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СУСПІЛЬНО-ПОЛІТИЧНА АКТИВНІСТЬ СЕЛЯНСТВА УКРАЇНИ В 1917 р.

Анотація. *Мета дослідження* – з'ясувати причини, сутність та особливості суспільно-політичної активності українського селянства в 1917 р. **Методологія дослідження.** Дослідження спирається на принципи історизму, всебічності, об'єктивності та системності. Під час вивчення цієї теми авторами застосовано загальнонаукові (аналіз, синтез, елементи статистичного методу) та спеціально-історичні (проблемно-хронологічний, історико-типологічний, історико-системний) методи дослідження. **Наукова новизна** полягає в обґрунтуванні тези стосовно того, що активним суб'єктом суспільно-політичних процесів у 1917 р. в Україні стало селянство. **Висновки.** Зміни, що відбулися на

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початку 1917 р. у політичному житті держави, стали катализатором до активних дій селянства. Селяни вимагали кардинальних змін у землеволодінні/землекористуванні. Аграрна проблема загострилася протягом 1905–1907 рр. і у 1917 р. здетонувала вибух суспільно-політичної активності селянства. Вона виражалася у виступах селянства, організації селянських з'їздів, створенні селянських організацій, залученні до виступів робітників та солдат тощо. Протягом 1917 р. суспільно-політична активність селянства зазнавала змін. Кінець 1917 р. позначився її посиленням, що змусило уряд брати до уваги його потреби як активного учасника суспільно-політичного життя держави.

Ключові слова: українське селянство; Українська революція; суспільно-політична активність селянства; аграрна проблема.

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SOCIO-POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF THE PEASANTRY OF UKRAINE IN 1917¹

Summary. *The purpose of the study is to research the causes, nature, and features of the socio-political activity of the Ukrainian peasantry in 1917.*

Research methodology. *The study is based on the principles of historicism, comprehensiveness, objectivity, and systematicity. During the study of this topic, the authors used general scientific (analysis, synthesis, elements of the statistical method) and special-historical (problem-chronological, historical-typological, historical-systemic) research methods.*

The scientific novelty *lies in the substantiation of the thesis concerning the fact that the peasantry became an active subject of socio-political processes in 1917 in Ukraine.*

Conclusions. *The changes that took place in early 1917 in the political life of the state became a catalyst for the active actions of the peasantry, which required radical changes in land tenure/land use. The agrarian problem worsened during 1905–1907 and in 1917 detonated an explosion of socio-political activity of the peasantry. It was expressed in the speeches of the peasantry, the organization of peasant congresses, the creation of peasant organizations, the involvement of workers and soldiers in speeches, etc. During 1917 the socio-political activity of the peasantry underwent changes. The end of 1917 was marked by its strengthening, which forced the government to take into account the needs of the peasantry as an active participant in the socio-political life of the state.*

Key words: *Ukrainian peasantry; the Ukrainian revolution; socio-political activity of the peasantry; the agrarian problem.*

Formulation of the problem. The milestones of Ukrainian history in modern historical science attract the attention of many researchers. After all, they have a significant transformational impact on the future development of history. One of these is the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921. It became the historical phenomenon that summed up the nineteenth century and identified trends in the twentieth century. In general, the beginning of the twentieth century became a period of

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intertwining of two epochs: agrarian and modern. Therefore, we fully share V. Verstyuk's opinion that the events of the Ukrainian revolution are central to the modern history of Ukraine (Verstyuk, 2000).

Analysis of recent research and publications. It is well-established in modern historiography that socio-political activity of the peasantry during the Ukrainian Revolution became active in early 1918. In our opinion, the reason for this is successfully explained by O. Zhytkov, determining that socio-economic history is studied "dotted" in our state (Zhytkov, 2014, p. 13). At the same time, there is reason to say that the revolutionary activity of the peasantry began much earlier – in March 1917. Among others, we will also mention the works of Yu. Kotlyar (Kotliar, 2005), S. Kornovenko (Kornovenko & Pasichna, 2019), O. Gerasemenko (Herasymenko, 2007) and others.

