

## **THE FORMATION AND THE FIRST DAYS OF THE CENTRAL RADA: HISTORICAL RESEARCHES AND MEMOIRS**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In February 1917, in the midst of the First World War, there was a democratic revolution in Russia as a result of which the monarchic regime ceased to exist. The political situation in Ukraine changed radically. There was the development of the self-organization of the Ukrainians which resulted in the Ukrainian War of Independence. Political parties and self-sufficient public associations came up from the underground and initiated actions. They were confronted with the task to determining their plans for the near future and beyond.

Most politically active Ukrainians saw the collapse of autocracy as a chance to restore Ukrainian statehood. But there was no single point of view on this among them. Two positions were more or less clearly distinguished in the views on the future in the politically active segment of Ukrainian society: the autonomist and federalist one – its supporters advocated the restructuring of the unitary Russian state on the basis of a federation with autonomous Ukraine as a full member of the latter, and the independist one – the supporters of the complete Ukrainian independence. There was a fierce competition between them for leading the political process in the country which was particularly evident from the first days of the revolution when the formation of an all-Ukrainian social and political organization – the Ukrainian Central Rada (UCR) – began in early March 1917.

The Central Rada was the Ukrainian revolutionary parliament which worked from March 1917 to April 1918 and played an enormous role in the Ukrainian War of Independence. The activities of the Rada have been studied in Ukraine and abroad for a whole century and a considerable amount of scientific researches has been deposited. An anniversary International Scientific Conference on the 100th Anniversary of the Ukrainian War of Independence was held in Kyiv in 2017. The results of various revolutionary process aspect studies which had been conducted during the last three decades were summarized. Based on the results of the Conference, there was a publication of materials that *inter alia* deepen our understanding of the activities of the Central Rada<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, some

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<sup>1</sup> Революція, держава, нація: Україна на шляху самоствердження (1917–1921 рр.). Матеріали міжнародної наукової конференції, м. Київ, 1–2 червня 2017. Київ-Чернігів, 2017. 527 с.

important pages of its history have not yet been adequately covered. Among them, one of the key pages is the formation and the first weeks of the UCR functioning and participation of various political forces' representatives, in particular, of Ukrainian autonomists and federalists and Ukrainian independists, in the UCR formation.

Historical sources and scientific studies do not provide archival data on the issue, and then newspapers and the revolution participants' memoirs written later give rather a contradictory picture. The author of this article has already made attempts to understand different points of view on the problem<sup>2</sup>. But this work is still far from complete. There is an acute lack of information. The purpose of the article is to characterize the autonomists and federalists' and independists' participation in the UCR formation by using new sources. The analysis will help to determine how the political tendencies that began in the first revolution weeks influenced the further Ukrainian War of Independence development and the fate of Ukraine as a whole.

### **1. Beginning of the UCR formation**

The Revolution in Petrograd won on February 27, 1917. In Kyiv, the official circles were silent about this event for some time hoping that "all this might be just a passing episode, and the old authorities would still recover their ground", as M. Hrushevsky wrote about it<sup>3</sup>. As a result, neither on March 1 nor on March 2 (hereinafter dates are given according to the old calendar) information on the government change did not get into the Kyiv newspapers, although various rumors about events in Petrograd were already spreading in the city. It was only on March 3 when the Kyivans finally learned from the press that a revolution had taken place in the capital and monarchical power had ceased to exist. This gave a powerful momentum to the beginning of political forces' power struggle.

On March 4, there was a meeting of public organizations' and political parties' members, most of them having pro-Russian orientation, in the Kyiv City Duma who elected the Executive Committee of the United Public Organization Council. Ukrainian organizations were also represented at the meeting, including the Society of Ukrainian Progressives (TUP) members (progressists) and several socialists<sup>4</sup>.

In the minority, Ukrainian organizations were represented in other power structures of the new regime, in particular, in the Governate Executive

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<sup>2</sup> Турченко Ф.Г. Утворення Української Центральної Ради: джерела та їх інтерпретації. *Український історичний журнал*. 2007. № 2. С.63–73.

<sup>3</sup> Грушевський М. Споми́ни. Київ, 1989. № 8. С.130.

<sup>4</sup> Дорошенко Д. Історія України: 1917–1923 рр. Т. 1. Доба Центральної Ради. К.: Видавництво "Темпора", 2002. С. 51.

Committee attached to the Governate Commissioner of the Provisional Government, M. Sukovkin.

On March 4, another body was formed in Kyiv, which played an important role in the subsequent events – the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies, that had its founding meeting on March 4. This body was administered by representatives of the all-Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party (Esers) and the RSDLP – the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. There was a radical wing among the Russian Social Democrats – the Bolsheviks, who gradually increased their influence on the Kyiv and other Dumas (given the composition, they were usually called the *Soviets*) eventually turning these structures into cover for their dictatorship.

Although expectations of changes increased among Ukrainians in the conditions of war, growing economic collapse, exacerbation of social and national contradictions, everyone was surprised by the speed with which they occurred. On the one hand, the Russian autocratic regime embodying centuries-old national enslavement of Ukraine collapsed just in a few days, and, on the other hand, crystallization of new political forces was passing abruptly, new authorities and social and political structures were forming. For the most part, they focused on the new Russian center – the Provisional Government and all-Russian political parties. The influence of Ukrainians – both liberals and socialists or non-party members – on these organizations was minor. In this situation, there was a strong need for a separate social and political structure that would clearly formulate the national requirements of Ukrainians in the new conditions and lead the struggle for their implementation.

It was against this political background that the Ukrainian Central Rada (UCR) was formed.

