

UDC 94 (477):321.728]“1918”  
DOI 10.24919/2519-058X.32.311501

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**Bibliographic Description of the Article:** Malynovsky, B. (2024). Secret progovernment organizations formation in the Ukrainian People’s Republic, April of 1918. *Skhidnoieuropeiskyi istorychnyi visnyk [East European Historical Bulletin]*, 32, 52–64. doi: 10.24919/2519-058X.32.311501

**SECRET PROGOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS FORMATION  
IN THE UKRAINIAN PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC, APRIL OF 1918**

**Abstract.** *The purpose of the research is to find out how the network of secret armed cells was formed, designed to protect the government of the Ukrainian People’s Republic (UPR) from the attempts to overthrow it (April of 1918). The methodology of the research is based on the principles of historicism, systematicity, verification, general scientific and special scientific methods (historical genetic, etc.). The scientific novelty of the research consists in the fact that the issue on the formation of underground military organizations network by the officials of the Ukrainian People’s Republic in the spring of 1918 has been analysed in historical science for the first time.*

**The Conclusions.** *The position of the leadership of the Ukrainian People’s Republic deteriorated rapidly in March – April of 1918. The government’s authority was falling apart, the political opponents were preparing to overthrow it by force. Taking into account the above-mentioned conditions, the formation of secret armed organizations network began on the initiative of numerous prominent figures of the Ukrainian People’s Republic (the leaders of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Labour Party and the Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionary Party), aimed at protecting the state leadership from rebellions and conspiracies. There were established Ukraine Salvation Committee in Kyiv and the Committee of the “Moloda Ukrayina” (Young Ukraine) society in Zvenyhorod poviat, as part of the network. The civil servants of the Ukrainian People’s Republic were responsible for the formation of secret command centres, equipping and arming underground armed cells. The members of the Council of People’s Ministers of the Ukrainian People’s Republic were the part of Ukraine Salvation Committee. The members of the fighting underground, along with the military units of the UPR, were to prevent or suppress the anti-government demonstrations or, if this failed and the government was overthrown, to launch an insurgent movement, aimed at returning this government to power. The plan of action would be the following: the government troops and secret armed forces would be the first to act, and the broad masses of people would join them. In addition, according to the plan, probable leaders were to be detained and imprisoned in order to prevent the anti-government uprisings. The civil servants of the Ukrainian People’s Republic and the activists of the ruling parties, initiated into this secret plan, were sure that they did the right thing. According to their conviction, the Ukrainian*

people supported the policy of the Ukrainian People's Republic leadership fully and should have come to its defense certainly.

**Key words:** the Ukrainian People's Republic, German and Austro-Hungarian troops in Ukraine (1918), uprising, armed underground, armed struggle.

## СТВОРЕННЯ ПРОУРЯДОВИХ ТАЄМНИХ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЙ В УКРАЇНСЬКІЙ НАРОДНІЙ РЕСПУБЛІЦІ, КВІТЕНЬ 1918 Р.

**Анотація. Мета дослідження** – з'ясувати, як відбувалося формування мережі таємних збройних осередків, призначених захистити уряд Української Народної Республіки (УНР) від спроб повалення (квітень 1918 р.). **Методологія дослідження** ґрунтується на принципах історизму, системності, верифікації, на загальнонаукових і спеціально-наукових методах (історико-генетичний та ін.). **Наукова новизна** полягає у тому, що вперше в історичній науці поставлено й розглянуто питання про створення посадовцями УНР навесні 1918 р. мережі підпільних бойових організацій.

**Висновки.** У березні-квітні 1918 р. становище керівництва УНР швидко погіршувалось. Авторитет уряду падав, політичні противники готувалися силою усунути його від влади. В цих умовах за ініціативи низки чільних діячів УНР (керівників Української соціал-демократичної робітничої партії та Української партії соціалістів-революціонерів) розпочалося формування мережі таємних збройних організацій, покликаних захистити державний провід від заколотів і змов. У складі мережі було створено Комітет порятунку України в Києві та Комітет товариства “Молода Україна” у Звенигородському повіті. Утворення таємних керівних центрів та комплектування й озброєння підпільних збройних осередків було покладене на державних службовців УНР. До Комітету порятунку України належали члени Ради народних міністрів УНР. Члени бойового підпілля разом із військовими підрозділами УНР мали попередити або придушити антиурядові виступи або, якщо б це не вдалося і уряд був би повалений, розгорнути повстанський рух із метою повернути його до влади. План дії передбачав, що першими виступлять урядові війська й таємні збройні загони, а до них приєднаються широкі народні маси. Також згідно з планом для попередження антиурядових заколотів мали бути затримані й ув'язнені їхні вірогідні лідери. Державні службовці УНР та активісти правлячих партій, посвячені в цей секретний план, були певні, що вчиняють правильно. На їх переконання, український народ цілком підтримував політику керівництва УНР й неодмінно мав стати на його захист.