The purpose of the article is to investigate the causes, nature and features of socio-political activity of the Ukrainian peasantry in 1917.

Statement of the main material. The aggravation of the agrarian question in the spring-autumn of 1917 was a consequence of the agrarian policy of the tsarist government officials. The coming to power of the Provisional Government did not improve the situation significantly. The peasants perceived the revolution as the end of the old order in general and the land in particular. They were confident that the Provisional Government would soon begin resolving the agrarian issue. However, government indecision led to peasant protests.

The active participation of the peasantry in the Ukrainian revolution determined its peasant character (Danilov, 2011). The agrarian issue has been in the centre of attention of the governments of the Russian Empire, various political parties, etc. since the second half of the nineteenth century. The peasant reforms of 1861 and the Stolypin reforms of 1906 became the starting point in resolving the agrarian issue. The February Revolution, caused by the previous stages of socio-economic and political development of the state, became a natural historical phenomenon. After the February Revolution of 1917, the solution of the agrarian issue became very important.

At the beginning of 1917, the peasantry of Dnieper Ukraine was in a difficult economic situation: high rents for land, low labour prices for acute scarcity of land, low incomes from agriculture and more (Igrijskiy, 1929). At the beginning of 1917, 2/3 of the rural population was employed in the agricultural sector. For example, in 1917, out of 31,214.5

thousand inhabitants of the nine Dnieper Ukrainian provinces, 24,237.3 thousand were peasants (77.7%) (Rybalka, 1987, p. 38).

Agrarian challenges worsened in 1902–1907 (Bartenev, 1996; Ramazanov, 1995, p. 5). The state was shaken by the peasant revolution (Sviashchenko, 2013; Ananich, 1997, pp. 136–140; Danilov, 1996, pp. 4–23; *Oktyabr 1917 g.*, 1998, p. 9; Dumbrovskiy, 1995; *Istoriya SSSR*, 1963; Leshchenko, 1977; Smirnov, 1979; Kornovenko & Herasymenko, 2017). According to estimates by Yu. Kotlyar, the peasants had 28 million des. of land, or 64% of the total economic land area. In the regional division, each peasant farm had: on the Right Bank – 5.4 des.; on the Left Bank – 6.8 des.; in the South – 8.5 des. (Kotliar, 2005). At the same time, the size of landed estates averaged 1.740 acres per estate (Malkin, 2009).

The reasons for the strengthening of socio-political activity of the peasantry in early 1917 were as follows: 1) the objective processes of establishing market relations in agriculture, for which the peasants were not ready; 2) the preservation of the remnants of landlord oppression, and especially the workings off, which were quite sensitive for the peasants. The most common were working off for land leased by peasants from landlords; 3) performance in favour of the landlords and the state of numerous in-kind and monetary duties. The most significant of these were redemption payments. Due to chronic insolvency, peasants from year to year underpaid 10, 20 percent or more of a certain amount of payment, which led to an increase in the amount of arrears; 4) non-yielding years, which were repeated in Russia with a frequency of 3–4 years (Herasymenko, 2007).

In our opinion, summarizing the data of historiographical and historical sources on the causes of the peasant uprisings of 1917, it is necessary to add the following: 1) deficit of labour in the countryside. About 4 million men in the countryside were mobilized into the army; 2) by the spring of 1917 a third of the peasants' horses had been requisitioned for the needs of the army (Malkin, 2009). The requisitions for food for the needs of the army legalized on November 29, 1916, also fell on the shoulders of the peasants (Motenko, 2005); 3) a sharp decrease in the supply of the countryside with agricultural equipment, machinery, such simple, but necessary for the peasants' tools such as sickles and scythes. At the beginning of 1917, every second peasant farm did not have arable tools; in addition, it was forced to hire working cattle,

