Andrii Zhyviuk

ORCID: 0000-0002-9031-880X
I. Krypiakevych Institute of Ukrainian Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Ukraine
E-mail: derzhy60@gmail.com
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Anti-bolshevik Insurgencies in Vohlynia in 1919–1920

Abstract

The study examines the resistance of the population of Vohlynia against the Bolshevik government from the spring of 1919 to the fall of 1920. The author carried out a heuristic search for documents (archival-criminal cases) opened by the employees of the All-Russian Emergency Commission (Vserossiyskaia odzhdenskaia komisia – vchK, in Russian) in the Sectoral State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine in Rivne, which reveal the specified topic, systematized and analyzed them. On the basis of the narrative synthesized from archival and criminal cases, the author came to the conclusion that the Cheka’s repressions against the participants of anti-Bolshevik insurgencies had an illegal, brutal, chaotic character, systematically violated elementary human rights, and not only the participants of the anti-Bolshevik uprisings, but also ordinary civilians became their victims. At the same time, the scope and implacability of anti-Soviet demonstrations in Vohlynia in 1919–1920, together with the actions of regular Ukrainian and Polish military units, delayed the establishment of the Bolshevik regime there for twenty years. The discussed topic can become the subject of a separate multi-faceted study on the...
basis of the considered documentary array originating from the departmental archives of the Ukrainian special services.

**Keywords**

Vohlynia, anti-Bolshevik demonstrations, the Polish-Soviet war, the Cheka, repressions

One of the main consequences of the First World War was the collapse of four empires – Austro-Hungarian, German, Russian and Turkish. As a result, more than ten new national states emerged, including the Polish Republic (PR) and the Ukrainian People’s Republic (UNR). At the same time, power in Russia after the overthrow of the tsarist regime was seized by the Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin, who raised the slogan of world communist revolution. With this slogan, they tried to spread their power on the territory of the former Russian Empire and conquer new neighboring states.

From the end of 1917 to the end of 1919, Soviet Russia twice attacked the Ukrainian People’s Republic, forcing its government and army to retreat to the western borders of its state. Bolshevik troops entered the territory of Vohlynia at the end of May 1919, when units of the Army of the Ukrainian People’s Republic left it. On the other hand, Polish troops came to Western Volhynia, and on August 9, 1919, they pushed the Bolsheviks out of Dubno, and on August 14, from Ostrog. The UNR army in Vohlynia and Podillia found itself in the so-called “triangle of death”.

It should be noted that Vohlynia (a historical and cultural region in the north-west of modern Ukraine) from the end of the 10th century, belonged to the Kyivan state. At the end of the 12th–the middle of the 14th century, it was a part of the Galicia-Vohlynia Principality. In the 14th–16th centuries, it was part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In 1566, the Vohlynia Voivodeship was formed – an administrative-territorial unit of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. After the Partitions of Poland at the end of the 18th century, the Vohlynia Province was formed as part of the Russian Empire, as the third most populous in the state, which covered
the territory west of Kyiv up to the border with Austria-Hungary. During the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921, the Vohlnia land entered the UNR. Faced with the threat of defeat, the leadership of the Ukrainian People’s Republic led by Symon Petliura signed the Warsaw Pact on April 21–24, 1920 with Poland, which was under the leadership of Józef Piłsudski. The treaty consisted of political and military conventions and envisaged, in addition to territorial demarcations (Eastern Galicia and Western Volhynia were to go to Poland), a joint struggle with Bolshevik Russia. From the Polish and Ukrainian sides, the main goal of this war was to defend the independence of their states. Meanwhile, Soviet Russia sought to break through the Republic of Poland to the German state in order to capture it and from there spread the communist revolution throughout the world.

On April 25, 1920, the combined Polish-Ukrainian armed forces crossed the Zbruch River and in several weeks of fighting knocked out the Red Army units from Right Bank Ukraine, capturing Kyiv on May 7, 1920. However, in mid-May, an offensive of the Soviet troops began, which lasted until the end of the summer of 1920. Vohlnia and Polissia were the main arena of military-political confrontation at that time.

In addition to the hostilities that took place on the territory of Vohlnia in the spring and autumn of 1920 between the Polish-Ukrainian army and the Red Army, the region was engulfed in a wave of uprisings, mainly anti-Soviet. The vast majority of the multi-ethnic population of the region, having received a negative experience of relations with the Bolshevik authorities in 1918–1919 (Numerous lootings and requisitions of property and food, killings of the civilian population), expressed active or passive resistance to its return. Accordingly, in the immediate rear of the Red Army, which invaded Volhynia and Polissia from the beginning of the summer of 1920 by the forces of the Western and South-Western Fronts, in particular the 12th and 1st Cavalry Armies, a wide field of activity for the Bolshevik punitive bodies arose. In particular, it was the Special Department of the All-Russian Emergency Commission (vchk), whose structural subdivisions were part of the specified armies and fronts.
Studies characterizing the 1919–1920 clash of the Vohlynia population with the Bolshevik government and its punitive bodies make up a relatively insignificant historiographical segment. In contrast to the coverage of the peasant insurgent movement and the opposition to it by the Cheka bodies in the Dnipro region and the South of Ukraine (Mytrofanenko, 2016; Shyshko, 2019), we find only isolated works about the anti-Bolshevik uprisings in Vohlynia during this period (Demianchuk, 1995; 1997). The directory of R. Davydiuk (2023) contains biographies of individual participants of these uprisings. The peasant movement in Vohlynia during the period of the Ukrainian Central Council and the Hetmanate of Pavlo Skoropadskyi was analyzed by V. Haynalii (2005), however, the upper chronological limit of the study is the spring of 1919. As for the activity of the Cheka structures in Vohlynia and Polissia, it is covered in fragments only in biased publications of the Soviet period (Golynkov, 1986; Zakaliuk, 1988). On the other hand, through the prism of the activities of Polish police authorities, O. Razyhrayev (2011) examined the situation in Vohlynia in 1919–1920, which, however, is not the subject of our study.