**Ключові слова:** Українська Народна Республіка, німецькі та австро-угорські війська в Україні (1918), повстання, збройне підпілля, збройна боротьба.

**The Problem Statement.** It was the period of a fierce armed struggle between the supporters and opponents of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskyi in Ukraine, in the middle of 1918. There were several uprisings, which took place against his authority – in Zvenyhorod, Tarashcha, and others. There were the historians, who studied the above-mentioned uprisings, the prevailing opinion was that they arose as a protest of the rural masses against the agrarian policy of the Hetmanate, aimed at the restoration of a large land ownership, contrary to the desire of peasants to take possession of the estates lands (Luschnat-Ziegler, 2021, pp. 12–17; Sherbatyuk, 2012, pp. 256–271). However, due to a detailed analysis of the events, we came to the conclusion that it was not a mass popular movement, but the speeches of organized political groups that aimed at gaining power in Ukraine (Lobodaev, 2017, pp. 59–99; Malynovsky & Malynovska, 2020; Malynovsky, 2023), and that the preparation of these speeches began even before the establishment of the Hetmanate, during the period of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR).

**The Review of Publications.** The secret armed cells formation was aimed at protecting the government of the Ukrainian People's Republic from the attempts to remove it from

power is covered in the studies on its activities, in particular measures to prevent a coup d'état (Hai-Nyzhnyk, 2014, pp. 213, 215; Hai-Nyzhnyk, 2019, p. 46; Havrylenko & Lohvynenko, 1998, pp. 18–22). The above-mentioned issue is also discussed in the studies that deal with the insurgent movement of the summer of 1918 (Halushko, Tereschenko, Hyrych, Papakin, Ostashko, Lobodaev, Hromenko, Pinak, Kharuk, 2018, p. 217; Lobodaev, 2010, p. 206; Zaharchenko, 1997, p. 52), as the soldiers of the underground units formed in the spring prevailed among the participants of this movement. However, the issue of the underground network formation in the capital and regions at the initiative of the UPR government officials has not been studied yet, which makes the study of this issue an urgent scientific objective.

**The purpose of the research** is to shed light on the process of a network formation of the secret armed organizations aimed at protecting the UPR government from attempts to remove it from power (April of 1918).

**The Results of the Research.** As is it known, in the UPR the highest government positions were held by the leaders of two socialist parties mainly – the Ukrainian Social Democratic Labour Party (USDLP) and the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries (UPSR) at the beginning of 1918. The Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries played a leading role in state administration. Its members held the majority in the Mala Rada (Minor Council) (the legislative body of the UPR, which consisted of a part of the deputies of the Ukrainian Central Rada and had the authority to act on its behalf) and in the Council of People's Ministers (the UPR government formed by the Mala Rada). The members of the political organization Ukrainian (or All-Ukrainian) Peasants Union had also a significant influence on the decision regarding the state affairs.

Due to the taken measures by the ruling parties, aimed at building the socialist state in Ukraine, especially socialization and an equal distribution of land, a deep political crisis was caused (Lebedeva, 2006, pp. 25–33). The ruling group of the UPR found itself in isolation: it was criticized not only by other political forces of Ukraine, but also by external partners – Germany and Austria-Hungary, which in February of 1918, at the request of the government of the Ukrainian People's Republic, entered its territory to help repel the Bolshevik attack and expel them back to Russia. The Central Powers hoped to receive food supplies from Ukraine in exchange for a military aid. The transformations introduced by the leadership of the Ukrainian National People's Republic in the agrarian sphere – land socialization and parcelization – meant the destruction of a large-scale commercial food production in Ukraine, i.e. they crossed out these export plans (Borowsky, 1970, pp. 85–116; Kuraiev, 2009, pp. 267–303).

