

РЕЦЕНЗІЇ / REVIEWS

UDC 94(477)“1918”:332.021.8(049.32)
DOI 10.24919/2519-058X.39.364986

Vasyl LOPUSHANSKYI

PhD (Psychology), Associate Professor; Head of the Department of the German and French Languages and the Methods of Their Teaching, Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University, 24 Ivan Franko Street, Drohobych, Ukraine, postal code 82100 (w_lopuschanskyj@dspu.edu.ua)

ORCID: 0009-0008-0460-6655

Yaroslav LOPUSHANSKYI

PhD (Philology), Associate Professor; Associate Professor of the Department of the English Language and Translation Studies, Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University, 24 Ivan Franko Street, Drohobych, Ukraine, postal code 82100 (jaro.lopuschanskyj@dspu.edu.ua)

ORCID: 0000-0002-8872-1982

Василь ЛОПУШАНСЬКИЙ

кандидат психологічних наук, доцент, завідувач кафедри німецької та французької мов та методики їх викладання, Дрогобицький державний педагогічний університет імені Івана Франка, вул. І. Франка, 24, Дрогобич, Україна, індекс 82100 (w_lopuschanskyj@dspu.edu.ua)

Ярослав ЛОПУШАНСЬКИЙ

кандидат філологічних наук, доцент, доцент кафедри англійської мови та перекладу, Дрогобицький державний педагогічний університет ім. Івана Франка, вул. І. Франка, 24, м. Дрогобич, Україна, індекс 82100 (jaro.lopuschanskyj@dspu.edu.ua)

LAND, POWER AND REVOLUTION: A NEW STUDY ON THE AGRARIAN REFORM IN THE UKRAINIAN STATE IN 1918

A peer-review of the monograph: Ruslan Pyrih, Roman Tymchenko.

“The Land Reform of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky: Historical Essays, Documents and Materials”. Kyiv, 2025. 344 p.

ЗЕМЛЯ, ВЛАДА І РЕВОЛЮЦІЯ: НОВЕ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ АГРАРНОЇ РЕФОРМИ В УКРАЇНСЬКІЙ ДЕРЖАВІ 1918 р.

**Рецензія книги: Руслан Пиріг, Роман Тимченко.
“Земельна реформа гетьмана Павла Скоропадського: історичні нариси, документи й матеріали”. Київ, 2025. 344 с.**

The monograph written by Ruslan Pyrih and Roman Tymchenko is dedicated to one of the most controversial aspects of the history of the Ukrainian State in 1918 – the agrarian

policy of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky and the attempt to implement the land reform under the conditions of the revolutionary transformations. There was the joint participation of two institutions – the Institute of History of Ukraine of the NAS of Ukraine and the Research Institute of Peasantry and Agrarian History of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi Cherkasy National University in order to publish the above-mentioned monograph. The monograph consists of Introduction, two parts (the first – “Land Reform of Hetman P. Skoropadsky: Historical Essays”, the second – “Documents and Materials”), a personal index and a list of abbreviations. The first part consists of nine chapters.

The authors turned to the historiographical understanding of the land policy of the Hetmanate in *Chapter 1*, “Land Reform in Modern Ukrainian Historiography. Historical Sources of the Topic”. There was made the analysis, which starts with the statement that the agrarian policy of the Ukrainian State in 1918 was evaluated ambiguously in the Ukrainian historical science, and interpretations largely depended on the political and ideological orientations of the scholars. The authors emphasized that the representatives of the conservative statist trend of the Ukrainian historiography – in particular, Dmytro Doroshenko, Viacheslav Lypynsky, Natalia Polonska-Vasylenko – generally positively evaluated the concept of land reform by P. Skoropadsky. At the same time, they tried to explain the difficulties of its implementation by the influence of the revolutionary situation, social radicalism, and the policy of the Central Rada (p. 15). In this chapter, the authors seek not only to present a list of historiographical positions, but also to show the evolution of the scientific analysis of the Hetmanate land policy. Hence, the issue appeared not as a narrow issue of agrarian history, but as a complex issue of the social, political and state-building processes of the Ukrainian revolution era. There was chief focus on critical evaluations of the reform. According to the authors, even supporters of the Hetmanate often criticized not the idea of the agrarian transformations, but the methods and pace of their implementation. Due to the above-mentioned approach, it was possible to avoid apologetics and forms a more balanced picture of the historical process. There was provided a thorough analysis on the complex of the historical sources in the chapter, which highlighted the preparation and implementation of the Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky land reform. The authors emphasized that the topic was represented by almost all types of sources – the archival documents, legislative acts, memoirs, the press, archeographic publications and reference editions (p. 24).