Cheka Special Department, “a body for combating espionage, treason and other counter-revolutionary crimes in units and institutions of the RSChA”, was created on December 19, 1918 by a decision of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (Central Committee of the RCP(b)). Its functions were defined as protection of power, provision of revolutionary conquests and, only in the third place, counter-intelligence. Mykhailo Kedrov (January – August 1919), Feliks Dzierżyński (August 1919 – July 1920) and Vyacheslav Menzhynskyi (July 1920 – July 1922) alternately headed the Special Cheka Department (Zabava, 2013).

The staff of the army Special Cheka Department consisted of 32 employees. A military unit numbering 150–180 people was seconded to it. The organization of the “fight against counter-revolution, espionage, speculation and official crimes” in divisions, brigades and separate regiments was carried out by the authorized army Special Cheka Department, who had a small apparatus of employees under their command. According to the orders of the army Special Cheka Department, checkpoints (CPP) or military
checkpoints (VKP) were established on the ground, which were based in large settlements in the front zone of the respective army.

From December 1919 to November 1921, he was the head of the Western Front Special Cheka Department. Pylyp Medvid, especially Jan Olski (Kułakowski) worked as special representatives of this department, Myron Vladimirov (Sheinfinkel) and Roman Pillar (Baron Romuald Ludwig Pillar von Pilhau), cousin of Dzierżyński. The Special Cheka Department of the 12th Army was headed by Zynovii Katsnelson. Mykola Skrypnyk was in charge of the Central Committee of the Cheka of the South-Western Front, Andrii Dizhbit was the head of the Special Cheka Department of the 1st Cavalry Army from May 1920.

The fact that they had their own seals and forms of warrants for the right to search and arrest, their own investigative apparatus, broad powers to apply the death penalty, conducted foreign intelligence activities through their foreign branch, carried out military censorship, and were tasked with to oppose “political banditry” (i.e., the insurgent movement).

As for the death penalty, it was abolished by the resolution of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (CEC) and the Council of People’s Commissars (RCC) on January 17, 1920, but returned by the order of the Revolutionary Military Council of the RSFSR on May 4, 1920 on the introduction of revolutionary military tribunals. According to the decree of the Central Committee dated May 22, 1920, “On the procedure for the execution of sentences up to the highest degree of punishment by the provincial revolutionary tribunals in the areas where martial law has been declared, as well as in the areas where the power of the revolutionary fronts extends”, the convicted was deprived of the right to appeal and pardon, and the death penalty was carried out immediately (Holynkov, 1986).

On February 21, 1920, Izvestia VTsIK published the appeal of the Special Cheka Department “To all citizens of the Soviet Republic”. The Cheka called on “workers, Red Army soldiers, communists and all citizens to come to its aid in the fight against the enemies of the Soviet Republic and, regardless of form and presentation, to send information about all observed cases where espionage, malicious sabotage, treason can be suspected, as well as about all other
actions of secret enemies of the republic aimed at undermining the power of the Red Army” (Zabava, 2013).

Thus, prerequisites were created for whistle-blowing, the spread of the practice of seksotstvo (Russian: secret cooperation) among the population, which led to mass arrests and massacres of opponents of the Bolshevik government, and often of innocent people who committed crimes against the Cheka.

The State Archive of the Rivne Region, the archival subdivision of the Security Service of Ukraine in the Rivne Region, stores archival and criminal cases (ACC) on persons arrested and convicted or released in 1919–1920, Special Department of the Cheka on the territory of the Rivne, Ostrog and Dubno counties of the Vohlynia province. We discovered the ACC for the 121st person (1919–10, 1920–111). Some of them were initiated and investigated by the Special Cheka Department of the 12th Army of the Western Front, some by a similar department of the 1st Cavalry Army of the Southwestern Front, some by the provincial and transport departments of the Cheka. These archival files that make it possible to trace the anti-Bolshevik demonstrations in Vohlynia in 1919–1920 and the fate of their participants.

We learn from the ACC that 45 arrested were later released, 24 were shot and killed (or killed while escaping) (see Table 1), 26 were sent to a concentration camp, 11 were sent outside the front, four were sent to the RTSCHA, three were sent to a penal battalion, two teenagers – to an orphanage, two were sent to the rear provinces of Russia, one was imprisoned in a house of forced labor, and the case of one was sent for additional verification. The national composition of detainees looks is as follows: Poles and Ukrainians – 45, respectively, Russians – 13, Jews – 9, Belarusians and Czechs – 2, respectively, Ingush – 1, while the nationality of individual prisoners has not been established. Of the 121 arrested, there were 16 women, and two of them were shot to death. We will discuss the stories of some of the prisoners of the Bolshevik regime in more detail, mainly those who were sentenced to be shot.