Most contemporary authors believe that the UCR was established by the progressists – members of the liberal and democratic union of the Society of Ukrainian Progressives (TUP) that favoured national and territorial autonomy of Ukraine. In particular, the famous Ukrainian historian V. Soldatenko provides us with the following scheme of the Central Rada formation in his fundamental monograph on the Ukrainian War of Independence published in 1999: *“As early as on March 3, 1917, the Ukrainian organization representatives’ meeting took place at the initiative of the Society of Ukrainian Progressives (TUP) at the Kiev club “Rodina” (“Motherland”)... Besides the “old guard” – the TUP members – the meeting was attended by representatives of newly emerged national organizations formed mostly by student youth. It was then that the idea of creating a special organization for the Ukrainian movement coordination was born. The proposal to call it the Central Rada was also logical...*

*It is noteworthy that the TUP members' efforts of the to assume the top functions did not find the meeting participants' support. At the initiative of D. Antonovych and other participants of the meeting, it was decided to form a new body as a coalition one made up of representatives of all national organizations, although some of them were only in their infancy*<sup>5</sup>.

This extensive quotation from the V. Soldatenko's monograph is fully given there not by accident. It is a key component of the author's scheme and fully reflects his vision of the Central Rada birth process. However, it is not the historian's vision that matters for the reader but what historical sources confirm his view, and, therefore, how accurate his version of events is. And here the reader will be surprised. Instead of references to the sources, V. Soldatenko refers the reader to the historian V. Verstyuk' monograph on the Ukrainian Central Rada published in 1997<sup>6</sup>.

We addressed this monograph, but we did not find any documentary confirmation of V. Soldatenko's scheme there. V. Verstyuk formulated his vision of the problem as follows: "The sources, most of which are overwhelmingly memoirs, do not explain who was first who personally came up with the idea of creating such an organization and how its name was created"<sup>7</sup>. It seems to be the researcher's well-considered conclusion. After all a year earlier, in the Preface to the two-volume collection of documents and materials *Ukrainian Central Rada* published in 1996, V. Verstyuk had already admitted: "*We do not even know what persons put forward the idea of the organization, created the name, made the first steps to shape it and took the organizational initiative*"<sup>8</sup>. Let us add that V. Verstyuk defends the *progressist* version of the UCR formation, but in the Preface cited above he does it cautiously: "*Only in general terms is it known that the Society of Ukrainian Progressives did it*"<sup>9</sup>.

But what do these "general terms" mean? What historical sources do they come from? What memoirs or other documents mention the TUP participation in the Central Rada formation? V. Verstyuk does not mention it in his monograph, however, he makes an attempt to argue his hypothesis somehow (not in a documented way). He writes: "In general, it is known that the initiative belonged to the Society of Ukrainian Progressives which was the

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<sup>5</sup> Солдатенко В. Ф. Українська революція. Історичний нарис. К.: Либідь, 1999. С. 134.

<sup>6</sup> Верстюк В, Українська Центральна Рада. Навчальний посібник. К.: Заповіт, 1997. С. 64–65.

<sup>7</sup> Верстюк В, Українська Центральна Рада. Навчальний посібник. К.: Заповіт, 1997. С. 63.

<sup>8</sup> Верстюк В. Передмова . *Українська Центральна Рада: Документи і матеріали*. К.: Наукова думка, 1996. С. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Верстюк В. Передмова . *Українська Центральна Рада: Документи і матеріали*. К.: Наукова думка, 1996. С. 5.

only Ukrainian social and political organization that managed to continue its activities half legally during the World War and another World War-related campaign of governmental pogroms of the Ukrainian movement”<sup>10</sup>.

Even probably the author himself is not sure to call it a sufficient argument. In the conditions of the collapse of tsarism, the behavior of the TUP members – usually elderly, very cautious and balanced politicians – was more perplexing than decisive. These days, the youth activists of socialist and independist orientation were more radical and decisive. They were underground, but they began to take a decisive action immediately after the first, yet unconfirmed information on the revolution in Petrograd. But this is a topic that needs a separate discussion.

In addition, V. Verstyuk, being an experienced researcher, does not seem to stick much to his version of the so-called “general terms”. This is evidenced by the document on the Central Rada composition that he found and cited in his monograph. This document contradicts the pattern of the UCR formation mentioned above. It is about the information in the first issue of the newspaper *News from the Ukrainian Central Rada* dated March 19, 1917. The information is also provided in the collection of documents and materials by drafters headed by V. Verstyuk. We provide it with the preservation of the features of the original: “...the temporary composition of the Rada of the representatives of: the Ukrainian Scientific Society, the Ukrainian Technical and Agronomic Society, the National Ukrainian Union, cooperatives, students of all higher schools in Kyiv, the Union of Workers’ Cities of, troops, social and democratic groups, etc.)”<sup>11</sup>. Thus, the names of ten subjects of the social and political representation are given and it is stated that this is a non-exhaustive list by using “... etc Historians know nothing on some of these representatives. V. Verstyuk calls them “paper tigers”. But it is surprising that the Society of Ukrainian Progressives is not mentioned among the real organizations. The historian expresses his surprise about this, but does not explain the fact in any way”<sup>12</sup>. In our view, it deserves a serious comment by the researcher.

The supporters of the progressist version of the UCR formation often refer to the memoirs of D. Doroshenko, an active participant of the events. At one time, we conducted a textological analysis of the relevant fragment of D. Doroshenko’s memoirs and made sure that there were no sufficient

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<sup>10</sup> Верстюк В, Українська Центральна Рада. Навчальний посібник. К.: Заповіт, 1997. С. 63.

<sup>11</sup> Українська Центральна Рада: Документи і матеріали. К.: Наукова думка, 1996. С. 44–45.

<sup>12</sup> Верстюк В, Українська Центральна Рада. Навчальний посібник. К.: Заповіт, 1997. С. 67.

grounds to conclude on the TUP's priority in the UCR formation on their basis<sup>13</sup>.

Therefore, the question of the TUP's dominant influence on the UCR formation remains unanswered. No one of the modern researchers cites any documents on the subject.