because they also did not have their own (Motenko, 2005). 88.46% of the poor and middle peasants did not have enough land, 88.1% – working cattle, 84.2% – cows, 44.9% – equipment (Kutashev, 2002). If the landowner household had 17 horses and 24 head of cattle, then the poor had 1.2 horses and 1.5 head of cattle (Kutashev, 2002). S. Maslov, one of the leaders of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, considered the reason for the peasants' protests to be the peasantry's scarcity of land: "Land needs are all over the country" (Maslov, 1917, pp. 1–2). According to K. Kononenko's calculations, the landless and low-land peasantry of Ukraine made up a total of 78% (Kononenko, 1965).

Mobilization of the population, shortage of labour, tools, etc. have led to a sharp decline in crop capacity. For example, in Poltava province, compared with 1913, in 1917 the yield of rye in peasant farms decreased from 78 to 48 poods, winter wheat – from 97 to 37 poods, spring wheat – from 67 to 46 poods, barley – from 79 to 48, oats – from 80 to 52 poods, etc (Revehuk, 2002, p. 93). However, despite the decrease in yields on the territory of Ukraine in peasant households, the export of fodder and food for the needs of the army only increased.

In addition, peasant households had a low agricultural culture. Most of the land in peasant households was cultivated by three-field and multi-field systems and so on (Motenko, 2005). Land yields in peasant farms were half as low as in landlord and wealthy peasant farms. Due to this, the peasants were forced to rent arable land. For example, in the Kharkiv province, the rental price in early 1917 was 20 rubles 20 kopecks per dessiatin (Motenko, 2005).

According to the research of Yu. Kotlyar, V. Malkin and I. Kutashev, the property differentiation of peasant farms in 1917 was as follows:

Despite all the challenges of the peasantry that arose before him in early 1917, one of its main tasks, he saw the elimination of large landholdings. Large landowners, who accounted for 0.8% of the population, owned 40% of the total land fund, while 57.6% had a small and middle peasantry – 11.5% of the land fund.

At the beginning of 1917, during the First World War, we observed a contradictory social differentiation of peasant farms. There were cases when rich peasants were redeemed from conscription into the

Peasant households of Ukraine (1917)
(Kotliar, 2005; Malkin, 2009; Kutashev, 2002)

Peasant households	according to Yu. Kotlyar	according to V. Malkin	according to I. Kutashev
Without own sowing	700 thousand	625 thousand	633 thousand
With sowing up to 1 dessiatin	–	616 thousand	625 thousand
With sowing from 1 to 3 dessiatins	800 thousand	647 thousand	657 thousand

army, while the poor were deprived of a single worker (Motenko & Shyshkina, 2015, p. 48). Therefore, the confrontation among the peasantry itself intensified. The situation was also aggravated by the fact that wealthy farmers hired workers. In order to somehow improve their financial situation, the peasants combined work in agriculture with earnings in industry and the lease of land. The rent was too high for the peasant (Lozovyi, 2010). The peasantry of Ukraine leased 3.9 million des. of the landlords' land, for which they paid 60 million rubles annually (Kutashev, 2002). This rent was half the value of the annual income. It is clear why not all farms could afford to rent land. Therefore, poor and middle households were at risk of bankruptcy (Shcherbatiuk, 2010, p. 187). Prior to all this, the number of farms increased, so land plots were not enough to meet the needs of the entire peasant population.

Peasant gatherings had a significant influence on the formation of peasant activity. In general, researchers consider rural meetings (gatherings, congregations) in two planes: as a gathering of citizens and as a body of local self-government (Kovalova, 2013, p. 20). As a body of local self-government, they solved various administrative issues, and at the same time became a catalyst for the active actions of the peasantry. However, if at the beginning of 1917 the peasant congregations were mass, in particular in Podillya, Poltava, Kyiv, Kherson, etc. provinces (Kovalova, 2013, p. 20; 2016, p. 187), then at the end of the year such meetings were much less frequent. Also, the formation of views and attitudes of the peasantry was significantly influenced by the behaviour of peasant veterans. Those people who

visited the front line and "saw the world" informed about the real, as it seemed to them, the situation in the country, were more determined and often led peasant uprisings (Kovalova, 2016, p. 188).