The first on this list is the Orthodox priest from the village of Skala, Kyiv province, a native of the village of Nevirkiv, Rivne district, graduate of the Vohlynia theological seminary, Anatolii Senitskyi, who was shot on June 1, 1920, by order of the Special
Cheka Department of the 1st Cavalry Army. On a regular sheet of paper, the head of the Special Cheka department, Dizhbit frantically wrote with a red pencil: “Having considered the case of the priest Senitskyi and found out that Senitskyi, a staunch enemy of the Soviet government, sympathizing with the Poles, could facilitate the organization of insurgent gangs. It has been decided to subject Senitskyi to the highest punishment – execution” (Senitskyi case file, sheet 8 zv.). The head of the Special Department entrusted the immediate execution of the sentence to “Comrade P. Uime” (Senitskyi case file, cover of the case file).

It is worth emphasizing that the case of priest A. Senitskyi’s case consists of eight sheets (description of the case, several protocols, conclusion), filled in illegible handwriting with normal and red pencils (Senitskyi’s case file). Such cases are the majority among the discovered Cheka files. Let us add that A. Dizhbit, was the first head of the main police department of Soviet Russia, later transferred to the People’s Commissariat of Foreign Trade, lived to a ripe old age, and he wrote and published his memoirs of an “old Bolshevik” in Riga (Dizhbit, 1957).

In the summer of 1920, employees of the Special Cheka Department of the 12th Army discovered and arrested the participants of anti-Soviet uprisings that took place in the summer of 1919 in the Rivne district. During one of them, the rebels, led by Yukhym Stepanovych, occupied the city of Kostopil and held it under their control for three days, disarming the workers’ militia. Next, the party of Yu. Stepanovych went to the Tuchyn Volost to unite with other forces and prepare an offensive on Rivne. The Kostopil Regional Committee sent of its leader, Lobach, for help to the city of Sarny. Together with a detachment of Red Army soldiers, he returned to Kostopil in an armored train. After a fierce battle, the anti-Bolshevik uprising was suppressed, its leaders were arrested and shot by order of the Rivne regional revolutionary headquarters on July 29, 1919.

The text of the sentence read: “Announcement No. 7 of the military revolutionary headquarters of the Rivne District in the city of Rivne and Rivne County. It is announced to the population that the Revolutionary Military Staff, which stands in defense of the proletarian revolution, having considered the case of traitors, provocateurs
and leaders of the Kurkul armed uprising against the Soviet government, who organized a mutiny in the first days of July in the area of Kostopil Volost by means of deception, decided: a citizen of the village of Velyka Liubasha Yukhym Ivanovych Stepanovych, a citizen of the same village Khoma Andriovych Nekhin and a citizen of the village Pidluzhne, Oleksii Romanovych Pochynok should be shot immediately” (Namozov, 2013, p. 10).

Some of the associates of Yu. Stepanovych were arrested by the Cheka. Among them we find Lavrentii Servetnyk, who headed the sanitary unit of Stepanovich’s detachment. Later, in 1928–1930, he was an ambassador to the Sejm, and in 1929–1933, he worked as a vice burgomaster of Kostopil (Servetnyk case file, sheets 15, 59; Davydiuk, 2023). In 1919, L. Servetnyk was released from custody due to the fact that he saved the life of one “red” sailor.

The fate of Konstantyn Dmukhovskyi, who was forced by Stepanovich’s rebels to serve as a telegraph operator at the Kostopil station, was different. He was arrested by the Cheka of the 12th Army on August 26, 1920. In the conclusion of the case file, the investigator wrote:

Kostyantyn Dmukhovskyi was arrested by the insurgents during their capture in 1919 as a Bolshevik, according to a false denunciation ... in Kostopil and sentenced to be shot, but in view of the fact that local citizens and railway workers vouched for him ..., the rebels agreed to release him on the condition that he, as a telegraph operator, would serve Kostopil district”. K. Dmukhovskyi agreed and “became an assistant to Stepanovych, chieftain of the Petliura gang, wrote passes, kept money, issued orders.

After the defeat of the uprising, before the establishment of the Polish government, the telegrapher hid in the surrounding villages, from where he sent letters to his lover. It is from the letters of K. Dmukhovskyi, involved in the case, the investigator concluded that “he was waiting for the arrival of Petliura” in order to take a responsible position. The investigator accused him of occupying the position of assistant commandant of the Kostopil district and, “according to the opinions expressed ... in his letters”, K. Dmukhovskyi
was a “counter-revolutionary”. According to the conclusion of the investigator, the head of the Special Cheka Department Z. Katzenelson put the resolution: “I consider applying to citizen Dmukhovskyi a higher punishment as a proven counter-revolutionary, an enemy of the worker-peasant government.” On August 29, 1920, the board of the Special Cheka Department Committee under the Revolutionary Council of the 12th Army accused K. Dmukhovskyi “for service in the rebel forces with the desire to personally receive a proper position from Petliura and be a Polish gendarme” and decided to shoot him (Dmukhovskyi case file, sheet. 55). That is, his letters to his mistress served as the main evidence of guilt and the reason for the man’s execution by the Chekists.