Despite criticism from all sides, the UPR leadership refused to change its political course or share power with its opponents. The part of the state leadership of the UPR foresaw they would try to seize power by force and that made attempts would be supported by the Central Powers, hence, the UPR leadership came up with a plan to counter it, in particular they decided to establish a pro-government armed underground.

It is impossible to say exactly who of the UPR leaders made the above-mentioned decision. Its discussion was secret and, probably, was not documented, and the mentions of it in the memories left by the leaders of the UPR are brief and unclear. It is only certain that the circle of those involved included the representatives of the UPSR, USDLP and the Ukrainian Peasant Union, and this circle was very limited. According to the testimony of the writer Volodymyr Vynnychenko, one of the leaders of the USDLP, it was “a small group of people, three or four” (Vynnychenko, 1980, p. 296). The majority of leaders and rank-

and-file members of the government parties (including V. Vynnychenko) had nothing to do with the case (Vynnychenko, 1980, p. 296). It can be assumed that even among the initiates, only a few knew the plan in its entirety. Most likely, the plan creators, who were aware of all its details, included the Head of the government Vsevolod Holubovych (UPSR), as well as Ministers Mykola Kovalevskyi (UPSR) and Mykhailo Tkachenko (USDLP). It is possible, to one degree or another, that other high-ranking officials were also involved in the development and implementation of the plan – the representatives of the UPSR and the USDLP, in particular government members Pavlo Khrystiuk, Mykola Liubynsky, and Oleksandr Zhukovsky. It is unknown what kind of role Mykhailo Hrushevskyi, the Chairman of the Central Rada, who is connected to the UPSR, played in these events, whether he took part in it or not.

The plan was to organize secret command centres, as well as recruit and arm several underground units and use them to prevent the mutiny, or, if it fails, to suppress the mutiny together with the UPR government troops, or if it fails, to commit a counter-insurgency in some period of time. According to his memoirs, Kovalevsky explained the essence of the plan the following way: “These [aimed at overthrowing the UPR government] preparations [of political opponents] were also known to us, and therefore during March and April, our political parties and organizations got ready for this decisive struggle and reorganized so that in the event of the coup to go immediately into an illegal situation and continue the struggle for the Ukrainian liberation ideals implementation. The so-called Reserve Committees were established in our organizations, [...] in the “All-Ukrainian Peasants Union”, in the party of socialist revolutionaries and in the [party] of social democrats in advance, which went through the entire organizational network in case of a coup. The armed struggle against the occupying power in the event of a coup was supposed to remove the form of partisanship, which happened later” (Kovalevsky, 1960, pp. 476, 477).

The commandant hundreds, along with the secret cells, were to be publicly operating armed formations functioning as support structures under the district commandants of the Ukrainian People's Republic as a component of the resistance forces. According to Pavlo Khrystiuk, in order to carry out the armed struggle, “the Military Ministry was in a rush regarding the plan implementation for the organization of the revolutionary military units in poviats that could defend the Central Council and the Republic in the event of a coup attempt by the German-Ukrainian bourgeoisie” (Khrystiuk, 1921, p. 166).

The commandants were to become the organizers and leaders of mass public demonstrations. Oleksandr Zhukovsky, Military Minister of the UPR noted in his memoirs that it was necessary to “give that unorganized mass harmony and unity, as an organized mass, which in a critical moment can be called to arms to defend its rights. The poviat commandants' mission was to play the role of such connecting centres, under which, according to the instructions, security hundreds were to be formed to protect order in the poviats” (Zhukovsky, 2018, p. 191).

In addition to the preparation of a secret armed network, detention and imprisonment of its potential participants was supposed to be another area of activity to prevent a rebellion against the UPR government. Khrystiuk noted the following: “At the same time, the government decided to arrest a number of people, who were at the head of the counter-revolutionary movement” (Khrystiuk, 1921, p. 166).

The UPR officials and activists of the ruling parties, initiated into this secret plan, were convinced that they were doing the right thing. After all, the Ukrainian people, in their

opinion, supported the policy of the Central Rada fully and in the event of an attempt to overthrow it, they had to come to its defense. The leading figures thought that the opposition would be launched by the Ukrainian government troops and formed the secret armed cells previously, and the broad masses would join them, and the attempt to overthrow the Central Rada and cancel its reforms would be put to an end.