Based on the historical sources analysed by us, the forms of peasant demonstrations are divided into three groups. The first – actions aimed at full or partial liquidation of privately owned estates (Sharapov, 1968). The second group includes secret actions, and the third – actions against landowners. The most common were the performances of the first group. The peasants sought not only to obtain their land, reduce the cost of rent, etc., but also to restore justice. For the peasants, this meant punishing the landlord, who during many years worsened their working conditions.

At the beginning of 1917 the socio-political activity of the peasantry took place under the slogan "Land to the working people!" (Kotliar, 2005). Scholars' views on the regional features of peasant protests differ. For example, N. Kovaleva claims that the leader of the peasant actions was the Left Bank, the second place was occupied by the Right Bank and the third – Southern Ukraine (Kovalova, 2016, p. 190), and V. Malkin singled out as the leader of the peasant uprisings the Right Bank, explaining that the region was closest to the front line, so was socially unstable (Malkin, 2009). In general, the socio-political performances of the peasantry in early 1917 were determined by relations between landlords and peasants. The peasants could no longer withstand the oppression of the landlord. Immediately after the February Revolution, 25% of landowners left their estates and moved to the city (Kovalova, 2015, p. 34).

The first forms of peasantry's actions were the poisoning of crops, cutting down forests, attacks and looting of landowners' estates, seizure of weapons, seizure of land and more (Kutashev, 2002). Socio-political activity of the peasantry in late March 1917 was the signal to the authorities, which warned of the reluctance of the peasants to procrastinate with the solution of the agrarian issue. As early as March 16 and 18, 1917, the Ministry of Internal Affairs received a report of the looting and burning of six landlord estates in Volyn. On March 20, 1917, the peasants of the Podillya province of Haisyn district looted and divided the property of the landlady Khanenko (Kutashev, 2002). The government received numerous complaints from landowners about peasant

uprisings and land seizures. The landlords asked the government to take appropriate measures.

In April 1917, the socio-political activity of the peasantry focused on the wealthy peasantry, church and monastery land ownership. Monasteries and churches of Kharkiv province in 1917 owned 37.840 des. of land (Reshodko, 1962, p. 81). Peasants begin to graze their cattle on church lands, refusing to pay rent for it. For example, April 24, 1917 in the village Kamenske, Okhtyrka district, peasants seized church lands on April 29, 1917 in the village of Zavodyanka of Starobilsk district. The peasantry arbitrarily distributed the seized church land among the low-land peasants (Reshodko, 1962, p. 81).

In the spring of 1917, the protests of the peasantry were isolated and unorganized. The peasants demanded the abolition of private ownership of land, its transfer to peasant ownership without redemption and the final solution of the agrarian issue. In March-May 1917 there were 936 peasant actions (Kutashev, 2002). May-June 1917 was a period of peasant struggle for the establishment of peasant organizations.

At the end of summer and the beginning of autumn 1917, the actions of the peasants became radical. In July-August 1917, the socio-political activity of the peasantry intensified. Peasants resorted to the seizure of landed estates, lands, equipment, crops, protested against forced rent. Their performances became organized and planned, and most importantly – frequent. During this period, 817 agrarian actions took place in Ukraine (Kutashev, 2002). Peasant actions spread through the Dnieper region: they covered Volyn, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Podillya, Poltava, Kharkiv, Kherson, and partly Chernihiv provinces.