The anti-Bolshevik uprisings of 1919 covered almost the entire territory of Vohlynia from east to west. In the east – Zviahel, Korets, Mezhyrichi – units under the leadership of Sokolovskyi, Stoyanovskyi, Pasichnyk, Palienko, Kolesnychenko and others took over. The commandant of Zviagel and Korets was lieutenant colonel of the tsarist army Mykola Modestov during these uprisings, who was shot on November 6, 1920 in Zhytomyr by decision of the Committee of the Vohlynia provincial Cheka (Vitrenko, Vitrenko, 2011). In Korets, the uprising was led by a senior officer of the UNR Army, a local native, Oleksandr Herus. The insurgents took over the city and massacred the leadership of the Bolshevik Revolutionary Committee. Later, representatives of the Polish authorities allegedly offered O. Herus to take the position of head of the police station in Korets, but he refused. In 1923, O. Herus left for Argentina, but on the eve of the World War II he returned to Korets (Herus case file, sheets 4–5, 59–60; Davydiuk, 2023). Participants in the uprising led by M. Modestovych were also Stepan Yakymchuk. During the interwar period, the latter was a shopkeeper, at one time the deputy head of the Korets magistrate, and he later worked as a watchmaker (Yakymchuk file case; Davydiuk, 2023); Dmytro Yaroshynskyi, a cadet of the Ukrainian army, cooperated with the intelligence of the Ukrainian People’s Republic in the 1920s (Yaroshynskyi case file; Davydiuk, 2023); the Pole Albin Niedzielski repeatedly crossed the Polish-Soviet border in the 1920s, and was recruited by the oGPU (Niedzielski case file, sheets 8–11). All of them were punished by the Bolshevik regime.
by imprisonment even later. In 1940, O. Herus was executed on February 19, 1941 in Rivne. In the west of Vohlynia – in Radyvylov – the leader of the anti-Bolshevik uprising of 1919 was the staff captain of the Russian army, chieftain of the First Vohlynia Regiment of the Ukrainian People’s Republic Maksym Borovyj. Together with three hundred of the Ukrainian Galician army, he managed to establish control over the Dubno and Kremenets counties. In the interwar period, he lived in Radyvylov, engaged in agriculture. Arrested by the NKVD in 1940, he died in a camp (Borovyj case file; Bortnyk, 1997; Davydiuk, 2023). In Dubno, the uprising in the summer of 1919 was led by the district commandant Osavul Petriv, the commander of a separate sotnia, lieutenant Mykhailo Nikolaev (arrested by the Special Cheka Department of the 1st Cavalry Army, killed during an escape attempt on September 1, 1920) (Nikolayev case file), officers of the tsarist army, Czech brothers Volodymyr and Serhii Serkhal, residents of the village of Obhiv, father Fedir (killed in 1922 by a shot through the window by unknown persons) and son Ivan Basmat (he served as a non-commissioned officer of the Leopard submarine in the Baltic Sea navy, and later worked as a blacksmith in his village, arrested in 1940, died in camp) (Basmat case file, sheets 45–53), et al. After the occupation of Dubno, the rebels sent a delegation for negotiations with the command of the Polish troops in Lutsk, to whom the city was surrendered (Basmat case file, sheets 114–115). The resistance, caused by the atrocities of the Red Army of the 44th Soviet Division, was also organized by Czech colonists from the village of Myrohoshcha (Demianchuk, 1995). The uprising in the town of Kuniv, Ostroh District, which began on July 1, 1919, was led by a teacher, Hryhoriy Saikovych. The peasant regiment was commanded by another teacher from the neighboring village of Novomalyna, Melnyk. The negotiations conducted by the Ostroh revolutionary committee with the rebels were not successful: they opposed communism and demanded the disarmament of the Ostroh garrison. A guard battalion was sent to pacify then, but it was defeated in battle. Later, help arrived from Iziaslav – 150 soldiers, but the garrison together with them had to leave Ostroh and stopped in the village of Velbivnyi. Here the Red Army men were surrounded by
peasants and disarmed. The Zhytomyr headquarters sent military units from Dubno there to fight the “counter-revolution”: “The next day, the Taraschan division arrived, which dealt with the rebels with all severity. The 5th Taraschan regiment entered the city of Ostroh, and there was silence” (Demianchuk, 1997, pp. 8–9).

In 1919, Ivan Hrek, a resident of the village of Obariv in the Rivne district, became the leader of the peasant uprising against the Bolshevik government and its requisitions in the vicinity of Rivne. Under his leadership, an attack on the city of Rivne was being prepared. The surrounding villages were divided into three rebel districts: I. Hrek himself was the first to command. The second was commanded by the head of a children’s shelter in the village of Shpaniv (apparently, he was an instructor of the Ministry of Education of the Ukrainian People’s Republic, in the interwar period, Petro Zinchenko, a drawing teacher of the Polish seven-year school in Rivne) (Davydiuk, 2023). The third one was Stepan Mykytskyi, a resident of the village of Basiv Kut. In Basiv Kut itself, the organizer of the peasant resistance was Hryhorii Kozub, who sent out appeals and orders under the signature “Zhelezniak” (in the 1920s and 1930s, he worked in the commune self-government and magistrate of Rivne) (Davidyuk, 2023). The insurgents attacked the village of Horodok, where they disarmed a machine gun team. Later, they marched on Rivne, but failed and were scattered (Chepyk case file, sheet 222).

A year later, in July-August 1920, the 12th Army’s Special Cheka Department arrested Tikhon Chepyk from Tynne, Ivan Hrypych from Kamianna Hora, Pavlo Zdanyvych from Dvirets, Stepan Mykytskyi and Stepan Shyshko from Basiv Kut, Mykhailo Isachenko and Petro Kozub from Rivne, and Feodosii and Yakiv Kundush from Kustyn. As a result of the investigation, according to the decision of the Committee of the Special Cheka Department at the Revolutionary Council of the 12th Army (headed by Z. Katznelson) of September 13, 1920, the first four were shot, the others were released (Chepyk case file, sheet 225).

