours, after which we moved on to Fedorivka.<sup>[1]</sup>

### **February 20-21.**

We spent the night at Fedorivka in an old billet. In the morning we sent a scout to Huliaipole. After lunch we left Fedorivka. On the road we met our scout who told us that there were 200 to 300 Red soldiers in Huliaipole. We decided launch a night-time raid and disarm the Reds. In the evening, we arrived at the village of Shagarovo, where we halted for several hours. Again we sent out a scout, in order to ascertain the placement of both the troops and their commanders.

At midnight we left Shagarovo for Huliaipole. On the road, we were told the disposition of the enemy forces. Quickly we reached Huliaipole and positioned ourselves on the outskirts. All the battle-worthy boys advanced immediately to the centre of the village, and then spread out to disarm the uninvited guests. The Red soldiers didn't put up much of a fight, and quickly surrendered their weapons. Their commanders defended themselves to the last, until they were killed where they stood. By morning, we had disarmed almost three-quarters of the 6<sup>th</sup> Regiment. The part that was still not disarmed got their turn in the morning. They started returning fire, but soon found out that their comrades had already been disarmed, so they also surrendered their weapons.

Our boys were frozen and exhausted by the time this affair ended, but the reward for this labour and suffering for each Insurgent was the consciousness that even a small group of people, weak in strength but strong in spirit, inspired by a great idea, can achieve great things. Thus 70 to 75 of our boys over a period of several hours defeated 450 to 500 of the enemy, killing

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1 Galina's Ukrainian place names are used throughout, i.e. Huliaipole = Gul'gai-Polye.



their commanders, capturing many rifles, bullets, machine guns, *tachankas*, horses, etc.

Winding up this affair, the boys dispersed—some to sleep, some to go home, some to visit friends. Nestor and I also went to the centre of the town to buy some stuff, visit some people, and then returned to our quarters. We began to prepare dinner, when suddenly Gavrusha<sup>[2]</sup> ran into the hut and said that we needed to harness the horses right away because enemy cavalry were coming down the hill along the highway from Polohi. Quickly we assembled and left. Remaining in the centre of the town were Savely Makhno, Vorobyev, and Skoromny.<sup>[3]</sup> As we were leaving the town, we heard very heavy firing in the centre. After an hour or two, we were already in Sanzharivka. Here we halted for three hours, and in the evening moved on to Vilgovka,<sup>[4]</sup> where we spent the night.

### **February 22.**

We roused ourselves, breakfasted, and set off through Uspenivka to Dibrivka. The Uspenivka boys promised to join us in Dibrivka. In Dibrivka we met Comrade Petrenko, who has already commenced work with his own boys, seizing commissars and disarming the small units that have turned up in Velika Mikhailivka. The meeting was quite joyful. Petrenko immediately announced that he was going with us.

We spent the night in Dibrivka.

### **February 23.**

During the night I got sick from charcoal fumes and felt poorly the whole day. At 10 a.m. our boys seized two Bolshevik agents, who were shot.

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2 Gavril ("Gavrusha") Troyan (?–1921) was Makhno's personal adjutant.

3 Savely ("Savva," "Savka") Ivanovich Makhno (1872–1920), Nestor's oldest brother, acted as a quartermaster for the Insurgents; Nikolai Matveyevich Vorobyev (1893–after 1929), deputy chief of the Makhnovist *kontrrazvedka*, was the son of a Huliaipole blacksmith and belonged to the Union of Anarchists of the Huliaipole Region; M. Skoromny (1890–after 1927), from the family of a *bednyak*, belonged to the Union of Anarchists of the Huliaipole Region.

4 Possibly Olgivske.

Around dinner time we arrived in Gavrilivka. In Gavrilivka we captured two agents who were requisitioning cattle, and also an engineer who had come there to set up a *Revkom* and an *Is-polkom*, and also to discover who was fighting with Petlyura, with Makhno, and with Denikin. We spent the night here. (There was a meeting.)

### **February 24.**

It turns out we are leaving this place today. Fenya<sup>[5]</sup> was left behind. (Two were killed.)

From Huliaipole arrived members of the *Kultprosvet* Commission,<sup>[6]</sup> which had not been able to leave at the same time as us, and told us that the Communists had killed old Korostelko and that there had been shooting between Savka, Tikhenko, and others of ours and the Bolsheviks. There's a rumour that Savka was killed.<sup>[7]</sup>

Around dinnertime, we arrived in Gavrilivka by way of Andriyivka and Komar.<sup>[8]</sup> A meeting was held here. (The Greeks were dying to see the Batko, but he refused to come out. They hung around for a while, then dispersed. Here in the lodging, the teachers, great talkers, also spent the night.)

### **February 25.**

Arrived in Veliky Yanisol from Komar. Here we met our own people. Everyone agrees that for now the Communists are a great pestilence. We didn't stay long in Veliky Yanisol, for we received news that the Communists were coming in significant numbers.

5 Fenya Gayenko (~1892–1921) was Galina's best friend and inseparable companion throughout the civil war. They had studied together at the teachers' seminary.

6 The Cultural-Educational Section of the Insurgent Army carried out agitational/propaganda work among the population. It was staffed with Anarchists and Left SRs.

7 Savva [Savka] Makhno was taken prisoner in Huliaipole on February 21 by soldiers of the Red 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division and shot.

8 There were about 20 Greek villages in the region, with a total population of about 30,000, including Komar, Bogatir, Velikiy and Maliy Yanisol. These villages had been settled by Crimean Greeks who moved there in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Around dinnertime we arrived in Mayorsk.<sup>[9]</sup> Here we caught three agents collecting grain and other stuff. They were shot.

Today we learned that Lashkevich and Kozhin<sup>[10]</sup> had been arrested by the Reds.

### **February 26.**

We spent the night in Mayorsk. We are still halted here. After dinner we departed through Kermenchik<sup>[11]</sup> to Sviatodukhivka.

### **February 27.**

We spent the night in Sviatodukhivka. At 10 a.m. we arrived in Turkenivka. We stayed in the Lutay school. They gave us a warm welcome. We had only just finished dinner, when we heard shooting in the village. We rushed into the courtyard. We were told that 25 cavalymen had penetrated the village from the Uspenivka direction and began shooting at our guys. In a twinkling our foot soldiers went into action and opened fire on the enemy with a machine gun, while 10 of our cavalry chased after them. The enemy ran out of the village and up the hill and quickly disappeared on the other side. A few minutes later a line of infantry appeared over the crest of the hill, interspersed with cavalry.

Rapidly more and more troops appeared on the horizon, reinforcing the line that began to advance on Turkenivka. It was noticed that 30 cavalry troopers peeled off and started a flanking movement on the left. Our boys, seeing this, quickly returned. We watched the enemy's line for an hour and a half. First it advanced, then it stopped, and then all the infantry bunched up. It became obvious that there was no great desire to attack the village. Many of our boys wanted to engage the enemy, but there were also many against this. The enemy was significantly stronger than us and it didn't make sense for us to attack when there

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9 Staromayorske.

10 Lashkevich (?–1920) was a Red Army commander and Bolshevik who joined the Makhnovists in September, 1919. The Anarchist Foma Kozhin (?–1921), of peasant origin, joined the Makhnovists in December, 1918, and was an effective military commander.

11 Stariy Kermenchik.

was no particular need. We left the village.

In the evening we arrived in Shagarovo, fed the horses, and passed through Gulyai-Polye and Varvarivka in the middle of the night, arriving in Bashaul.<sup>[12]</sup> The horses were very tired, and so were we. The road was in rough shape, with snow that was already half-melted. Neither sleighs nor *tachankas* could make much headway.

### **February 28.**

Today we got up late, because we had been so late retiring and were exhausted. Yesterday those boys who were left in Gulyai-Polye returned. Today Danilov,<sup>[13]</sup> Zelenskiy, and some other veterans returned as well. We will spend the night in Bashaul.

### **February 29.**

The weather is foul, the snow is melting, and there's mud everywhere. It was hard slogging to get anywhere, so we stayed put. Then we left for Vozdvizhenka. I visited the Ribalskys.

### **March 1.**

Received news that in Rozhdestvenka (5 *versts* distant) that there is cavalry and a supply train. In the evening the reconnaissance party arrived from there and beat one peasant for answering the question "Who and how many are in the village?" with "I don't know."

After breakfast we travelled to Varvarivka. As we were leaving the village, we saw an elderly peasant with a carbine who was coming out intending to kill the wife of Kolchenko, who was travelling with our detachment. This granddad was the father of Kolchenko, and was now providing shelter to the first wife of the latter and her three children. Outraged by the actions of his son, the granddad, together with his aggrieved daughter-in-law, decided all the guilt fell on "the other woman," and that it was

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12 Possibly Babashiv. This may be a case where Galina's handwriting is difficult to decipher.

13 Vasily Antonovich Danilov (1893–1960), an Anarchist from a poor peasant family in Hulaiapole, was in charge of supply for the Makhnovist artillery.

better that she should die rather than four should perish. Some of our boys approached the peasant and said:

“But the gun away, granddad.”

“Take the gun,” he said, “and I’ll kill her with my bare hands.”

Our boys burst out laughing, while the son along with the cavalry and “the other woman” on a *tachanka* left by another lane. The old peasant stood there, stamping his feet and watching us leave, then trudged back to the village.

In Varvarivka we learned that there were Communists in Gulyai-Polye.

Going in advance with the reconnaissance, I met Stefan’s father, who told us that the commander of the regiment was the same person who had escaped when he disarmed the 6<sup>th</sup> regiment.

We stopped in Varvarivka for an hour and then advanced to Gulyai-Polye. Upon approaching the village, we learned that the Communists had been carrying out searches and had made some arrests. Then they had left in a hurry. We sent ahead a detachment with two machine guns and 10–12 cavalry to harass the Reds. The rest of us entered the village and set up shop in our “nook.” Soon boys from the detachment arrived and gave us the news that the commander Fedyukhin had been wounded and captured, that there were many wounded Reds, that many had fled into the steppe, and that 75 prisoners were being brought back. Batko wanted to see the commander and sent for him, but the messenger soon returned and informed us that there was no possibility of transporting the wounded man and that he had been shot at his own request. The prisoners were then released, with the warning that their reappearance in Gulyai-Polye would mean certain death.

According to captured documents, it was clarified that Fedyukhin, following the disarming of his 6<sup>th</sup> regiment, had formed another “punitive detachment,” which was empowered to “carry out searches and requisitions,” and also to “produce” arrests of “suspicious persons in the region of activity of the Makhnovist bands.”

We stopped in Gulyai-Polye for two hours and left in the evening for Novoselka.

### **March 2.**

We spent the night and a whole day in Novoselka. It provided a little rest for both people and horses. The Communists were nowhere near. At 10 a.m. everyone jumped up because all of a sudden there was shooting. It turned out that some of ours were testing a machine gun in a careless manner, and bullets had been fired into our courtyard.

Yesterday the infirmary in Gulyai-Polye released eight men, who rejoined us. The nurses also left the infirmary, where there were also some Reds who asked to join us. They were taken along.

Today the boys seized two million in cash and everyone was given 1,000 *karbovanets*.<sup>[14]</sup>

We're spending the night here.

### **March 3.**

After breakfast, we set out for Kinski Rozdori. While passing through Fedorivka, we learned that today there had been a visit by six cavalymen, who asked that 50 *poods* of barley and some loaves of bread be prepared, and who said that "Makhno was expected in Fedorivka today."

Upon arriving in Rozdori, we learned the Reds had taken their revenge on innocent inhabitants for the killing by us there of five Communists—they shot the chairperson, the *starosta*, a clerk, and three partisans. They threw a grenade into the *volost* office.

The owner of the hut where we stayed was beaten by the Reds and everything in his home stolen.

We spent the night here.

### **March 4.**

Today was gloomy. There was pouring rain and the roads are in very bad shape. We awoke to rifle fire. Quickly we assembled and

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14 Ukrainian currency used by both the Bolsheviks and Nationalists.

got ready. The Reds had come from Polohi during the night and began to attack at dawn. The enemy had already seized two of our cavalymen and arrested 20 local Insurgents.

Comrade Sereda,<sup>[15]</sup> as always the first, drove his *tachanka* with a machine gun towards the enemy. Comrade Litvinenko wasn't far behind with another machine gunner. Our cavalry had still not formed up when the Reds met the Makhnovist advance with strong machine gun and rifle fire. This time luck ran out for our heroes: an enemy bullet struck Litvinenko right in the forehead, Sereda was heavily wounded by another bullet, a third bullet killed one of the *tachanka* horses, and a fourth struck the driver in the shoulder. As soon as our cavalry galloped up, and the infantry arrived, the enemy was forced to take to his heels. Our boys captured three machine guns, killed 20 men (Estonians and Poles), wounded many of the enemy, and liberated some arrested Makhnovists. We didn't pursue the enemy very far. Soon we all assembled, waited for two hours, and then set out for Fedorivka. Accompanying us were 25 recruits from Rozdori.

The death of Comrade Litvinenko weighed heavily on many of us—it was a long time since our detachment had suffered such losses as today.

### **March 5.**

Everything was quiet and calm today. The sun is shining, and that, together with the wind, is drying things out. The snow is mostly melted—the only places where it remains are the *balkas* and hollows. On the dried up knolls, new blades of grass are poking out of the earth. The winter-fields in the steppe are beginning to turn green. Yesterday in a field I saw a mouse that had already emerged from the ground and was welcoming spring. . . .

We went to see the wounded Sereda. He's getting better, just needs to rest. Him and his driver we will leave here. Ivanenko visited us and told us that Kapelgorodsky has been arrested.

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15 Grigoriy Sereda (?–1921), was a peasant and a native of Huliaipole. An anarcho-communist from 1915, he served as paymaster of the Insurgent Army in 1919 and Makhno's adjutant in 1920.

Golik<sup>[16]</sup> arrived from Gulyai-Polye; he has published an appeal to workers and peasants. Currently there are no troops stationed in G-P and environs.

### **March 6.**

After breakfast, we arrived in Novoselka. We stayed in our old quarters. Our host is a very nice person. Today he brewed some *samogon* and treated us. Nestor drank some and was rather cheeky with me.

### **March 7.**

At 8 a.m. we left for Shagarovo, and from there headed to Gulyai-Polye. The road was practically impassable. Six horses weren't powerful enough to drag one *tachanka*. While still in Novoselka the Batko began to drink. In Varvarivtsa, his deputy Karetnik<sup>[17]</sup> got quite drunk as well. While we were in Shagarovo, the Batko was already making a fool of himself, shamelessly screaming obscenities along the whole street. He even yelled bad language into a hut that contained women and small children. Finally he got on a horse and we left for G.-P. On the way he almost fell in the mud. Karetnik was also acting up—he started shooting the machine guns—first one, then the other.

Bullets whistled low over the huts, causing a panic.

Quickly it was explained that the shooting was thanks to the idiotic behaviour of the drunken Karetnik.

We arrived in Gulyai-Polye. Here, under the direction of the drunken Batko, a rather improbable scene developed: cavalrymen began beating any former partisans they happened to meet in the street, using their Nagants<sup>[18]</sup> and rifle butts.

It was bright, warm, and sunny today; there were many people in

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16 Lev Golik (?–1920), of peasant origin, had worked as a machinist in Gulyai-Polye. An anarcho-communist from 1917, he headed the Insurgent Army's *kontrrazvedka* in 1919–1920.

17 Semyon Nikitovich Karetnik (or Karetnikov) (1893–1920), a member of the Gulyai-Polye Group of Anarchists, held various command posts in the Insurgent Army. Taciturn and cruel, he was one of the most feared Makhnovists.

18 The Nagant revolver, of Belgian origin, was manufactured in Russia.



the streets. Everybody came out to see the new arrivals, a wild, demented horde rushing back and forth on horseback, running down innocent bystanders and all of a sudden beginning to beat them, while repeating:

“This is for you not saving your rifle. . . .”

Two boys were bashed in the head, and another was forced into the river, in which ice was still floating. People were frightened and ran away.

The Gulyai-Polyans began to complain quietly, but were afraid to express their dissatisfaction with the Makhnovists openly—everyone was afraid. And indeed, how can frightened, intimidated, defenceless villagers protest against any force, let alone the violence of drunken Makhnovists, who are now in charge and can do whatever they want.

### **March 12.**

We’ve been staying the last few days in Gulyai-Polye. Taranovsky<sup>[19]</sup> has arrived, along with 35 boys with horses—only there aren’t enough saddles. Towards evening on March 10, cavalry was observed on the road to Polohi. We went out to meet them and fired on them, but there was not a single shot in reply from their side. We took them prisoner. It turns out they were 23 Reds, sent from Taganrog, to requisition horses. They were disarmed and released.

### **March 11.<sup>[20]</sup>**

In the evening there was a play devoted to the memory of T. G. Shevchenko.<sup>[21]</sup> Many of our people were there. Everything went splendidly.

Drinking has been going on for seven days now. It’s a bit of a scandal. In his cups, the Batko was very talkative, especially in relation to the purity and sanctity of the Insurgent movement.

Today we moved to Uspenivka.

19 The anarcho-communist Aleksandr Nikiforovich Taranovsky (1888–1921), a World War I veteran, held various command posts in the Insurgent Army.

20 This entry is out of sequence in the diary.

21 Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861), Ukrainian poet, artist, and folklorist.

### **March 13.**

We're staying in Uspenivka. Batko was drinking today also. Talking a lot as he wandered in a tipsy state along the street dancing to accordion music. Quite an enchanting picture. All the while he was swearing profusely. After yakking away and dancing himself out, he fell asleep.

One Uspenivka peasant complained to the staff about a former Insurgent who had beaten a girl—the peasant's niece—and his son. The thing is, this girl became the girlfriend of an Insurgent. But while he was away, she took up with another guy, who became her new boyfriend. When the Insurgent returned home, he began to court this girl again, and when she rejected him, he beat her up, and her cousin as well (the peasant's son). After some time had passed, the Insurgent showed up late in the evening at the hut of the guy he had beaten and called on him to come out so they could "patch things up." No one came out of the hut, but he was asked to come back in the daytime. The Insurgent pressed his demand and threatened to toss a bomb in the window. Then the peasant—the father of the beating victim—fired a shot at the Insurgent and wounded him. Now the Insurgent was threatening that once he recovered, he would kill the peasant.

After listening to all this, we sent everybody home, warning the Insurgent that if he tried to take revenge, the consequences would be severe.

Speaking privately, Nestor expressed sympathy for the Insurgent.

### **March 14.**

Today we arrived in Veliky Mikhaylivka. We killed one Communist here. Then we moved on to Gavrilivka. On March 15 we left V. Mikhaylivka. In the forest we killed a Mikhaylivka Insurgent for looting and raping, which he committed in his own village.