The authors analyzed the foreign policy and economic factors that accompanied Pavlo Skoropadsky’s rise to power in *Chapter 2* of the monograph – “The “khlіbni” (“bread”) drivers of the coup d’État”. The very title of the chapter demonstrated the author’s emphasis: the coup of April 29, 1918, was viewed not only as the intra-Ukrainian political event, but also as a consequence of the complex interaction of the interests of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Ukrainian conservative circles (pp. 46–50).

There was the authors’ analysis regarding the Brest Peace Treaty, which was directly related to the food needs of the Central Powers. It was emphasized that for Germany, Ukraine was primarily of strategic economic importance as a source of food and raw materials. That is why, the German military command sought to establish a stable government in Ukraine, capable of ensuring regular supplies of grain.

General Wilhelm Groener and Ambassador Alfons Mumm von Schwarzenstein played a key role in implementing this policy. Quickly they became convinced that the socialist government of the Central Council was unable to ensure stability in the country, carry out the sowing campaign, and fulfill food obligations to Germany (p. 43). The German

command was particularly dissatisfied with the Central Council's agrarian policy, based on the socialization of the land, which, in the Germans' opinion, was destroying agriculture and making it impossible to export grain on a large scale.

The authors analyzed in detail the escalation of the conflict between the German authorities and the Central Council around the order of Field Marshal Hermann Eichhorn on the mandatory sowing of fields. The Central Council regarded this document as interference in the internal affairs of the UNR, but in fact could not counteract German pressure. There was formed a conviction in German military and diplomatic circles regarding the drastic need to remove the socialist government and establish a more conservative and manageable government gradually.

There was presented the process of searching for a candidate for the new ruler of Ukraine. The German command considered several candidates, but the most acceptable figure was Pavlo Skoropadsky, who was an authoritative general, a large landowner and a representative of the starshyna-hetman family. The activity of the Ukrainian People's Community established by him was also an important factor, which became a political instrument for preparing the coup.

The authors emphasized that the coup d'état was the result of a convergence of interests between the German command and the Ukrainian conservative forces – primarily the Union of Landowners and the Ukrainian Democratic Agrarian Party. The Germans sought a stable government capable of guaranteeing food supplies, while the Ukrainian property circles sought the elimination of the socialist reforms of the Central Rada and the restoration of private property.

It was emphasized that on the eve of the coup, P. Skoropadsky agreed to a number of demands of the German command: fulfillment of the Brest Peace Treaty terms, ensuring food supplies, restoration of private property, rejection of the parliamentary system and restrictions on the creation of his own army. In return, he received the German support in establishing a new regime.

As a result, the authors concluded that the April 1918 coup and the establishment of the Hetmanate of Pavlo Skoropadsky were initiated and organized by the German military political leadership with the Ukrainian conservative forces' support. Formally, the coup had the appearance of the intra-Ukrainian process, but in fact it meant the transition of Ukraine to a regime of dependence on the Central Powers and the beginning of the occupation nature of the Ukrainian-German relations.

There was analyzed the formation of the political and agrarian views of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky and his vision of the land reform as a key element of state building of the Ukrainian State in 1918 in *Chapter 3* "The Views of P. Skoropadsky and the Ruling Elite on Solving the Land Issue". The authors emphasized that P. Skoropadsky viewed the agrarian issue not only as an economic one, but primarily as the basis for the political stability and creation of social support for the new state in the form of a wealthy peasantry and farms.