Given this, we at one time questioned the validity of the UCR formation scheme provided by V. Soldatenko and initiated a discussion on the subject<sup>14</sup>. In this discussion, V. Soldatenko did not show his willingness to discuss the issues essentially and replied unequivocally: "*The formation of the Central Rada initiated by the Society of Ukrainian Progressives*" is "*a real irrefutable knowledge having rather a wide documentary base...*"<sup>15</sup>

But the discussion did not end there. After all, the author did not provide any convincing specifics to confirm his version. In particular, it is unknown what historical sources are the basis of that it is "*irrefutably*" proven that the idea, name and initiative of the formation of the Central Rada belonged precisely to the TUP members and this process began on March 3, 1917. Therefore, we continued our search. Given the Central Rada's enormous importance in the history of the Ukrainian state-building, our desire to find a convincing answer to this important question is completely natural.

This is also encouraged by the fact that there are other versions of UCR formation in the literature as well. For example, supporters of one of the versions formulated by P. Mirchuk in the USA in 1960 associate the beginning of the Ukrainian Central Rada institutionalization with the activities of Mykola Mikhnovsky and date it to March 3, 1917<sup>16</sup>.

Let us recall you who M. Mikhnovsky was. He had already been known in political circles as one of the consistent Ukrainian independence supporters. At the beginning of the 20th century he founded the first independist political party in the Dnieper Ukraine – the Ukrainian People's Party (UNP) and developed its ideological platform in the brochure *Independent Ukraine*. In 1917, M. Mikhnovsky, being a military lawyer, served in the Kyiv District Military Court and was no doubt well informed of the events in Kyiv before and in the early days after the collapse of tsarism. Mikhnovsky personally knew both the figures of the Ukrainian movement who acted legally in the social and political arena of the capital of Ukraine before the revolution and

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<sup>13</sup> Турченко Ф. Г. Микола Міхновський: Життя і Слово. К.: Генеза, 2006. С. 215–216.

<sup>14</sup> Див.: Турченко Ф. Г. Микола Міхновський. Життя і Слово. К.: Генеза, 2006. С. 210.

<sup>15</sup> Солдатенко В. Ф. Ідейний опонент М. Грушевського. (Полемічні зауваги на полях книги Ф. Турченка "Микола Міхновський: Життя і Слово"). *Український історичний журнал*. 2006. № 5. С. 106.

<sup>16</sup> Мірчук П. Микола Міхновський. Апостол української державності. – Філадельфія, 1960. С. 55.

those who had been underground and occupied the political life proscenium after February 1917. It was M. Mikhnovsky who was considered to be the initiator of the UCR formation by P. Mirchuk.

Another version of the UCR formation was formulated in exile by another foreign author and participant of the Ukrainian War of Independence R. Mlynovetsky (R. Brzeski) who claims that the Rada appearance was initiated on March 2, 1917 by a conspiratorial Ukrainian organization – the Brotherhood of Independents<sup>17</sup>. In both cases – of both P. Mirchuk and R. Mlynovetsky – it is about an initiative role of the independist political current representatives in the Central Rada formation. As for the Society of Ukrainian Progressives, according to the supporters of these versions, it entered the process of the Central Rada formation a little later seeking to take the political initiative out of the independists' hands. Mlynovetsky writes about the parallel existence of two organizations for some time with the similar name – “the Ukrainian Central Rada” (the independist one) and “the Ukrainian Rada” (the progressist one) – for some time<sup>18</sup>.

Unlike the progressist version which is perceived by V. Soldatenko as “a real irrefutable knowledge”, the “independist” versions of foreign authors are rejected by him as undocumented, contrived and groundless. He writes that at the beginning of March 1917 the TUP members went to “create the *one and only* Central Rada” which sought the autonomy of Ukraine as part of democratic federal Russia.

V. Soldatenko also points to the Ukrainian *socialists'* activity in the process. But the historian perceives them as *autonomists and federalists*, that is, as the TUP liberals' supporters in regard to the question of the future state status of Ukraine. As for *independists*, in his opinion, only “some of them did not form a separate (primary) Central Rada and participated in the formation and then the activities of a single body”<sup>19</sup>.

However, let us emphasize for the second time that of neither V. Soldatenko nor other UCR formation “progressist scheme” supporters (and they are dominant among Ukrainian historians) propose any concrete evidence that could be provided in favour of their version. By the way, P. Mirchuk and his supporters who consider the Ukrainian independist M. Mikhnovsky to be the founder of UCR do not provide direct evidence to substantiate their concept. And it is not accidentally. The source base is too narrow for such evidence.

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<sup>17</sup> Млиновецький Р. Нариси з історії українських визвольних змагань 1917–1918 рр. (Про що “історія мовчить”). Т. 1. (Б. м.), 1970. С. 98.

<sup>18</sup> Млиновецький Р. Нариси з історії українських визвольних змагань 1917–1918 рр. (Про що “історія мовчить”). Т. 1. (Б. м.), 1970. С. 99.

<sup>19</sup> Солдатенко В. Ф. Ідейний опонент М. Грушевського. (Полемічні зауваги на полях книги Ф. Турченка “Микола Міхновський: Життя і Слово”). *Український історичний журнал*. 2006. № 5. С. 107.

However, one thing is clear: two political groups of Ukrainian society with different political orientations were engaged in the UCR formation: the first one was composed by supporters of the autonomy of Ukraine as part of federally restructured Russia, and the second one by supporters of full Ukrainian independence. The actual split in the Ukrainian national movement took shape long before the revolution, at the beginning of the 20th century, remained in the first days of the revolution and continued later when M. Hrushevsky was already at the head of the Ukrainian Central Rada. This is evidenced by the specific materials available to all researchers.