In Gavrilivka we picked up Fenya and went on to Andriyivka, where we spent the night.

**March 16.**

In the morning we left for Komar. We had just left the village when we received news that there was a detachment of *kadets* in Mariental,<sup>[22]</sup> which had killed one of our boys. We decided to go straight away to this *khutor* and wipe out the *kadets*. The cavalry immediately peeled off and went in a roundabout way. I was with the boys on the right flank. As we approached the *khutor*, we saw several men, on horseback and on foot, making a getaway. We quickly entered the *khutor* and began firing on the huts. Those who ran away were overtaken and killed on the spot. Somebody set fire to the straw. Grenades were tossed into several huts. It was all over in a hurry. It turned out that there was no detachment here, but rather a local organization of self-defense, which had killed one of our *Cossacks*. Mariental paid dearly for this ill-advised murder: almost all the inhabitants, with the exception of the very old and very young, were killed. It seems that even the women were killed. Our boys took over the *khutor* for an hour and took away many horses and other goods. Upon leaving the *khutor*, in the steppe we found two men with rifles hiding in the weeds. We sabred them. Finally we arrived in Komar. Here the Greeks handed a German over to us who had run away, crossed the river, and tried to hide with them. Him we also put to death.

Outdoors it was sunny, warm, and dry. After dinner we all walked down to the river. The corpse was lying on the bank. There was a crowd of people nearby. When we appeared on the bank, people started watching us. We came closer to them. Here people often crossed to the other side: there was a narrow channel with ice on both sides. We got into a boat and crossed the river. After staying there for a little while, during which we got sprayed with water, we went home. Here we learned that 20 *versts* away, in the village of Andriyivka, Bakhmutsky *povit*, there was a Bolshevik punitive detachment. We decided to deal with it the following day.

22 Mariental was a German Protestant settlement. Galina's account of the massacre there is not found in any other source.

**March 17.**

In the morning we went first to Bogatir, then to Andriyivka. In Andriyivka there were actually three companies of the 22<sup>nd</sup> punitive regiment. Upon leaving Bogatir, we crossed the River Vovcha, and on the other side near the windmill on the hill we spotted two cavalymen. When they noticed us, they headed back to Andriyivka in a hurry. The Batko with our cavalry advanced. When we approached the village, shooting started. There was the clatter of machine gun fire. The cavalry charged into the village, leaving the infantry far behind. We soon learned that 40 prisoners had been captured.

We entered the village and saw a group of people on the road: some were standing, some were sitting, and some were lying on the ground. These were the prisoners. They were surrounded by our boys—both on horseback and on foot. They had to strip before being shot. When they had removed all their clothes and shoes, they were ordered to tie each other's hands. All of them were Great Russians—young, healthy specimens. We withdrew a short distance and halted. A corpse was lying beside the road next to a fence. A little further along, in the courtyard of the infirmary, there was another corpse. At the corner there was a peasant sitting on a *brichka*, harnessed to four horses, on which was mounted a machine gun captured from the Reds. There was also a wagon loaded with rifles. Our boys gathered nearby and there was also a large crowd of villagers. They watched as the prisoners first undressed and then were led away one by one to be shot. Several were shot in this manner, but the rest were formed up in a row and mowed down with a machine gun. One made a dash for it. He was overtaken and sabred.

The villagers stood and watched. They were quite pleased. They told us how this detachment had been running things in their village. Drunks had roamed the village, demanding that the villagers prepare them fancy dishes and beating them with Nagants if they didn't, or if they failed to answer questions.

After spending some time with these inhabitants, we proceeded to the centre of the village, where there was also a large crowd.

Leaflets were distributed and a meeting was convened. We dispersed to various courtyards for an hour or two to feed our very exhausted horses. While we were getting a bite to eat, we saw a small, gray foal being led into the courtyard by some of our boys. They had run down escapees and killed them, along with their commander, whose horse they had brought back to show us.

Once the horses were fed, we set off for Bogatir, where we intended to spend the night. While crossing the Vovcha River near Bogatir, our *tachanka* came to grief. The embankment leading to the bridge across the river is very narrow. A foursome of horses, which is what we had, can't cross this way. When we were coming to Andriyivka, we almost tipped over into the river. Usually when we're crossing a small bridge, our outside horses are very skittish and likely, first—to gallop, and second—to press against the shaft horses. Knowing this, we decided that for this crossing we would unharness the left horse, being the most timid one. So we did just that and proceeded. From the rear someone yelled flippantly:

"I guess you're going to take a bath now."

There were four of us on the *tachanka*: myself, Nestor, Fenya, and Sashko the driver. As soon as we drove onto this very narrow space, the right trace-horse pressed against the right shaft horse, and the latter was forced up against the filly, so that these horses ran out of room. Only the trace-horse, that had pushed the others off, remained on the bridge, its reins hanging loose, pulling with all its strength on the traces. Together with the horses, the driver was thrown into the water and the *tachanka* was upset. Tethered to the back of the vehicle was Halka, a riding horse, who pulled on her halter, while Vanya Lepetchenko ran up and grabbed the rear wheels of the *tachanka*. At the foot of the bridge next to the water was a post sticking out of the ground, to which the overturned *tachanka* was hooked. Thanks to this and all the other factors, the *tachanka* didn't fling us into the water, but lay on its side, allowing us to scramble out of it without falling into the river. The two suitcases, one with linen, the other with money, fur coats, a blanket, Fenya's big shawl,

and other junk, were floating on the water. Jumping out of the *tachanka*, I immediately ran out on the bridge and began looking under it. Sasha, completely soaked, was hanging on to a post under the bridge and stretching his hands towards the boys so they could save him. The boys ran up and pulled him out. The horses were tangled up in the reins and traces in the water and couldn't free themselves. One horse fell on its back with its feet up, with the filly crosswise on its stomach to that there was no way he could get up from under her, and she couldn't get off of him. The river flow drove them under the bridge up against the piers, and they got entangled up with the broken shaft, traces, and reins. . . .

The horse under the filly with its head under the water immediately expired. We tried to at least save the filly. For a long time we struggled to get her free. We pulled her off the horse, pulled her to the shore, we called to her: "Volya, Volya," but she sort of lay on her side, her head just above the water, from time to time moving her feet, groaning mournfully with a human-like voice, rolling her blood-shot eyes as if appealing for help. She lay quietly for a little while, stopped shaking, and was quiet.

Again we began to drag her by the feet. She moaned and tried to move, then began to get up and fell again. Half a minute later she tried to move her feet again, made a strong effort, got up on her feet and, covered with slime, started swimming and quickly made her way to the opposite bank, which was ice-bound. We began calling her back to our side. She made a half-circle along the river and quickly swam back to our side. We immediately began to exercise her, so that she wouldn't catch cold. Sashka had been pulled out of the water right away, and he was taken to a hut to get a change of clothes and get warmed up. Only Fenya's big shawl and blanket got soaked and sank to the bottom.

Fenya and I sat on another wagon, while Nestor rode Halka, and we made our way to the centre of the village to look for quarters. We spent the whole evening, night, and the following day drying linen, money, etc.

### March 18.

We held a meeting here. We arrested three men in order to interrogate them, but the Greeks began to defend them vociferously, so we released them. We left Comrade Ogarkin<sup>[23]</sup> here for organizational work while we went to Velikiy Yanisol. Here we met Comrade Lashkevich.<sup>[24]</sup> This encounter was a happy one. There was lots of mutual kissing, hugging, exchanging of stories. We told him how we had been living, and asked him how he had escaped from the Communists.

Once the first euphoria had worn off, we got down to business. The thing is, when he left Gulyai-Polye at Christmas-time, Comrade Lashkevich took with him 4½ million rubles of our common funds. We questioned him about this. He was evasive, saying

“I will tell you where I put it.”

But at this time the staff was approached by former Greek partisans who indignantly told us about what kind of dissolute life Lashevich had been living: throwing money around, holding dances, parties, making expensive gifts to prostitutes—paying them 200,000 per “visit,” etc.

These former partisans said that money obtained at the cost of the lives, crippling injuries, and blood of many Insurgents is so easily, so shamelessly, spent by their commanders, that now they won’t go to war with such commanders. Instead they will first kill all those who become rich and live the high life behind the backs of honest Insurgents. Only then will they go to the front.

A commission was chosen, which looked into the matter, and demanded an accounting from Lashkevich. The investigations of the commission and the interrogation of Comrade Lashkevich determined that of the 4,500,000 rubles only 105,00 remained.

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23 Probably Ogarkov, a *serednyak* active in the Makhnovist movement from 1918.

24 Lashkevich (?–1920) was a Bolshevik army commander who defected to the Makhnovists in September, 1919. In the Insurgent Army he commanded the 13th Makhnovist Regiment and was garrison chief in the city of Yekaterinoslav in October, 1919.

After giving his report, Comrade Lashkevich invited all of us for supper at his place—he would be serving the Greek dish *chirchiri* (*chebureki*).<sup>[25]</sup> Fenya and I went. Nestor went to bed early and declined to go. The rest of our boys also refused. We went and found there the Greek Starik and Budanov. We got to meet the host, a very likable Greek. We drank from tiny glasses, ate *chirichiri* (which was delicious), and then left. Lashkevich accompanied us home, taking along a plate of dumplings for the Batko. At our place he continued acting like a fool before leaving.

### **March 19.**

Today the boys went to Lashkevich for the rest of the money and wanted to arrest him on the spot. But he was in such a pitiable state that they decided to leave him alone for the time being.

Nestor, Budanov, Petrenko, and some others went to the village of Vremivka, not far away, to hold a meeting. Outdoors it was clear and warm. We all went out on the street. Soon Lashkevich approached our boys, who responded to him coldly and were reluctant to answer his questions. Then he crossed over to our side of the street and greeted us, asking where the other boys were. He promised me that he would get documents and help me arrange for accommodation here in Yanisol. I thanked him and gave him my authorization, well knowing that this person was likely to be shot within half an hour—an hour at most. He politely excused himself and made as if to go home. Vasilevsky<sup>[26]</sup> called him over, took him by the arm, and led him away. He was arrested and placed under guard.

Soon the Batko and the others arrived. As people gathered in the centre of the village, Lashkevich with his hands tied was led to the square to be shot. Gavril said something to him, took aim, and pulled the trigger. A misfire. A second time—also a misfire. Lashkevich tried to run away. Some Insurgents standing by fired a volley, then a second. He kept running. Then Lepetchenko

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25 Deep-fried dumplings with beef or pork.

26 Grigoriy Semenovich Vasilevsky (1889–1921), a member of the Gul-yai-Polye Group of Anarcho-Communists, was Nestor Makhno's adjutant. He was the deadly enemy of any sort of Communist officials.



chased after him and finished him off with bullets from his Nagant. When he fell, and Comrade Lepetchenko approached to finally shoot him in the head, Lashkevich looked at him and said: "Well, I had a life. . . ."

Several minutes later, they led out another Insurgent who had somehow become rich and shot him in the street. After this a meeting was convened where the killing of these two was explained. The peasants were satisfied. Some of them said:

"It's clear that there's lawfulness here, you don't touch other people's stuff."

In the evening I said goodbye to the boys and moved to the village of Vremivka, where I'm thinking of staying for some time.

### **March 20.**

Today I'm in a new home. Fenya and I are beginning a sedentary life. We cleaned, washed, and made repairs the whole day. Before supper we went out for a walk. We went as far as the river. We were missing our bunch terribly. We assumed that they were still in Yanisol, which made us sad and depressed. We returned home. Then I noticed, poking out from under last year's leaves, a little blue flower, and then a second, a third. . . . We began to gather these first spring flowers (known around here as brandishes<sup>[27]</sup>), harbingers of warm, sunny days in the near future. The immediate effect was to cheer us up. After picking some flowers, we returned home.

From villagers we learned that Budyonny<sup>[28]</sup> was in Yuzovka<sup>[29]</sup> with his troops, while our boys had left in the morning for Kermenchik. Today seemed very long.

### **March 21.**

We got up late. The weather was bad outside: wind and rain the

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27 *Crocus reticulatus*.

28 Semyon Budyonny (1883–1973), founder of the Red Cavalry, later Marshal of the Red Army.

29 Yuzovka derived its name from the Welsh entrepreneur John James Hughes (1814–1889), who established several mines and a metallurgical plant in the area. The city was renamed Donetsk in 1924.

whole day. We read a little, wrote a little, and spent some time talking with our hosts. It appears that the villagers know that I'm staying here.

### **March 22.**

Foul weather. I have a sad, empty feeling. The coming days are going to be quiet, gray, and monotonous. Complete rest for both body and spirit. Which is what I wanted.

### **March 23.**

Good weather. Bright and sunny: already things are growing a bit. It would have been quite warm, if there hadn't been a fierce wind. Before supper we went out, ran down to the river bank, and walked a little. We picked some more little flowers. The landlord where we are living is very worried—today he learned that there are Communists in Pavlivka who are collecting grain and other goods from the villagers. The inhabitants of Yanisol and Vremivka are very uneasy and frightened by this news. Within a day or two one can expect a visit from these terrible guests, who are coming to steal the products of the villagers' hard labour. The Pavlivka villagers sent two peasants in search of Batko Makhno, to get him to come with his detachment and help the villagers drive off the Russian robbers and rapists. In view of the fact that the Communists can very quickly be in Yanisol, Vremivka, and Neskuchne, the landlord advises us to leave. We're going to do so tomorrow morning.

### **March 24.**

This morning we set out for Kermenchik in a wagon from the village, then switched to another wagon on the road. On the way, we decided to go to Uspenivka, and then on to the Shirokiy *khutor* where the teacher Liza is living. And this we did. Two horses were hitched to the wagon, but they were skinny and small, like colts. They could hardly pull us, and the road was long and hard—about 40 *versts* long. Our driver stopped at one *khutor* where he knew the owner, and harnessed a third horse. Then things went a little better.

It was overcast and rainy weather appeared likely. A cold breeze was blowing. We travelled for more than six hours. We were muffled up in shawls and were wearing white, peasant, sheepskin coats, so the trip was quite nice. We were cheerful because we were rid of our panic-stricken landlord, who had been quaking with fear because of us, and frightening us to the point that we could hardly sleep and spent the night in a panic worrying about the arrival of the Communists. We were also cheerful because we had done a good job of disguising our direction of travel and our destination. And we were also cheerful because our horses were so slow and the harness of the outside horse broke. And because in our sheepskin coats we looked like peasant aunties, so that probably our own people wouldn't recognize us. In a word, everything was fun for us and we were able to laugh the whole way.

Also our driver was an amicable fellow, and whenever we stopped talking, he would make some remark and we would all start laughing again. Near the Shirokiy *khutor* we met Liza, who was going to Uspenivka. She transferred to our wagon and we arrived at the school. At her quarters we found a terrible mess and freezing cold. Immediately the three of us set about tidying up. One person swept, another washed, and the third started up the stove. I became quite happy and began to hop around like a child. In the evening, Liza asked some peasant women for pillows and floor mattresses. We had supper, then made up our beds on the floor, and lay down. We talked until midnight.

We were getting drowsy, when Fenya stood up and announced in a firm voice that there were some kind of fumes in the hut and that she had a headache. I also got up and realized that my head wasn't in good shape either. We opened the door and all of us went into the courtyard. After walking around the courtyard for an hour and airing the room, we again lay down.

### **March 25.**

We got up at 10 a.m. and everyone was healthy. The only problem was that our room was very cold. Liza took off for Uspenivka, and Fenya and I began doing household chores. After lunch Liza re-

turned. In Uspenivka they were saying that there were Makhnovists in Gulyai-Polye, and that in Zhrebets the Communists had forced the villagers to dig trenches. We spent the whole evening waiting for Pavlusha Lepetchenko,<sup>[30]</sup> who had promised to come visit us, but he didn't show.

### **March 26.**

Yesterday we talked for a long time in the evening and woke up this morning around 8 a.m. Outside it was overcast and drizzling and I didn't feel like getting up. I lay in bed until 10 a.m. In the afternoon the rain really started coming down. Fenya and I put things in order in the hut, while Liza ran around the *khutor* asking the peasants for bread, milk, a bucket to hold water, and straw. In the evening we read and talked.

### **March 27.**

Today we also got up late. We divided up the chores between us. Liza is in charge of our meals, Fenya tidies up the rooms, and I fire up the stove. After breakfast, we all went for a walk. When we went out on the street, I noticed a farm on top of a hill. We set off in that direction. When we got there, we crawled all over the place, broke off green branches in a garden, found a couple of pigeon eggs in one of the sheds, looked around all the rooms, cellars, gardens—in fact, we inspected everything that was there.

We returned home tired and hungry. We found Fenya with three girls, yakking about this and that. We kidded around with them for a bit, and I told the fortune of one of them with cards, warning her not to take it seriously. Somehow we managed to have our meal. Then I developed a severe headache and had to lie down. In the evening, girls and boys gathered at the school. I was very unhappy that I wasn't feeling well enough to go.

### **March 28.**

Today's Sunday. We were still in bed when a little boy brought us breakfast. We got up. Characteristically, all the inhabitants of the

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30 Pavel [Pavlusha] Lepetchenko was the brother of Makhno's adjutant and bodyguard Ivan Lepetchenko.

*khutor* observe Lenten dietary rules. Knowing that we did not follow these rules, our host baked some blintzes with meat for us and sent them over. We had just sat down to have breakfast when a girl brought fresh rolls. Half an hour later, another girl brought us a saucer of sunflower seeds. After breakfasting and tidying up the place thoroughly, we went out to the gates. A group of men and boys approached us. We chatted with them about this and that. One guy was going to Uspenivka, so Liza and I went with him. We spent a couple of hours walking around and talking to people, but we were freezing and so we returned to the hut.

**March 24.** <sup>[31]</sup>

Today Fenya left us. Nestor said:

“It’s too bad that Fenya’s not here any more.” I’m so sorry that she left. But it’s better for her. As it turned out, she was necessary only to me, but not all the time by any means. To the rest, she was a burden and they were nasty to her sometimes. I wouldn’t want to be in that situation myself. She did the right thing by leaving us. And what about me? I thought about staying with her somewhere. And why not? Actually I’m scared that people in Gavrilivka already know me by sight. No. Or maybe because Nestor said in a fit of temper:

“If you leave, then don’t consider me your husband any more.” Also no. I must surely remain here. . . . As a matter of fact, Nestor promised me to create better circumstances. But that hasn’t happened. What to do? I’m sunk in apathy. Indifferent to the whole world, physical and spiritual weakness. What banality, what nastiness. I don’t have the heart to follow this thought through to the end. . . .

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31 This entry is out of sequence in the diary.

