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## Coping with consequences of a housing crisis during great war: A case of Right-Bank Ukraine in 1914-1918

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## Discussion Papers

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# Coping with Consequences of a Housing Crisis during Great War

## A Case of Right-Bank Ukraine in 1914-1918

Konstantin Kholodilin and Tymofiy Gerasymov

Opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect views of the institute.

#### IMPRESSUM

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# Coping with consequences of a housing crisis during Great War: A case of Right-Bank Ukraine in 1914-1918<sup>☆</sup>

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## Abstract

World War I led to radical changes in the government policy of participating countries. The enormous demographic and economic disturbances caused by the war forced the governments of all the belligerent nations to drastically restrict the market freedom. In particular, the state began actively intervening in the housing market. Ukraine as a part of the former Russian Empire, for the first time in its history saw the introduction of rent controls and protection of tenants from eviction. This paper concentrates on the government intervention in the rental housing market of Right-Bank Ukraine during World War I (1914–1918). It identifies the factors that made the state intervene in the relationships between landlords and tenants, analyzes changes in the housing legislation, and assesses the effectiveness of the regulations.

**Keywords:** rental housing market; rent controls; tenant protection; government regulations; World War I; Right-Bank Ukraine.

**JEL classification:** N44; N94; O18; R31.

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## 1. Introduction

The First World War (WWI) played a very important role in shaping the modern socio-economic policy. In particular, WWI was a catalyst for state intervention in the rental housing market.

Even hundred years after, this issue did not lose its actuality. In the mid-2010s, rent controls and tenant eviction protection remain actively used tools of government regulation in many industrialized countries (e.g., Germany and the USA).

However, the housing policy of Ukraine during World War I remains a white spot. And this is despite the fact that the former Russian Empire that included Ukraine was one of the first countries to adopt such policies.<sup>1</sup> In the Soviet historical literature, the housing market regulation of Right-Bank Ukraine was only briefly mentioned, exclusively in the context of worsening life standards of the workers, as exemplified in [АН УРСР \(1973\)](#) and [Сарбей et al. \(1983\)](#).

Modern Ukrainian historians give somewhat more attention to urban housing issues. So, an everyday-life researcher [Вільшанська \(2004\)](#) considered the main reasons of housing shortage and dramatic rent increases during WWI. The study of [Молчанов \(2014\)](#) on the impact of WWI on the welfare of Ukraine's population noted a substantial deterioration in housing conditions. [Вітюк \(2013\)](#) and [Герасимов \(2011\)](#) discuss the government regulation of the housing in 1917–1921. However, they confine themselves to the geographical limits of the Podol'skaya governorate.

Our aim is to analyze the origins and development of the state intervention in the rental housing market (rent controls and tenant protection) in one of the regions of the former Russian Empire — Right-Bank Ukraine. The paper examines the factors that brought about the state intervention. It will also reflect on the effectiveness of the intervention.

The paper is structured as follows. The next section considers the housing market in Right-Bank Ukraine prior to World War I. In section 3, the factors that contributed to a serious deterioration of the housing market during the war will be examined. Section 4 analyzes the legal acts that were used by the government to cope with the housing crisis. In section 5, the

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<sup>1</sup>See, for example, a detailed overview of the housing legislation during WWI in [International Labour Office \(1924\)](#).

effectiveness of these measures is inspected. Finally, section 6 concludes.

## 2. Housing market before WWI

Right-Bank Ukraine is one of the historical regions of Ukraine. As an integral regional unity, it started to take shape in the 16th and 17th centuries. When it made part of the Russian Empire (late 18th — early 20th century), Right-Bank Ukraine bore the official name of South-West region and occupied the territory of three Ukrainian governorates: Kievskaya, Podol'skaya, and Volynskaya (see Figure 1). In the map of modern Ukraine these are territories of Cherkasskaya, Khmel'nitskaya, Kievskaya, Rovenskaya, Vinnitskaya, Volynskaya, Zhitomirskaya, and parts of the Odesskaya and Ternopol'skaya oblasts, see Прищепя (2013), p. 131.