Hence, numerous secret armed organizations emerged in the capital and in the regions of the UPR. The most massive element of the pro-government underground was the organization in Zvenyhorod poviat. It was established on the basis of Zvenyhorod Kish of free Cossacks. The organizers and leaders of the armed cell in Zvenyhorod were the local military officials of the UPR – Mykola Shynkar, Kyiv Provincial Commandant, Mykhailo Pavlovsky, Zvenyhorod Poviat Commandant, Yuriy Tiutiunnyk Commissioner for Demobilization of District 7 of the South-Western Front (a former Chieftain of Zvenyhorod Kish of Free Cossacks) and Ivan Kapulovsky, Zvenyhorod Poviat Military Chief. The main role was played by the two latter figures (Kapulovsky, 1923, pp. 96, 97; Yurtik, 2014, p. 363).

In addition to their positions, the membership in the public organization “Moloda Ukrayina” also served as a cover for their activities. The “Moloda Ukrayina” society was managed by the Committee, which was the headquarters of Zvenyhorod underground armed group. The Committee of the “Moloda Ukrayina” society was headed by Ivan Kapulovsky. There were 15 local activists of the UPSR and USDLP in the society initially. According to Kapulovsky’s memoirs, at the two founding meetings there were present the representatives of other socialist parties, including the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, who refused to join the society (and the secret organization). Later on, Shynkar, Tiutiunnyk, a member of the Central Rada Pavlo Demerlii and other people signed up as members of the “Moloda Ukrayina”. The society had its own printed organ – the newspaper “Zvenyhorodska Dumka”. I. Kapulovsky wrote in his memoirs the following: “Officially, the “Moloda Ukrayina” society was engaged in publishing a newspaper and cultural and educational work, but in fact all its members were in charge of the organization of combat peasant insurgent units” (Kapulovsky, 1923, p. 97).

The main goal of the Committee of the “Moloda Ukrayina” society was to equip and arm underground units. The members of the Committee used their official powers to provide the underground with the weapons. According to the orders published by the German command and the Ukrainian authorities, the population had to surrender UPR registered weapons under threat of punishment. Yu. Tiutiunnyk and I. Kapulovsky not only left the weapons to the soldiers, but also gave the additional ones secretly. Yu. Tiutiunnyk handed over the weapons that ended up in his hands as a result of demobilization measures. It was about 10 or 11 thousand rifles, up to 50 machine guns, two cannons and an armored car. I. Kapulovsky, on the other hand, hid and then distributed among the insurgents 5,000 rifles, which he received from the residents of the poviat, who complied with the official order to surrender UPR registered weapons. So that the German authorities did not carry out searches and, therefore, did not find the weapons hidden by the underground, I. Kapulovsky issued certificates to all residents of the villages that they had fulfilled this order (Bozhko, 1998, p. 35; Kapulovsky, 1923, p. 98; Yurtik, 2014, p. 365).

Significant success to underground officials was the fact that they managed to maintain complete secrecy for a long time. The German officers (as well as undisclosed UPR government officials) did not know about the dual activities of Zvenyhorod poviat military leadership until the end of April of 1918. Yu. Tiutiunnyk admitted that Zvenyhorod conspirators were “on good terms” with the Commander of the German garrison (Bozhko, 1998, p. 35),

later he recalled this “friendship” with disdain: “Every day, Pavlovsky used to make drunk a representative of the great German nation, some wretched Ober-Lieutenant, who was the oldest among the Germans in Zvenyhorod, by pouring “schnapps”” (Yurtik, 2014, p. 363).

The efforts of the Committee of the “Molda Ukrayina” society gave the expected result: a powerful armed group emerged in Zvenyhorod. According to Kapulovsky, at the beginning of May of 1918, there were formed 18 battalions with a total number of 25,000 soldiers in Zvenyhorod poviat and in the adjacent parishes of Uman, Tarascha, and Kaniv poviats. It should be also added the personnel of the command under the poviat military chief: 200 infantrymen and 45 cavalrymen (Kapulovsky, 1923, pp. 98, 99).