There was shown P. Skoropadsky's worldview evolution – from a Russian aristocrat and a large landowner to a Ukrainian statesman of a liberal conservative orientation. A significant influence on his agrarian views was exerted by the Stolypin reform, which he considered a model of the agriculture modernization through the development of private small property and farm management. At the same time, the Hetman was aware of the difference between the Ukrainian conditions and the Russian ones and saw the need for forced or ransom alienation of large landowner estates to provide land to landless peasants.

In the text it was emphasized that the land reform was to be based on the principles of the private property, state regulation of the land market, and the creation of the State Land Bank. It was envisaged the abolition of the land socialization carried out by the Central Rada, the formation of a land fund by buying up private, state, and church lands, and the sale of land plots to the peasants. At the same time, it was planned to preserve large, highly productive “cultural farms” – primarily sugar, seed, and breeding farms (p. 53).

The authors analyzed in detail the political environment of P. Skoropadsky and the government’s attitude to the agrarian reform. The reform was supported by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers F. Lyzohub, the Minister of Land Affairs V. Kolokoltsov and a significant part of the Cadet environment. At the same time, there was resistance to the forced alienation of lands among large landowners, which hindered the practical implementation of the reform (p. 58). There was a chief focus on the activities of the Ukrainian People’s Community (Ukrainska Narodna Hromada) and attempts to create a conservative political support for the Hetman regime.

In the chapter there were also showed the contradictions of the Hetmanate’s agrarian policy. On the one hand, the authorities declared the need to transfer the land to the peasants and liquidate large latifundia, and on the other, they restored the right of the landowners’ private property legislatively and adopted a law on the land liquidation commissions, which allowed the landowners to demand compensation for damages. The above-mentioned exacerbated the social conflict in the countryside and effectively blocked the reform implementation until the end of 1918 (pp. 60–62).

In general, due to the Chapter 3 of the monograph, it is possible to understand the internal logic of the Hetmanate’s land policy, it shows the complexity of finding a compromise between the state interests, economic efficiency and the social demands of the peasantry. The authors convincingly demonstrated that P. Skoropadsky’s agrarian reform was an attempt to modernize the land relations in an evolutionary way, but the political instability and revolutionary nature of the era limited the possibilities of its implementation significantly.

The preparation and first steps in implementing the land reform of the Ukrainian State during the Hetmanate of Pavlo Skoropadsky were highlighted in *Chapter 4*, “Government Activities in Preparing the Legislative Framework for the Reform”. The leading role in reforming the agrarian relations was assigned to the Ministry of Land Affairs, headed by Volodymyr Kolokoltsov. His appointment triggered a sharp criticism by the Ukrainian socialist and national forces, as well as opposition among some ministry officials, which was accompanied by the strikes and a campaign of discredit (pp. 63–64).

Despite the political conflict, the government began to form a legislative framework for the land reform. Its main goal was to provide land to the landless peasants by purchasing part of privately owned land by the state and selling it to the peasants with help of the State Land Bank. At the same time, the Hetman’s government sought not to eliminate large landownership, but to create social support for the regime among the wealthy peasantry.

A special land commission was created with the participation of the government officials, agricultural scientists, and German specialists in order to prepare the reform. In its work, there clashed two approaches: a conservative one, which advocated the preservation of large estates, and a liberal one, aimed at limiting landlord land ownership. Initially, the government supported a moderately reformist direction.

There were passed a number of laws, which regulated the right to the harvest, the purchase and sale of the land, the activities of the land commissions, and the procedure

for the restoration of landlord estates in May–August 1918. The land ownership norm was determined: no more than 25 desiatyn per person, but the mechanisms for implementing this norm remained undeveloped. There were not regulated issues on forced alienation of the land, pricing, and the functioning of the land market (p. 67).

A significant problem was the contradiction between the government's reformist intentions and the policy of restoring the rights of large landowners. The Law on Land Liquidation Commissions actually provided the landowners with the opportunity to return their estates and compensate for losses, which caused mass discontent among the peasantry and the strengthening of the insurrectionary movement. De facto, the Land Commissions, which were meant to be the arbitrators, often turned into a tool of pressure on the peasants.