On the eve of the First World War, the region occupied a particular place in the military strategic plans of the Romanov and Habsburg empires. The former regarded it as a foothold for an offensive against Galicia, while the latter wanted to conquer it. The neighborhood of the region to Balkans with its strong conflict potential should be also taken into account. Perhaps nowhere in the Russian Empire was the approaching catastrophe felt so palpably as in the region. During the war, the front line passed through the western part of Volynskaya governorate.

In 1914, the total population of Right-Bank Ukraine was 11.5 million persons. The biggest cities of the region —with population of 50,000 or more— were (in descending order): Kiev, Zhitomir, Berdichev, Vinnitsa, and Kamenets-Podol'skiy; see Figure 2. The size of squares denoting the cities is proportional to their 1910 population.

From the beginning of 20th century through WWI, Right-Bank Ukraine led the Empire in terms of urbanization rates. It was urbanizing even faster than the most economically developed regions of the Romanov's Empire. Between 1897 and 1914, the urban population of the region increased by 70%. During the same period, the average increase of this indicator for the whole country was 58%; Гуменюк (2004), p. 114–120.

According to the calculations in Ращин (1956), p. 37, as of January 1, 1914, the share of urban population in Right-Bank Ukraine was as follows: in Kievskaya governorate 18.0%, in Podol'skaya governorate 8.8%, and in Volynskaya governorate 8.4%. The average share for the whole Empire was 15.3%, see Гуменюк (2004), p. 101. A high urbanization level of Kievskaya



governorate was attained in large part thanks to Kiev, which accounted for the largest part of the city-dwellers of the region: 520,500 out of 863,300; some 60.3% of the urban population; see [Центральный Статистический Комитет \(1915\)](#), p. 37. However, despite the growing numbers of the urban population, Right-Bank Ukraine remained an agricultural region, see [Центральный Статистический Комитет \(1915\)](#), p. 48.

The breakneck increase of urban population inevitably led to an aggravation of the housing shortage. During the last pre-war years, residential construction in Right-Bank Ukraine was a very profitable business. A construction frenzy led to a noticeable increase of prices for construction materials and labor. On the eve of the war, along with constructing new multi-storey buildings, additional storeys were built on top of the existing houses. In the central parts of the city, small houses were demolished and in their place multi-storied buildings were erected; [Кошман \(2013\)](#), p. 3. The landlords rented the newly built apartments; [Anonymous \(1914\)](#), p. 6.

However, Kiev's growing housing supply was not accompanied by a decrease in the rents for apartments and chambers. Above all, it was a result of the city's high growth rates that led the Kiev to become the biggest city in Ukraine, leaving behind Odessa (520,500 and 499,500, respectively) on the eve of World War I; [Гуменюк \(2004\)](#), p. 93. In 1912, according to [Наумов \(1914\)](#), the share of housing expenditure in total expenses of Kiev's workers varied between 3 and 22%.<sup>2</sup> The lowest share was observed in the case of the singles, who rented beds, while the highest share — in the case of families, who rented the entire apartments. Among the singles, the share of those who rented apartments was just 11.3%, whereas among the families it was 67%. By contrast, almost half of the singles (44.8%) lived squeezed in the corners and rented beds or even shared them. A large excess of demand over supply and a lack of laws protecting the tenants made them defenseless in the face of the landlords. Sometimes the landlords even prohibited the tenants from having children. The “guilty” families were evicted. The unwillingness to lose shelter forced the poor tenants to act desperately. One, for example, immediately after his daughter was born sent the baby to a village where his relatives lived;

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<sup>2</sup>Such a value of this indicator is comparable to other European countries. For instance, in Germany in 1907–1910, rent accounted for 17–18% of household income on average. Even low-income families spent “only” 20% of their budget on rental housing; see [Ascher \(1917\)](#), p. 28).

[Anonymous \(1913\)](#), p. 3.