In particular, this is mentioned in the memoirs of O. Lototsky who headed the Petrograd Ukrainian National Rada, an organization standing on the TUP platform, after the February Revolution. When he arrived in Kiev in the 20 days of March, he was forced to state: “...*The Ukrainian side was not yet organized and a rift was felt in it*”. There was “*a moderate group concentrated around the TUP*” and “*a young boarding house led by a newly minted three-day socialist...*” (A reference to M. Grushevsky, who declared himself a socialist and was just elected head of the UCR.– F. T.) “*A real abyss was formed in Kyiv between the two directions,*”<sup>20</sup> O. Lototsky stated.

Thus, at the beginning of March 1917, the Ukrainian movement had two separate wings, each with its own vision of the future of Ukraine.

## 2. Formation of the unified UCR

In our view, the place and role of different political forces in the UCR formation can be clarified by carefully analyzing the composition of the progressists’ opponents, that is, D. Antonovych and M. Mikhnovsky with their supporters, as well as the group that O. Lototsky conditionally called “a young boarding house”.

Neither V. Soldatenko<sup>21</sup>, nor V. Verstyuk<sup>22</sup>, nor other historians specifically explored the group’s activities in their works on the Central Rada history. They are described in a confused and often biased way in the former TUP members’ memoirs. In particular, D. Doroshenko and Y. Chikalenko who were in Kyiv in March 1917, wrote about their opponents with unhidden antipathy. The reader sees unbalanced irresponsible individuals without clear ideological orientation inclined to political demagoguery who are difficult to communicate with even on a personal level and who have failed the promising TUP political project.

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<sup>20</sup> Лотоцький О. Сторінки минулого. Ч. 3. Варшава, 1934. С. 348, 353.

<sup>21</sup> Солдатенко В. Ф. Українська революція. Історичний нарис. К.: Либідь, 1999. С. 130–138.

<sup>22</sup> Верстюк В. Українська Центральна Рада. Навчальний посібник. К.: Заповіт, 1997. С. 64–68.



For example, D. Doroshenko characterized them as “*people with a demagogic inclination*” while describing the TUP Council session “*on the second or third day*” after the February Revolution in Petrograd where the independists – Lieutenant Mikhnovsky and Captain Gan – were among the guests in his memoirs<sup>23</sup>.

The circle of people was characterized even more sharply by Y. Chikalenko: “*Being sick, I was so discouraged with the cooperation with them, with such unprincipled demagogues as Stepanenko and others... that I have ceased to attend of the Central Rada sessions since that*”<sup>24</sup>.

There is no doubt that this is not just an emotional approach but a biased one. But let us suppress the emotions. Let us pay attention to the facts of the TUP opponents’ concerted actions among whom the memoirists name two groups, I. Steshenko, D. Antonovych, O. Stepanenko on the one hand and M. Mikhnovsky and his supporters on the other one. This is evidenced by D. Doroshenko and M. Hrushevsky<sup>25</sup>.

The insufficiently informed reader is surprised by the alliance. These people were too different to unite on a common platform. In particular, D. Antonovych and I. Steshenko are known as socialists who were the Ukraine autonomist and federalist prospect supporters and were in an ideological conflict with the independists since the early 20th century. As for O. Stepanenko, he went down in history as a consistent independists, one of the Ukrainian People’s Party organizers, an M. Mikhnovsky’s associate, a participant of the 2nd All-Ukrainian Student Congress in Lviv (1913) that was held under the slogans of separation from Russia and where D. Dontsov performed his famous abstract<sup>26</sup>.

But the Ukrainian independence supporters’ participation in the Central Rada formation is not limited by these individuals. The 24-year-old independist V. Otamanovsky who is considered to be the ideological leader of the Brotherhood of Independists and a co-organizer of the publishing house “*Vernygora*” that issued mass independist leaflet and brochure editions in 1917 is also referred to them<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Дорошенко Д. Мої спомини про недавнє минуле (1914–1920). Мюнхен 1969. С. 85.

<sup>24</sup> Чикаленко Є. Уривки із споминів за 1917 рік. *Науковий збірник Української Вільної Академії Наук у США (1945–1995)*. IV. Нью-Йорк, 1999. С. 255.

<sup>25</sup> Див. Дорошенко Д. Мої спомини про недавнє минуле (1914–1920). Мюнхен: Українське видавництво, 1969. С. 85; Грушевський М. Спомини. *Київ*. 1989. № 8. С. 129.

<sup>26</sup> Верстюк В., Осташко Т. Діячі Української Центральної Ради: Біобібліографічний довідник. К., 1998. С. 166.

<sup>27</sup> Верстюк В., Осташко Т. Діячі Української Центральної Ради: Біобібліографічний довідник. К., 1998. С. 142; Млиновецький Р. Нарис історії українських визвольних змагань. 1917–1918 рр. (Про що “історія мовчить”). Т. 1. (Б. м.), 1970. С. 114–115.

In this context, let us return to the question. Why and how did Ukrainian independists, together with socialists, find themselves in such an important political project as the Ukrainian Central Rada formation?

There is an established view that has turned into a kind of myth that in March 1917, as in previous decades, independists had no significant influence, and the Ukrainian social and political environment was supremely dominated by the supporters of the national and territorial autonomy of Ukraine as part of Russia. It is believed that a similar situation was during the war years. It is on the basis of this myth that the concept of the TUP's leading role of in the UCR formation was built. But in fact, it is not so.

The facts show that with the beginning of the World War separatist and independist sentiment began to spread rapidly in the Ukrainian society. Volodymyr Vynnychenko admitted that during the war Ukrainians split into the supporters of “the Russian orientation”, “the orientation towards Germans” (“out of two disasters, the orientation chose a more cultural ... disaster”), and “the orientation towards themselves and their own forces”<sup>28</sup>. Oleksandr Lototsky noted that in the conditions of war “[T]he idea of Ukrainian independence still had its convinced supporters who gave arguments that could not but convince, although it seemed unrealistic in the pre-war circumstances”<sup>29</sup>. The examples can be continued.