There were additional factors, which hindered the reform: the weakness of the administrative apparatus, personnel shortages, lack of funding, conflicts between the government officials, and dependence on the German-Austrian occupation administration. An important element of the reform was to be the State Land Bank, but its creation was delayed, and the financial capabilities were limited (pp. 68–69).

As a result, the authors made a conclusion that the land reform developed quite actively at the legislative level in May–July 1918, but by the end of the summer it had reached a dead end efficiently. The main reasons for this were the lack of a real mechanism for land redistribution, the contradictions between the interests of the peasantry and large landowners, the repressive nature of local politics, and the unfavorable international and domestic political situation (pp. 71–72).

There were analyzed the contradictions of the agrarian policy of the Ukrainian State under Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky and the influence of large landowners and industrial financial circles on the course of the land reform in *Chapter 5* “The Opposition of Right-Conservative Circles to the Transformation of the Land Legal Relations”. The authors showed that the principle of the inviolability of the private property proclaimed in the Hetman's Charter came into conflict with the intention to alienate large estates in favor of small-land peasants. It was this contradiction that became decisive for the entire subsequent land policy of the Hetmanate.

The central role in blocking the reform was played by the All-Ukrainian Union of Landowners, which represented the interests of the landowners and demanded the full restoration of their property rights, the return of the land, compensation for losses, and the preservation of large landholdings. Despite supporting the Hetman's coup, the union gradually turned into an influential force that systematically resisted the government's reformist intentions. A similar position was taken by PROTOFIS, which united the industrial and financial elite and advocated the protection of large property, a centralized “yedyna Rosiia” (“United Russia”, and a conservative socio-economic course (pp. 74–76).

In the text it was traced how the representatives of these organizations tried to influence the formation of the government, local administration and legislation. There was created an administrative mechanism regarding the return of the estates to their former owners due to the starost (elders) appointment from among the landowners and former officials. The state authorities actually supported the restoration of the pre-revolutionary land relations, using the administrative apparatus and even military force to protect the interests of the landowners (pp. 76–78).

The focus was on the struggle around the draft laws of the land reform. The landowner circles consistently sought participation in the development of all agrarian laws and blocked any attempts at the forced alienation of large landholdings. Although the government

commissions developed projects aimed at creating the peasant landownership and limiting latifundia, under pressure from the large-land lobby, these initiatives lost their radical character or were not implemented at all (pp. 79–81).

The authors also depicted the contradictions within the government itself: some government officials and experts were cognizant of the need for the forced redemption of large estates in the reform's sake, but there was not enough political will to make the appropriate decisions. There was offered significant resistance not only by the landowners, but also by the sugar millers and tenants, who were afraid of the loss of their economic positions. As a result, the land reform was never completed, and the dominance of the interests of large property became one of the factors of the crisis and weakening of the Hetmanate at the end of 1918 (pp. 82–84).

There was analyzed the reaction of the Ukrainian peasantry and workers to the establishment of the Hetman regime of Pavlo Skoropadsky after the coup d'état of 1918 in *Chapter 6* "The Peasantry's Reaction to the Restoration of Large-Land Ownership". The authors stated that the new government resorted to the repressive measures immediately: there were banned the peasant and workers congresses; there were restricted the democratic freedoms; there was restored private ownership of land, and there were persecuted opposition organizations and the press. The above-mentioned caused a wave of protests in various regions of Ukraine, especially among the peasantry, which perceived the Hetmanate's policies as a threat to the loss of the gains of the revolution and the return of landlord landownership (pp. 87–88).

In the text it was emphasized that at the initial stage, the population attitude to the new government was not unambiguous: part of society supported the Hetmanate or took a wait-and-see approach. At the same time, the poorest sections of the peasantry quickly became disillusioned with the restoration of the landlord rights and the activities of the land liquidation commissions, which actually contributed to the return of the estates and the collection of compensation from the peasants. Due to the actions of the German and Austro-Hungarian troops, which supported the Hetmanate administration and participated in the punitive operations, there exacerbated significant dissatisfaction (p. 89).