Numerous appeals of landlords to the Provisional Government to take the necessary measures to suppress the socio-political activity of the peasants did not go unnoticed by the authorities. If in the spring of 1917 the government appealed to the peasantry for a peaceful solution to the situation, made efforts to adopt the necessary preparatory bills to resolve the agrarian issue by the Constituent Assembly, then in late summer-early autumn of 1917 finally understood the need for more radical action. In the autumn of 1917, the measures taken by the authorities, as well as the actions of the peasantry, were decisive and radical.

General L. Kornilov defended large landowners. The first punitive detachments were sent to the Podolsk province on April 17, 1917. At the end of the summer of 1917, the state swept a wave of detentions

of peasants and court hearings (Kutashev, 2002). In July-August 1917, General L. Kornilov made several attempts to combat peasant pogroms and actions (Egorov, 2005, p. 58; Tsvetkov, 2006). In particular, on July 8, 1917, he issued an order extending to the front-line territory. According to the text of the document, the peasants were forbidden to prevent the landlords from harvesting by agricultural machinery, as well as to take away the landowners' inventory, loot crops, take any action against preparing the fields for winter, demand a reduction of rent and other. Provincial and county land commissioners were appointed to monitor the order, and local judges were appointed to review violations.

Undoubtedly, in this way the landowners felt the support of General L. Kornilov, and therefore he received their complaints and requests. After numerous appeals from the landlords, L. Kornilov continued to follow a certain course in this direction. On July 13, 1917, he issued Order 777, which provided for more severe punishments for violators, convictions of guilty, and the introduction of punitive troops. Order of L. Kornilov № 737 of July 31, 1917 extended the validity of the law of July 8, 1917 to the territory of the theatre of operations. L. Kornilov justified this by the fact that peasant pogroms and actions could not be a tool for solving agrarian issues. Violators were sentenced to 6 months in prison, up to 3 months of correctional labour and fines of up to 300 rubles (Khitrina, 2003, p. 260).

On August 6, 1917, L. Kornilov sent a telegram to O. Kerensky, a message proposing to protect private households from peasant seizures. However, L. Kornilov's bills were not successful ("Postanovleniya Vremennogo pravitelstva", 1917, p. 1). They, as well as the position of L. Kornilov, were sharply criticized by V. Chernov. The latter even called on the peasantry to oppose the general and support the Provisional Government, because, in his opinion, the latter cares not only about the solution of the agrarian issue, but also about the interests of the peasantry.

In the summer of 1917, the vector of socio-political activity of the peasantry changed. It required the transfer of all privately owned land to the disposal of volost land committees. At the same time, the slogans have changed. The peasantry demanded the elimination of large private land ownership. For example, on July 14, 1917, the provincial commissioner of Poltava region S. Ivanenko sent a telegram

to the Minister of Internal Affairs of Russia with the following content: "The agrarian movement is intensifying. The awareness that the land issue can only be resolved by the Constituent Assembly has been shaken... The movement is unfolding" (Revehuk, 2002, p. 60). One of its forms, as noted above, was the refusal of peasants to harvest in the fields. Thus, the county commissioner Sochansky informed the Provisional Government that the peasants of Cherkasy district refused to harvest the landlords' bread and it was rotting in the fields. The Commissioner requested the Provisional Government to intervene and take the necessary measures (SACHR, f. R-504, op. 1, spr. 9, ark. 77–77 zv.).

Monastic and church lands did not cease to be the object of socio-political activity of the peasantry during 1917. Their enthusiasm only intensified in the summer. For example, in the Kharkiv region during May-June 1917 there were 13 cases of seizure of church lands by peasants, during July-August there were 20 of them (Motenko, 2005). At the end of the summer of 1917, church lands in the Cherkasy region also became the objects of peasant actions. Thus, on August 16, 1917, the priest from the village Samoridnya of Kaniv district informs the authorities about the seizures of church land by peasants. In his address, he mentions the name of Hryhoriy Kibalnyk (*Dvadtsiat chetverta berezneva naukova sesiia*, 2014, p. 58). According to the priest, Hryhoriy Kibalnyk not only "sowed doubts among the population, but also voluntarily divided church lands among the peasants" (*Dvadtsiat chetverta berezneva naukova sesiia*, 2014, p. 59).