# **The Diary of Peter Rybin**

**(October 24 – December 10, 1920)**



Peter Rybin (wearing fedora) and Makhnovist commanders in the fall of 1920. As the photo suggests, the urban labour organizer Rybin got along well with peasant revolutionaries.

## Translator's Introduction

Peter Antonovich Rybin was born in 1885 in the town of Yelets, about half-way between Moscow and Kharkov, to working class parents. He finished elementary schooling, then graduated from a trade school. Later he would continue his studies in the U.S.A., but, judging from his letters, never achieved a high level of literacy, although this did not prevent him from carrying on responsible teaching and editing duties. Rybin's political career began with participation in the Russian Revolution of 1905–1907, resulting in a sentence of some kind in 1906 for being a “political”. Exactly what brand of “political” isn't clear, but by 1908 he was calling himself an “anarcho-syndicalist.”

After serving his term, Rybin emigrated to the U.S.A. in 1907. Since he took an eastern route, through Nome (Alaska) to Seattle, it's likely that he served his sentence (prison or exile) in Siberia. After moving to Pittsburgh, he became one of the leading activists of the Union of Russian Workers (URW—founded in 1914), which had an anarcho-syndicalist orientation.

Like many of the activists of the URW, Rybin returned to Russia in 1917, where he held important posts in trade union organizations of the Ukrainian cities of Yekaterinoslav and Kharkov. At the same time he took part in the civil war, was wounded fighting the Whites, and had to live underground for a time in 1919.

Rybin had withdrawn from the Anarchist movement when he started working for government organizations, but in the fall of 1920, convinced of the anti-worker nature of the Soviet regime, he joined the Makhnovist movement and was immediately elected to the Council of the Revolutionary Insurgent Army of Ukraine (Makhnovists). Rybin organized courses for propagandists, and about 170 commanders and activists went through his program. He still found time to go to the front and take part in the fighting against the Whites.

After the fragile truce between the Soviet authorities and the Makhnovists broke down on November 27, 1920, Rybin took part in armed struggle against the Reds. On January 24, 1921, the Council of the Insurgent Army sent him to Kharkov for underground work. But he was soon arrested and shot (in March, but the exact date is unknown).

During the fighting with the Reds in December, 1920, the Makhnovists lost a substantial part of their archive, including a few pages of a diary written by “P. R.”—undoubtedly Peter Rybin. The translation here is from an uncertified typewritten copy found in a collection of copies of documents about the Makhnovist movement assembled by a Soviet Commission on the History of the Civil War.<sup>[1]</sup>

1 Thanks to Yuri Kravets for this information.



### **October 24. Village of Ulyanovka**

Vanya<sup>[1]</sup> and I prepared a draft of an agreement with Soviet power, then after supper we went to Batko Makhno, where I met Béla Kun<sup>[2]</sup> and other Soviet representatives. When Béla Kun and his entourage left, we got to work analyzing the political question, i.e. our draft of the agreement. These representatives from Kharkov were a big waste of our time. In view of this we made some changes [in the agreement] and sent them off by telegraph. In the evening of October 21 an order arrived from the staff of the Southern Front about preparing for the offense.

### **October 24.**

In the morning we arrived in Novonikolayevka. At 4 p.m. we held a meeting, which wasn't a success. In the evening Petrenko (commander of the infantry regiment) arrived and told the Batko and me that Red Army soldiers were deserting from their regiments and moving over to us. Then we went to the regiment and explained to the Red Army men that we did not have the right to accept them, but they categorically refused to return to their own regiments and declared that they were going to fight for Batko Makhno.

### **October 31. Gulyai-Polye**

Today an Italian anarchist and two Maximalists arrived from Kharkov. The Batko talked with them for a long time. They offered their services to the cultural-educational section. But we declined and proposed that they work in the field hospitals, which they agreed to.

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1 Ivan Lepetchenko, Makhno's adjutant (see photo at the head of the article—he's standing on the right).

2 Béla Kun, former leader of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, was a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Soviet Southern Front and assigned to negotiate with the Makhnovists. On this occasion, he presented Makhno with a commemorative album of portraits of leaders of the Third International (Comintern) with a signed dedication "to the warrior for the Worker-Peasant Revolution comrade Batko Makhno." Biographies of Kun describe his visit to Makhno as an unparalleled act of heroism. In her memoirs, Kun's wife went so far as to say he could have been killed for one careless word. But the diary implies that his visit was strictly routine.

### **November 3. Gulyai-Polye**

I'm sad and depressed. The thought "and what will happen next" torments me and gives me no peace. The White Guard regime will be crushed, and then what will happen to the Insurgent Army? At headquarters everyone is tired. Makhno himself is weighed down with fatigue. There is no concrete goal for the army and no well-defined plan—and so nothing for cultural workers to do. I'm alone and feel like I'm on an island. One feels aimless and apathetic. I wish the guys from Kharkov would get here quicker so we can combine forces and perhaps make some decisions about a plan for subsequent work. I'm afraid the communists will declare us outside the law, and then the shedding of the workers' blood will begin again. Those bunglers can't understand that the Red Army is demoralized and is moving over to our side. But our whole tragedy consists in the absence of cultural forces. Makhno has also slowed down. I have the impression he is worn out.

### **November 6.**

While heading to the staff, I met Makhno on the road riding on horseback with his *sotnia*. Galina Andreyevna<sup>[3]</sup> was riding up front. At 1 p.m. I met Belash, who passed on depressing news about the knavery and hypocrisy of the communists, with one hand signing an agreement, and with the other making plots against us. People are capable of any kind of perfidy in the name of power. Is it really conceivable that they can do anything for working people?

### **November 8.**

In the morning Budanov,<sup>[4]</sup> Taratuta,<sup>[5]</sup> etc. arrived from Khar-

3 Galina Andreyevna Kuzmenko, Nestor Makhno's wife..

4 The Makhnovist commander Avraam Budanov (1886–1929), a metalworker by trade and an anarcho-communist from 1905, was engaged in negotiations with the Bolsheviks for most of the fall of 1920. His goal was to gain independence for a large area of southeast Ukraine for the purpose of creating a free Anarchist system.

5 The veteran Anarchist Olga Ilinichna Taratuta (1876–1938) was a prominent member of Nabat Anarchist Confederation and one of Makhno's most trusted advisors.

kov. In the evening comrades Budanov and Kurilenko<sup>[6]</sup> (he also arrived from Kharkov) made a report in which it was explained that the communists are playing politics and intend to use us. After which we arrived at the same conclusion, namely, that with the communists it is necessary . . . [editor's note: several pages are missing at this point]

#### **November 25. Gulyai-Polye.**

Today we spoke on the telephone with Kharkov (with comrades Voline and Popov). They communicated that negotiations are coming to an end. In the evening a meeting of the Council was held. Before the meeting, the Batko presented me with a silver rouble. I remarked to him that it was a Suvorov rouble,<sup>[7]</sup> whereupon he laughed and said sheepishly,

“Well then, give it back.”

I replied that it was too late.

Belash asked me: “How come the Batko never gives me anything?”

I replied: “Don't ask me, take it up with the *komandarm*.”

#### **November 26.**

From the staff we heard that the Reds are attacking on all sides. I went to the Batko and found him already prepared to move. We assembled everyone and began departing from Gulyai-Polye, but it appeared that the Reds had surrounded us with a tight ring. Our cavalry attacked, smashed the Reds, and we drove off 24 *versts* from Gulyai-Polye and made ourselves secure for the night. The Batko is worried about the Crimean group.

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6 Vasyly Kurilenko (1891–1921), a bootmaker by trade and an anarcho-communist from 1910, was chief of the administrative section of the Insurgent Army's Revolutionary Military Council in the fall of 1920.

7 The Russian general Alexander Suvorov (1729–1800) never lost a battle, being undefeated in over 60 large battles while always having a numerical disadvantage. He also socialized with the rank-and-file, addressing soldiers as “brother.”

### **December 1.**

At 4 p.m. Shchus had to go to Yelenovka to destroy the railway bridge. Upon going to the staff I saw that our troops were retreating in panic. I boarded a tachanka and we headed in the direction of Malaya Mikhailovka. We didn't sleep the whole night and were hungry.

### **December 5.**

After breakfast we left the village of Yasen. As we were leaving, we learned that the group of comrade Marchenko (commander of the Crimean group) was 25 *versts* from us. We stayed to wait for his group, and at 4 p.m. Marchenko arrived with 300 cavalry and 15 machine guns. They were greeted by an orchestra playing in the village. The Batko met the group, and exchanged greetings. Marchenko approached the Batko and reported facetiously: "The Crimean group has successfully returned."

### **December 10. Village of Popovka, Yekaterinoslavskaya gubernia.**

In the morning, by pre-arranged signal, we all gathered to meet the detachment of comrade Vdovichenko<sup>[8]</sup> (which was part of Marchenko's group), composed of 260 cavalry and 15 machine guns.

### **December 11. Village of Berestovaya.**

In the evening a meeting of the Council was held, at which it was decided to attack Berdyansk.

### **December 12.**

We entered Berdyansk and left by night in the direction of Gulyai-Polye, which we approached at 8 a.m. and proceeded to open fire. The cavalry circled around the town. The Reds (42<sup>nd</sup> Division) fled from Gulyai-Polye. Lying about the streets were corpses of Reds, commissars, etc. The peasants told me the Reds shot 60 people just before our arrival. Six hundred Red Army

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**8** Trofim Vdovichenko (1889–1921), an anarchist from 1910, fought in World War I, becoming a lieutenant. He held various command posts in the Insurgent Army.

soldiers carrying rifles approached the staff and began to stack their weapons. We held a meeting where we explained the goals and tasks of the Insurgent Army of Ukraine (Makhnovists), after which 400 of the 600 soldiers enlisted; the rest we dismissed. At the meeting of the Council we decided to break up our army into two groups. In the first group are two regiments of cavalry and one regiment of infantry under the command of comrade Marchenko. In the second group are one regiment of cavalry and two regiments of infantry under the command of comrade Petrenko. The machine gun regiment and batteries form a reserve under the direct command of the staff of the army. All this was done because the enemy has started to operate in the manner of partisan detachments.

*[In the course of the next few days, the Insurgent Army was engaged in heavy fighting during which a substantial part of its archive was captured, including, it seems, Rybin's diary.]*

## Introduction to Two Pamphlets

Relations between the peasant revolutionary Nestor Makhno and the urban intellectual Vsevelod Voline, never good, were exacerbated by Makhno's response to Kubanin's book. The result was a pamphlet war between the two titans of Russian/Ukrainian Anarchism in 1928–1929. Kubanin provoked this conflict by quoting juicy passages from the transcript of Voline's interrogation when he was a prisoner of the Bolsheviks in early 1920. As mentioned earlier, this document, found in a military archive in Moscow, has still not been published.

It should be noted that both Makhno and Voline were ill with typhus at the end of December, 1919—beginning of January, 1920, and were hardly in a position to respond rationally to the events taking place around them. Makhno was convinced that Voline had left the Insurgent Army on a recruiting mission to Krivy Rog at the end of November, 1919, or early December. The document quoted in Appendix A makes it clear that this was not the case: Voline did not leave until December 29 at the earliest, the date cited in his own account.

Although the two texts are polemical in nature, they provide enough details about this crucial period (late 1919 – early 1920) to constitute an important addition to the historical record.



***Southeastern Ukraine at the time of Voline's  
ill-fated journey to Krivy Rog.***

# **CLARIFICATION**

**(Concerning N. Makhno's response to  
M. Kubanin's book "The Makhnovshchina")**

**Paris, 1929**

**by Vsevolod Voline**



ВОЛИН

# РАЗ'ЯСНЕНИЕ

(По поводу ответа Н. Махно на книжку М. Кубанина  
«Махновщина»).

Париж, 1929.

Cover of Voline's brochure.

**I**n Russia not long ago a book by a certain M. Kubanin entitled **The Makhnovshchina** appeared (publisher: “Priboy,” Lenin-grad). This is an uninteresting and inaccurate book, in which facts and events, pulsating with unique and vivid experiences, are artificially fitted to the dead scheme of official Marxism and distorted beyond recognition. For some reason the Bolsheviks need to slander and excoriate the Makhnovist movement once more, and they did this with their usual impertinence.

N. Makhno considered it necessary to publish a response to Kubanin’s book [**The Makhnovshchina and Its Erstwhile Allies—the Bolsheviks**, (Paris, 1928)]. I’m not going to deal here with his response as a whole, and in fact I wouldn’t get involved at all if it weren’t for one circumstance.

In responding to Kubanin, Makhno unfortunately goes out of his way to settle some personal scores with me. And he does so in a manner which compels me to reply in print with an explanation and a protest.

I note that he is not attacking me for the first time. But up till now, his attacks were minor, were not printed in the press, and could only interest a narrow circle of persons. This time the situation is different.

Comrades who don’t know Makhno personally, but who know that I worked in the Makhnovist movement for six months, that I was always on friendly terms with Makhno, that Makhno asked for my release at the time of his alliance with the Soviet government against Wrangel, etc., may wonder why Makhno changed his attitude and turned against me.

The estrangement between Makhno and myself arose largely thanks to some personal traits of Makhno’s character and disposition—his hostility towards intellectuals and his suspicious and spiteful nature. Some other circumstances contributed to this estrangement, but I won’t get into them in order not to get sidetracked from the immediate topic.

In his response to Kubanin, Makhno makes two kinds of attacks against me: (1) he cites incorrect “facts”; (2) he drops nasty hints,

he insinuates. First, about the incorrect “facts”:

(1) On page 42<sup>[1]</sup> Makhno writes:

“Accompanied by the best of the Makhnovist army’s *kontrrazvedka*, Voline left the army in November, 1919, and travelled to a region where he surrendered to the 14<sup>th</sup> Red Army.”

And a few lines above, he claims that I “always loved to use the services of the *kontrrazvedka* while in the Makhnovist army.”

The last statement is simply a malicious fabrication, intended to cast a shadow. Makhno knows perfectly well that I always kept a distance from the *kontrrazvedka* and its affairs. (Even the members of the *kontrrazvedka* were, for the most part, unknown to me.) He knows that all my purely cultural activities in the movement had nothing to do with the *kontrrazvedka* and I did not interact with it in any way, shape, or form. He knows—and this is the most important thing—that I never, for any reason, had recourse to the *kontrrazvedka* for the simple reason that I never had need of its services. So yes, I know the exact opposite of what he writes. What can we call this?

(2) Concerning the circumstances of my departure from the army on December 29, 1919 (not in November, as Makhno writes by mistake), they are well known to Makhno, and he distorts them when he writes that I left “accompanied by the best of the *kontrrazvedka*.” I will refresh his memory, if it has failed him.

In December, 1919, the Makhnovist army retreated from the city of Yekaterinoslav in the direction of the city of Aleksandrovsk. The retreat, which began in November, was extremely difficult owing to the *rasputitsa* and the prevalence of disease in the army. Battles with the Denikinists, who were pressing hard from the north, continued. Any kind of cultural work was unimaginable. At that time a revolutionary Insurgent G. arrived from Krivy Rog and asked that an experienced agitator be released to counter the growing influence of the Petliurists in the Krivy Rog region. According to G., the region had up to 10,000 peasant youth ready for armed struggle against the Whites, but who were be-

<sup>1</sup> Page 51 in this work.

ing subjected to a barrage of propaganda by agents of Petliura.<sup>[2]</sup> Makhno suggested to me that in view of the lack of work in our section, I should travel to Krivy Rog for a few days and organize a broad-based agitation there against the Petliurists, with the goal of attracting to our side the peasant masses who were seeking an alternative.

The journey sounded interesting. There was only one thing to worry about: sooner or later we would undoubtedly run into Soviet armed forces and authorities, who were following on the heels of the Denikinists retreating from the north. (All this, I will remind you, happened soon after the defeat of the Denikinist forces in Ukraine by the Makhnovists, the occupation by us of Yekaterinoslav, and the retreat of the Denikinists from the outskirts of Orel. In the course of their retreat, they attacked us in Yekaterinoslav, drove us from the city, and harried us while hastily retreating before the oncoming Reds.) Undoubtedly the Denikinist army was fated to disappear within a few days, and then the Makhnovists would link up with the Reds in the resulting vacuum. This impending encounter, it was hoped, would be peaceful, but was fraught with all sorts of complications. I told Makhno that it would be nice to go to Krivy Rog, but if the meeting with the Bolsheviks was really going to happen, I could stay with the army. Makhno answered that the meeting wouldn't take place for another two weeks, and I would be back in 10 days. So my departure was decided.

I didn't have anything to do with organizing the trip. I didn't make requests to any of the services, including the *kontrrazvedka*. I was issued a mandate (certificate) that said "as of this date the bearer of this certificate, Comrade Voline, is directed to . . ." etc., over the signatures of the *komandarm* N. Makhno, the chair of the *Revvoensoviet* [Revolutionary Military Soviet] Lashchenko, and chief of staff (Belash, apparently), with the date: December 29, 1919. (The reader will see below why I remember these details so clearly, and why they matter.) Without any input

2 Symon Petliura (1879–1926), President of the Ukrainian People's Republic and Supreme Commander of its army.

from me, it was decided that I needed to travel with an entire small armed detachment, as the destination was sufficiently far, and there were places where one might anticipate all sorts of surprises, the most worrisome one being running into one of the individual Denikinist units passing through the area. And so it was done. Accompanying me were: the Insurgent G. from Krivy Rog and a detachment of 20 Insurgents with rifles and two machine guns (with several *tachankas*). The fact that this detachment included elements of the *kontrrazvedka* was of no interest to me and no one asked me about it, I had nothing to do with the composition of the armed detachment, and only upon departure did I learn that the *kontrrazvednik* Golik<sup>[3]</sup> was accompanying us. (I knew that Golik was in the *kontrrazvedka* but didn't know that he was the head of it.) I still don't know how many *kontrrazvedka* members were in the detachment, nor what their assignments were. I didn't inquire about the escort, and that I was "accompanied" by the "best of the *kontrrazvedka*" I have learned only now from Makhno's brochure.

Doesn't this seem like he's trying to pin something on me?

(3) What does it mean "to surrender to the 14<sup>th</sup> Red Army"? How could Makhno write such an absurdity? I assume that he must have learned the circumstances of my detention from Golik himself.

The circumstances were as follows. (I hope the reader will not complain if I set out details that I consider necessary to convey these circumstances "photographically.")