For participating in the uprising, the 12th Army’s Special Cheka Department also arrested residents of the village of Horodok: forest guard at Baron Steingel’s estate Petro Prystupa, peasant Petro Koli- miets, head of the volost land department Samuil Danyliuk, and
a resident of Rivne, a forester at the Rivne forestry Kostiantyn Kostrub. On September 11, 1920, the first two were imprisoned in the Kyiv concentration camp for the entire period of the Civil War (Pristupa case file, sheets 42–44), while other two were released from custody on September 14, 1920 (Danyliuk case file, sheet 63).

Interestingly, a pack (70 pieces) of brochures by Ivan Khliborob entitled “Land Law in Poland” found on a shelf in the pantry was confiscated from Danyliuk. The brochure referred to the law adopted on July 16, 1919, by the constituent assembly (Sejm) in Warsaw that adopted a land law that provided for the right of the state to buy out former German landowners’ property at fixed prices and to immediately divide it among small-scale peasants on facilitated terms. This law was opposed to the Bolshevik reforms aimed at the appropriation of land by confiscating it from large owners. The author of the pamphlet emphasized that the transfer of land to peasants announced by the Bolsheviks without establishing an appropriate mechanism led to looting and arbitrary seizures. It was suggested that Ukraine convene its own constituent assembly, which would adopt a land law modeled on the Polish one (Danyliuk case file, sheets 38–41).

Anti-Soviet insurgencies continued in the vicinity of Rivne in the villages of Basiv Kut, Dvorets, Tynne, Kustyn, and others in 1920. They created the conditions for the concentration of Ukrainian insurgent groups led by atamans Ivan Treiko, Yevhen Kovbasiu, and Hryhorii Shcherbaniuk after the 1921 Riga Peace Treaty between Soviet Russia and Poland. These insurgent formations served as a springboard for the upcoming Second Winter Campaign of the UPR Army to restore Ukrainian statehood, secretly supported by the Polish side. Later, in 1924, the book Z poliakamy proty Vkrainy [With the Poles Against Ukraine] a Chekist assessment of the situation around Rivne in 1921, attributed to Ataman Yurko Tiutiunnyk was cited: “The most impudent and vile ataman’s company gathered in the area” (Tiutiunnyk, 1924, p. 50).

In order to carry out repressions, the Cheka often used or provoked the discontent of the local population against certain individuals. Manipulating the “people’s will”, they used repressive instruments at every opportunity. This can be seen in the case of Nykyfor Kuznets,
a senior officer of the Liubykovytse volost in the Rivne district, who was arrested by the Cheka.

The verdict of the Strilske village community of August 22, 1920, reads: Nykyfor Kuznets “was a village elder under the provisional government, a volost elder under Petliura, a volost head under the Bolshevik Communists last year, and finally a starosta under the Poles. Each time he was elected by the people at a general volost meeting, not appointed by the authorities. Therefore, we believe that if he really did not meet the requirements of the election and was a harmful person to society, it is clear that he would not have been able to be elected so many times to such an important public service in this difficult time” (Kuznets case file, sheet 15). The village assembly of Strilsk asked to release N. Kuznets from custody, which was signed by 40 participants of the meeting. They were joined by 33 residents of the village of Liubykovychi. A similar verdict acquitting N. Kuznets was vouched for on August 22, 1920, by 34 residents of the village of Zaluzhzhzhia in the Liubykovychi parish (Kuznets case file, sheets 15–19).

At the same time, 33 participants of the general meeting of the village of Kolky of the same parish recognized N. Kuznets as a “Cain” and a “bloodsucker” because he allegedly helped the Poles in the massacre of peasants who participated in the Dubrovytsia Bolshevik armed uprising of 1918–1919 against the UPR Directory. A meeting in Kolky, held on September 3, 1920, decided to punish N. Kuznets for his actions. The Liubykovytsi Revolutionary Committee certified the decision made in Kolky on September 5, and the regional branch of the Cheka received it on September 10. N. Kuznets was shot by the commandant of the post, Barut, on the night of September 3 to 4, 1920, according to the verdict of the head of the Cheka in Sarny, Paller (Kuznets case file, sheets 26–29).

The adoption and execution of sentences against persons accused of “counterrevolution” by the Cheka was arbitrary and uncontrolled. An investigator of the 1st Special Department of the Regional Cheka at the 44th Division of the 12th Army accused a private trader from Kostopil, Nikodym Yakhymovych, of “serving as a Polish spy” and “a secret agent of the gendarmerie”. On this basis, on July 27, 1920, the investigator decided “to apply the death penalty to N. Yakhymovych.
On July 30, a telegram “Pluh” was sent to Kyiv to the head of the 12th Army’s Special Cheka Department, which read: “Permission to shoot Nykodym Yakhimovich, accused of serving as a Polish spy for the gendarmerie, bribery, beating civilians, and extraditing communists to the Poles.” Since no response was received to the first telegram, a second one was sent. Eventually, Kyiv was informed that N. Yakhymovych was shot on August 7, 1920, for attempting to escape (Yakhymovych case file, sheets 26–27).

Denunciations accusing people of collaborating with the Polish authorities, spying for the Poles, or serving in the Polish police were often the basis for reprisals against certain people. The victims of such accusations were usually local Polish residents. A striking example of the use of such denunciations by Bolshevik repressive authorities is the conviction of Maria Żołędziewska and Kazimiera Puchalska.