The answer to the question why it happened so may be suggested by the circumstances of wartime that showed the full futility of hopes for the “Ukrainian question” solution in the Russian Empire conditions. Instead of weakening national oppression, Ukrainians suffered from the rampant Russian great-power chauvinism. This triggered the evolution of some Ukrainian socialists' ideas from territorial autonomy within Russia that they maintained at the beginning of the war to separation and independence. Thus, in these conditions the former differences between the socialists and autonomists and the independists began to take second place.

The literature provides many specific examples of such a political drift<sup>30</sup>. In particular, in his *Memoirs*, M. Hrushevsky writes that at the end of 1916 the youth from Ukraine who wanted him to be the national movement leader very often came to him in Moscow where he was under the supervision of Russian gendarmes: “I was clearly told about the organization of the youth who were

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<sup>28</sup> Винниченко В. Відродження нації. Ч. 1. Київ; Відень, 1921. С. 39–41.

<sup>29</sup> Лотоцький О. Сторінки минулого. Ч. 3. Варшава, 1934. С. 299–300.

<sup>30</sup> Див.: Наумов С.О. Український політичний рух на Лівобережжі (90-і рр. XIX ст. – лютий 1917 р.). Харків, 2006. С.275–284; Старух О. В. Український трикутник: унітаристи, самостійники, федералісти. *Українська революція: 1917 – початок 1918. Проблеми, пошуки, узагальнення: Збірник наукових статей*. Запоріжжя: Просвіта, 1998. С. 65–119; Турченко Ф. Микола Міхновський: Життя і Слово. С. 213–215.

also members of the military front formations and issued their own proclamations ... Among the youth, apparently, there were Austrophilic currents with the opposite ones: the independist ones [...] with the federalist ones”<sup>31</sup>.

Dmytro Antonovych, a Ukrainian social democrat and a son of the famous historian Volodymyr Antonovych, was also involved in the process. All memoirists and researchers write about the significant role of Dmytro Antonovych in the Central Rada formation. During the war, the Ukrainian social democrats led by him (referred to as the “D. Antonovych’s group” in the literature) defined themselves on the platform of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine and maintained links with it<sup>32</sup>.

However, let us return to O. Lototsky’s memoirs where he described his report to the Central Rada. He reported on the activities of the Ukrainian National Rada headed by him in Petrograd that consisted mainly of Ukrainian progressists. It was on March 24 when M. Hrushevsky had already presided over the UCR. O. Lototsky’s report was about the fact that the National Rada defended the various Ukrainians’ national and cultural and political demands, in particular, on the need for the Ukrainian representatives’ participation in the commission that should develop a law on the Constituent Assembly elections that should restore the national and territorial autonomy of Ukraine. These are the usual “standard” TUP demands both in the pre-war period and during the war. The speaker awaited the approval of his report. But some of the session attendees perceived the activities of the Petrograd progressists negatively as a manifestation of the “pettiness of the measures taken by the National Rada”. It turns out to be the part of the UCR dominated by supporters of D. Antonovych and M. Tkachenko.

D. Antonovych has already been mentioned. Now let us tell a few words about M. Tkachenko who is mentioned among the active members of the “Antonovych’s group”. Like some other members of the Central Rada, in March 1917, he stucked to a distinct independist orientation, although he remained a convinced left-wing Ukrainian social democrat<sup>33</sup>. Like his other supporters, he was “*irreconcilably set against the central government*”. In particular, unlike the TUP members, *they did not consider the Ukrainian self-determination issue through the Russian Constituent Assembly the priority because it meant to pass the “Ukrainian question” into Russian hands*. After a while, M. Tkachenko stated that “*there is no use of the*

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<sup>31</sup> Грушевський М.С. Спомини. Київ. 1989. № 8. С. 115.

<sup>32</sup> Наумов С.О. Український політичний рух на Правобережжі. (90-і рр. XIX ст. – лютий 1917 р.). Харків, 2006. С. 279, 280.

<sup>33</sup> Верстюк В., Осташко Т. Діячі Центральної Ради. Біобібліографічний довідник. К., 1997. С. 172–173.

*discussion with the Provisional Government, and if we wish to address them, we should do it with other requirements*". In other words, as A. Lototsky stated, it meant breaking with the central government, that, in his firm belief, "was a practical absurdity in the then situation in Ukraine"<sup>34</sup>.

All this testifies that there were two political lines – the TUP and autonomist one and the socialist and independist one in the Central Rada at the beginning of its existence.

In the light of the mentioned above, the close cooperation of the Ukrainian socialists and independists in the first weeks of the revolution when the UCR was formed seems completely natural. The environment may not have been as clearly structured as its opponent – the Society of Ukrainian Progressives. But if we judge by specific actions, we can state that they had enough internal harmony and sense of common purpose. They had the appropriate human resources and political will to begin the Central Rada formation on their own. Finally, their representatives were united by a shared acute critical attitude towards their political opponents – the TUP members that served as an additional impetus for internal consolidation. They even had their own headquarters – the D. Antonovych's apartment. In his *Memoirs*, M. Hrushevsky draws attention to "the long meetings that he (D. Antonovych – F. T.) had those days, on March 3–4"<sup>35</sup>. Elsewhere, he says that his daughter "accidentally came across this parliamentary meeting in the Antonovych's apartment (it refers to the meeting that was about the need to invite M. Hrushevsky to lead the projected center – F. T.) on Friday, March 3 coming to his niece..."<sup>36</sup> Without a doubt, M. Mikhnovsky also was in the the D. Antonovych's house. At least, the fact of the Dmytro Volodymyrovych's invitation of Mikhnovsky is fixed. His wife Kateryna left information on it<sup>37</sup>. It was in the D. Antonovych's apartment, as R. Mlynovetsky writes, where there were the sessions of the organization that he calls the Ukrainian Central Rada organized by the Brotherhood of Independists<sup>38</sup>. Although the existence of such a Rada (as well as the progressist one) has not been proven, its "link" to the D. Antonovych's house is representative.