At the very beginning of the journey I became ill—as it turned out later, a serious form of typhoid fever. I had to dismount from the horse I was riding and lie down on a *tachanka*. When we reached the first large village, I was laid up in bed for three days

**3** Lev Golik (?–1920), a skilled worker and anarcho-communist, was head of the Insurgent Army's *kontrrazvedka* in 1919–1920, a position to which he was elected. In negotiations with the Bolsheviks in January, 1920, he rejected disarming the Makhnovists, demanded an end to repression of the Anarchists, and recognition of the independence of the Insurgent Army. He was killed fighting the Reds on November 30, 1920.

in a private residence arranged for me by the comrades of the detachment. Meanwhile, G. along with part of the detachment went ahead in order to make advance preparations for meetings in Krivy Rog.

(It was assumed that I would recover quickly.)

Upon feeling better (as it turned out, this was only a temporary respite between the first and second stages of the disease), I went on further and arrived in Krivy Rog. However, in view of my great weakness, I was still unable to speak at meetings and was again confined to a residence until I could completely recover. Here I was brought up-to-date newspapers, from which I learned that the Makhnovists had already met with the Bolsheviks in Aleksandrovsk. Immediately, the whole detachment assembled. We decided to leave Krivy Rog and head for Aleksandrovsk as quickly as possible, in view of the undoubted importance of the events transpiring there.

The next morning, our detachment set off.

After a day of travelling along back roads, with brief stops in villages along the way, we arrived at a small village and noticed from a distance that it was occupied by some kind of military force. The village was located on a small hill. Below was a creek which we approached and which separated us from the village itself. And then, along the crest of the hill, the movement of armed cavalrymen was visible.

“What kind of troops are these? Petliurists? Whites? Reds?” we asked ourselves, while putting ourselves in battle-readiness with machine guns, rifles, and revolvers. When we got close to the creek, horsemen came down the hill (now we could see the red stars on their caps) and began to shout to us across the stream, asking us to identify ourselves.

“Insurgent-Makhnovists,” we replied, “and who are you?”

“We are Reds. Please come across, comrades, and join us. You can take a break before going on further. . . .”

We decided to enter the village. It turned out to be occupied by

a rather large Red unit. We were surrounded by a crowd of peasants and soldiers. Some sort of negotiations began, people came running up. . . .

In the meantime, I began feeling really sick again (the second stage of typhus was beginning). Extracting myself from the crowd, I went to a hut on the edge of the square and leaned on the fence near Golik's *tachanka*. There was no one near me.

I was experiencing a high fever and my head was spinning. I could hardly stay on my feet. In the distance, as if through a fog, I saw some kind of movement. People were running and screaming. The village was in a state of agitation.

A few minutes later Golik and another comrade came running up, out of breath and upset. Noticing me by fence, Golik quickly told me:

"Comrade Voline, we need to leave before they notice us. . . . Our detachment is being disarmed. . . . People, it seems, are being released, but those who want to can join a Red detachment. . . . But it's better for us to leave. I will slip away around the back and push on to Makhno. . . . Are you coming?"

I hesitated for a minute while Golik was taking some stuff out of the *tachanka*, then told him that I was hardly in a state to go with him right away.

"I'm really sick again," I said, "I can hardly stand up and my head is reeling. . . . I will only be a burden on you. . . . I can't go on. . . . You can't take me along. . . . And it's uncertain what else you will run into on the way, weighed down with a sick person. . . . No, I will have to stay here, recover completely, and then continue my journey. . . ."



**Vsevelod Voline**



We said goodbye. I remained in the village and was then detained and sent, seriously ill, to Yekaterinoslav, where I arrived two days later in an almost unconscious state (they conveyed me in a cart in all sorts of weather). I was lodged, under guard, in a room at some hotel.

This is a photographic version of my experience. It needs to be supplemented by some details having their own significance:

(i) After the recent heroic struggles of the Makhnovists with the Denikinists, relations with the Bolsheviks, while not friendly, could not, however, be aggressively hostile. Our encounter with the Bolsheviks, as I've already mentioned, was more or less peaceful.

(ii) In particular, the Bolsheviks could not have any complaints concerning me personally, and I was convinced that they would leave me alone. Indeed, they did not immediately detain me, according to instructions received from Yekaterinoslav.

(iii) As I found out later, Yekaterinoslav asked Trotsky in Moscow about me. Trotsky responded with a curt telegram: "Shoot immediately." I wasn't shot, for reasons set forth below.

And that's how I "surrendered" to the 14<sup>th</sup> Army.

(iv) Here's another "fact" mentioned by Makhno. This is an episode with a certain Orlov (p. 42).<sup>[4]</sup>

"Moreover," Makhno writes in his customary tone of abusive insinuation, "Voline, according to a report of the *kontrrazvedka* of the Makhnovist army, acquired, or at least tried to acquire, a reputation for himself among the leaders of the Bolshevik *gub-partkom* in Yekaterinoslav. It was he who brought one of the Bolshevik leaders, a certain Orlov,<sup>[5]</sup> to see me in my office . . .," etc.

In the first place, I don't have any memory of Orlov or any such

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4 See pp. 51-52 in this edition.

5 The Bolshevik E. P. Orlov left memoirs of this period in Yekaterinoslav. When the Whites retook the city in December, 1919, Orlov was in a hospital with typhus. The Whites shot all the Makhnovist patients, but Orlov was miraculously saved. See Vasily Golovanov, **Nestor Makhno**, (Moscow, 2008), p. 268.



episode. It's possible, of course, that I approached Makhno on some matter at the request of one of the local Bolsheviks. There would be nothing peculiar, or strange, or dishonourable in this. Many people—including Bolsheviks—approached Makhno through me with all sorts of requests and concerns, and I usually passed on these requests and concerns. There was nothing special, or strange, or shameful about this. And if such an event did in fact take place, then, firstly, there was no intention on my part to earn some kind of "reputation" as a result of it, and, secondly, I have no doubt that both the event itself and the circumstances surrounding it have been completely distorted by Makhno just like the other "facts" he cites.

Is it possible in this case that he has confused me with someone else? . . . Well, anyways, this incident has no great significance.

I shall now turn to Makhno's innuendos and insinuations:

On page 41,<sup>[6]</sup> regarding my alleged testimony to the investigator of the *Revtribunal* of the 14<sup>th</sup> Soviet Army, Makhno casually flings the remark:

"I know Voline, and I know what he is capable of; however, I think . . .," etc.

Makhno must know, without any prompting from me, that such phrases are not to be tossed off flippantly. So he knows what I'm capable of? Fine. I categorically assert that there is nothing reprehensible that he can reproach me for. I declare that by tossing out such a phrase, he is obliged to back up his words with facts, and that he is unable to do.

Finally, the main point: my notorious testimony to the investigator of the tribunal of the 14<sup>th</sup> Army.

In this regard, Makhno is more circumspect and less categorical. He hesitates and lacks confidence. He doesn't know what to think. You see, he doesn't quite believe Kubanin or the text of the statement. . . . And, nevertheless, from all his arguments, "facts," and hints there remains as a residue a certain general impression, a certain sense of something fishy, which is what he wants

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6 Page 51 in this edition.

to leave with the reader. He creates the impression that Voline is someone “capable of surrendering” to the Bolsheviks almost on purpose, probably with the goal of “winning a reputation for himself,” and “perfidiously informing” the Bolshevik authorities about the Makhnovist *kontrrazvedka*.

Let’s turn to the essence of the matter.

Kubanin’s citation from my, alleged, testimony to the investigator of the *Revtribunal* of the 14<sup>th</sup> Soviet Army, although it includes a reference to the “Voline case file, page 24, Archive of the GPU of Ukraine” (M. Kubanin, *Makhnovshchina*, p. 116), caused me considerable astonishment, because during my arrest in Ukraine, described above, no case file was created and I had no occasion to give any testimony to an investigator of the *Revtribunal* of the 14<sup>th</sup> Army.

I will state the sequence of events in consistent fashion.

I’ve already mentioned that the Bolsheviks delivered me, seriously ill, to Yekaterinoslav, and put me in a hotel room. A woman physician was summoned and diagnosed typhoid fever. I recall that she was asked if it was possible to move me by railway to Kharkov. She answered that I was in a very bad state; that, as a doctor, she was against transportation, and that she could not guarantee the outcome. After she left, I asked if they, nevertheless, were planning to move me again. They replied that the army headquarters was leaving for Kharkov immediately and that, if ordered, they would take me there, no matter what my condition. Fortunately, there was a crisis in the course of the disease that very night (a break between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> stages of typhoid fever), and when they came the next day to convey me to Kharkov, I was in a relatively better state.

In Kharkov they threw me in some kind of dungeon in terrible conditions, and left me to my fate. If it had not been for the occasional help of the soldiers on duty in the dungeon, plus my strong resolve to live, I would have died there. As I was told later, the authorities, hesitant to drag out and shoot such a seriously ill person, decided it was possible to get rid of me without shooting:

I would simply die on my own, deprived of medical care and assistance. (I note that Trotsky subsequently expressed regret that I was not shot “owing to the weakness of the local authorities.”) However, I wasn’t stuck in the Kharkov dungeon for very long. A few days later the staff of the army moved to Kremenchug. Since I was still alive, they pulled me out again and took me along. Here I was incarcerated again in terrible conditions (a frigid solitary-confinement cell, inedible food, etc.). I know for sure that, horrified by my condition on arrival, the Warden of the Kremenchug prison (a Left SR), immediately reported to his boss (Dukelsky) that the Anarchist Voline had been brought into the prison and that he was in such poor condition that he would undoubtedly die within a few days. To this Dukelsky responded:

“So what! Let him die—we’ll give him a proper burial. . . .”

That same Warden saved me from death. He did everything in his power and within the limits of legality to give me the possibility to recover: he sent me a *feldsher*, gave me medicine, ordered my cell heated, washed my laundry, put me on the sick list for special rations (milk and white bread), etc. (I know that he nearly paid a terrible price for his attentive care.) Soon the strength of my body asserted itself, and I began to make a strong recovery.

As soon as my mobility returned (this was at the end of January, 1920), I was summoned for “interrogation”—the first in all this time!

I went down to the Warden’s office. Sitting behind a table was a man introducing himself as Investigator Verbov (he was, evidently, the investigator of the *Revtribunal* of the 14<sup>th</sup> Soviet Army). He invited me to sit down, put a folder with papers in front of me, and said:

“Now of course, Comrade Voline, you consider yourself a revolutionary. But I must tell you that you are accused of a manifestly counter-revolutionary act, and that this accusation is extremely serious. . . .”

“Interesting,” I said, “what exactly am I accused of? I just want to know the charge. . . .”

“You are accused,” Verbov announced rather solemnly, “with dissuading Makhno, whom, as we know, was very much under your influence, from proceeding to the Polish front, when the Soviet government demanded this from him at a critical moment for the defense of the revolution. . . . This is the matter about which I must interrogate you. . . .”

I was momentarily stunned. The Polish front? I was hearing about this for the first time and was completely ignorant of what he was talking about. I declared my complete ignorance regarding the Polish front to Verbov. He laughed at first, and then became angry and began to admonish me for lying in hopes of avoiding responsibility for my actions. I continued to assure him that I didn’t know anything about the Polish front, that I was hearing about it for the first time, that I didn’t know why Makhno refused to go there. . . . At the same time I was trying to understand what was going on. Suddenly, it dawned on me.

“Please tell me,” I exclaimed, “how and when did this question of the Polish front arise?”

“You know perfectly well that negotiations about the Polish front began soon after the arrival of the Makhnovists and the Soviet authorities in Aleksandrovsk. Around the 15<sup>th</sup> of January. . . .”

“But I left the Makhnovist region to go to Krivy Rog at the end of December,” I objected, “I fell ill on the road and was arrested soon after. And now I’m sitting in front of you. I was not in Aleksandrovsk and, after my departure, did not see Makhno and didn’t know anything about what was going on. . . . Around the 15<sup>th</sup> of January I was already bedridden and under arrest in Yekaterinoslav.”

“You’re confused. . . . In any case, I can’t take your word for it. You must prove. . . .”

A new thought occurred to me.

“At the time of my arrest,” I said, “I had a mandate, signed and issued to me, on the day of my departure from the Makhnovist region. There’s a date on it. If you’ve got all the documents here that were taken from me, you should have that mandate. . . .”

Verbov opened the folder and began to sort the documents.

"There it is, the mandate," I said, noticing a sheet of paper.

Verbov took a close look at it. It was that "certificate" that I have already mentioned. It certified that "the bearer of this, such-and-such a person, on such-and-such a date, is being sent," etc., and was dated December 29, 1919.

Verbov turned pale and was completely at a loss. Obviously he had been handed the folder, and told in haste what I should be accused of. But neither he or, perhaps, his immediate supervisors had studied the case file and were quite unfamiliar with it. There was probably an order from the top to bring such-and-such a charge against me and then under this pretext shoot me.

As I later found out, comrades everywhere already knew about my arrest, were worried about me, made inquiries, etc., and the Bolsheviks were afraid to shoot me for nothing. They needed to stage a proper "accusation" and "court."

Their case collapsed. After reviewing the contents of the mandate, Verbov immediately changed his tone. Now he admitted that an obvious mistake had been made, that he was unable to continue the case, and that I was dismissed. The whole conversation lasted 20 minutes.

The next day, Verbov summoned me again, but only for a few minutes. He told me that the error had finally been clarified, and that my case had been terminated as there were no other charges against me. I was to be transferred to Moscow where they would do with me whatever they wanted. . . . Then he asked if I had any declarations to make, if there was anything he could do for me. He promised to do whatever was within his power to do.

I demanded the right to receive parcels, correspondence, and visitors, and to be allowed to read newspapers. He replied that he no right to allow any of those things.

"In that case," I said, "try to have me transported to Moscow as soon as possible. I have close friends there. . . . I'm still not quite well, I'm starving, and generally this is a bad place for me."

"I promise you this for sure," said Verbov. "I will do my best to get you moved to Moscow as soon as possible."

Evidently, he kept his word. Within in a week, I was sent to Moscow, where I arrived at the Internal Prison of the VChK [*Cheka*] in early February, 1920.

Thus, I gave neither written nor oral testimony to the investigator of the *Revtribunal* of the 14<sup>th</sup> Soviet Army. There was never any kind of "case" or any kind of interrogation. I was never threatened with anything by anybody, and there was no occasion to give "vile testimony."

In conclusion, I note that if Makhno had such a bad opinion of me, if he knew "what I was capable of," etc., etc., then why did he demand my release from the Moscow prison in October, 1920? Why did he invite me back to the region of the movement? Why did he give me responsible assignments? Why did he make use of all that work which I expended, with great effort and sacrifice, when I was already in Berlin, to spring him from the Danzig mousetrap?<sup>[7]</sup>

Is it not clear that all the bad thoughts about me, all the anger towards me, and all the nasty attacks against me, are of comparatively recent origin, and have nothing at all to do with the movement and my role in it?

So what are we left with? What is Makhno trying to dump on me? Alas, only one thing: the black smoke of malice and slander. . . . To whom is this necessary and why?

Paris, November 1928

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7 In 1924 Makhno, living in Poland, tried to travel to Western Europe via the "free city" of Danzig. But he had no documents that would allow him to travel to another country, and soon found himself in prison when he was unable to fulfill the order of the Danzig authorities to leave the city.



# **APROPOS VOLINE'S “CLARIFICATION”**

**Paris, 1929**

**by N. Makhno**



Н. МАХНО

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По поводу „раз'яснения“ Волина.

Париж, 1929 г.

Cover of Makhno's brochure.

## INTRODUCTION

*By deliberately inserting a lie into his “clarification,” Voline avoids dealing with the essence of the matter. With his numerous questions—questions, moreover, of deliberately criminal intent—he shunts aside the main point arising from the testimony he gave, in Kubanin’s version, to the investigator of the Revtribunal of the 14<sup>th</sup> Soviet Red Army. Voline tries to muddy the waters even more by tossing out an inadmissible lie relating to completely secondary issues, and thereby compels me to respond.*

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In September, 1928, I published a response to the Bolshevik M. Kubanin’s book *The Makhnovshchina* in the form of a brochure entitled *The Makhnovshchina and Its Erstwhile Allies—the Bolsheviks.*” In my brochure on page 41,<sup>[1]</sup> I cited an excerpt (following Kubanin) from the testimony of Voline to the investigator of the *Revtribunal* of the 14<sup>th</sup> Soviet Red Army which, in my opinion, was untrue, and clearly reeks of a provocation.

This excerpt, cited verbatim according to Kubanin, reads as follows:

“Apropos of abuses committed by the Makhnovist army’s *kontrrazvedka*,’ says Voline, chairperson of the *Revvoensoviet* of Makhno’s army, in his testimony to the investigator of the *Revtribunal* of the 14<sup>th</sup> Soviet Army, “I have no direct knowledge. But lots of people came to me to complain about it and this forced me to intervene constantly in the affairs of the *kontrrazvedka*. I had to appeal to it as well as to Makhno personally. However, the military situation and my own intellectual activity within the movement prevented me from probing the complaints about these abuses. The number of plaintiffs nevertheless prompted me to suggest to the movement’s revolutionary military soviet that a panel be set up to look into matters in which the populace and the intelligence service were at loggerheads. Here I clashed with Makhno and Zinkovsky. In my own view, the *kontrrazvedka* was an abomination and I did all in my power to put paid to

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1 Page 51 in this edition.

its abuses.”

Having read my brochure and having come across this passage from his testimony (according to Kubanin), Voline, without trying to refute it, began to bristle up against me. Voline is an occasional journalist who is ignorant in a revolutionary sense, but always thinks he’s right. With a skilfully disguised lie, he tried to justify his untenable position, tried to persist in his lunacy. The net effect is that he obviously has an influence on people who, while not normally inclined to offer blind support, are lacking in information about this or that appalling affair taking place in our milieu. Such people, not being able to control their natural conciliatory impulses, are therefore unable to distinguish an artfully disguised falsehood and, regrettably, end up supporting it.

All of this taken together, I repeat, placed Voline in the hypocritical pose of an unjustly insulted person, innocently suffering for the sins of others. And he took up his pen to explain to everyone—both friends and enemies—everything under the sun except the most essential thing that Kubanin is talking about. But as a responsible leader of the revolutionary-liberatory movement of the Ukrainian toiling masses, I did not have the right to pass over this matter in silence and so I noted it in the appropriate place in my brochure, giving a summary which for the “multifaceted” Voline is not very flattering.

In fact, in his “clarification,” Voline resorts to his usual subterfuges and fusses about secondary issues, shamelessly distorting them and making a great hue and cry. The points of Voline’s testimony which Kubanin cites from Voline’s “case,” are not reproduced in his “clarification,” and he does not accuse Kubanin of perpetrating a lie, that the “case” against him never existed, nor does he demand that Kubanin respond, etc. Voline only in passing expresses amazement that there was such a case (page 9).<sup>[2]</sup> He avoids engaging Kubanin on this main point, and for good reason. Voline is afraid to challenge Kubanin, because this would put Kubanin in the position of an interested party to the debate, one, moreover, who has the opportunity of delving into Voline’s

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2 See page 149 of this book.