On September 8, 1920, on the denunciation of a resident of the city of Rivne Yegor Mikhalov, the women were arrested by the Special Cheka Department at the Revolutionary Military Council of the 12th Army. In his statement of August 29, 1920, addressed to the Cheka officer Denitskyi, Ye. Mikhalov said:

I, a citizen of the city of Rivne, was arrested by the Polish authorities on the statement of two Polish spies who said that I was a future communist and took an active part in Bolshevism. For which I was arrested by the Polish authorities and sentenced to death. But, thanks to a kind officer, I was able to get out of there. I would like to inform you of this and consider it my duty to bring such people to justice as Polish spies who deserve the highest form of punishment. Signed by Yegor Mikhalov.

In Ye. Mikhalov’s denunciation, the Cheka officer made a note: “According to the information, he was reported by Żołędziewska and Puchalska, who live near the brickyard (the information is accurate, collected from communist comrades)” (Lewandowski case file, sheet 59).

A slightly different picture of events emerges from the interrogation report of Ye. Mikhalov of September 14, 1920. Yegor Mikhalev, 33 years old, Belarusian, turner, literate, a native of the
Mstyslav district of the Mohylev region, a resident of the city of Rivne, married, worked as a policeman in the 2nd district, non-partisan, testified: “I had just entered a car repair shop under the Poles. One day I was walking down Shosova Street near the brick factory, where Maria Żołądziewska was standing with Puchalska and a Polish soldier. Żołądziewska told the soldier that an ardent Bolshevik had just passed by who was looking forward to the arrival of the Bolsheviks, pointing to me. He arrested me and took me to the barracks to an officer who soon interrogated me and released me, thanks to which I was saved. If I had been caught by the police, I probably would not have gotten out. Żołądziewska knew me for a long time, as I had visited them when she lived at my father-in-law’s. Sometimes, in a close circle, I often expressed my wish for the Bolsheviks to come. So, she knew my views” (Lewandowski case file, sheet 61).

As can be seen from the protocol, neither Żołądziewska nor Puchalska had any relation to Polish intelligence (espionage); on the contrary, the former was a good friend of the applicant (she lived with at father-in-law’s), no one was going to shoot him (a Polish officer released Mikhalov), and the story of the shooting was nothing more than his speculation (“if I had been caught by the police, I would not have gotten out”).

foto 1. Rivne residents Edmund and Maria Żołądzewski with children. Source: HDA SBU, Rivne, f. 5(R), spr. P-10147.
Nevertheless, on September 14, 1920. 28-year-old Maria Żołądzewska, a native of the town of Zegrze, Warsaw province, wife of Russian army soldier Edmund Żołądziewski, mother of 2 children, and 40-year-old Kazimiera Puchalska, a native of the city of Częstochowa, Piotrków province, mother of 3 children, were sentenced to death by the decision of the Special Department the Revolutionary Military Council of the 12th Army “in frontline conditions”. These “in frontline conditions” were the retreat of Soviet troops that began in late August 1920. The decree was signed by the head of the 12th Army’s Special Cheka Department, Z. Katznelson, and senior investigator Kruchynin. A copy of the resolution was sent to the commandant of the 12th Army’s Special Cheka Department for execution (Lewandowski case file, sheet 66).

foto 2. Director of the 1st Cavalry Army theatrical group, Yefim Gerasimov. 
HDA SBU, Rivne, f. 4(R), spr. 559.
It should be added that Z. Katznelson made a career in the Cheka, from the spring of 1933 he worked as the head of the Kharkiv regional department of the State Political Administration (Russian: Gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie, GPU). In January 1934, Katznelson became deputy head of the GPU of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic (USSR), and in July of the same year he became deputy people’s commissar of internal affairs of the USSR. In 1935, he was promoted to the special rank of State Security Commissioner of the 2nd rank. However, in the course of the “purge” of the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs (Russian: Narodnyy komissariat vnutrennikh del, NKVD) on July 17, 1937, he was removed from all positions and arrested from the old cadres, and on March 10, 1938, he was shot. In the wake of the political situation to eliminate the consequences of Stalin’s personal cult, he was rehabilitated in 1957 (Petrov and Skorkin, 1999). The Security Service of Ukraine included Z. Katznelson in the list of organizers of the Holodomor (List of Holodomor Organizers).

The ACCs we studied and analyzed contain a much wider range of documents in addition to information about the “counterrevolutionary, anti-Soviet, espionage, sabotage, and subversive activities” of the arrested persons (in other words, their active or passive resistance to the Soviet government, as evidenced by arrest warrants, interrogation protocols, and agent reports). In particular, these are various documents certifying a person or their activities (passport books, certificates, certificates) issued by Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian authorities; personal correspondence, diaries, notebooks, postcards, photographs; seals and stamps of various institutions, such as the Cheka, revolutionary committees, volost and district authorities, school and religious institutions; banknotes (e.g., shahs), securities; photographs of the repressed and other individuals. These artifacts can be the subject of study in special historical disciplines such as prosopography, diplomacy, epistology, sfragistics, bonistics, and photographic documentary studies.

For example, there is the case of Heorhii Syvodiet, who was born on August 25, 1889, in the village of Pełczyska, Pińczów district, Kielce province. H. Syvodiet graduated from the University of Warsaw, and in 1920 he worked as a mathematics teacher at the Zdolbuniv
8th-grade mixed gymnasium (Syvodiet case file, sheet 29–29 zv.). On June 11, 1920, he was arrested and accused of spying for Poland. By the decree of the head of the 1st Cavalry Army’s Special Cheka Department, the aforementioned A. Dizhbit, on July 12, 1920, he was imprisoned in the concentration camp in Orel until the end of the war with Poland for forced labor (Syvodiet case file, sheets 30, 34).