### 3. Housing crisis during the war

The entry of the Russian Empire in WWI changed Ukrainian cities significantly. The population exploded with city-dwellers returning from their summer residences and rural populations arriving in order to comply with the military draft registration; [Anonymous \(1914d\)](#). For example, in Zhitomir, such a substantial inflow of people had instantly led to rent increases; [Anonymous \(1914b\)](#).

In the fall of 1914, a mass eviction of the large and socially unprotected group of the reservists' families from rental dwellings started. The most tense situation was in Kiev, where newspapers reported about women unable to pay their rent after their husbands were drafted; these women were consequently evicted from their dwellings; [Anonymous \(1914a\)](#).

The martial law that was introduced on July 30, 1914 in Kievskaya, Podol'skaya, and Volynskaya governorates ([Авербах 1916а](#), p. 15) led to a reduction of housing vacancies. In the urban settlements, the requisitions of dwellings for the military started. Not only were residential buildings requisitioned, but also schools, thus creating the need to find new facilities for dormitories and classrooms. Moreover, during the war, many foundations, committees, military hospitals, and other organizations were increasingly being established in the cities, all needing premises for their offices; [Вільшанська \(2014\)](#), p. 454.

There was nothing to compensate for a reduction of residential space in the cities of Right-Bank Ukraine. With the outbreak of WWI, housing construction fell to virtually zero; [Приходько \(2011\)](#), p. 388. It was caused by the impossibility to obtain credit, strong increases in the wages of construction workers and materials, as well as a lack of free wagons in the railroads; most were reserved for military purposes; [Anonymous \(1914c\)](#). The first wartime construction season, starting in the spring of 1915, was almost a complete standstill. While public buildings were still erected, all private construction ceased; [Anonymous \(1915a\)](#). During the first months of 1915, the output of the building materials industry significantly dropped due to the mobilization of up to 50% of its workers; [Сидоров \(1973\)](#), p. 338. All materials needed for construction became scarce and, hence, very expensive; [Anonymous \(1915d\)](#).

In 1916, in the middle of the housing crisis in the big cities of Right-Bank Ukraine, the con-

struction market collapsed. The wages increased very rapidly. For example, between January and December 1916, the building costs more than doubled in Vinnitsa; [Archive \(a\)](#), l. 1, 911. In 1916, the city board of Kiev decided to stop all construction works; [Anonymous \(1916b\)](#).

Another factor that significantly contributed to the aggravation of the housing issue was an inflow of refugees from the territories occupied by the enemy and located near the front line. In August 1914, after Kamenets-Podol'sk was taken for a while by the Austro-Hungarian army, an eastward evacuation of its public establishments started, most civil servants, together with their families, heading to Vinnitsa; [Лисий \(2015\)](#), p. 48. A military catastrophe that the Russian army suffered in the summer of 1915, in turn, caused substantial movements of people toward rear governorates; [Жванко \(2014\)](#), p. 40. The refugees tried to settle down in the big cities, hoping that jobs and housing would be much easier to find there; [Вільшанська \(2014\)](#), p. 454.

Thus, the aggravation of the housing shortage in the cities of Right-Bank Ukraine in 1914–1915 can be explained by the following factors:

- requisitions by the military of the apartments and other premises that could be used for residential purposes;
- construction market crisis, which made the extension and conservation of the existing housing stock impossible;
- mass refugee flows, many of whom were looking for a shelter in the cities; and
- moves between the cities of various establishments evacuated from the areas occupied by enemy or located near the front line.

All these led to rent increases and the deterioration of relationships between landlords and tenants. Already in the fall of 1915, Vinnitsa and Zhitomir experienced the first symptoms of a full-fledged housing crisis. In September 1915, a local newspaper wrote about increases in rents for apartments and hotel rooms taking place on a daily basis; [Anonymous \(1915b\)](#).

In 1915, in Kiev the housing issue was not so grave as in Vinnitsa and Zhitomir, although that summer the rents were already much higher than immediately before the outbreak of the war. For instance, a one-room apartment on the city outskirts could be rented for at least

240–250 rubles a year, whereas in peacetime the rent for a similar apartment in the city center did not exceed 100 rubles; [Anonymous \(1915e\)](#). In the fall of 1915, there was a temporary rent decrease, triggered by the flight of people who feared that their city would be occupied by the enemy. In addition, thanks to a hasty evacuation of the local government bodies, including Kiev University, the city had a break in the housing crisis.