"case" a second time. For all I know, the file might be made available to some kind of outsider deserving of trust from us, the Anarchists, who could determine for the Anarchist world whether there is a case file for Voline, and whether it contains pernicious testimony about the *kontrrazvedka* of the army of the Makhnovists, etc.

Voline weighed all this very seriously, in my opinion, and decided to avoid this important issue, of such great significance for him. Instead of offering a straight answer to Kubanin, he preferred to sink in the slime with a concocted lie and flounder around in it, without regard to embarrassment before friend and foe.

From the end of August, 1919, Voline occupied the post of chairperson of the *Revvoensoviet* of the Makhnovist Insurgent Army. How could he not know that Comrade L. Golik was the chief of the Army's *kontrrazvedka*? At that time, because of his experience in the tsarist army, the chief of the *kontrrazvedka* was an equivalent rank to a senior military commander, and his attendance was obligatory at all important meetings of these commanders and of the Presidium of the *Revvoensoviet*. And he was always present.

So how could it happen that the chairperson of the *Revvoensoviet* of the army did not know who was head of the army's *kontrrazvedka*? No, there's something fishy going on here with Voline. In my opinion, this is like Voline refusing to acknowledge that he was the chair of the army's *Revvoensoviet* or that he ever held a responsible post in the movement of the *Makhnovshchina*.

But this Voline cannot do, nor can he claim "ignorance" of the fact that Comrade Golik was head of army's *kontrrazvedka*, and was sent by me to accompany him to Krivy Rog with certain responsibilities. Nor can Voline deny that Comrade Golik, following my instructions, chose several of the best *kontrrazvedniki* to accompany Voline not only on the journey, but to the meetings to be held throughout the region. Voline's feigned ignorance of this now is a bold-faced lie. Voline, myself, and Comrade Golik were all completely apprised of Voline's mission, and we prepared an appropriate cadre of persons to accompany him. . . .

No less scoundrelly is Voline's equivocating account about how and for what purpose he brought one of the Bolshevik leaders in Yekaterinoslav to see me. This person, a certain Orlov, wanted me to issue a mandate allowing him to remove money and valuables from a certain mansion abandoned by its owners, who had run off to Denikin. During this interview both my adjutants were present, despite the wish of Orlov and Voline that they be sent from the room. So I obviously do not need to concern myself with Voline's suggestion that I may have confused him with someone else.

On page 6<sup>[3]</sup> of his "clarification" Voline is outraged by the fact that in my brochure I said that he "surrendered to the 14<sup>th</sup> Army."<sup>[4]</sup> I didn't mean to suggest that Voline surrendered with evil intent. I was just following the report submitted by Comrade Golik when he returned from Krivy Rog. The latter, along with his people, suggested that Voline leave this village, which had been occupied by Red troops. Voline declared to Golik:

"I don't need to run from them, I have a mandate signed by Makhno, so they won't touch me." . . . From this it's clear that Voline allowed himself to be arrested out of stupidity. That's how I understood it, that's how Comrade Golik and the other *kontr-razvedniks* understood it, and that's how my whole staff understood it. That is the sense in which the word "surrendered" must be understood.

Voline puts a different spin on his arrest. But I have more reason to believe Comrade Golik than Voline, especially now when he has embarked on the dangerous ploy of dismissing everything and everyone, and lies at every step, about every question. Indeed. I affirm that everything was done in Yekaterinoslav to prepare them for their journey to Krivy Rog. . . . The relevant official documents and certificates were drawn up for them, as can be verified in the not too distant future by our comrades in Ukraine, provided conditions improve, from the army staff's order books, which set out the conditions for the mission. In Yekaterinoslav

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3 Page 144 in this book.

4 Page 51 in this book.

the travelers were issued an appropriate amount of money, etc. (Voline may not have known about the money, since it was issued to Comrade Golik who used it to purchase food for the journey.) The mission of Voline and the group of *kontrrazvedniks* was organized at the end of November – beginning of December 1919, on the eve of our abandonment of Yekaterinoslav. . . .

And about 12–15 *versts* from Yekaterinoslav, in the villages of Aleksandrovka—Sursko-Litovskoye, I said goodbye to Voline and to Comrade Golik with his small detachment. I was on my way to the front to direct operations against the attacking Denikinists, while they were departing in the direction of Krivy Rog. After that farewell, I did not see Voline again, either in the *Revvoensoviet* or in its wagon train. Two days later the army headquarters was located in one of the German colonies near the village of Bashmachka. Here, when I returned from the front, it was reported to me that Voline and Comrade Golik had taken off in the direction of Krivy Rog, in accordance with their instructions, while the headquarters was in the process of being moved from Sursko-Litovskoye to the region of Bashmachka.

But Voline, for purposes known only to him and his friends, has clearly set out along the path of vile jesuitical politicking and, while shamelessly slithering along this path, lies to himself, to his friends, and generally to the readers of his "clarification," by claiming that he had a mandate-credential dated December 29 and that this saved him from the dangerous charge presented to him by the investigator Verbov. . . .

So what is he up to—this guy who's a criminally reckless, backstabber to some, and a grandstanding poseur to others? Has Voline really failed to understand that in our world not everyone is criminally-minded, and therefore sooner or later his double-dealing will be noticed and brought out into the open? If not by us, then by our enemies, who will interpret matters in such a light that it casts aspersions not just on Voline personally, but on a whole constellation of the representatives of Anarchism. For our enemies are not aware that Voline alone lives by these abominations (perhaps joined by some of his associates); for real An-

archists living with the ups-and-downs of our movement, all this double-dealing of Voline, when he should be direct and honest, even if it's only with himself, is detestable. Or, perhaps, Voline believes that what he "clarifies" in his "clarification" is fodder only for the emigrant milieu, which he knows well and understands, and which can easily be armed with lies to use against me. But in this case, too, he should be careful with the facts and the truths associated with them. For if Voline and those who covertly support him do not feel obligated to stick to the facts and the truth, there are others, honourable persons, who will not rest until they clear up the truth of the matter.

Voline, on page 5<sup>[5]</sup> of his "clarification," wishing to affirm his lie that he received a certificate from me when he parted with me and the army, repeats: the credential was dated December 29, 1919 (the reader will see below why I remember these details so clearly and why they have such significance). . . . He goes on to spin some nonsense about it, concerning the worth of which I have already remarked, so I shall not repeat it. I will only offer incontrovertible evidence to prove his deceit about the date of December 29. If one can believe Voline, the certificate was dated December 29 and not earlier, as he pointed out to the investigator Verbov, otherwise Verbov would have had no hesitation in bringing the interrogation to a close and turning Voline over to the court for trial.

And how do I know this?

Because it was known for certain by me and my staff and by the staff of the 14<sup>th</sup> Red Army that the meeting of the Insurgent armed forces with the 45<sup>th</sup> Division of the Red Army took place near the city of Aleksandrovsk on December 20–21, 1919. According to Voline's own "clarification," at that time he was in the region of Krivy Rog. This compels me to ask all the chatterboxes and backstabbers who act as if I was slandering Voline: do I need to expose any more of Voline's dirty linen in this matter?

The encounter of the of Insurgent forces with units of the Red Army took place under the leadership of my deputy—the elder

5 See page 143 of this book.



Karetnik—who was taking the place of Comrade Vdovichenko, commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Azov Corps, who was ill. I emphasize that when the Insurgents and the Red Army soldiers had settled in to rest in Aleksandrovsk itself as well as in nearby villages and *khutors*, I and the main staff of our army entered the city on December 24, 1919.

Two days later the staff of the Insurgent army received an order from the *Revvoensoviet* of the 14<sup>th</sup> Red Army addressed to me. The order was to assemble all the Insurgent troops into one body and advance towards the Polish front.

This order brought all the Insurgent forces to life. On December 27–28, some Red units switched over to us, in particular, a battalion of Red Chinese, and a Red armoured train made us a present of thousands of three-inch shells. Our staff, wishing to avoid the impending bloodshed with the Red Army (I was already out of action due to typhus), pulled all the Insurgent units out of Aleksandrovsk and headed in the direction of Gulyai-Polye.

The question is, how could it happen that Voline, who parted with the Insurgent army almost a month earlier, came to have a certificate dated December 29, 1919? And why, if this was so, did the investigator Verbov put a stop to Voline's "case"? For if Voline was present in Aleksandrovsk on December 29, then he would be involved in the discussions by the staff and the *Revvoensoviet* of the Insurgent army and implicated in the response to the order of the Red high command—and that would have had disastrous consequences for Voline. But according to Voline (see page 10<sup>[6]</sup> of his "clarification"), he was accused by the Bolsheviks who arrested him of "dissuading Makhno . . . from proceeding to the Polish front, when the Soviet government demanded this from him at a critical moment. . . ."

What's going on here? Is this really due to a simple error of Voline with his false assertions, and not deliberate dirty tricks? Doesn't this tell you what a political rascal Voline is? In his regrettable "clarification," there is scarcely a line that is not a lie, albeit a lie imbued with so much self-confidence and posturing that one

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6 Page 151 of this book.



risks being swept off one's feet by his promotion of lies in place of the truth. Again, what's going on here? Is this the ideological fodder of the milieu where Voline discussed and prepared his mean-spirited "clarification" with its dirty and vulgar mendacity? Or is this just a reflection of the personal worth of Voline himself? . . .

As to how to understand all this, I understand it as conscious deceit and repudiate it as such before the whole revolutionary world. I protest against all this publicly for the following reasons. Firstly, Voline deliberately substitutes secondary issues for the essence of the matter, trying, thereby, to confuse things. Secondly, his exposition of these secondary issues is built on inadmissible, lying fictions which are completely obliterated by facts that are not subject to any dispute. And thirdly, I know that our enemies, the Bolsheviks, possess evidence that completely refutes Voline's inventions. Namely, the Bolsheviks have a file on Voline that contains his mandate-certificate with my signature and precise information about the date of that document, the date on which Voline was arrested by them, the date when the Makhnovist Insurgent Army met units of the Red Army in December, 1919, near the city of Aleksandrovsk, etc. The Bolsheviks, having all this data at their disposal and reading this jesuitical "clarification" of Voline, will readily notice Voline's arrogance and lies, which he hypocritically spins in place of the real facts, evidently counting on the naïveté of some and the stupidity of others of his sympathizers. And the Bolsheviks will use this arrogance and lying, together with the pettiness of Voline himself, against the Russian and Ukrainian Anarchists, whenever the Anarchists speak out publicly about the Bolsheviks' deliberate crimes against the revolution, against the revolutionary organizations of the toilers of town and village, and against the ideas advocated by the Anarchists. . . .

Mind you, comrades can tell me that my protest is somewhat weak, owing to the fact that it's not signed at the bottom by some "influential" people. But no signatures are needed here. As a matter of fact, it doesn't make sense to recruit people for sign-

ing who are do-gooders and you can't recruit people who have a shaky, or even dodgy, revolutionary consciousness, for the latter might sign something today, but tomorrow make backstabbing attacks against whatever it is that they signed. . . .

The acts against which I'm protesting are so obvious and intelligible to anyone wishing honestly and sincerely to grasp their disgraceful nature, that to summon anyone to support my protest against these acts would mean that I'm not fully committed to this protest and don't believe that Voline's lying will sooner or later be exposed for good by documents that will establish his guilt beyond all doubt. For it will then become clear to everyone why he is so brazen in his lying assertion that the certificate, issued to him by the staff of the Insurgent Army and signed by me, is dated December 29, 1919.

Further. In his same deceitful "clarification" Voline says that I've been attacking him for a long time.

"In responding to Kubanin, Makhno, unfortunately, takes this opportunity to settle some personal scores with me . . .,"<sup>[7]</sup> says Voline.

Here Voline again lies. In my response to Kubanin, I would not have mentioned his name if Kubanin had not made a reference to the Voline "case" and his "statement." . . . But the fact that Kubanin cites Voline's opinion about the *kontrrazvedka* of the Insurgent Army forced me to dwell on this point in my reply to Kubanin.

And further, Voline emphasizes that "the estrangement between Makhno and myself arose, to a significant degree, owing to personal traits of Makhno's character and temperament, to his hostile attitude towards the intelligentsia, etc. . . ."<sup>[8]</sup>

And here Voline, without embarrassment, as befits people of his type, is lying. During all the years of my revolutionary activity I have valued and continue to value genuine intellectuals, especially in our Anarchist ranks. And I hate only the scoundrels

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7 Page 141 in this book.

8 Ibid.

among them. And I can distinguish those. My long experience of revolutionary activity in the midst of the toiling masses, where intellectuals often pop by for a visit—but don't always stay fully committed to these masses in their struggles—has taught me to understand intellectuals and how to differentiate them. . . .

And it was not because of personal antagonism that I turned away from Voline. I've never made any attempt to settle personal scores with him. At a certain point, after meeting with him abroad, I simply ceased to consider him a comrade. And I don't think a revolutionary has any obligation to account for not considering someone a comrade. . . . Voline knows this perfectly well, so I'm amazed that in his "clarification" he makes remarks alleging the existence of some kind of personal grievances that I have against him. He should read again the letter I wrote him on August 7, 1926, and honestly reflect, as he should have done earlier in my opinion, on whether he should be writing a lie about my attempts to settle personal grudges with him. This letter would tell him just the opposite. But he didn't do this, and so he has slipped into this abyss of lies.

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As for the concluding questions posed by Voline, I can only say that most of them are stupid. Voline must be well aware that if he behaved in the ranks of the revolutionary movement the same as he had behaved here in emigration, he wouldn't have lasted one day in that movement. He would have been thrown out of it, because the peasant-Anarchist vanguard of the insurgency not only hate sneaky, lying people, they also get after them. This vanguard would especially get after Voline, after liberating him from under arrest in August, 1919, and helping him when he remained voluntarily in the Insurgent movement. Incidentally, Voline was in this movement for only four months, not half a year, as he deliberately and falsely states on the first page of his "clarification."

Regarding the question: "Why did he make use of all that work which I expended with great effort and sacrifice, when I was already in Berlin," shrieks Voline, "to spring him from the Danzig

mousetrap?"<sup>[9]</sup> —I have a lot to say. Firstly, this question tells me something about Voline's victimhood, something he would be better off keeping quiet about. Secondly, by flaunting his victimhood, he's helping me establish his chicanery.

So now, what were Voline's efforts and sacrifices in arranging my escape from the municipal hospital in Danzig and, 40 days later, from Danzig itself?

His efforts and "sacrifices" consisted, firstly, in conducting correspondence and the transfer of money directed to him by organizations and by Alexander Berkman; and, secondly, in making promises which he seldom kept. . . .

The escape was arranged by comrades living in Danzig without the knowledge of Voline. When the Danzig comrades wrote to Voline that I was already free and that it was necessary to expedite the promised document for me, Voline answered that they had speeded things up too much and would now have to wait. And for what? None of us could understand his irresponsible chatter.

My comrades wrote to Voline that my situation—staying in rented illegal apartments—was such that any delay in pulling me out of Danzig was out of the question. I could be arrested and conveyed so some kind of impregnable fortress where there was no possibility of escape.

"Try to do more," the comrades advised Voline, "than just making promises about helping Nestor to get out of Danzig. . . ."

Voline immediately sent back a letter that he was giving up on the matter. The comrades hurried to me with this letter, angry and concerned. This forced me to write to Voline myself. I wrote:

"Dear Dedushka,<sup>[10]</sup> you write that you are withdrawing from the assignment given to you by the organization arranging my exit from Danzig. I'm not going to beg you. I'm tired of hearing promises from you and tired of your non-fulfillment of obliga-

9 See page 153 of this book.

10 "Dedushka" [Granddad] was Voline's nickname in the Anarchist movement.

tions. So go to hell. But send me the 75 dollars which Comrade Karnuk sent to your address for me from North America on November 24, 1924. This money is necessary here, etc., etc.” (My letter to Voline from Danzig was sent in March, 1925.)

Voline could not send this sum of money. He had spent it on himself.<sup>[11]</sup> And this forced him to soften his tone with the young comrades who were corresponding with him about my escape and getting me out of Danzig. He continued to correspond with us and continued to irresponsibly promise to send me a passport, etc.

So I was stuck in an illegal apartment for over a month. During this time, Voline sent one comrade from the Hamburg individualist Anarchists to smuggle me out of Danzig by sea. And subsequently Feldman and Voline sent us yet another illegal person to also help me get out. My comrades and I decided to send back this last guy. But he declared that we were obligated to send him back with me, since he was an illegal and could not make it through except by illegal means. I recall what a burden this person was for all of us and how angry we were at Voline, while at the same time laughing at his “assistance.”

But the Hamburg comrade didn’t help us either. He seemed to have some kind of connection in Danzig. But through this connection he somehow got conned in an odd manner. He paid 300 gold marks to the owner of a boat that was supposed to take me by sea from Danzig to Stettin in Germany. But the owner of this boat didn’t show up for a rendezvous the following day, and instead sent a message through his wife that he had spent all the money during the night on drinking and was too ashamed to appear to us in person. . . .

After that, the comrades tried another route to get me from Danzig to Germany without any outside help, but this was also unsuccessful. All this aroused in us hatred of Voline’s promises to send a passport. I decided not to appeal to Voline in Berlin any

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<sup>11</sup> It was not unknown for money raised for a specific purpose to disappear when it passed through the hands of destitute Anarchists. In Voline’s case, he had a wife and six children to support.

more, but to leave with a single comrade, who also longed to get out of Danzig into Central Europe, through Polish territory into Germany. And we left one evening, also taking along the illegal person sent from Berlin. . . .

And so I reached Berlin. And only after Comrade Feldman told him that I had arrived, did Voline come to meet me. . . .

Such in reality were the "efforts" and "sacrifices" of Voline in helping me get out of the "Danzig mousetrap."

Should anyone be patting themselves on the back? I say—no. There are people who have reason to talk about helping me along the way, but for sure not Voline. Because he didn't act with any sincerity or commitment. He behaved like a conservative accountant, trying not to lag too far behind what others were doing but always limiting his efforts and sacrifices!

The story of my escape from Danzig will be fully exposed in due time.<sup>[12]</sup> But already from this brief exposition it's evident what a petty, mercenary soul Voline is! . . .

He puts before me and his readers his false "clarification" of the "great" efforts and sacrifices he expended in the interests of my freedom.