To summarize, there is reason to state that the independists had no less (if not more) will and ability to initiate the UCR formation than the progressists – the TUP members. However, this is only our hypothesis,

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<sup>34</sup> Лотоцький О. Сторінки минулого. Ч. 3. Варшава, 1934. С. 348–349.

<sup>35</sup> Грушевський М. Спомини. Київ. 1988. № 8. С. 129.

<sup>36</sup> Грушевський М. Спомини. Київ. 1988. № 8. С. 129.

<sup>37</sup> Антонович К. З моїх споминів про Миколу Міхновського *Самостійна Україна*. 1957. № 11. С. 8.

<sup>38</sup> Млиновецький Р. Нарис історії українських визвольних змагань. 1917–1918 рр. (Про що "історія мовчить"). 1970. Т. 1. (Б. м.), 1970. С. 99.

because there is no direct irrefutable evidence that would directly show that it was these people who started to create the organization, gave it a name, and progressives joined the process later – no such evidence is found.

### 3. Course towards the united front and its failure.

Eventually, after the negotiations that were recorded in many sources, both groups of Ukrainian politicians united into a single coalition organization called the Ukrainian Central Rada. It happened after the M. Hrushevsky's arrival to Kyiv. He headed the UCR on March 9, 1917.

The motives of the union are viewed in a different way. Some authors see it as a result of intrigue and outright deception of the independists by the federalists and *inter alia* by M. Hrushevsky. According to the others' version, the union was the result of the independists' desire to promote the consolidation of all Ukrainian forces without which, in their belief, state-building was impossible.

It was this point of view that was advocated in the 1920s by S. Shemet who was linked with Mikhnovsky by the commonality of political views and longstanding friendly relations. According to Shemet, Mikhnovsky was convinced that “*whoever presided over the Central Rada, whatever party the old professor Mykhailo Hrushevsky joined, ... whatever Ukrainian party took the lead, these hands would rather succeed in creating the independent Ukrainian state than fail*”<sup>39</sup>.

In view of the mentioned above, there is every reason to state that it is about the independists' political course correction. This is evidenced by the documents available to us that were from the independists' environment, in particular, the declarations and proclamations of the Ukrainian People's Party that resumed their legal activity in March 1917. These documents do not consist of direct appeals to struggle for Ukrainian independence contained in wartime materials<sup>40</sup>. But there is evidence that they should wait with the independence declaration.

It is also confirmed by the memoirs of contemporaries who contacted M. Mikhnovsky in the first weeks of the revolution. In particular, in her memoirs, Kateryna Antonovych describes a conversation with Dmytro Antonovych, her husband, after his return from the Central Rada regular session:

- *Do you know whom I met and who followed me home?*
- *No. And who?*

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<sup>39</sup> Шемет С. Микола Міхновський. (Посмертна згадка). *Хліборобська Україна*. Кн. V. Відень, 1924–25. С. 17.

<sup>40</sup> Украинская народная партия. *Киевская Мысль*. 1917. 12 апреля; Декларация Української народної партії. *Робітничка газета*. 1917. 11 квітня.

– Mykola Mikhnovsky. *I invited him to come to us, but he did not come. He told me such a strange thing that I still do not know how to understand it:*

*“Now do not insist on independent Ukraine in front of the Russian authorities, settle for the federation”. When I noticed that he had always stood for independent Ukraine and why he expressed a different opinion then, Mikhnovsky said that then was a very tragic moment in politics, everything could be lost, we had better wait with the demand for independence...<sup>41</sup>*

Nestor Korol, a member of the UNP, wrote about a similar incident in his memoirs. He was a cavalry officer during the First World War who was close to Mykola Mikhnovsky in Kyiv in March 1917. In particular, N. Korol remembered a conversation with Mikhnovsky when they discussed the revolution development prospects. *“For a while, forget about our most important goal – the struggle for Ukrainian independence. It is not yet clear what forms the revolution will take, but it is already quite clear that all Muscovites, regardless of political beliefs, economic and social position, will unite against us if we present the claim of Ukrainian state independence. Ukrainians will be squashed by Muscovites, and we, the politically minded layer, will be physically destroyed, regardless of our political beliefs. Our history has not seen such a high concentration of armed Muscovites in our territory as now<sup>42</sup>.*

Here is another testimony that belongs to Ivan Marchenko. M. Mikhnovsky said in a conversation with him took place in 1923 in Kuban where fate lead to both of them: *“I thought it was impossible to afford the national front partition then. And I think that I was right”. I remember that he asked himself for several times in a conversation with me: “ Was I right without taking the plunge then?” – and all the time he told himself that he had been right... He asked the question even later when we already talked in Kyiv in 1924<sup>43</sup>.*

The above facts show that, after the collapse of the autocracy, Mikhnovsky fully realized that the independists would not be able to ensure the existence of an independent Ukraine without the participation of other political forces. The scale of the tasks required the participation of the maximum number of people who were not indifferent to the fate of Ukraine. There were relatively few people with such patriotism at the independists’ disposal. The necessity of action unity of different national movement currents’ representatives was

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<sup>41</sup> Антонович К. З моїх споминів про Миколу Міхновського . *Самостійна Україна*. 1957. № 11. С.8.

<sup>42</sup> Король Нестор Очима звичайного учасника. (Спогади). *Свобода (Детройт)*. 1967. 15 квітня.

<sup>43</sup> Марченко І. Корені мого патріотично-національного самовизначення / Упорядкував Ф.Г. Турченко. К., 2012. С. 97–98.

dictated by life itself. That is why he stood on the positions of the united front of all national forces that could involve all the constructive society forces into the complex and difficult state-building work.