Another element of the underground pro-government network was Ukraine Salvation Committee (or Union), formed by the conspiratorial ministers in Kyiv. According to the German intelligence, the Committee included Minister for Internal Affairs Mykhailo Tkachenko, Military Minister Oleksandr Zhukovsky, Head of the Administrative Political Department of the Ministry for Internal Affairs Yuriy Haievsky, and Chief of Kyiv Police Petro Bohatsky (as for the latter, an agent who at the end of April of 1918 reported these data to intelligence officers, “especially warned and advised to neutralize him as soon as possible”) (SächsHStA, f. 11358, c. 54, p. 092). Other officials were probably also involved in the activities of the Committee, in particular other members of the government and its Chairman Vsevolod Holubovych (Hai-Nyzhnyk, 2014, p. 222). According to the German intelligence, Nataliya Romanovych-Tkachenko, a Ukrainian writer, a wife of Mykhailo Tkachenko, and a student Petrenko presided over the meetings of the Committee (Baumgart, 1971, p. 354).

The executors of the Committee’s decisions were several employees of the Ministry for Internal Affairs, such as, for example, the official for special assignments Oleksandr Osypov (Hai-Nyzhnyk, 2014, p. 225). In addition, according to the information of the German command, the Committee had armed forces at its disposal – several military units of the Ukrainian People’s Republic. Mayor Walter Yarosh, on behalf of the main command of the German troops in Ukraine, informed the command of Reserve Corps 27 that the Union for the Salvation of Ukraine had “a special influence on the Ukrainian volunteer soldiers – the “chorni Haidamaky””. This unit (kurin, Kurjen), numbering about 400 fighters, was supposed to be transferred from Poltava to Kyiv to play the role of “as reliable people say, a special shock force against the Germans” (SächsHStA f. 11358, c. 54, p. 004).

The first case of Ukraine Salvation Committee was to arrest the financier Abram Dobryi, whom the UPR government considered a key figure of the opposition. It was rumored in Kyiv that Dobryi also belonged to a secret organization, but an anti-government one – “he was one of a group of 5 people that was preparing a coup” (Vernadsky, 1994, p. 81), and was to become the new head of the government, “formed from the business circles of the Ukrainian bourgeoisie” (Karpenko, 1931, p. 90).

Prominent figures of the UPR were convinced that Dobryi’s activities posed a great threat to them. Later Holubovych noted the following: “A banker Dobryi [...] conducted direct negotiations on the one hand with Berlin, on the other hand – with the Russian chornosotenni circles, and in particular with one of the metropolitans about the monarchical rule restoration” (Ostashko & Kokin, 2013, p. 287). Khrystiuk emphasized that Dobryi was “the right hand of the Germans in their anti-state plans” (Khrystiuk, 1921, p. 166).

Dobryi’s isolation should decapitate and, thus disorganize the anti-government movement. Kovalevsky wrote about this the following: “As you know, Dobryi was [...] the instigator

of various German charges, which turned against the Ukrainian state centre and against the Ukrainian issue in general. It was not without reason that Dobryi was also considered the inspirer and organizer of the April coup, which was fully prepared fully at the time. Under these circumstances, our Minister for Internal Affairs, Mykhailo Tkachenko, decided [...] to remove Dobryi from Kyiv for a while and thereby deprive the coup organizers of one of the most active conspirators” (Kovalevsky, 1960, p. 481).

In addition to Dobryi, other people were also to be arrested. According to information received by the German intelligence on April 27 of 1918, these people included the police Chiefs Kvasnykov and Mykola Krasovsky, as well as Leonid Mykhailov, acting Minister of Labour of the Ukrainian People’s Republic (SächHStA f. 11358, c. 54, p. 092). As for Krasovsky, later the German intelligence found out that he, on the contrary, cooperated with Ukraine Salvation Committee.

Perhaps, in addition to carrying out secret arrests, Ukraine Salvation Committee had broader plans. Hence, in the Ukrainian political circles there were rumors about the intention of the UPR government officials to exterminate the officers of the German group of troops in Ukraine in order to make it ineffective (Doroshenko, 2002, p. 25). Academician Volodymyr Vernadsky, one of the leading figures of the Russian Constitutional Democratic Party in Ukraine, made the following notes in his diary: “On the very day, the German officers were to be killed and the soldiers left on their own [without the commanders] were put in a hopeless situation” (Vernadsky, 1994, p. 81).