What a shame! What a disgrace! — Was this a revolutionary worker, taking on the assignment of an organization to correspond with me and provide me with the necessary assistance in a timely manner to organize my escape? No! Alexander Berkman and myself came up with the idea about my escape by correspondence without any input from Voline, who was recruited after this. . . . Voline was a liaison between me and the organization. And while Berkman and myself were reaching the definite conclusion that only an escape could allow me to get out of Danzig to one or other of the Western countries, Voline was negotiating in my name with a comrade lawyer who was working on my visa application. . . . Moreover, he was acting on the organization's dime, for everything he did was at the expense of the funds of the "Russian Group Abroad," funds received by Berkman and

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12 The details of Makhno's escape from Danzig remain a mystery.

disbursed by him. And still he yells about the value of his “tremendous efforts and sacrifices.”

What does this mean? Is it not a sign of churlishness when a person becomes entangled in lies? However, this kind of “clarification” as an example of his “political wisdom” could only impress those who encouraged him by promising to support him in attacking me. And once this unfortunate man was egged on by his own friends, he naturally found in himself the maximum anti-revolutionary character and jesuitical boorishness to lie to his own friends, in fact to lie to everyone reading his “clarification,” and in particular to lie about the fact that he knew that Comrade Golik was head of the *kontrrazvedka*. He lied that his mandate-certificate was issued to him on December 29, 1919, rather than a month earlier. He lied that the Insurgent Army encountered the Red Army near Aleksandrovsk around January 15, 1920, rather than in the fourth week of December. And, finally, there was no investigative file in Ukraine when he was arrested by authorities of the 14<sup>th</sup> Red Army, etc. Since he has no qualms about lying about all this, it’s not surprising that he blathers irresponsibly and cynically about his “tremendous efforts and sacrifices” in the matter of helping me get out of the “Danzig mouse-trap.” Moreover, the ignorant public is unavoidably deceived, and cries that Makhno has slandered Voline, etc.

But no matter how much they cry, both Voline himself and the “esteemed public,” fussing over his “clarification” and pulling wool over the eyes of others concerning the certitude and truthfulness of the facts about him—I declare that Voline’s “clarification” is a dirty, vulgar explication of his deceit and absolutely vile. . . . This is the only correct way to understand Voline. . . .

N. Makhno

**MAKHNO**  
**(A Contribution to Studies of the**  
**Enigma of Personality )**

**by Vsevolod Voline**



## Introduction to the Translation

After his exchange of pamphlets with Makhno in 1929, Vsevolod Voline withdrew from the increasingly toxic world of the Russian Anarchist diaspora. Fluent in French, he found his niche as a writer and editor in the French Anarchist movement. But in 1936–1937 he edited the final two volumes of Makhno's memoirs, and in 1938–1941 he wrote a history of the Russian Revolution from an Anarchist perspective, published only after his death.

Voline got in the last word in his ongoing feud with Makhno in the following text from 1945. Although apparently intended as part of a much larger work, the author died soon after writing it—of tuberculosis, the same as Makhno. According to his description, Voline's relations with Galina Kuzmenko after Makhno's death were close, but platonic. After July, 1936, he never saw her again.

In 1948 Makhno's former friend and colleague Ida Mett wrote an account of Nestor's life in Paris.<sup>[4]</sup> She claimed that after his death, Galina Kuzmenko became Voline's wife. Somehow Galina, in remote Kazakhstan, became aware of this rumour and mentioned it in a letter to Viktor Yalansky (grandson of Nestor's brother Karp). She wrote:

*After Nestor's death, Voline and I published Nestor's materials. By the way: I'm aware of the version, started by someone, that after Nestor's death I married Voline. This is senseless fiction, lies. Voline had a wonderful family—a wife and two children.*<sup>[5]</sup>

Mett also claimed that Galina tried to cut Nestor's throat while he was sleeping when the couple were living in Poland, resulting in the disfiguring scar on the right side of his face. This story also reached Galina somehow, and she insisted that Makhno's scar was the result of a terrible bullet wound he suffered on August 22, 1921, in Ukraine, when a bullet entered his neck and exited through his right cheek.<sup>[6]</sup>

Voline feared that Galina had perished in World War II and that her firsthand knowledge of the Makhnovist movement would be lost forever. But in fact she not only survived but produced valuable accounts of the movement in her old age.

4 Ida Mett, **Souvenirs sur Nestor Makhno**, (Paris: Éditions Allia, 1983). Although written in 1948, Mett's brochure was published only in 1983, ten years after her death. And yet the content of the brochure seems to have been well known before it was formally published.

5 Galina's letter has been published in Viktor Yalansky and Larisa Verovka, **Nestor and Galina: Behind the Photos** (Kyiv - Huliaipole, 1999), p. 455. Voline actually had six children, but the four oldest ones had already left home by the mid-1930s.

6 Ibid., p. 419.

## PART ONE

### I. A Delicate Task

I confess to being somewhat confused. I've been asked for a study on Makhno, not on the popular Russian revolutionary movement to which he gave his name and which is, moreover, masterfully described by Peter Arshinov in his work: **History of the Makhnovist Movement**,<sup>[4]</sup> but specifically on the personality of the man.

But do they realize the nature of the task that has been thrust upon me?

Very few of his comrades truly knew him; Makhno's personality was extremely complicated—*embrouillé* (confusing) would be the correct word. He had a sort of raw genius, full of flaws (both rustic and refined) that were as large as his traits of genius.

Undeniably, Makhno belonged, in the Russian Revolution, to that type of personality that one can never understand completely: personalities destined to remain forever a little out of focus.

This remains true for me also in the collection of memories that I retain about him.

The pattern of impressions that men leave behind them are the product, generally, of the flagrant and incomprehensible contradictions in their behaviour, their idiosyncrasies, their actions. But these contradictions can be explained properly by the coexistence in men of wonderful positive qualities, on the one hand, and of profound negative tendencies, on the other hand. This coexistence results in sometimes one propensity, sometimes the other propensity, coming into play; which frequently leads to violent, internal conflicts. These conflicts take the form, externally, in unbalanced, contradictory idiosyncrasies and, rather

4 Peter Arshinov, **The History of the Makhnovist Movement 1918–1921** (Detroit/Chicago, 1974). Citations and page references are from this edition, which was translated by Lorraine and Fredy Perlman from the original Russian edition published in Berlin in 1923 by the Group of Russian Anarchists in Germany.

often, in acts that are abnormal, indeed criminal. And this takes place alongside heroic exploits and total personal self-sacrifice.

The personality of Makhno does not escape from this rule. This man presents us with an ensemble of enormous virtues, but also enormous defects, chaotically, inextricably mixed together. . . . It goes without saying that in accepting the offer to examine his personality, my first responsibility is honesty and absolute impartiality. I am thus obliged to speak not only of the virtues, but also of the defects and weaknesses of Makhno, of his amoral actions, possibly of his “crimes.” . . .

This is the first time that Makhno’s personality will be treated in this light. A word inevitably comes to mind: “revelations.”

And, indeed, there are in my work incontrovertible revelations—even for comrades knowing the movement and the man more or less well. And this leads to the first complication in my task.

## II. The Rub of the Matter

Here, the reader has a right to be astonished. Makhno died in July, 1935, exactly ten years ago.<sup>[5]</sup> Why, then, should truthful revelations about his real personality amount to a “complication”? Ten years after his death, they should be quite normal and quite appropriate. Certainly one ought to avoid mentioning facts implicating persons still living. . . . But apart from this precaution . . .

Well, yes! That’s undeniable. But there is a rather special “rub,” a terrible one, in fact, that even friends and comrades of Makhno are far from suspecting. It’s this “rub” that complicates and falsifies everything.

How to explain this clearly?

It’s worth noting, first, two phenomena which—the first one especially—are useful as a sort of general base, despite their stupidity and falsity.

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<sup>5</sup> Actually Nestor Makhno died on July 25, 1934. An incredible error by Voline, since he delivered the eulogy at Makhno’s funeral and his lengthy obituary was widely publicized.



*A bedridden Voline in 1945.*

The “Makhnovist” movement was, above all, a movement of (revolutionary) peasants. Makhno himself was the last born—the fifth, in 1889<sup>[6]</sup>—of an extremely poor peasant family, living in the large village of Gulyai-Polye (district of Aleksandrovsk, province of Yekaterinoslav, Ukraine). But among the Ukrainian peasants—as indeed among the peasants (and even manual workers in general) of the whole country—there is a very widespread mixture of distrust, contempt, and veiled hostility, sometimes reaching the level of intense hatred, with regard to intellectuals, non-manual workers, and non-peasants. Even in the revolutionary movement, if it is led by the masses themselves, the appearance or intervention of an intellectual—especially if the latter is deficient in tact and sensitivity—is very often considered “undesirable.” An intellectual is still rather often considered within the workers’ or peasants’ movements as an “alien,” a “gate-crasher,” or almost a “phony.” This sort of envy, embedded for centuries, will require a long time to eradicate.

This harmful prejudice, exactly opposed to what is fair, is very widespread among revolutionary militants, who strive to conceal as much and as long as possible from the public, even from the ordinary members of the party, the weak spots, the “shadows,” the deficiencies and failures of the movement. I’m not going to

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6 Nestor Makhno was born in 1888, based on church records, but this information did not appear in the historical literature until 1988. Makhno himself believed he was born in 1889.

discuss the subject here. Personally, I believe that a frank divulging and thorough-going analysis of the defects, errors, lapses, and failures of a social movement are not only very useful, but absolutely essential in order to avoid, in the future, errors which may be fatal.

The “chieftains” of “political parties” and the leaders of various social movements are, generally speaking, of a contrary opinion. All of them are afraid of “revelations,” and have recourse to any means to suppress such facts or actualities.

Let us now open the afore-mentioned work of P. Arshinov to page 49 and read:

It must be noted that, like vast and spontaneous peasant insurrections which rise without any preparation, these organized guerrilla actions were always performed **by the peasants themselves, with no help or direction from any political organization.** Their methods of action made it necessary for them to look after the needs of the movement **themselves**, and to direct it and lead it to victory. During their whole fight against the *Hetman* and the *pomeshchiks*, even at its most difficult moments, the peasants remained alone in the face of their vicious, well-armed and organized enemy. This fact had great influence on the very character of the whole revolutionary insurrection (as we will see later). Wherever it remained to the end a class action, without falling under the influence of political parties or nationalist elements, the characteristic feature of the movement **was revolutionary self-management by the people themselves. The partisan detachments were proud of this special quality of their movement and felt themselves capable of fulfilling their mission.** (*Emphasis by me—V.*)

Furthermore, it's worth the time and paper to cite some passages concerning Makhno himself:

His bold and resolute method of acting, the rapidity of his appearances and disappearances, the precision of his blows, and the manifest impossibility of capturing him, dead or

alive, soon made him a figure that struck terror and hatred in the bourgeoisie, but gave rise to feelings of deep satisfaction, pride and hope among the working people. To the peasants Makhno became a legendary figure. In Makhno's character and his actions, there were in fact qualities worthy of legend: his extraordinary boldness, his stubborn will, his resourcefulness in all circumstances, and finally the delightful humour that frequently accompanied his action. . . .

The warlike spirit that was shown in his insurrectionary undertakings of this early period of his activity was only the first manifestation of his enormous talent as a warrior and organizer. We will see later what a remarkable military force and what a magnificent organizer came from the ranks of the peasants in the person of Makhno.

Not merely a remarkable military guide and organizer, but also a good agitator, Makhno constantly increased the number of meetings that took place in numerous villages of the region where he operated. . . . He also published pamphlets. . . . Soon he became the rallying point for all the Insurgent masses.<sup>[7]</sup>

Let us recall that all the struggles, all the battles, up to the final victory, took place under the immediate direction of the young Makhno; that every day he accomplished, with his comrades in the struggle, exploits that were heroic and truly extraordinary; that his incomparable military genius led to victory in the famous battle of Peregonovka: a battle which saved, indirectly, the Bolshevik regime and about which we will have occasion to refer to again.

A final citation:

A multitude of legends about Makhno are spread by the peasants and workers of Ukraine; they represent Makhno as exceptionally brave, extremely shrewd and invincible. In fact, when one knew him personally and watched him at work, one became convinced that he was more remarkable

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7 P. Arshinov, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.

than all the legends about him.

Makhno is a man of historic action. The three years of his revolutionary struggle are filled with incessant deeds, one more remarkable than the other.

The central characteristic of Makhno's personality is his enormous willpower. . . . He never backed away from an obstacle once he had resolved to surmount it.

. . . Makhno has the determination of a real hero, as opposed to the determination of those who act behind people's backs and at their expense. In all important situations Makhno marched in the front lines, and was the first to risk his life. Whether he rushed into battle with a detachment, or the entire army set out on a march of ten or fifteen miles, Makhno was always in the front lines, in the saddle if he was well, in a wagon if he was wounded. This is a rule without exceptions.

. . . In terms of his revolutionary and social conceptions, Makhno is an Anarchist-communist. He is fanatically devoted to his class—the poor, oppressed peasantry which is denied all rights.

Makhno is intelligent and shrewd. This trait, which he inherited from the people . . . is evident in everything he does. He fully deserves the devotion and affection of his army and of the peasantry. In these surroundings he is considered their own, unique and outstanding.

“Batkо [father, guide: honorary surname in Ukraine] is one of us,” say the Insurgents. “He is happy to drink with us, talk with us, and fight shoulder to shoulder with us.”

These words give the best possible characterization of Makhno as a true son of the people.<sup>[8]</sup>

The reader should note that in all these texts there is not a single false word, not even an exaggeration. Everything is absolutely true.

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8 P. Arshinov, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-226.

“So, was Makhno a tremendous and versatile genius?”

“Yes, Makhno was a tremendous and versatile genius.”

“And was he a genius for the good?”

“Yes, he was a genius for the good.”

And then?

Then, imagine with what fierce determination the Ukrainian peasants, ex-partisans, ex-commanders of the army, etc. must defend the good reputation of their movement and their beloved guide. The slightest attempt to throw the slightest shadow on one or the other drives them crazy with anger and hatred. Immediately the word “traitor” is on all the lips. And the reaction can go very far. . . .

This is what has happened, in effect, with the Makhnovist movement and with the personality of Makhno.

The reader will scarcely be able to imagine how far this anger and hatred can go, or the surprising, fantastic, and persistent forms they can take.

And this is the main rub of the whole affair. It’s the main reason why, up to the present, no or almost no revelations concerning the negative aspects of the movement, or the weaknesses of its guide, have pierced the wall of silence and reached the public.

### III. Peter Arshinov’s Book

When Peter Arshinov arrived in Berlin in 1922 (I had already been there since the winter of 1921)<sup>[9]</sup> bearing his manuscript, he handed it over to me for an appraisal. I read it very carefully, and told the author:

“The work is excellent. But, in my opinion, it’s missing something important. You know better than me that the movement, as well as the personality of Makhno, did not only have positive and heroic attributes. Like any human creation, and the reader knows it, both one and the other also have weaknesses, aberrations.

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9 Another strange error by Voline: Arshinov arrived in Berlin in the autumn of 1921, Voline followed in January, 1922.



tions, and failures. I think it's necessary to speak of them: first, because it would be useful for our activists to know the dangers which can threaten a popular movement; next, because if you pass over this aspect of the movement in silence, the reader will question the impartiality of your work."

Somewhat taken aback, Arshinov replied:

"Oh, but you know, in comparison with the enormous positive characteristics of the movement, the failings or lapses are truly of no importance. . . ."

Nevertheless, upon my insistence, he added here and there a few lines making allusion, in a rather timid fashion, to the weaknesses of the movement. Among others, he also referred, cautiously, to some defects in the character of Makhno.

Let's read what Arshinov has to say in this respect:

Makhno's personality contained many superior characteristics—spirit, will, courage, energy and decisiveness. Taken together, these traits created an imposing impression, and made him stand out even among revolutionaries. However, Makhno lacked the theoretical knowledge and was deficient in political and historical knowledge. Because of this he frequently could not deal with broad revolutionary generalizations and conclusions, or simply refused to even consider them. The vast movement of the revolutionary insurrection demanded that new social and revolutionary formulas be found that would be adequate to its nature. By reason of his inadequate theoretical knowledge, Makhno was not always equal to this task, and in view of the position which he occupied in the revolutionary insurrection, this defect had repercussions on the whole movement. We believe that if Makhno had possessed more extensive knowledge in history and the political and social sciences, **the revolutionary insurrection would have recorded, instead of inevitable defeats, a series of victories which would have played a colossal and perhaps decisive role**

**in the development of the Russian revolution.** [*Emphasis added by me, because such a statement is very significant, even alarming.*—V.]

In addition, Makhno possessed one characteristic that sometimes diminished his dominant qualities: at times he exhibited a certain carelessness. Though full of energy and will, he occasionally showed, in times of exceptionally serious crisis, a frivolity that was incompatible with the seriousness demanded by the gravity of the situation.<sup>[10]</sup>

The reader should reflect carefully on this last paragraph. It's a genuine accusation, and a very serious one. The author doesn't tell us the source of this carelessness (which is probably also the source of other defects in Makhno's character). Patience! We'll get there soon enough.

That Arshinov dared to admit such facts, despite all the snags, proves to us, at least indirectly, that he also recognized, deep down, the importance of the defects both of the movement and of its guide, and, consequently, the need to study these defects. Because there's a clear contradiction between what he just said and his first formula, namely that the defects were so insignificant that they were scarcely worth mentioning.

Unfortunately, seized with fear at his own avowals, Arshinov hastens to soften their harshness, to mitigate their impact:

But Makhno grew and developed together with the growth and development of the Russian Revolution. Every year he became more focused. In 1921 he was much more profound than he had been in 1918-1919.

In studying Makhno's personality, one should not forget the unfavourable conditions in which Makhno had lived from his infancy: the almost complete lack of education among those who surrounded him and the complete absence of experienced and enlightened help in his social and revolutionary struggle. In spite of this, Makhno has brought about immortal achievements in the Russian revolution, and history will

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10 P. Arshinov, *op. cit.*, pp. 226-227.

rightfully list him among the most remarkable individuals of this revolution.<sup>[11]</sup>

Naturally, this is entirely fair. In examining the personality of Makhno, one must never lose sight of the conditions of his birth, his childhood, and his adolescence. This will contribute substantially to the understanding of his personality.

#### IV. My Own Work

The truth regarding the sinister aspects of this personality have revealed themselves with agonizing slowness, as if from a slow-drip device. Every so often, the account of a sincere Makhnovist; the discreet testimony of an inhabitant of the region; the confession of one of Makhno's companions. . . .

When, much later (in 1938), I began my work on the Russian Revolution, I already knew quite a few facts.

When I reached the end of this labour (end of 1941), I knew a lot more about it. . . .<sup>[12]</sup>

Naturally I accorded in my work a prominent place to the "shady" side of the movement, and, especially, to the personality of its guide. But, first, I couldn't say everything there since the topic was incidental to the main thrust of the book. And, finally, at that time, I was obliged to be reticent about "revelations" in order not to injure certain persons.