The greatest socio-political activity of the peasantry reached the autumn of 1917 in the Kyiv, Volyn, and Podillya provinces. According to I. Kutashev's estimates, in September-October 1917 there were 849 peasant actions (Kutashev, 2002). According to the research of Yu. Kotlyar, there are slightly fewer of them: during July-October 1917 the number of agrarian protests was 572 and, in the future, only increased (Kotliar, 2005).

On September 8, 1917, the order of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief O. Kerensky "On measures to suppress the peasant movement" was issued. He declared the solution of the agrarian issue by seizures, speeches, etc. inadmissible (SARF, f. 1797, op. 1, d. 10). A list of actions recognized by the authorities as illegal was added to the order. Violators were severely punished (*Oktyabrskaya revolyutsiya*, 1926). Landowners were obliged to harvest, and any actions to prevent

the solution of this issue were declared illegal, violators were punished, which were prescribed in the order of L. Kornilov from July 31, 1917.

In our opinion, the order of September 8, 1917 by O. Kerensky completely repeated the law of L. Kornilov of July 31, 1917. Both documents were aimed at the rapid cessation of peasant protests, but their repressive nature and recourse to radical measures of punishment confirms the inability of the authorities to stabilize the current situation. The peasantry was tired of waiting for a solution to the agrarian issue. The inaction of the Provisional Government, as well as the repressive orders and laws of L. Kornilov and O. Kerensky, only complicated the situation. Instead of dialogue and mutual understanding between the authorities and the peasantry, the confrontation only intensified.

The second coalition government of the Provisional Government also delayed resolving the agrarian issue. This had negative consequences for the provisional government, as it exacerbated the situation in the countryside. At the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918, the socio-political activity of the Ukrainian peasantry was gaining new momentum. It was characterized by sharp forms of struggle and radical measures. The peasantry demanded the abolition of landlordism: "To smoke the landlords out of their ancestral nests" (Kutashev, 2002). Peasants looted the estates of landlords, seized land, established control over it, and later – divided it among themselves.

D. Doroshenko wrote about the activity of the peasantry. According to him, this was significantly influenced by agitation by various political forces and the filling of the countryside with soldiers, who called for active struggle (Doroshenko, 2002, p. 141). D. Doroshenko believed that their actions both society in general and the peasantry in particular "put an end to the old political order" (Doroshenko, 2002, p. 149). For example, in the Kyiv province, in the town of Fastovets, a landowner's estate was destroyed by soldiers returning from the front-line, and valuables began to be distributed to peasants. Quite often the government received information about the actions of the peasantry together with the soldiers (Malkin, 2009).

The activity of the peasantry intensified after the proclamation of the Third Universal of the Central Council (Hrebenuk, 2012, p. 124). The peasantry was not satisfied with the explanations of the General Secretariat of the Central Council to the Third Universal. V. Vynnychenko noted in this regard: "The rural proletariat did not believe in

the promises and laws of the land, believing more in the real facts" (Vynnychenko, 1920).

One of the forms of socio-political activity of the peasantry was the activities of peasant organizations. The All-Russian Peasants' Union was the first organization to advocate the establishment of peasant organizations as early as March 1917. On March 25, 1917, a provincial committee was formed in the Ekaterinoslav Province, which issued orders to establish various peasant organizations. In the spring of 1917, such committees were organized throughout Ukraine, but this process was not systematic. Political pariahs joined in the intensification of the creation of various peasant organizations, but the peasant unions in March 1917 did not justify themselves.