This was the independists' point of view in the first weeks of the revolution. But Mikhnovsky and his independist supporters' perceptions of the Ukrainian War of Independence prospects, on the one hand, and their Central Rada autonomist federalist partners' ones on the other one, turned out to be different. Having gradually won the overwhelming majority in the Rada, the latter saw the future of Ukraine in the federal union with Russia. Most of those socialists who called for the Ukraine independence during the war and the first weeks of the revolution and turned out to be temporary independists' allies also became autonomists and federalists. They followed the sentiment of the Ukrainian population majority who found themselves in a state of political freedom and captured by the Russian democracy *magic* after the collapse of the Russian imperial regime. Volodymyr Vynnychenko, the second most influential person (after M. Hrushevsky) in the UCR, described the situation as follows: "... Ukrainians felt at home in Russia, for the first time the interests of the former prison have become close and their own ones. Any separation and independence were out of the question..."<sup>44</sup>

The theoretical basis was provided for the idea. M. Hrushevsky, being already the head of the UCR, said in the article "Where did Ukrainians come from and where do they go to?" written in the spring of 1917: "*I firmly believe – and not only me – that the great Russian revolution – if only protected from the fall and anarchy – would greatly affect the restructuring of the whole Europe and its transformation into the European Federation. Such a federation had been thought of by politicians and state law practitioners for a long time: they considered it a logical final of all the European life development up to this. It just seemed very distant till the recent events – as it now seems close and feasible. And that is why others and we are not the least concerned about the full political independence of Ukraine, we do not give it any weight. Broad Ukrainian autonomy in the federal Russian Republic is entirely sufficient in the short term. And in the future, we hope that the Republic will join the European Federation and Ukraine will become one of the strongest, most powerful and certain constituent parts within the Republic – one of the European Federation bases*"<sup>45</sup>.

M. Hrushevsky and his supported have repeatedly mentioned the view. Thus, the political plans of the current represented by M. Hrushevsky and

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<sup>44</sup> Винниченко В. Відродження нації. Київ;Відень, 1920. Т. 1. С. 42–43.

<sup>45</sup> Грушевський М. Звідки пішло українство і до чого воно йде . *Хто такі українці і чого вони хочуть*. К., 1991. С. 51.

V. Vynnychenko – and it is the overwhelming majority of the Central Rada – were aimed at gaining “*broad Ukrainian autonomy in the federal Russian Republic*” in the short term and the expectations that in the future Ukraine would enter *the European Federation as “one of the strongest, most powerful and certain constituent parts”*.”

To some extent, it was a pan-European vision. Not only the Ukrainian national liberation movement leaders were in the federalist sentiment captivity before and during the First World War. In particular, independists were neither influential in the environment of Poles and Czechs – the closest neighbours of Ukrainians. The overwhelming majority of Polish politicians believed that not the Polish independence but the establishment of the autonomous rights was possible. Most probably, J. Pilsudski, the founder of independent Poland, initially supported the concept of Austrian federal reorganization, according to which, the new state should consist of three equal parts, Poland being one of them<sup>46</sup>.

A real assessment of the forces kept most of the different Central and Eastern European peoples’ national leaders from taking steps to create their own independent state. It was the thing that united them with the Ukrainian political elite.

But there were significant differences between the Ukrainian federalism and the federalism of the Central and Eastern European peoples’ liberation struggle leaders. The most important of the differences lies in the fact that the Ukrainian elite was not aimed at the Ukrainian independence proclamation *at all*, even in the vague distant future. Autonomy was the ultimate goal but not the stage for gaining independence, while the autonomy establishment was only a step towards the country’s independence proclamation for Poles and Czechs. Given the real possibilities, they chose the tactics of gradual statehood restoration in the independence struggle the first stage of which was to achieve the corresponding empire restructuring on federal principles. And when in the autumn of 1918 the Austrian Empire began to disintegrate, these countries had been already ready for independent existence.

In Ukraine, the independists neither rejected the idea of the federation at the beginning of the revolution. The motives were the same as in the neighbouring countries. But the independent Ukrainian state remained their ultimate goal. Back in 1900, in the brochure *Independent Ukraine*, M. Mikhnovsky formulated a conclusion that confirmed the 20th century world, European, and, ultimately, Ukrainian historical experience: “... *The state independence is the main condition for the nation existence, and the*

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<sup>46</sup> Наленч Д. Наленч Т. Юзеф Пилсудский – легенды и факты. М.: Политиздат, 1990. С. 57.



*state independence is the national ideal in the sphere of international relations*"<sup>47</sup>.

But, agreeing on the federation with Russia in the beginning of the revolution, the independists set clear boundaries of the Ukrainian sovereignty. In the brochure "The Tyrants' Legacy" (the spring of 1917), emphasizing that "*Russia must become a federal union and that Ukraine – within its national and territorial borders – must be a member of the federal union!*", M. Mikhnovsky immediately reveals what it means specifically: "*The Ukrainian people want to live with the Muscovite one as equals – as our ancestors once wished in Pereiaslav in 1654*"<sup>48</sup>. M. Mikhnovsky gave his interpretation of the Pereiaslav Convent that emphasized the Ukrainian sovereign rights in *Independent Ukraine* in 1900. In essence, he saw the principles of relations in this document that went beyond the federal ones in the current understanding and was close to the confederation<sup>49</sup>.

But since the late spring of 1917, the situation changed. Hopes for Russian democracy dissipated quickly. The Russian Provisional Government did not agree on the Ukrainian autonomy. In these conditions, Mikhnovsky began to perceive the future of Ukraine through the dilemma prism: to win the full independence, or remain within a unitary and even democratized empire with a republican system.

V. Martynets, one of the researchers of the M. Mikhnovsky's worldview, testified the evolution of views: "...Since the beginning of the revolution in Russia and Ukraine, when all Ukrainian parties, all Ukrainian figures, and let us keep it real, the a mass of people were overwhelmed by the enthusiasm and belief in new democratic Russia, and Mikhnovsky followed the general psychosis, as well as our highest body – The Central Rada, and adopted the slogan of the federation; but the very first anti-Ukrainian initiatives by the Russian Provisional Government convinced Mikhnovsky in the fallacy of the situation, and he immediately abandoned such harmful and unrealistic positions"<sup>50</sup>.