Now I can, at last, speak freely, quite objectively and impartially, without fear of consequences.

Alert to the reader! I have now devoted several pages to the big "rub" of the affair. And I almost forgot that there exists a second, of lesser importance, that must be taken into account.

I'm afraid of tiring the reader with this first part and ask for a few more minutes of heroic patience.

11 P. Arshinov, *op. cit.*, pp. 227-228.

12 Voline's *magnus opus*, **La Révolution inconnue**, was composed in French and published in 1947, two years after his death, in three volumes. The present essay, undated, was probably completed in 1945 and intended to be part of a larger work.

## V. The Second Rub

The variety of people who might hold this work in their hands is daunting.

They include, above all, those who happened upon this book accidentally, intrigued by the title or impelled by another reason—perhaps hoping to have found a good detective or adventure novel—and don't know anything about the topic. (The latter will probably be in the majority.)

I assume, nevertheless, that they know that in 1917 there was a great uprising in Russia; that it overthrew the tsarist regime which had ruled for three centuries; and that, rapidly blazing through all the intermediate stages, it ended up installing a regime of authoritarian communism.

The two characteristics typical of this regime are: on the one hand, the abolition of private property in the means of production and life in general (land, factories, machines, houses, buildings, etc.) as well as the means of transportation (railroads, shipping, postal service, aviation, etc.), plus the suppression of private commerce; on the other hand, the replacement of private property and thousands of entrepreneurs, bosses, and trades people not with the principle of non-ownership (the principle of “utilization,” of “management,” of all the so-called “means” by the corresponding organs of workers, without anyone being a proprietor), but with a new owner, sole and exclusive—the State, personified by the “communist” government, administering its immense property with the aid of millions of bureaucrats.

Now here and there, over and over again, working people were unwilling to accept this new system of ownership: they wished to take upon themselves the organization of production, distribution, etc., completely independent of and apart from any question of property, the State, and government.

The Bolshevik government suppressed this tendency of the people with violence and repressed the popular movements which sought to bring it into effect. But, in certain regions, the people fiercely resisted this new government-as-owner. And,

sometimes, victory remained in the balance for an appreciable length of time.

The region where this resistance of the masses to a new form of subordination was most widespread, most energetic, and most class-conscious, was Ukraine. Here the toiling masses even created an army of partisans to defend the liberty of their new social activity against any attempt to impose new masters. The Bolshevik authorities, both civil and military, had to apply exceptional efforts in order to put an end to this movement.

The young military guide and animator of the movement was, deservedly, Makhno. It is he who is the subject of this work. And I assure the casual reader that, while relating authentic facts, this book is more riveting than any adventure novel.

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Some words to readers who have heard of Makhno and the movement and struggles of the masses of Ukraine.

A few readers may even have read *The History of the Makhnovist Movement* by Peter Arshinov. Almost all of these readers will be either comrades, sympathizers, or at least people who have taken a serious interest in the Russian Revolution and have gone to some trouble to learn about it.

A surprise awaits them, however. They will realize, from the start, that this is something new, something that they had not suspected: the shadows and weaknesses of both the movement and, especially, its guide.

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Finally, two words to comrade-readers who are already familiar with the facts; who not only have read Arshinov's book, but heard vague rumours of certain defects, more or less serious, of the movement and also of the personality of Makhno. They will also be surprised by this or that fact or finding.

I would have preferred that they read this work after the appearance of my fundamental work on the Russian Revolution (three volumes). Because the revelations here basically supple-

ment those that I have already addressed in the book. But I can't change the order of things. Nor can I modify the basic make-up of my book. Moreover, the subject of the book is not the analysis of the positive and negative qualities of Makhno's personality, but the rather the movement of the masses. I would thus be moving outside the framework of the subject if I concerned myself with this special problem.

Phew! Our first part is finished.

## PART TWO

### THE SOURCES

#### I. Enumeration

What are the sources that can provide us with documentary evidence of the true personality of Makhno?

They are rather numerous, but not of equal value.

(1) The memoirs of Makhno himself. In total there are three volumes. The first, published a long time ago in Paris, in both Russian and French,<sup>[13]</sup> deals with all the initial activities of Makhno in his native village (Gulyai-Polye) and its environs, immediately after the February Revolution.

This work is really bad. Poorly written, badly translated, dense, ponderous, and monotonous. And it gives scarcely any hints about the personality of the author. The only thing that comes through clearly is that Makhno, as soon as he arrived in the region, launched a whirlwind of social activity, nominally revolutionary and libertarian.

The other two volumes, which appeared consecutively in 1936 and 1937, are much more interesting and easy to read. But they exist only in Russian and there is little hope that French translations will appear in the near future.<sup>[14]</sup> Makhno tells about events in Ukraine and informs us of his own activities up to 1919. Several traits of Makhno's revolutionary temperament emerge clearly. They are always the same: a frenzy of social activity, the main thrust of which more and more becomes the assembling of immense popular forces (especially peasants), and eliminating once and for all the capitalist, statist, authoritarian regime. All this furnishes us nothing new concerning the personality of Makhno, with the exception of some interesting indications of

<sup>13</sup> Also available now in English: *The Russian Revolution in Ukraine*, (Edmonton, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> These volumes have now been published in French: *Mémoires et écrits 1917/1932*, (Paris, 2009); and in English: *Under the Blows of the Counterrevolution*, (Edmonton, 2009) and *The Ukrainian Revolution*, (Edmonton, 2011).

the first manifestations of his military and organizing genius. However, in these last two volumes, certain character traits emerge rather clearly: blind confidence in the peasantry; mistrust of all the other classes of society; and a certain contempt for “intellectuals,” even Anarchist ones.

(2) Naturally, the work by Peter Arshinov, abundantly cited here. An excellent book which furnishes quite a few hints regarding Makhno’s personality. Unfortunately, this book is practically unobtainable.<sup>[15]</sup>

(3) Reliable witnesses, accurate accounts, admissions, etc. Especially important would be the impartial testimony of Makhno’s companion (his widow) because, naturally, for his wife there would not be any secrets “*dans la maison*.”

(4) Principal source: my sojourn with Makhno and my direct contacts with him.

I call this a “principal” source. Obviously, direct, daily contact with a person offers numerous ways of getting to know them well. But, the extent and the depth of this knowledge depends on the type of contact that you have with them. You can have business dealings with someone for years. But if that person’s personal life remains outside the sphere of contact, you won’t learn anything about their real personality.

During the two stints I spent in the heart of the movement—six months in total—I was in close contact with Makhno.<sup>[16]</sup> I lived with him, or in his home, and experienced all manner of occurrences: funny, quaint, enchanting, insightful, inspiring, odd, and deeply moving. I talked with him, discussed with him. . . . Often, I shared the evening meal with him and with others. . . . Conditions for getting to know Makhno’s personality were thus favourable. However, I hasten to state that this knowledge always stopped at a certain boundary that I never crossed. Almost all my contacts with Makhno were restricted to “business” dealings. His personal, inner life remained absolutely out of bounds. I knew

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15 See footnote #4, p. 173.

16 These periods are August–December, 1919 and November, 1920.



absolutely nothing about it. And yet such knowledge would have allowed me to penetrate to the very sources of his personality. And note that Makhno never made the least effort to establish a closer friendship with me, something that I was well aware of at the time and that I explained to myself as due, quite simply, to a lack of time to spend on building a close relationship.

It would thus be correct to say that the most reliable source for understanding Makhno's personality would be his partner, who was certainly well informed about the activities and personal life of her husband.

And indeed, Makhno's partner could have become the primary source. Still better: under certain conditions she could have exposed his personality to the full light of day. But circumstances prevented that from happening.

These circumstances are so very typical and significant that the reader will definitely not regret making their acquaintance.

But in order to arrive at a good understanding of these circumstances, I'm obliged to make a digression and make a preliminary excursion into a very curious matter: Makhno's engagement.

## II. Makhno's Engagement

Joseph Kessel, this utterly despicable prostitute of the French bourgeois press, once published a sort of "biographical novel" with the title *Makhno and His Jewess*.<sup>[17]</sup> He tells a preposterous story about an alleged marriage—in the manner of oriental potentates—of Makhno with a Jewish girl, on a whim. . . . I don't know whence Kessel derived the elements of his abominable novel. Did he find them exclusively in his imagination, or did he embellish a story supplied by someone else? . . . The novel is abominable not only because it contains not a single word of truth, but especially because it leaves the reader with the impression that this episode is based on real facts. But the reality is quite different. What I call the "engagement" of Makhno is an episode sufficiently dramatic and picturesque that there was absolutely

17 Joseph Kessel, *Makhno et sa juive*, (Paris, 1926)..

no need to devise fictional versions. . . . The real story was told to me by the companion of Makhno herself, and I deeply regret that I no longer recall certain details that would make the affair even more piquant.

When, for the first time, Makhno had recovered Gulyai-Polye from the Denikinists, he made a personal inspection of certain establishments of the village. Among others, he visited the municipal school. While wandering through corridors and empty classrooms, he came upon a closed door that he kicked open . . . and found himself abruptly in the little room of a young woman, a room that was very clean, exquisite, with a bed covered with white linen, a few other items of furniture, and shelves on the walls filled with books. . . . The young woman was there also, facing the door, her arms crossed on her chest in a pose of tense expectation. (And let us add that the young woman was of above average height, pretty, with brown hair and large black eyes—a Ukrainian beauty.)

Somewhat disconcerted, Makhno stopped dead in his tracks and stared at the young woman. (Let us recall that Makhno was quite short, rather plain looking, with cold, grey eyes. But there was something imposing about him. And at that time, he wore his hair long, very dense, falling on his shoulders. . . . He was in military garb and armed.)

“Who are you?” he asked, almost rudely.

“I am the principal of this school,” was the calm response.

“Ah!” murmured Makhno between his teeth, with a nasty, crooked smile (a smile peculiar to him in certain instances, and which promised nothing good). “Ah! You’re the principal. . . . You stuff the brains of children with bourgeois, reactionary ideas. . . .”

“Not necessarily. . . .” Again he heard the calm, sweet-sounding voice. “That’s not my professional duty. . . .”

“Good, we’ll sort that out later,” he interrupted, in an almost threatening manner.

He turned toward the wall and his eyes fell upon a shelf full of

books. He took up one, flipped through the pages, put it back, then pulled out an other, at the same moment knocking down a book that slipped to the middle of the floor.

"Pick up the book," he ordered roughly.

"You dropped it on the floor, pick it up, yourself," she replied.

Furious, he drew his revolver, coldly aimed it at the young woman, and said:

"If you don't pick up the book right now, I will shoot. I'll count to three. . . ."

"I'm not afraid of you. If you are evil enough to shoot me, go ahead. . . . I'm waiting. . . ."

Naturally, Makhno didn't shoot. Without saying another word, he replaced his revolver, turned, and left in a hurry, slamming the door behind him.

And this was love at first sight.

Why did he act this way? Was he testing the character of the young "intellectual"? Or did he simply intend to amuse himself with her fear? . . . It doesn't matter! The episode is worth noting, that's all.

I would assume—I was never so indiscreet as to question his partner on this subject—that, little by little, Makhno's superior qualities would have won over the heart of the young woman. The engagement by revolver ended in an *entente cordiale*.<sup>[18]</sup>

### III. The Mismatch

Certain interesting consequences of this union are worthy of our attention.

Makhno's friends and collaborators, his commanders of regiments and others, were all good, solid peasants. They would never allow even the slightest presence of any "intellectual" element at the heart of their movement. Certainly, all these worthy

<sup>18</sup> Galina's own account of this "rough wooing" is found in Appendix B. A notable difference: it was not a book Makhno dropped, but a gun.

people had no objection to Makhno some day choosing as his companion a nice peasant woman, someone who was both a good warrior and a good housewife; in any case, a true “woman of the people.” . . .

And one fine day they learn, with bewilderment, with pain and anger, that their mentor is in a relationship with a school teacher, an “intellectual,” a woman from a different background. . . .

For them, this was, quite frankly, a terrible “mismatch.” . . . One can easily imagine the shock that they experienced. . . . Of course, they didn’t dare say anything. Outwardly, they accepted the situation. But, deep inside, they immediately judged this act to be a mistake—indeed a failure—on the part of Makhno. . . . And regarding his “woman,” there was an attitude of suspicion, hostility, and even hatred towards this “stranger,” “intruder,” “damsel,” who had planted herself at the heart of their movement.

That their mentor was enjoying himself by sleeping with a “chick” of this type—well, fine! That would still be acceptable. . . . But making her his companion for life, his wife, his confidante—no! . . . Not on your life. . . .

Thus from the very first minute, acute mistrust and suspicion, along with animosity, muted but persistent, and more and more hateful, surrounded Makhno’s companion from all sides. . . . Her situation was quite fragile; difficult, distressing, sometimes dangerous. . . . Much tact was required, a cool head, and discretion in order to deal with this very special situation.

#### IV. Where the Plot Thickens Again . . .

**I**t’s a very curious thing that this prejudice against “intellectuals” is more entrenched, more deep-rooted than, for example, national, religious, or other prejudices.

Makhno’s wife was a pure Ukrainian: her first name—Galina, and her family name—Kuzmenko, indicate that sufficiently well. But for these men—commanders of regiments, personal friends of Makhno, etc.—this was of no importance: she was an “intellectual,” and thus a “stranger.” . . .

This was, among other things, a very special type of jealousy. The commanders wanted to enjoy the total confidence of Makhno; not a confidence shared with anyone else. But Makhno was passionately in love with his wife, and she, naturally, was his closest confidante.

A specific factor complicated things even more. Galina didn't feel the same strong feelings for Makhno that he felt for her. In the first place, she had a rather chilly personality; in addition, during the course of their marriage she experienced some bitter disappointments, due to certain "delinquencies" in the behaviour of her husband and to certain serious defects of his character. Some of these delinquencies and defects inflicted deep moral wounds upon Galina which never healed.

The commanders knew or "sensed" the difference in feelings of one for the other. And they considered Galina unworthy of being the primary confidante of Makhno. They believed Makhno's feelings for the "bitch" were a defect. According to them, he was blinded by his passions for her and didn't notice that she wasn't a true Makhnovist, and therefore not a suitable companion for him. And they endeavoured, discreetly but persistently, to "open his eyes," to sow doubt, to put a seed of suspicion in his mind.

And partially they succeeded. Morbidly distrustful and suspicious already by nature, Makhno experienced genuine "crises of confidence," even *vis-à-vis* Galina. They must have known, moreover, that the feelings of Makhno's companion were far from being at the same level as his. However, these "crises" were transitory and of brief duration. The love and trust quickly returned. And the see-saw struggle between the clique of commanders and Galina continued.

Makhno ended up oscillating continually between confidence and mistrust of both Galina and the commanders. In certain instances, where it was a matter of secrets important for the movement, his behaviour approached the heights of absurdity: almost simultaneously, he told his commanders that he "did not disclose that to Galina," while in fact he shared this information with her, asserting that he "had not imparted it to his commanders." And

sometimes he added that they “had become too materialistic and egoistic.” (I learned this from Galina herself.)

These differences, psychological in nature, were soon accompanied by elements of a purely material sort.

Among the guides of the movement, there was no one who could be sure of a final and decisive victory of the movement. Now in case the final result was defeat, all the “top dogs” put aside assets, acquired in the course of struggles with the bourgeoisie and the *kulaks*. For example, the commanders were sure that Makhno himself had little by little accumulated a “treasure” in cash, jewels, etc., with the intention of burying some of it, if necessary, both for the needs of the underground movement as well as for necessities for individuals. And to whom would he confide the important secret of the location of this treasure? To his faithful comrades in arms, or to the “bitch”? Makhno himself said nothing. The commanders more and more feared the latter eventuality, thanks to her access to his confidences. And this fear impelled them all the more to supreme efforts towards progressively separating Galina and Makhno.

Naturally, Galina, very intelligent, observant, and constantly vigilant because placed between several fires, was perfectly aware of all these intrigues and machinations. And she responded to them with the same sentiment of mistrust and hatred. (And also with the same tactic: scattered attacks against the commanders.) The struggle—muted and cunning—continued. With extraordinary competence, Galina manoeuvred between the commanders and Makhno, between all the dangers and threats, between all the difficulties and complications.

### Fifteen Years Later

Fifteen years went by. Makhno, who had found permanent refuge in Paris, died there after a long and painful illness, in July, 1935. [*sic*]

Immediately after his death, a “Nestor Makhno Committee” was formed in Paris. It set itself principally the task of examining and

making use of, in the general interest, everything that possibly remained of the "spiritual legacy" of the deceased: notes, documents, various papers, finished manuscripts, etc. It was known, however, that this "legacy" was scarcely voluminous. The lifestyle of Makhno during the last years of his long agony did not permit him to do much mental work.

All that remained was contained in a single suitcase, kept by Galina in the poor hotel room occupied by the little family. But it was necessary, all the same, to carefully examine the contents of this suitcase and use whatever would serve the cause.

Everything appeared to be going splendidly. But then, "someone spoiled the party."

From the very first meeting, serious differences emerged at the heart of the Committee. Two opposing camps formed, full of distrust and mutual hatred. One of them, naturally, was made up of certain well-known Makhnovists, former commanders of Makhno's army, who had escaped with him and taken refuge abroad; the other formed around Makhno's widow, Galina Kuzmenko.

As soon as the first meeting started, one Makhnovist got up and attacked Galina Kuzmenko in a vicious, crude manner, saying that she had always been for Makhno an "evil spirit," that Makhno had, over time, less and less confidence in her, etc. In conclusion, he protested vehemently against the presence of Galina on the Committee, and demanded that she remove herself from it. This man was warmly approved by one faction of the members of the Committee.

In a dignified manner, coolly and tactfully, Galina replied that it would be wrong to countenance such crude and disgraceful attacks; that in spite of everything, she was Makhno's companion until the end of his life; that she had taken an active part in the movement; that no one had anything concrete to blame her for; that no one had the right to interfere in her private life; that, despite any disagreements, Makhno had complete confidence in her, which he confirmed before his death by entrusting her with

the suitcase containing his papers and manuscripts; and that there were, among other items, two finished manuscripts ready to be published, after being edited by an intellectual comrade.

It goes without saying that several comrades took the floor to express their indignation against such crude, personal attacks. They upheld Galina's point of view, and they reduced, at least to some extent, the fierceness of the attack of the "opposition."

Next we moved on to a discussion of more concrete matters.

After long and exhausting debates, we reached a practical solution, agreed to almost unanimously: we appointed a commission of six members, of whom four were "normal" and two from the "opposition" (Galina and myself were members) to carefully examine the contents of the suitcase; to publish, if appropriate, the two manuscripts; and to see if we could make use of the other notes, papers, and documents, etc. The commission was to keep the Committee informed about the course of its work.