The starting point in the history of the creation of peasant organizations can be considered the First All-Russian Peasants' Congress, which took place from May 28 to June 2, 1917 at the Solovtsov Theatre in Kyiv (now the Ivan Franko Theatre) (Khmil, 1992, p. 4). The resolutions "On the Land" and "On the Organization of the Peasantry" became significant results of the First All-Russian Congress of Peasant Deputies.

The resolution "On Land" was based on the proposals of M. Kovalovsky, who was elected a representative of the Poltava province and a member of the Small Council. In his speech at the discussions, he supported the idea of socialization of land, called for the abolition of private property and considered the right solution to agricultural problems in the Seimas by representatives of parishes and counties (Khmil, 1992, p. 19). The resolution "On Land" abolished private ownership of land. It provided for the formation of a land fund, which was to be subordinated to the Ukrainian Sejm. Land use was provided to those who would cultivate the land "with their own hands". The importance of establishing a labour norm was noted. All costs associated with agrarian transformation were borne by the state. The creation of the Central Ukrainian Land Committee was considered appropriate for a fair solution to the agrarian problem. Resolving resettlement issues was a priority. The possibility of creating a group farm by creating agrarian societies was allowed (Khmil, 1992, pp. 23–24).

The first paragraph of the resolution "On the organization of the peasantry" read: "Only the most systematically organized peasantry can provide freedom and land to the Ukrainian people" (Khmil, 1992,

p. 27). As we can see, the peasantry was entrusted with a great mission – the construction of the state. The form of the peasant organization was determined by the Ukrainian Peasants' Union, and its legislative bodies – the All-Ukrainian, provincial, county, township and village committees (Khmil, 1992, p. 27).

The resolutions had an almost immediate reaction from the peasantry. First, the socio-political activity of the peasantry, which was expressed in the seizures, pogroms and distribution of property of the landlords, intensified; secondly, the local peasantry began to be actively involved in the creation of various peasant organizations, which in the future acted as bodies of the peasantry's organization, their control and actions, and so on.

Peasant congresses of various levels met throughout 1917 throughout Ukraine. The provincial congresses paid the most attention to resolving the agrarian issue. Their position on the solution of the agrarian issue was in tune with the agrarian program of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party – the land must be socialized (Skalskyi, 2009, p. 124). Peasant congresses supported the peasantry in resolving the agrarian issue. Their views evolved during 1917: from loyal in the spring of 1917 to radical in the autumn of 1917. For example, the first peasant congress of the Chernihiv province on April 7–9, 1917 considered the solution of the agrarian question possible by the Constituent Assembly, and in the requirements for agrarian reforms expressed the following address: "During the consideration of the land issue at the Constituent Assembly there is a desire..." i.e. there was no call for radical action. At the end of April-April 16–17, 1917, the Peasants' Congress of Poltava Province used the following phrases in its resolutions to solve the agrarian problem: "it is necessary to establish", "to confiscate without ransom", "to prohibit", "to cancel" etc. (Skalskyi, 2009, p. 124). In August, the resolutions of the peasant congresses show notes of radicalism. For example, on August 14–17, 1917, the Peasants' Congress of the Kherson Province, in a resolution on the agrarian issue, demanded that "the following measures be taken immediately" (Skalskyi, 2009, pp. 124–125).

The Provisional Government considered the implementation of the necessary preparatory measures to optimize the activities of the Constituent Assembly to resolve the agrarian issue a priority. To this goal, for example, on April 21, 1917, the Provisional Government adopted

a resolution on the establishment of land committees (SARF, f. 1796, op. 1, d. 1). Thus, the Provisional Government entrusted the Main Land Committee with all the necessary preparatory measures to resolve the agrarian question in the Constituent Assembly, as well as to some extent to control the actions of the peasantry on the ground. In Ukraine, by December 1917, land committees had been established on 80% of the territory of Ukraine. The grassroots land committees fully supported the position of the peasantry and advocated the liquidation of private property, the endowment of landless and low-land peasants with land, and so on.