The authors covered in detail the development of the peasant uprising in the summer of 1918. The largest uprisings were the Lubensko-Zolotoniske uprising, the Kanishka uprising and especially the Zvenyhorodsko-Taraschany uprisings, during which the rebels created their own governing bodies, headquarters and armed formations. The German and Austro-Hungarian command was forced to use significant military forces, artillery and mass repressions in order to suppress these uprisings. The uprising covered most of the regions of Ukraine and took on the character of a broad peasant war against the landlords, occupation troops and the Hetman's power (pp. 90–95).

The focus was on the role of the political forces in the peasant movement. The greatest influence on the organization of the uprisings was exerted by the Borotbists, the Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionaries, the Peasants' Union, and in some areas by the Bolsheviks, the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, and the anarchists. The authors emphasized that the demonstrations were mostly spontaneous and were not properly coordinated on an all-Ukrainian scale.

At the end of the chapter, the conclusion is made that the mass insurgent partisan movement was a natural reaction of the peasantry to an attempt at the socio-economic restoration and the restoration of the landlord land ownership. At the same time, the authors warned against exaggerating the scale of the movement and evaluate critically some historiographical calculations of the number of the insurgents and losses. The main reasons for the defeat

of the peasant uprisings are the presence of powerful occupation troops, coordination of their actions with the Hetman's authorities, the absence of a single leadership center of the uprising, and the heterogeneity of the peasantry itself.

There were analysed the relations of the Ukrainian State of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky with Germany and Austria-Hungary after the coup d'état of 1918 in *Chapter 7* "Pragmatic Interest of German and Austrian Allies". The authors stated that the Central Powers supported the change of power primarily to ensure stable supplies of the Ukrainian food and raw materials. The German government denied interference in the internal affairs of Ukraine publicly, but in fact the military command, diplomatic representatives, and economic structures actively influenced the political course of the Hetmanate, especially in the agricultural and food sectors (pp. 97–99).

It was emphasized that the relations between the Ukrainian government and the allies were formally of a partnership nature, but were unequal due to the dependence of the Hetmanate on the German-Austrian military support. The German side controlled the formation of certain directions of the domestic and foreign policy, demanded the implementation of the economic agreements and interfered in the preparation of the land reform. The basis of the agrarian policy was proclaimed to be the restoration of the private ownership of land with the preservation of the large farms and the gradual redemption of the land by the peasants.

The authors covered in detail the involvement of the German diplomats, military and economic advisors in drafting the land legislation, regulating grain procurement and setting fixed grain prices. At the same time, the Allies sought to prevent the destruction of large landowner farms before the harvest was complete, since they were seen as the main source of grain for export. Hence, the peasantry was discontented and there increased the social tension (pp. 100–101).

In the text the focus was on the forced methods of the food procurement. The German and Austro-Hungarian military structures used the requisitions, indemnities, military pressure and punitive measures against peasants. These actions were particularly harsh in the Austro-Hungarian occupation zone. The occupation administrations created their own networks of the grain procurement bodies, used the military units to ensure the harvest and force the peasants to fulfill food deliveries (pp. 102–103).

There was also analyzed the economic negotiations between the Ukrainian State and the Central Powers in the Chapter. Due to the slow delivery of supplies, Germany and Austria-Hungary increased pressure on the Ukrainian government. Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky's visit to Germany had not only diplomatic but also economic significance in September 1918: as a result, a new tripartite economic agreement was concluded, which provided for large-scale supplies of grain, livestock, sugar, alcohol, and raw materials to the Central Powers.

At the end of the monograph, the authors concluded that the policy of Germany and Austria-Hungary in Ukraine was determined primarily by the desire to ensure their own military and economic needs. Despite the support for the Hetmanate regime, there was constant interference in the internal affairs of the state, control over the agrarian reform and the use of the forced methods of grain procurement. It contributed to the aggravation of the conflict between the authorities, the peasantry and the occupation forces and weakened social resistance to the Hetmanate (p. 114).