These rumors about the sinister intentions of the UPR government seem to be an exaggeration, because Dobryi (and possibly the others) were planned to be imprisoned, not killed. However, the very assumption about the ability of extremists in power to resort to terror and bloody revenge was indicative. Yevhen Chykalenko, a Ukrainian public figure, explaining in a private conversation, why he refused the offer of opponents of the UPR government to assume the post of the Hetman, said that he was unable to create a powerful team because his “political friends, although they considered the policy of the Central Rada very pessimistically, refused ministerial portfolios”, declaring: “The Hetman and [his] Ministry will not resist the agitation of the “leftists”, and then we will be hanged” (Starovoitenko, 2022, p. 310).

If Kapulovsky, the Head of the “Moloda Ukrayina” society, frankly told his story in his memoirs, there were controversial testimonies about Ukraine Salvation Committee. It should be mentioned that Zhukovsky and other high-ranking officials of the Ukrainian People’s Republic – alleged members of Ukraine Salvation Committee – denied their involvement in its activities later (Zhukovsky, 2018, pp. 192–211; Kovalevsky, 1960, p. 481, Ostashko & Kokin, 2013, p. 287). Taking into account their words, it appeared that this secret organization did not really exist at all. Everything came down, if we believe them, to the initiative of the Minister for Internal Affairs Tkachenko, who acted, according to Kovalevsky, “on his own initiative” and had the only intention to isolate Dobryi (481). Khrystiuk noted the following in this regard: “It was intended [...] to arrest several prominent counter-revolutionaries quite openly”, but Tkachenko, “for an unknown reason”, decided to detain only Dobryi, “and that in an unusual way (secret arrest under the name of some private organization), which gave the case an arrest of an adventurous nature, putting the entire government and especially the Chairman of the P[eo]ple’s C[ouncil] of M[inisters] Holubovych in an unnatural position” (Khrystiuk, 1921, p. 166).

However, despite the objections of the leaders of the UPR, a secret organized group was a reality, which consisted of at least Tkachenko and several of his subordinates from the People's Ministry for Internal Affairs of the UPR. As it was found out later by the German intelligence and Ukrainian (Hetman) investigative bodies, its members declared directly that they belonged "to a society which [in the Ukrainian People's Republic] was more important than any ministries at the end of April of 1918 (CSAHAAU, f. 2207, d. 1, c. 657, p. 4; Gor'ky, 1936, p. 53).

When did these secret organizations – Committees emerge in the capital and in Zvenyhorodka? The above-mentioned were formed at the second half of April of 1918, the period after the political crisis caused by the issuing of an order to the German troops to "insist vigorously" on that all land in Ukraine should be sown (Kornovenko, Zemzyulina, Kovaleva, Malynovsky, Masnenko, Morozov, Mykhailiuk & Pasichna 2020, p. 203). The German command agreed previously on this order with the Head of the government of the Ukrainian People's Republic of Ukraine Holubovych and the Minister for Land Affairs Kovalevsky, however, after the publication of the order, the leadership of the UPR condemned it as a violation of the sovereign rights of the Ukrainian state – on April 13 of 1918, the Mala Rada (Minor Council) adopted the corresponding resolution (Verstiuk, 1997, p. 273). The German side, for its part, expressed a sharp protest, reprimanding the Ukrainian Ministers that they destroyed agriculture with their socialist utopias and were generally incapable of managing the country (Kornovenko, Zemzyulina, Kovaleva, Malynovsky, Masnenko, Morozov, Mykhailiuk & Pasichna, 2020, pp. 186–188).

The offended Ministers of the Ukrainian People's Republic were in a bellicose mood. Petro Chykalenko, a son of Yevhen Chykalenko, an employee of the UPR government at the beginning of 1918, told his father that Holubovych "after [...] an order [...] threatened to raise an uprising against the Germans". The Chykalenkos did not pay attention to this, "considering these words to be a usual chattering of Holubovych", but in fact the Prime Minister's statement was quite serious (Chykalenko, 2004, p. 96).