In August 1916, the housing issue in the large cities of the region was aggravated to a very high degree. A real housing crisis emerged. In Zhitomir, local press noticed a complete absence of vacant lodgings and extreme overcrowding in the hotels. The real-estate agents asserted that “the housing issue was never so tight before”; [Anonymous \(1916a\)](#).

During 1917, the situation remained unchanged. However, the period between March and December 1918 was peculiar for the cities of Right-Bank Ukraine. It was the period of the fastest growth. First, the demobilized soldiers returned home. Second, the presence in the cities of the garrisons of the Central Powers made them “safe harbors.” In the countryside, the peasants frequently revolted, meaning that the big landowners were fleeing to the cities trying to escape the peasants’ anger. Third, thousands of refugees flooded the Hetmanate state.<sup>3</sup> Some left Bessarabia, which was occupied by Romania, others ran away from the Russian regions under Bolshevik rule, especially from Moscow and Petrograd. These factors together with high inflation intensified the housing crisis further.

This crisis affected urban settlements in the region. According to one contemporary, “all vacant lodgings were completely filled and many city-dwellers were in an unbearable situation,” see [Anonymous \(1918b\)](#). Kiev was suffocating from the overpopulation; [Anonymous \(1916a\)](#), p. 226. Mogilyov-Podol’skyi was full of refugees from Bessarabia and surrounding villages; [Archive \(b\)](#), l. 360.

#### 4. Reaction of the state to the housing crisis

The state reacted to the increasing housing problems with prohibitive-protective measures. Table 1 summarizes the legal acts that were in force in Right-Bank Ukraine in 1915–1921. The

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<sup>3</sup>A coup d’état perpetrated on April 29, 1918 and supported by the military of Germany and Austro-Hungary, resulted in P.P.Skoropadsky becoming the Hetman of Ukraine. Therefore, the period of Ukrainian history between April 29 and December 14, 1918 is called Hetmanate. The official name of the country was the Ukrainian State (*Ukrayinska Derzhava*).

first column reports the date of the act, as indicated in the document. The second column contains the full title of the act both in English translation and in the original language. Column 3 characterizes the sphere of application of the legal act: its **subject** (e.g., apartments and rooms); **settlements**, which were subject to the regulations; and **exceptions** from the regulations. Column 4 describes the provisions concerning the rent controls: **setting**, which stands for the rules setting the upper bound on the rent and **updating**, which denotes the rules regulating the legally allowed rent increases. Column 5 sums up the provisions on protection of tenants from eviction: **prolongation** — the possibilities to automatically prolong the contract when it is over; and **termination reasons** — the possibilities to revoke the contract ahead of schedule by the landlord. The column 6 lists the bodies to which the legal act delegated the power to (extrajudicially) settle the conflicts between the landlords and tenants. The last column shows the period of validity of the legal act as indicated within it.

The rent increases that accelerated in the middle of 1915 due to large inflows of refugees caused discontent of the population. Similar to the heads of many other regions of the Russian Empire,<sup>4</sup> the commander-in-chief of the Kievskiy military district decided to restrict the rent increases and issued a compulsory ordinance (*obiazatel'noe postanovlenie*) on August 13 (July 30), 1915.<sup>5</sup> It prohibited to increase rents for apartments, furnished chambers, and hotel rooms in excess of the existing ones, except for those cases where rent increases could be justified by the expenses in improving the apartments; [Anonymous \(1915c\)](#).