The H. Syvodiet’s case file contains artifacts such as certificates with the stamp, seal, and facsimile of the directorate of the Zdolbuniv Railway Gymnasium, a list of 7th grade students of the gymnasium, students’ math papers, Syvodiet’s legitimization for the right to stay outside the premises, a travel certificate for railway stations in Rivne and Rivne region, etc. (Syvodiet case file).

Conclusions The anti-Bolshevik uprisings in Vohlynia in 1919–1920 were massive and irreconcilable, due to the rejection of the Bolshevik government and its slogans by a large part of the population of the region, as well as outrages by Red Army soldiers, representatives of revolutionary committees, Soviet commissars, and Chekists. Due to their spontaneity and dispersion, these actions were often defeated. However, together with the actions of regular Ukrainian and Polish military units, they prevented the establishment of the Bolshevik regime in Western Volhynia and Polissia, leaving them for twenty years under the influence of the state and political factors of the Second Polish Republic.

The repressions carried out by the Cheka against participants in anti-Bolshevik action had an extrajudicial status and nature. The Cheka special departments systematically violated basic human rights, and their repressions were brutal and chaotic. The victims of these repressions were not so much armed opponents of the Bolshevik government, members of anti-Soviet organizations, but rather random civilians whose guilt was solely determined by the chiefs and investigators of the Cheka organizations on the basis of denunciations.

In addition, we note that this topic may be the subject of a separate multidisciplinary study based on the documentary material from the SBU’s HDA.
Table 1
Executed by shooting by the decision of Special Cheka Departments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of decision</th>
<th>Body which ordered the execution</th>
<th>Decision made</th>
<th>Names of the convicted</th>
<th>Date of execution</th>
<th>Other data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01.06.1920</td>
<td>Special Cheka Department of the 1st Cavalry Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Anatolii Senitskyi</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ukrainian, priest, Village of Skala, Kyiv Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.07.1920</td>
<td>Head of the Special Cheka Department of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Yosyp Mudryk</td>
<td>13.07.1920</td>
<td>Ukrainian, prison warden city of Rivne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.07.1920</td>
<td>head of Unit No. 4 Special Cheka Department of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Albert Ozdov</td>
<td>night of 23.07.1920</td>
<td>Ingush, police officer, Berezniv parish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.07.1920</td>
<td>head of Unit No. 4 Special Cheka Department of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Marian Renke</td>
<td>night of 23.07.1920</td>
<td>Pole, watchman, Karachun dacha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.07.1920</td>
<td>head of Unit No. 4 Special Cheka Department of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Stanislaw Juckiewicz</td>
<td>night of 23.07.1920</td>
<td>Pole, worker, Malynsk Forestry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.07.1920</td>
<td>head of Unit No. 4 Military Cheka Department of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Yustin Ivloha</td>
<td>night of 23.07.1920</td>
<td>Russian, police officer, Oleksandria, Kostopil city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.07.1920</td>
<td>Special Cheka Department of the 12th Army</td>
<td>killed while trying to escape</td>
<td>Mikhail Nikolaev</td>
<td>01.09.1920</td>
<td>Russian, assistant military commissar, city of Dubno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.07.1920</td>
<td>investigator of the 1st Unit of the Special Cheka Department at the 44th division of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Nikodym Yakhimovich</td>
<td>killed while trying to escape 07.08.1920</td>
<td>Belorussian, private trader, city of Kostopil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of decision</td>
<td>Body which ordered the execution</td>
<td>Decision made</td>
<td>Names of the convicted</td>
<td>Date of the execution</td>
<td>Other data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.08.1920</td>
<td>head of the 4th Unit of the Special Cheka Department of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Waclaw Wasilewski</td>
<td>night of 09.08.1920</td>
<td>Pole, estate forester, Tynne village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.08.1920</td>
<td>field officer of the 12th Army Cheka Department</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Mykhailo Sudak</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ukrainian, Volodymyrets, served in the Polish police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.08.1920</td>
<td>Head of the Command-and-Control Unit No. 3, Special Cheka Department of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Nykyfor Kuznets</td>
<td>night of 03.09.1920</td>
<td>Ukrainian, farmer, village of Strilsk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03.09.1920</td>
<td>Special Cheka Department Committee of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Semen Sviansytskyi (Święcicki)</td>
<td>04.09.1920</td>
<td>Pole, starosta, village of Ozery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.09.1920</td>
<td>Special Cheka Department of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Ostap Kravchuk</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ukrainian, carpenter, village of Strilsk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.09.1920</td>
<td>Special Cheka Department of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Tykhin Chepyk</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ukrainian, clerk, Tynne village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.09.1920</td>
<td>Special Cheka Department of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Ivan Hrypych</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ukrainian, police officer, city of Rivne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.09.1920</td>
<td>Special Cheka Department of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Stepan Mykytskyi</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ukrainian, farmer, village of Basiv Kut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of decision</td>
<td>Body which ordered the execution</td>
<td>Decision made</td>
<td>Names of the convicted</td>
<td>Date of the execution</td>
<td>Other data</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.09.1920</td>
<td>Special Cheka Department of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Pavlo Zdanevych</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Ukrainian, farmer, village of Dvorets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.09.1920</td>
<td>Special Cheka Department of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Maria Zhelundetska (Żołądziewska)</td>
<td>14.09.1920</td>
<td>Pole, housewife, city of Rivne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.09.1920</td>
<td>Special Cheka Department of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Kazimiera Puchalska</td>
<td>14.09.1920</td>
<td>Pole, housewife, city of Rivne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.09.1920</td>
<td>Cheka Committee of the Kyiv Province</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Mykhailo Borysov</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Ukrainian, farmer, village of Taikury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.09.1920</td>
<td>Special Cheka Department Committee of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Pavel Sergin</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Russian, Socialist Revolutionary, chairman of the volost revolutionary committee, village of Diadkovyvhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.09.1920</td>
<td>Special Cheka Department Committee of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Kostiantyn Dmukhovskyi</td>
<td>29.09.1920</td>
<td>Ukrainian, Station manager, town of Volodymyrets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.10.1920</td>
<td>Special Cheka Department Committee of the 12th Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Yefym Gerasimov</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Russian, theatrical director, 1st Cavalry Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03.11.1920</td>
<td>Special Cheka Department Committee of the 1st Cavalry Army</td>
<td>VMP – shooting</td>
<td>Georgiy Murga-Muravskyi</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Russian, clerk of the 51st radio station, 1st Cavalry Army</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table was compiled by the author on the basis of archival criminal cases:
HdA SBU, Rivne, f. 4, case file 559, 560, 563, 568;
HdA SBU, Rivne, f. 5, case file P-10066, P-10067, P-10068, P-10119, P-10126, P-10130, P-10131, P-10133, P-10134, P-10146, P-10147, P-10148, P-10202, P-11053;
DARo, f. R-2771, op. 2, case file 629.