A historian H. Karpenko, one of the first researchers of the uprising in Ukraine in 1918, noted the following: "The Mala Rada (Minor Council) adopts [April 13, 1918] a resolution according to which the Minister for Land Affairs is asked to protest to the German government against the illegal actions of the German command in Ukraine and to address calling on the population not to comply with the order [...]. Along with these official actions of the Central Rada, the members of the Ukrainian Party Socialist Revolutionary and Ukrainian Esdec [= the members of the UPSR and USDLP] organize a secret committee "Spasinnia Ukrayiny" (Saving Ukraine), which includes several Ministers [...] and several military personnel; this Committee is entrusted with the task of preparing forces for an uprising just in case. A similar Committee was formed at the same time in Zvenyhorod, which was called: "Moloda Ukrayina" (Karpenko, 1931, pp. 89, 90).

There were formed other pro-government underground organizations in various regions of the UPR simultaneously with the Committee of the "Moloda Ukrayina" society and Ukrainian Salvation Committee. In particular, according to the information of the German command, such a cell functioned near Radomyśl. On April 29 of 1918, the German intelligence service reported to the command about the existence of "an organization headed by the Head of the [Central] Council Hrushevsky, who has a large number of supporters, primarily in Radomyśl poviat". This organization possessed a large stockpile of weapons allegedly ("for example, 2,000 rifles were distributed among the supporters of this party, which at



one time were captured by the Ukrainian troops at Irsha train [station]). – If intelligence about it was true, Radomyśl underground centre as well as in Zvenyhorod was headed by local civil servants: the Head of the Povit Administration and the Head of the Poviats Land Committee Mykyta Mandryka and the Heads of the Radomyśl City Administration Hryhoriy Karbovskiy and Serhiy (Mykhailo?) Marchenko (SächsHStA f. 11358, c. 54, p. 005; about the Radomyśl district leadership of the Ukrainian People's Republic in 1918 in the memoirs of M. Mandryka: Mandryka, 1977, p. 87).

At that time, a large underground cell also appeared in Mohyliv-Podilskyi poviat. On April 18 of 1918, the acting Chief of the police of the 2nd precinct of this poviat reported to the leadership the following: "... the peasantry took up the formation of free Cossack units vigorously and, in general, armaments. I don't know by what order certain individuals from the free Cossacks call upon the peasants not to surrender their weapons to anyone, but on the contrary to acquire them in various ways and to arm themselves in order, if necessary, to get rid of the Austrians and the Germans by the force of weapon. In the town of Mohyliv free Cossacks are helping in the matter of supplying the weapons" (Lobodaev, 2010, p. 208).

The village of Kukavka became the centre of the armed organization in Mohyliv-Podilskyi poviat. The members of the secret organization included employees of Mohyliv-Podilskyi poviat commandant's hundred and the poviat Commandant Andriy Vovk along with the soldiers of secret combat units, representatives of the free Cossacks mainly (Malynovsky, Malynovska, 2020, p. 125). A total amount of fighters was at least 2000 in the organization (Malynovsky, 2023, p. 125).

The peculiarity of the underground network established by the UPR officials was that it did not include armed units everywhere. There were only headquarters and weapons warehouses (secret and those that were officially under the protection of the UPR army). In this regard, Zhukovsky noted the following: "well-known information departments should have been organized at the [poviat] commandants to provide information about the mood of population, which had the main task of organizing the local forces and on the order [= order] "to arms" the doors of ready-made warehouses [ ] with weapons] were opened and in this way the whole army of the armed people appeared at once" (Zhukovsky, 2018, p. 191).

On April 27 of 1918 the German intelligence officer reported the following: "The main principle is to attract the population to the side of the coup participants at the last moment with the help of provocateurs and give them weapons". In confirmation, he cited a specific fact: Minakovskiy, Fastiv Commandant, while having a conversation with another Ukrainian officer, stated that "he can put forward 2,000 bayonets in the fight against the Germans at any moment" and that he does not need to distribute the weapons in advance, he keeps them in storage in order to be ready (SächsHStA f. 11358, c. 54, p. 004).

In addition to the combat groups formed by the UPR officials in accordance with the general plan for the preparation of resistance bases, there were also secret pro-government armed formations that emerged at the initiative of the local figures independently. Hence, formally the unit of the Free Cossacks was disbanded in the village of Hlodosy, Yelyzavhrad poviat, by their own decision, kept composition and organizational structure and hid their weapons (Mykhailyk, 1934, p. 14).