Later, the commander-in-chief of Kievsky military district V. I. Trotsky issued two more compulsory ordinances on housing regulations. The compulsory ordinance of September 23 (10), 1915 covered all the towns and boroughs (*mestechki*) of Kievskaya governorate, except the city of Kiev, see [Обязательное постановление \(1915a\)](#). The subject of regulation was the same as in the previous compulsory ordinance. There were two novelties in the new compulsory ordinance:

- Written contracts concluded before publication of the compulsory ordinance were excluded

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<sup>4</sup>In July-August 1915, similar ordinances were issued, for example, in Kaluzhskaya, Voronezhskaya, Tver-skaya, Permskaya, Moskovskaya governorates, Odesskiy military district, Smolenskaya, Arkhangelskaya, Saratovskaya, and Yaroslavskaia governorates (in chronological order).

<sup>5</sup>From here on the date before parenthesis denotes the date according to the Gregorian calendar, while that in parentheses stands for the date according to the Julian calendar that was used in the Russian Empire.

from its sphere of application.

- The reference date, to which the maximum rent was linked, was specified and set to August 14 (1), 1915. In the previous compulsory ordinance, its publication date was set as the reference one.

The compulsory ordinance of April 21 (8), 1916 was much more elaborate than its predecessors, see [Обязательное постановление \(1916а\)](#). It contained the following multiple novelties:

- An additional restriction on the sphere of application was introduced: only premises built prior to August 12 (July 30), 1914, were now subject to the regulations.
- The reference date was shifted from August 14 to December 28, 1915. In addition, to the rent level at the reference date 5% could be added.
- The advance payments<sup>6</sup> of rent were limited to one month not only to the families of the military, but also to the tenants renting corners and beds.
- An automatic prolongation of the rental contract after its expiry was introduced, provided that the tenant diligently paid rent.
- The termination of existing contracts was confined to two cases: 1) if the housing was urgently needed by the landlord or principal tenant, which should be incontestably proven; or 2) if the behavior, life style, and occupation of tenants required their eviction.

This compulsory ordinance had significantly enlarged the sphere of regulation by extending it not only to the residential but also to non-residential premises. At the same time, the sphere was confined only to the premises built prior to WWI. However, taking into account that during the war construction almost ceased, this relaxation of regulation was relevant for very few dwellings. The main purpose of this exception was to avoid reducing incentives for the new construction.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the compulsory ordinance covered all settlements of the Kievsky

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<sup>6</sup>In order to minimize risks of non-payment, the landlords often forced their tenants to pay rent several months in advance.

<sup>7</sup>Similar exceptions existed in the legal acts on rent controls adopted in other European countries: e.g., in Austria, France, Germany, and Spain.

military district. The shift in the reference date practically implied an increase in the allowed rent level. A very important novelty was an introduction of tenant protection from eviction. Previously, only the rent level was controlled, while the eviction of tenants was a free decision of the landlords. It is clear that under such conditions, the landlords could easily get rid of the undesirable tenants. Now, the eviction, at least on paper, was made much more difficult. It should be noted that the first condition (an urgent personal necessity) was formulated clearly and strictly, while the second one was very vague and allowed a wide interpretation. The authors of the compulsory ordinance imagined perhaps the noisy and reckless tenants destroying the dwelling and making money in reproachful occupations (for instance, prostitution). In practice, however, the landlords could interpret this provision in a radically different way.

A small part of Right-Bank Ukraine, namely the Baltskiy uyezd of Podol'skaya governorate, a county with a center in the town of Balta (see Figure 2), belonged to the Odesskiy military district. The military district had its own regulations on tenant protection, which until September 9, 1916, also covered Baltskiy uyezd. In particular, on September 4 (August 22), 1915, the commander-in-chief of Odesskiy military district general M.I.Ebelov issued a compulsory ordinance prohibiting rental increases in excess of those fixed in the contracts (both written and oral) concluded prior to the publication of the ordinance; see [Обязательное постановление \(1915b\)](#). On January 28 (15), 1916, general Ebelov issued another compulsory ordinance that froze the rental prices for hotel rooms and furnished chambers at the January 14 (1), 1915, levels; see [Обязательное постановление \(1916b\)](#).

After multiple compulsory ordinances issued at the regional level, in the fall of 1916, finally, the central Russian government reacted to the growing housing issue. On September 9 (August 27), 1916 the Council of Ministers of the Russian Empire issued an act “On prohibition to increase the housing rents,”<sup>8</sup> see Table 1.