There was studied the transformation of the Ukrainian political environment after the coup d'état of April 29, 1918, and the establishment of the Hetmanate of Pavlo Skoropadsky in *Chapter 8* "Ukrainian Political Parties: Attitudes to the Government's Land Policy".

The elimination of the Central Rada led to a regrouping of the political forces, forcing the Ukrainian parties to determine their attitude to the new regime, to develop new tactics and forms of the struggle. The majority of Ukrainian socialist parties found themselves in the opposition to the Hetmanate's government because of its conservative liberal course, restrictions on democratic freedoms, and orientation toward large landowners.

It was illustrated that initially the Ukrainian parties tried to have influence on the government by the legal methods: through negotiations with the German command, memoranda, demands for the "Ukrainization" of the government and the creation of the representative bodies. At the same time, there intensified the ideological contradictions within the parties. The above-mentioned was especially acutely manifested in the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries, where occurred a split between the moderate current and the Borotbists, who advocated underground activities and an armed uprising. There were other parties, for example, USDLP, UPSF, UPSS, UDBP, which also criticized the Hetman's regime, but differed in the degree of radicalism and vision of the state development paths (pp. 116–117).

The analysis on the parties' attitude to the land reform had special place in the text. The very agrarian issue itself became the central topic of the political struggle and the party discourse. The Ukrainian socialist forces opposed the restoration of the landlord land ownership and criticized government bills as an attempt to preserve large estates and limit the peasant representation. There was supported the idea of creating small peasant property by moderate parties, but, those parties did not offer radical mechanisms for the forced alienation of the land mostly. Gradually, with the aggravation of the peasant uprisings and the crisis of power, even moderate forces began to lean towards the need for the forced redemption or liquidation of large latifundia (pp. 119–123).

The authors emphasized that the opposition to the Hetmanate in May-August 1918 remained relatively moderate and mostly loyal to the German occupation authorities. Its activities were reduced to the political pressure, public criticism of the government and attempts to influence the personnel composition of the Cabinet of Ministers. The Ukrainian National-State Union was established in order to coordinate actions, and later the Ukrainian National Union, which united a wider range of parties and public organizations. The above-mentioned formation turned into the centre of the anti-Hetman opposition gradually (pp. 124–125).

The final part of the chapter there was depicted the radicalization of opposition movement in the autumn of 1918. The defeat of the Central Powers in World War I and the weakening of the external support for the Hetmanate contributed to the transition of the opposition from the legal forms of activity to preparations for the overthrow of the regime. The leaders of the Ukrainian National Union focused on the change of power and the formation of a pro-Ukrainian government increasingly, and the land reform issue receded into the background gradually in comparison with the struggle for the political future of the Ukrainian state (pp. 126–127).

The authors studied the final stage of attempts regarding the implementation of the land reform in the Ukrainian State in the autumn of 1918, focusing on the activities of the new Minister of Land Affairs V. Leontovych, intra-governmental contradictions, and the gradual winding down of the reform process against the backdrop of the general political crisis of the Hetmanate in *Chapter 9* "Attempt to Reanimate Land Reform".

P. Skoropadsky managed to retain control over the formation of the Cabinet of Ministers after the October government crisis, although some representatives of the Ukrainian National Union were included in the government. At the same time, the UNS remained in opposition to the Hetman's power. The authors emphasized that even a partial renewal of

the government did not eliminate the main problem – the lack of public compromise on the agrarian policy (p. 130).

The focus was on the role of the German general W. Groener, who considered the land reform as the key condition for stabilizing Ukraine. It was emphasized that the reform should not have been carried out according to the socialist scenario of the Central Rada, but through the preservation of the private property and the formation of a strong peasant economy. Hence, the authors stated that even the German military political leadership realized the impossibility of the regime's further existence without resolving the land issue.