And it is not about Mikhnovsky's "excessive" nationalism that is often written about by underinformed or politically motivated authors. The matter is his assessment of the Russian society's real state and the latter's willingness to recognize the sovereignty of the Ukrainian people. After all, the federation

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<sup>47</sup> Міхновський М. Самостійна Україна. Промова. *Українська суспільно-політична думка в 20 столітті*. Т. 1. Сучасність, 1983. С. 62.

<sup>48</sup> Міхновський М. Спадщина тиранів. К., 1917. С. 7.

<sup>49</sup> Міхновський М. Самостійна Україна . *Українська суспільно-політична думка в 20 столітті*. Т. 1. Сучасність, 1983. С. 61–72.

<sup>50</sup> Мартинець В. Ідеологія організованого й т. зв. волевого націоналізму. Аналітично-порівняльна студія. Вінніпег, 1954. С. 177.

idea requires the ruling nation's consent. Without this, the federation is impossible. But Mikhnovsky was convinced that there were no influential political forces interested in rebuilding of Russia it on a federal basis at that time, and those who were in power (the liberals and socialists from the Provisional Government) or had a chance to take power into their own hands (the Bolsheviks) would not agree on the federation.

In the brochure *The Tyrants' Legacy* mentioned above, M. Mikhnovsky represents the political priorities in the Russian society after the February Revolution: "All Russians want a unitary (joint) democratic republic, because Russians want to continue their former domination over Ukrainians, but Ukrainians want to get free from that domination... The Muscovite people – not one or another party but all the people – want to lord over the Ukrainian people. Here is the basis for the struggle between the two nations. One is fighting for their liberation, the other is fighting for their domination over the former<sup>51</sup>."

The rigorous assessment of the Russian imperial mentality and Russian politics by Mikhnovsky turned out to be far more realistic than the utopian predictions of overcoming the "tyrants' legacy" in Russia that were the basis for the Ukrainian socialist and liberal politicians' projects. Mikhnovsky hopes that "the hardest means of struggle will not be needed. At the same time, he was concerned about the the Ukrainian people's willingness to protect their historical rights and he calls upon his compatriots to be resolved: "... When we show apathy, vacillation and indecision, the Ukrainian people will be crossed out of the book of life<sup>52</sup>". Unfortunately, the following months confirmed the worst fears of Mykola Mikhnovsky. The leadership of the Central Rada did not show the determination that the political situation required. Ultimately, it had a harmful effect on the fate of the revolution and the future of Ukraine in general.

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite the century-old Ukrainian War of Independence studying tradition, the first weeks of its history, that is, the period when the Ukrainian Central Rada was being formed and the political course was being determined, have not been adequately highlighted by scholars. Neither memoirs of witnesses and active participants in the revolution, nor archival documents, nor scientific researches will give the reader a clear answer to the question who began to form the UCR and what political views on the immediate and distant future of Ukraine these people had. Contemporary historians continue to spread the version, according to which, the initiative to create the UCR belongs to the Society of Ukrainian

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<sup>51</sup> Міхновський М. Спадщина тиранів . К., 1917. С. 7.

<sup>52</sup> Міхновський М. Спадщина тиранів. К., 1917. С. 8.

Progressives that stood on the platform of Ukrainian autonomy. At the same time, nobody mentions any specific facts and names. The assurance that the version “has a quite wide documentary base.. is not confirmed. In order to deny independist orientation politicians’ active participation in the UCR formation process, various methods are used in the discussion, including the ones that are far from scientific ones. And it is not just a matter of determining a priority of a particular political force and the figures who represented it in the Central Rada formation. The question is to determine how the process has influenced the further development of the Ukrainian War of Independence and the fate of Ukraine as a whole.

The experience of the neighbouring Central and Eastern European countries that became independent after the end of the First World War shows that federalism of the Ukrainian elite does not look like an anomalous phenomenon or evidence of their inferiority. On the contrary, it has its own rationale. And it is quite natural. But in this case, it is important to us why Ukrainians failed to do the thing that Czechs, Poles, Finns and other Central and Eastern European peoples did.

The most important difference between Ukrainian federalism and the federalism of the neighbouring European peoples’ liberation struggle leaders who gained independence in the early 20th century is that the Ukrainian elite was not aimed at the Ukrainian independence proclamation even in the vague future. Autonomy was the ultimate goal but not the stage for gaining independence. For the Polish or Czech elite the autonomy was considered to be only a step towards the independence proclamation. Both neighbouring Poland and Czechia have achieved their goal leaving an example for Ukraine.

## **SUMMARY**

The article analyzes the content of historical memoirs and scientific researches that are about the formation and beginning of activity of the Ukrainian Central Rada that governed the national liberation movement at the first stage of the Ukrainian Revolution from 1917 to early 1918. It is shown that these publications do not have a balanced scientific assessment of the autonomists and federalists’ role, on the one hand, and the independists’ one, on the other one, in the process. A renewed vision of this issue is proposed on the basis of historical sources, including those that have been introduced into scientific circulation for the first time. It is concluded that independist orientation forces were very active in the early days of the UCR formation. But they did not emphasize the need for Ukrainian independence declaration believing that it would be possible when the conditions were ripe. Over time, the forces that focused on the autonomy of Ukraine as part of the federally restructured Russian state won in the UCR. It is argued that they did not

abandon this political line even when the policy failure became apparent. The independists were expelled from active participation in the Central Rada that had a harmful effect on the revolution process and the fate of Ukraine in general. The article compares the course of national liberation processes in Ukraine, on the one hand, and the neighbouring Central and Eastern European countries where independent states emerged after the end of World War I, on the other one. The article materials and conclusions open opportunities for deepening and modernization of the scientific vision of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921.

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