- The act explicitly delineated the settlements subject to its regulations. Specifically, in Right-Bank Ukraine 42 such settlements were identified.
- It specified the subject of regulations: only dwellings, excluding the apartments for the wealthy.

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<sup>8</sup>[Авербах \(1916b\)](#), pp. 696–704.

- The rent was fixed at the pre-war level (August 1, 1914) plus 10%. The rent could only be increased to compensate for growing expenditure for fuel, wages of yard-keepers and porters as well as in case of interior refurbishment.
- A protection of tenants from eviction was introduced.
- An automatic prolongation of contracts was provided for.
- The contract termination ahead of time by the landlord was stipulated in three cases: if the tenant breaks all the conditions of the contract; if the landlord needs the housing for his own use; or if the tenant infringes conditions of co-habitation in the house.
- The expiry date was set for August 1919. Apparently, the war was supposed to end by then and the housing market was expected to normalize.

Thus, the rent controls act of the Tsarist government marked a large progress in the housing market regulation compared to the local compulsory ordinances, in particular, to those of the Kievskiy military district. It substantially specified the regulation mechanism. Did the 1916 legal act lead to stricter controls? To a large extent the answer is “no.” First, compared to the compulsory ordinance of April 21 (8), 1916, it meant a softening through the exclusion of non-residential premises from regulations and through its focus on the specific segments of middle- and low-priced dwellings, which especially needed protective regulations, and not on the entire market. Second, it softened regulations by extending the list of reasons for a landlord to terminate rental contracts ahead of time, thus weakening the protection from eviction for tenants. How restrictive was the provision allowing a 10% increase of rents compared to August 1, 1914, can only be determined by examining data on how rents in Right-Bank Ukraine increased between August 1, 1914, and December 28, 1915, and through September 9, 1916. Unfortunately, such data are not available.

On August 18 (5), 1917 the Provisional Government of Russia issued a decree “On establishing the maximum rents for apartments and other premises”<sup>9</sup> It became a model for almost all the subsequent rent control acts that were issued through 1920 on the territory of the former Russian Empire by the non-Bolshevik governments.

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<sup>9</sup>[Временное правительство \(1917\)](#).



Compared to the act of 1916 the legal act of the Provisional Government of Russia introduced the following changes:

- The sphere of application was extended by including, along with private apartments, the lodgings belonging to public, charity, commercial, and industrial establishments.
- The regulations were extended to subletting.
- The premises in hotels and summer residences, if they were let for a short term, as well as in large pensions and hotels were excluded from the sphere of application of the act.
- The upper bound for rent was raised to 15–100%, depending on the apartment tax class<sup>10</sup> of the corresponding settlement and rent category of the dwelling.
- The compensation of increasing costs for heating was introduced as an additional possibility to increase the rent.
- The claiming of dwelling for landlord's own use was excluded from the list of reasons allowing an early termination of contract by the landlord.
- As a body for extrajudicial settlement of conflicts between the landlords and tenants arbitration councils (*primiritel'nye zhilishchnye kamery*) were set up, including representatives of both sides on the parity basis.

After the February 1917 Revolution, the Empire started to decompose. Regarding Right-Bank Ukraine, in 1918, there were several political regimes that partly coexisted and alternated on its territory. Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR) from January 22 to April 29, 1918; Hetmanate from April 29 to December 14, 1918; and Directorate of the UPR from December 1918 to November 1920.

On November 2 (October 20), 1918, the government of the Hetman Skoropadsky issued the "Act on renting premises."<sup>11</sup> It was thought to replace the decree of the Provisional Government of Russia of August 18 (5), 1917. The novelties of the Hetman's law were as follows:

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<sup>10</sup>The apartment tax (*kvartirnyi nalog*) was a tax imposed on the tenants. According to the apartment tax act of May 27 (14), 1893, all the settlements were split in five classes. For example, class I included the two most important cities of the Empire: Petrograd and Moscow. Within each class, between 19 and 36 categories, according to rent levels, were identified.