In turn, the leaders of the Ukrainian Party of Independent Socialists (UPSS) tried to establish their own secret network, another party represented in the Central Rada and the UPR government, simultaneously with the above-mentioned underground organizations, formed by representatives of the UPSR, UPSD and the Ukrainian Peasants'

Union. In particular, the “Batktivshchyna” society was founded in April of 1918 on the initiative of the Ukrainian Socialist Workers’ Party. This society had the same features as the underground organizations formed by members of the UPSR and UPSD: it was connected to the Cossack movement (cooperated with the General Cossack Council of the Free Cossacks), combined legal and illegal activities. The legal one consisted in the organization of cultural, educational and political actions. The illegal one, which was the main one, got ready to take measures for the defense of the Ukrainian statehood (Herashchenko, 2006, pp. 39–41).

In the spring of 1918, independent socialists had difficult relations with the leadership of the Ukrainian People’s Republic, which was dominated by the members of the UPSR and the UPSD. On the one hand, independent socialists themselves belonged to the leadership of the UPR – they held several ministerial positions (Verstiuk, 1997, p. 227). On the other hand, the leaders of the UPSS criticized the government policy of the Ukrainian People’s Republic and even developed a plan for anti-government armed action, nominating their own candidates for the Hetman post (Herashchenko, 2006, p. 37). Probably, having started to build their underground network, independent socialists were ready to use it both to protect and to overthrow the UPR government – depending on what, according to the members of this party, would be more in the interests of the Ukrainian state.

The Bolsheviks also formed their own armed network in the UPR in the spring of 1918. In particular, there was one of the centres, which was formed and functioned in the village of Vilshana, Zvenyhorod poviat. According Isaak Chyzhov, a member of the communist underground, claimed in his memoirs, in Vilshana “the first revolutionary partisan unit in the poviat was organized”, which “became the main armed force on which the Zvenyhorod Bolshevik organization relied” (Chizhov, 1970, p. 235).

According to Ivan Kapulovsky’s memoirs, it is known that he maintained contacts with the Bolsheviks in Zvenyhorod poviat and even invited them to join the armed underground led by the Committee of the “Moloda Ukrayina” society (Kapulovsky, 1923, p. 97). That is, while preparing to repulse the “onset of the counter-revolution” in Ukraine, the UPR officials not only failed at preventing the Bolsheviks (with whom, let’s recall, the UPR fought a war with the support of the Central Powers) to establish underground fighting groups, but also assumed the possibility of joint actions with them.

**The Conclusions.** The position of the ruling political parties of the UPR – the Ukrainian Social Democratic Labour Party and the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries deteriorated during March and April of 1918 rapidly. Their authority in society fell apart, political opponents prepared to overthrow it by force. The overthrow of the government formed by these parties could have been prevented by changes in its policy, first of all, by the rejection of the socialist agrarian reform. However, some of the leaders of the UPR chose a different path – they decided to establish a network of secret armed organizations aimed at protecting the government from attempts, or, if these attempts could not be prevented, to return power to it later. This network, formed mainly in April of 1918, included Ukraine Salvation Committee in Kyiv and the Committee of the “Moloda Ukrayina” society in Zvenyhorod poviat. The founders of underground armed cells were civil servants of the People’s Republic of Ukraine, Ukraine Salvation Committee included members of the government. The underground network included a significant fighting force. Its most powerful element – Zvenyhorod cell – consisted of 18 battalions and numbered about 25,000 soldiers. Along with troops loyal to the government and with the help of masses,

who, according to the leaders of the Ukrainian People's Republic, shared their political programme, the secret armed organizations were supposed to ensure that the People's Republic of Ukraine remained in power.

**Acknowledgements.** I express sincere gratitude to members of the editorial board and scientists of the Research Institute of Peasantry and Agrarian History Studies, Cherkasy National University named after Bogdan Khmelnytsky, for consultations provided during the preparation of the article for publishing.

**Funding.** The study was prepared based on the results of fundamental research "The Socio-cultural Space of Ukraine in the Second Half of the Nineteenth – First Third of the Twentieth Century: the Peasant-centric Dimension" (state registration number: 0123U101600) with the support of the National Research Foundation Fund of Ukraine.

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*The article was received November 03, 2023.  
Article recommended for publishing 30/08/2024.*