The government was oriented in the socio-political situation. Numerous reports and complaints from landlords and large landowners, information about land seizures and looting, peasant demonstrations, etc., constantly came from different regions. The government aimed to prepare the necessary bills to address the agrarian issue by the Constituent Assembly. Representatives of the Central Council shared the position of the Provisional Government in this regard. In his first speeches, M. Hrushevsky brought to the fore the solution of political problems in Ukraine. In his opinion, the first thing that needed to be achieved was autonomy, and only then – to solve all the problems of the state, among which the agrarian one was urgent. At the beginning of 1917, no political party had a clearly defined agrarian program. However, with the intensification of socio-political activity of the peasantry, representatives of political couples put forward different scenarios for solving the agrarian issue. Socialist-revolutionaries were the most popular among the population. By the end of 1917, more and more politicians and members of the Central Council understood not only the failure of the adopted agrarian bills, but also advocated the introduction of such agrarian laws that would meet the demands of the peasantry. For example, at the VIII session of the Central Council, which took place from 12 to 17 December 1917, B. Matros proposed to pass a bill that would help "take the land from the lords", dispose of equipment, "to reassure farmers". A representative of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party B.O. Zarudny also advocated "meeting the needs of the peasants" (Hlazunov, 2008).

At the end of 1917 the socio-political activity of the peasantry took new forms. This is due to the councils of peasant deputies and land committees. They created control commissions, sent them to the estates

of landlords and put them on record and control. Such forms of socio-political activity were common in Kyiv, Podillya, Kharkiv, and Volyn provinces. For example, the land committees of the Kyiv province took into account during November-December 1917 12 savings and estates of landowner Tereshchenko, and the village land committees of the Kharkiv province – more than 20 manors and estates (Kutashev, 2002). Such peasant control in December 1917 was established throughout Ukraine.

The behaviour of the peasants at the end of 1917 changed dramatically. If in the spring they plundered and burned the landlord's property, and divided the land between the landless and low-land peasantry, by the end of 1917 the peasants did not so often destroy and burn the landlord's property, although they divided it among themselves. There were isolated cases of landlords being taken hostage. For example, the newspaper "Kyivskaya Mysl" in the issue of November 16, 1917 reported on the pogroms, robberies, etc. of landed estates in Skvyra district of Kiev province, as well as that the landlords were taken hostage (Kutashev, 2002).

Socio-political activity of the peasantry only intensified. Thus, the Central Rada received information about 425 pogroms and seizures of landed estates only on December 15–16, 1917. In December 1917, the socio-political activity of the peasantry with its various forms covered the Volyn and Podillya provinces. According to I. Kutashev's calculations, during November-December 1917 the peasants' protests covered 5–10% of the total territory of southern Ukraine and the Left Bank, 20–25% – in the Kiev province and eastern counties of Volyn and Podillya, 50–60% – in counties of Volyn and Podillya provinces (Kutashev, 2002).

With the coming to power of the Bolsheviks, the socio-political situation worsened. The peasantry did not accept the new government and no longer believed in its promises to solve the agrarian problem. In addition, relations within the peasantry itself between the poor and the wealthy peasantry are deteriorating.

Conclusions. Thus, the socio-political activity of the peasantry in 1917 is an example of the peasantry playing a decisive role in the revolutionary events of 1917. The attempts to postpone the solution of the agrarian issue during the war ended in the overthrow of tsarism, change of power, promises to fulfil the demands of the peasantry. The

change of power and the coming to power of the Provisional Government were perceived by the peasantry as the solution to all their challenges. However, the democratic approach of the Provisional Government to the agrarian question was perceived by the peasantry as inaction. Agrarian challenges against the background of aggravation of the political situation in the state initiated the activity of the peasantry. 1917 was the beginning of the revolutionary activity of the peasantry to satisfy the desire to improve agrarian living conditions.

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