The activities carried out by V. Leontovych as Minister of Land Affairs were the highlighted in the fragment extensively. The authors characterized him as a supporter of moderate but decisive agrarian reform aimed at the liquidation of large latifundia and the creation of a layer of wealthy peasantry. The Minister directly acknowledged the abnormality of the excessive concentration of the land in the hands of large owners and allowed the possibility of the forced alienation of estates in an interview with the press. At the same time, he remained a supporter of private ownership of the land and evolutionary reform of the agrarian relations (pp. 131–133).

In detail the authors traced the contradictions between the reformist intentions of V. Leontovych and the position of conservative landowner circles. The All-Ukrainian Union of Landowners actually blocked the work of a special land meeting and opposed the forced alienation of landlord lands (p. 134). In the text there was presented the process of division within the agricultural environment itself between large landlords and supporters of democratic agrarianism, who supported the restriction of large landownership and the development of small and medium-sized peasant farms.

The analysis on the legislative developments of the last weeks of the Hetmanate's existence played a vital role. A reform project was developed, with the participation of Ye. Chykalenko, V. Kosynskyi, K. Vobly and the others, which provided for the forced purchase of large estates by the state through the State Land Bank with the subsequent sale of the land to the peasants in small plots (p. 132). However, the authors emphasized that the above-mentioned project had been never considered by the government due to the rapid aggravation of the political situation.

The psychological and political change in the behaviour of P. Skoropadsky was especially emphasized. If at the end of October the Hetman still demonstrated interest in completing the reform, then after the defeat of Germany and the beginning of the search of the alliance with the anti-Bolshevik Russia, his attention completely switched to the issues on preserving the state power. The authors considered this to be one of the key moments in the actual winding up of the land reform.

The agrarian reform had lost any real prospects for implementation by November 1918. Although the State Land Bank, land commissions and a number of draft laws were created, the state was unable to form a sufficient land fund to provide the peasants with the land. The lack of political will for the forced alienation of the landlord latifundia made the reform virtually unviable.

The authors also drew attention to the structural problem of the land shortage in Ukraine. According to V. Kosynskyi and other agrarian specialists that even a complete redistribution of large land holdings could not solve the land scarcity issue radically. The above-mentioned enabled the authors to go beyond the limits of a purely political analysis and show the objective economic limitations of agrarian reform. (p. 138).

In conclusion, the scholars concluded that the main reason for the failure of the Hetmanate's land policy was the contradiction between the evolutionary model of reform and the revolutionary expectations of the peasantry. P. Skoropadsky's desire for a compromise between large landowners and small-land peasants turned out to be unfeasible under the conditions of the revolution, social radicalization and the rapid collapse of the political system. Even the developed mechanisms of the reform remained mostly at the level of projects, and the Ukrainian State lost the opportunity to complete the agrarian transformations due to its own political crisis and the fall of the regime in December 1918 (p. 140).

It should be mentioned that the documentary sources involvement is of great scientific importance, for example, the government decrees, official correspondence, memoirs, materials from the periodical press and archival documents. It is the richness of the sources that ensured a high level of argumentation of the monograph. The authors were not limited to the declarative evaluations, but seek to confirm their conclusions with the specific documentary evidence.

The style of the monograph combines academic restraint with a sufficiently expressive author's position. One can feel the desire of the scholars to revise the traditionally negative evaluations of the Hetmanate, characteristic of the Soviet historiography, and to show the reformist potential of the government of P. Skoropadsky. At the same time, this desire does not turn into an uncritical apology, since in the monograph there is a sufficient focus on the internal contradictions of the agrarian policy and its practical miscalculations.

In the conclusions of the monograph, the authors concluded that P. Skoropadsky's land reform failed due to the inability to overcome the antagonism between the right of the private property and the land hunger of the peasantry under the foreign occupation. The monograph written by Ruslan Pyrih and Roman Tymchenko is the role model in the scientific publication, which, owing to the combination of in-depth analysis and the publication of the unique documents (Part II), fills a significant gap in the history of the Ukrainian State in 1918.

The article was received November 08, 2025.

Article recommended for publishing 30/05/2026.

This article is available under the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license