The commission met at my home. It examined the content of the suitcase and found the two manuscripts which—alas!—continued the account of the movement only up to January, 1919. We discovered nothing further that would have allowed us to pursue the task ourselves: no interesting documents, no coherent notes. I edited the two manuscripts and they were published subsequently in two volumes (in Russian).

However, the violent disputes between the two "oppositionist" members of the Committee and Galina continued unabated within our commission. They strived, more and more viciously, to exclude her from the commission, accusing her of all sorts of crimes and betrayals *vis-à-vis* Makhno and the movement. As Galina's defender, I soon became, in my turn, the object of violent and absurd attacks by the "opposition." They began by accusing me of all sorts of bad intentions *vis-à-vis* the memory of Makhno and the good name of the movement. In the final analysis, was I not also an "intellectual"? . . .

Needless to say, Galina and myself paid no attention to these despicable actions. We had a solemn duty to continue the work.



Among other things, we decided, the two of us, to undertake a sequel to the account. She was well acquainted with the facts; while I would be able to give the work a certain ideological and stylistic refinement.

I envisaged the possibility of soon being able to shed light on all the “dark patches.”

But in the meantime, incidents between the “oppositionist” members of the commission and Galina reached an intolerable level. This was complete sabotage. All work became impossible.

Among other things, it was common knowledge that Galina was aware of certain “dark patches” of the movement as well as Makhno’s personal failings. And there was an effort to get rid of her once and for all from the ranks of the Makhnovists in order to put a stop to any possibilities of revelations. Indeed, what could be the value of belated revelations from a woman expelled from the movement by her own comrades?

“The missus is taking her revenge,” people would say, and no one would think any more about it.

Thus they tried to “excommunicate” the wife in order to discredit in advance any revelations, right or wrong, that might come from her.

Tired of all these accusations and especially of the impossibility of continuing the work, Galina made a “heroic” decision.

“I’ve had enough of all this,” she declared. “I’m ready right now to tell the entire truth about the dark sides of both the movement and Nestor himself, with supporting evidence and all the details—without omitting anything. Then you will understand my situation, my rather chilly and reserved demeanour, and many other things.”

I had hopes that day of soon being able to fill in all the dark patches.

However, it was necessary to accompany these important declarations and revelations with certain formal guarantees in order that they would acquire a historical value.

We approached Sébastien Faure<sup>[19]</sup> and asked him to be a “formal” witness and custodian—because naturally he couldn’t be either a judge or even an arbitrator—of the important declarations of Makhno’s companion, and to permit three members of the commission to meet from time to time at his home. The depositions (I also wished to make some) would be stenographed, duly signed by all those present, and locked away in his home as an important document capable in the future of establishing historical truth.



*Sébastien Faure*

Sébastien Faure agreed. The first meeting took place in his presence. Three members of the commission were present: Galina, myself, and one of the oppositionists.

I went first, making my declarations which were brief and without much importance. I especially wanted to encourage Galina, for whom the task, as I well knew, was a veritable moral ordeal.

After me, Galina began her declaration. But she had scarcely begun, when the “oppositionist” comrade, acting as a saboteur, interrupted her with nasty and derisive responses. She tried to continue. But the interruptions kept falling thick and fast. Finally she remained silent. She refused to continue under these conditions. We decided to resume our task at the next meeting and in the meantime try to reason with the interrupter.

But on the way home, Galina said to me:

“I will never be able to make my full declaration in the presence of this individual. I will give it up for good.”

The next meeting didn’t look promising. At the same time, my hope of fully opening to investigation Makhno’s personality van-

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19 The French anarchist Sébastien Faure (1858–1942) employed Voline to write articles for his **Anarchist Encyclopedia**.

ished. The only possibility remaining to me was to ask Galina to continue her revelations to me, personally.

But a happening upset everything. The first meeting at Sébastien Faure's home took place in mid-July, 1936. The next meeting was set for a week later. On July 19, the explosion of events in Spain immediately absorbed the entire activity of all the comrades, so that no one gave any thought to continuing the meetings.

The whole project came to a halt. It was never resumed.



*Galina Kuzmenko and her daughter Elena, early 1940s.*

## V. Conclusion

And that's where things remained. Events accelerated. After those of Spain, came the war.

We were more and more separated from Galina. I only found out in 1942 that she had gone to Germany with her daughter. I don't know what happened subsequently, If she didn't perish in the turmoil, she will surely renew relations with me. If she doesn't give any sign of life, it will be because she is no longer living. . . . Then the "principal source" will be gone for good.<sup>[20]</sup>

<sup>20</sup> During World War II, Elena was recruited for factory work in Berlin. Some time later she was joined by her mother. They were arrested by Soviet police in 1945 and sentenced to terms of imprisonment in the Gulag.

## Appendix A

*Excerpt from the minutes of Joint Meeting #57 of the Military-Revolutionary Council and the command staff of the Insurgent Army of Makhnovists:*

December 29, 1919

...

2) Concerning the trip by Comrade Troyan<sup>[1]</sup> to Krivy Rog together with Comrade Voline and the appointment of a temporary secretary to replace Comrade Troyan.

Report of Comrade Troyan. He explained the purpose for which he was travelling to Krivy Rog *raion*—to carry out cultural-educational work together with Comrade Voline and Comrade Odi-nok from the Cultural-Educational Unit. The Council decided to send Comrades Voline and Troyan for the above-mentioned purpose on condition that they are to return immediately when contacted by telegraph or telephone. . . .<sup>[2]</sup>

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1 Gavril Troyan (?—February 3, 1921) was a *batrak* from Gulyai-Polye and an anarcho-communist from 1917. He served as one of Makhno's adjutants and became a regimental commander in January, 1921.

2 V. Danilov & T. Shanin, eds., **Nestor Makhno. A Peasant Movement in Ukraine. 1918–1921: Documents and Materials**, (Moscow, 2006), pp. 285–286.

## Appendix B

*In the spring of 1972 an routine official letter arrived in Gulyai-Polye asking for confirmation that Galina Kuzmenko had been a teacher in the town. The letter created a sensation and was passed from hand to hand like a hot potato for it confirmed that Nestor Makhno's wife, long thought to be deceased, was still among the living, albeit in distant Kazakhstan. A lively correspondence was soon established between Galina and Nestor's relatives in Gulyai-Polye. The following account of Makhno's whirlwind courtship was written in 1973 as part of this correspondence and is preserved in the Gulyai-Polye Local History Museum.<sup>[1]</sup>*

It was the beginning of the school year. The first or second day of classes. In the morning, on my way to school (I always walked across the square), a meeting was already going on and the square was packed with people. Passing through the crowd, I heard that Makhno himself would be speaking.

As I was beginning some lesson—I had only just finished roll call—the door opened and on the threshold stood a man of diminutive stature wearing a brand new military uniform. I noticed that his uniform was freshly sewn, expertly tailored, and that his long hair, which fell down to his shoulders, was well combed. He glanced around the class, but scarcely looked at me. Going to the first vacant desk to the right side of the door, he sat down. Quietly. Both for me and for the kids his presence was unsettling. Understandably, the kids only had eyes for him. Me, too. Then, after a minute, I regained my composure and continued the lesson. Our guest sat quietly for two or three minutes. I already had a sense that he was impatient. Then he got up and turned to me: “Comrade teacher, take a break and let’s leave the class.”

I saw that the children were apprehensive. “Sit quietly,” I told them, “I shall return right away.”

<sup>1</sup> Galina's text is translated from the Ukrainian as published in Viktor Yalansky and Larisa Verovka, **Nestor and Galina: Behind the Photos** (Kyiv – Huliaipole, 1999), pp. 347-349.

Makhno exited first, and I followed him. We walked along the corridor. Suddenly he dropped a pistol on the floor. I stopped. He glanced at me and uttered a command:

“Pick it up.”

I answered:

“It’s yours, you pick it up.”

“Do you know who I am?” he said, and halted.

“Tell me!”

“I’m Nestor Makhno. And from this moment you will be my wife. We shall go see the principal,” he said, picking up the pistol.

We went to the office of the principal Oleksiy Korpusenko. He greeted Makhno in a friendly manner—they knew each other well.

“What’s the name of this young woman?” Makhno inquired of Korpusenko.

“Arafiya Andriyivna Kuzmenko,” he replied.

“She’s going to be my wife,” Makhno announced.

“That’s your business,” the principal retorted

After negotiating with the principal, it was agreed that I would work until the end of the school year and not a day more.

When we left the office, Makhno said: “Now you will call yourself Galina.”

He asked where I was living. I said that as a non-resident I was renting an apartment from Matviy Gelbukh, near the church.

“If you’re at home in the evening, I will come around seven or eight,” he said, “so we can figure out how to arrange things.”

How expectantly I waited. How the time dragged. What inner turmoil I experienced! Is it really possible to put it in words? Everyone knows him . . . Everyone talks about him. He is Makhno himself . . . What’s going to happen?

He came at exactly eight o’clock.

We sat at dusk on a bench under an apple tree in Gelbukh's small garden.

First off he said he didn't have a hut of his own—that the Austrians had burned it down and his mother was living with his brothers and that we should go see them.

"But it's no problem that I don't have a hut. You will be my wife. We will be together even without a hut . . . And you're not only good-looking, you're brave and self-confident. When I dropped the pistol, you weren't afraid to refuse to pick it up. Do you realize how impressed I was? I shall call you Galina. Galina . . . Galya . . ."

He questioned me about my relatives, and I told him about them. It was already getting dark. A light was on in the house.

"Well, let's go in," he said.

I answered that I would ask the landlord for permission. I went to his room:

"Matviy Isakovich, Makhno himself is visiting me. He's taking me for his wife. Is it possible that he could spend the night here?"

"And why not?" he said, "be my guest."

He ordered his servant to prepare a meal.

Ganya [Agapiya] brought the food to my room. I set two bowls and a bottle of vodka—a treat from the landlord.

"And where's your bodyguard or adjutant?" I asked Nestor.

"Don't be afraid, either for me or for yourself. A defense perimeter has been set up in Gulyai-Polye and its surroundings. Insurgents have also dispersed to their own homes—to their parents or wives.

When we first started talking, I, in truth, was quite intimidated by him, and acted like a schoolgirl answering to a strict teacher. But little by little, I began to feel more at ease, I became my normal self, and, looking him in the eye across the table, I could already ask him about something that had been bothering me:

"Why did come to the school today?"

"We needed someone with clerical skills for our staff. And when I saw you—why you're such a beauty! Then involuntarily—well, you heard me—I timidly blurted out 'Will you be my wife?'"

Now I burst out laughing.

"You weren't the least bit timid! You issued an order: 'You will be my wife!'"

Already then I realized that when he made a pronouncement that seemed to him unsure, others heard it as an order.

"So what am I going to be—a staff clerk or a wife?"

Now Nestor laughed:

"Don't worry about that. Today at the staff meeting my adjutant Vanya Lepetchenko said we already have a clerk—Vasya Kharlamov, from right here in Gulyai-Polye. His handwriting is quite harmonious. No, you will be my wife. That's worth drinking to."

He drank a glass, but when I took a sip, I started coughing, because I still wasn't used to drinking vodka. Neither at home, nor at Gelbukh's, where he served some kind of sweet drink similar to syrup at his Christmas table. Then Nestor removed a small revolver from his pocket and placed it in front of me on the table: "This is for you."

I was shocked: "What on earth for?"

"From this moment on you will always be with me. The wife of Nestor Makhno cannot be without a weapon. You will be able to defend yourself. Either I or Vanya Lepetchenko will teach you how to shoot.

We lay down to sleep long after midnight. He was in my room, while I was in the sitting-room on the sofa. He didn't try to hug or kiss me.

In the morning after breakfast, we went together to the school. Here Nestor advised Korpusenko that I would not be teaching any more and that he was taking me away.

—Galina Kuzmenko



## Glossary

- balka** ravine
- batko** a Ukrainian word meaning “military commander,” it also is an affectionate term for “father,” such as “dad.” In a figure like Makhno, these two distinct meanings tended to be merged.
- batrak** poor peasant who was forced to hire out as a day labourer. Makhno’s father was a *batrak*.
- bednyak** poor peasant
- Bolshevik** member of the radical wing of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, which became a separate party formally in 1912. In March 1918 the party changed its name to the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks).
- brichka** a long, spacious carriage with four wheels, with a folding top over the rear section. Intended for long trips and provided with various kinds of conveniences (beds, tables), it was the 19<sup>th</sup> century equivalent of a motorhome.
- Cheka** All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-revolution, Profiteering and Corruption—the original secret police organization set up by the Bolsheviks shortly after taking power. Its functionaries were known as *Chekists*.
- Cossack** member of a Russian or Ukrainian military caste which lived on the borderlands of the Russian empire and enjoyed special privileges in exchange for military services.
- desyatin** unit of land measurement in Tsarist Russia equivalent to 2.7 acres.
- feldsher** paramedic
- feldwebel** sergeant
- GGAK** Gulyai-Polye Group of Anarcho-Communists, organized in 1917, and reorganized in early 1919 as the Gulyai-Polye Union of Anarchists (GSA) which covered a much larger geographical region (it included the Anarchist strong points of Bolshe-Mikhailovka and Pokrovskoye). As a member, Nestor Makhno was obligated to adhere to the internal rules of these organizations.
- gubernia** administrative unit which can roughly be translated as “province.” Yekaterinoslav was the administrative centre of a *gubernia* which included several *uyezds* (one of which was Aleksandrovsk *uyezd*).
- gubnarkom** provincial people’s commissar
- gubpartcom/gubparkom** provincial party committee
- gubrevkom** provincial revolutionary committee
- haidamak** elite soldier of the Ukrainian nationalist armed forces. An archaic term which harks back to Ukrainian *Cossack* warriors of the 18th century.

- Hetman** traditional title for leader of Ukrainian *Cossacks*. The title had been dormant for 150 years before being revived by the backward-looking Skoropadsky regime in 1918. The corresponding regime was called the *Hetmanate*. The original *Hetmanate* had been an independent *Cossack* polity which became a client state of Russia before being completely absorbed by the Russian empire. The 1918 *Hetmanate* was a client state of Germany.
- ispolkom** executive committee
- kadet** member of the Constitutional Democratic Party, the political arm of the White movement; used by the Makhnovist to refer to any White soldier.
- khutor** a farm or rural estate, an independent economic unit in the sense that it was not subject to the traditional communal structure of the Ukrainian village. Makhno uses the term to refer to farms set up under the Stolypin reforms (1906-1916). The *khutor* included living quarters for farm workers as well as the owner's house and thus was a small village in itself.
- komandarm** commander of the army
- komnezam** committee of poor peasants, an institution of War Communism (1918–1921) used by the Communists to assist with *prodrazverstka*. Members of these committees were known as *komnezamozhniks*.
- kontrrazvedka** literally “counter-intelligence.” In the *Makhnovshchina* it involved a range of activities including reconnaissance, recruitment, and procurement of supplies.
- kulak** as used by Makhno, a peasant who had left the *obshchina* and set up an independent farm, generally employing some hired labour. A term with negative connotations in Soviet times, in contemporary Ukraine it has acquired a positive aspect, like “farmer” in Western society.
- Kultprosvet** the Cultural-educational section of the Insurgent Army which engaged in propaganda and educational work. It was the home of the movement's intellectuals.
- Left SR** member of the Left Socialist-Revolutionary Party, formed in October 1917 from the left wing of the SR Party.
- Makhnovshchina** the Makhnovist movement. A pejorative term in Soviet historiography, it has gradually acquired a neutral hue.
- Maximalist** a member of the Maximalist Party, an early (1904) Anarchism-oriented split from the SR Party. Like the Anarchists, the Maximalists insisted on the immediate socialization of land and the means of production; and like the Anarchists, they opposed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.
- obshchina** peasant villagecommune, as opposed to individual farmstead or *khutor*.
- pomeshchik** owner of a large landed estate.

- pood** Russian unit of weight: 16.4 kg. or 36.1 lb.
- povit** district in Ukrainian, equivalent to Russian *uyezd*.
- prodrazverstka** food requisitioning by the Soviet state during the period of War Communism (1918 — 1921). The requisitioning was carried out by *prodotryads* (food brigades)
- raion** administrative unit, a subdivision of a *uyezd*. The village of Gulyai-Polye was the administrative centre of a *raion* (also named Gulyai-Polye) which included several other (much smaller) villages and hamlets.
- Revkom** Revolutionary Committee. After the October Revolution of 1917 local soviets set up Revkoms to organize the military defense of the Revolution.
- Revtribunal** revolutionary tribunal
- Revvoensoviet** revolutionary military council
- samogon** home-made vodka—the literal meaning of the word is “self-distilled.”
- serednyak** a middle peasant, i.e. an economically independent farmer but one who did not exploit the labour of others.
- sotnia** literally “a hundred,” used to designate a *Cossack* military squadron of 100 men. The term was applied to *Cossack* communities expected to supply this number of recruits and was later extended by the Tsarist government to non-*Cossack* communities.
- SR** member of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party (PSR), the largest left wing party in Russia, which claimed to represent the interests of the peasantry. Socialist but non-Marxist, it was prone to factionalism and underwent a number of splits. National variants of the SR Party existed in Ukraine.
- starosta** the senior administrative official of a *gubernia* – a centrally appointed position under the *Hetman* government in 1918. Literally the word means “elder.”
- tachanka** a light farm wagon equipped with springs, with a mounted machine gun pointed toward the back, pulled by two to four horses.
- uyezd** administrative unit, a subdivision of a *gubernia*. Aleksandrovsk was the administrative centre of a *uyezd* which included several *raions* (one of which was Gulyai-Polye).
- verst** unit of length: 3,500 feet or 1.06 kilometres.
- volost** administrative unit which could be the equivalent of a *gubernia*, *uyezd*, or *raion* depending on location and historical tradition (*volost* units were common in *Cossack* regions).
- zemstvo** an organ of local self-government in the countryside established in the latter stages of the Russian Empire. Dominated by the rural gentry, the *zemstvos* concerned themselves with schools, health care, agricultural innovation, road construction, etc.

## **The Makhnovshchina and Its Aftermath**

The Makhnovist movement, or Makhnovshchina, was an attempt by revolutionary peasants in southeastern Ukraine to construct an anarchist society during a savage civil war. The survivors of this failed project were forced to defend their movement from critics and also analyze their own shortcomings.

The present collection provides translations of a number of rare documents, including a substantial work by Nestor Makhno responding to one of his Soviet critics and two diaries by participants of the movement. The diary of Galina Kuzmenko, Makhno's wife, is of particular interest as it was used in Soviet times to discredit the Makhnovists.



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