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Sectoral State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine, Rivne (HDA SBU, Rivne)

Borysov case: The case of Mykhailo Borysov, accused of espionage. HDA SBU, Rivne, fond (f.). 5(r), sprava (case file) P-11053, 33 arkushy (sheets).
Chepyk case: The case against Tykhon Chepyk and others, 9 people in total. HDA SBU, Rivne, f. 4(r), case file 568, 225 sheets.

Danyliuk case: The case against Samuel Hryhorovych Danyliuk, Kostrub Konstantyn Kyrilovych. HDA SBU, Rivne, f. 5(r), case file P-955, 64 sheets.

Dmukhovskyi case: The case against Konstantyn Vlodymyrovych Dmukhovskyi. HDA SBU, Rivne, f. 5(r), case file P-10119, 36 sheets.

Gerasimov case: The case of the Special Department of the Revolutionary Military Council of the 1st Cavalry Army on charges of Red Army soldier Yefim Gerasimov of drunkenness and intention to lag behind the headquarters during the retreat from the city of Kryvyi Rih. Rivne: HDA SBU, Rivne, fond 4(r), case file 559, 37 sheets.

Herus case: The case against Oleksandr Oleksiyovych Herus under Art. 54 p. 13–1a of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian SSR. HDA SBU, Rivne, f. 4(r), case file 9941, 93 sheets.

Ivolha case: The case against Yustyn Polikarpovych Ivolha. HDA SBU, Rivne, f. 5(r), case file P-10126, 12 sheets.

Juckiewicz case: The case against Stanisław Juckiewicz. HDA SBU, Rivne, f. 5(r), case file P-10068, 20 sheets.

Kuznets case: The case against Nykyfor Yosifovych Kuznets. HDA SBU, Rivne, f. 4(r), case file 563, 32 sheets.

Lewandowski case: The case against Lewandowski W.I., Żołędziewska, Puchalska K.U. HDA SBU, Rivne, f. 5(r), case file P-10147, 70 sheets.

Mudyk case: The case of the Special Department of the Revolutionary Military Council of the 1st Cavalry Army on the charge of Mudryk Yosyp of beating arrested persons in Rivne prison. HDA SBU, Rivne, f. 4(r), case file 560, 12 sheets.

Murha case: The case of the Special Department of the Revolutionary Military Council of the 1st Cavalry Army on the charges of Heorgii Murha for his service in the Polish police. HDA SBU, Rivne, f. 5(r), case file P-10130, 16 sheets.

Niedzielski case: The case of accusing Albin Adamovych Niedzielski of crimes under Art. 54–13 of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian SSR. HDA SBU, Rivne, f. 4(r), case file 17671, 118 sheets.

Nikolayev case: The case of the Special Department of the Revolutionary Military Council of the 1st Cavalry Army on the charge of
Mikhail Nikolayev of serving in Denikin’s army. HDA SBU, Rivne, f. 5(р), case file P-1696, 46 sheets.

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Prystupa case: Prystupa and Petro Kolomiets case. HDA SBU, Rivne, f. 5(р), case file P-2552, 44 sheets.

Renke case: The case against Renke Marian. HDA SBU, Rivne, f. 5(р), case file P-10167, 19 sheets.

Sudak case: The case of Mykhailo Ivanovych Sudak, accused of serving the Polish police. HDA SBU, Rivne, f. 5(р), case file P-10133, 17 sheets.

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State Archives of Rivne Region (DARO)


Andrii Zhyviuk – PhD in History, Associate Professor, Doctoral Candidate at the I. Krypiakevych Institute of Ukrainian Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (Lviv), head of the scientific editorial group of the book Reabilitovani istoriieiu Rivenska oblast [Rehabilitated by history. Rivne region] (Rivne).

Researches the history of Ukraine and Vohlynia in the 20th century, the repressions of the communist totalitarian regime, and the history of the Soviet special services.