<sup>11</sup>[Anonymous \(1918c\)](#), p. 1.

- The regulations were extended to the residential premises, regardless of the rent level.
- The upper bounds for legally admissible rent were raised from 15–100% to 50–100% as a function of the category of settlement and level of rent.
- The list of contract termination reasons was substantially extended. To the two reasons mentioned in the decree of the Provisional Government, another five were added: failure to pay rent; damage of premises; speculation of premises; absence in the rented premises for more than five months; and if the tenant was fired and his employment was related to the occupation of the dwelling (for example, if he was a yard-keeper).

On the one hand, the new law implied tougher regulations through extending its application sphere. On the other hand, it meant weaker regulations, since it simplified the contract termination by the landlord. Again, the upper bounds for rent established by the Hetman's law cannot be unambiguously identified as liberalization, because it is not known by how much the cost of living and of, in particular, housing increased in Ukraine between August 1917 and November 1918. It is likely that the Hetman's law simply legalized the rent increase that occurred during that period.

However, the Hetman's law turned out to be very short-lived. Even in November 1918, it was suspended (see Герасимов (2011), p. 428) and the rent controls act of the Provisional Government was reinstated. On July 30, 1919, the Directorate of the UPR prolonged the act on the territory that it controlled at that time (a small piece of Podol'skaya governorate) until October 1, 1919; see Верстюк (2006), p. 439–440, for it had to expire on August 1, 1919. On May 24, 1920,<sup>12</sup> the Directorate once again prolonged the act of the Provisional Government of Russia; Верстюк (2006), p. 40.

## 5. Effectiveness of state intervention

*Rent increases.* The rent control legal acts could hardly achieve their main purpose, namely preventing the housing rent increases. Unfortunately, no reliable statistical data on the rent

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<sup>12</sup>Although a gap in the coverage of the rent control act, between October 1, 1919, and May 24, 1920, appears here, it is apparent that laws must have been in place to cover this time period. However, the specific prolongation of laws have not yet been identified or located in the record.

dynamics during the period under consideration could be found. However, the available pieces of information point to uncontrolled growth of rent between 1914 and 1918. For example, between 1914 and 1918, the average annual expenses for a room rented by a single person were reported to increase in Ukraine by 15 times: from 120 to 1800 rubles. During the same period, the prices for staple food increased by 20 times, [Anonymous \(1918g\)](#).

*Evading restrictions.* As landlords were not readily willing to violate the provisions of law prohibiting rent increases, they sought ways to circumvent them. A rational reaction of the landlords to the impossibility of increasing rent revenues were their attempts to cut costs or to find alternative sources of income. The landlords were “saving” on repairs and provision of services to the tenants. Oftentimes, while formally setting the rent at the legal level, the landlords were forcing new tenants to buy some rudimentary furniture for exorbitant prices.

At the background of a severe housing shortage and the impossibility of offsetting inflation by raising rents, some landlords revealed abominable personality traits. Moved by a money-grubbing motive they tried to lodge those tenants, who were ready to pay large amounts of money in order to stay in the city. To do so, they needed to get rid of the incumbent tenants. The methods that were employed by the landlords to make the life of their tenants hellish, as described in the contemporary press, are strikingly manifold. For example, the landlords prohibited having pets or playing musical instruments, restricted water supply, and did not stoke the fire, etc. As a result, the Kiev city authorities received multiple complaints from the affected tenants, see [Anonymous \(1916c\)](#).

During the occupation of Ukraine by the Central Powers, new methods of evading rent controls were invented. In Kamenets-Podol'skiy, the landlords threatened the tenants, who did not agree to pay above the allowed bounds, to transmit the dwellings to the employees of the Podol'sk railroads; [Anonymous \(1918d\)](#). In other cities, the landlords appealed to the foreign military command and asked them to evict the tenants, who were apparently neglecting the premises, by requisitioning the property; [Anonymous \(1918e\)](#).

The right to create arbitration councils, given by the rent control act of the Russian Provisional Government to the municipalities, was not implemented everywhere. For instance, in Proskurov and Vinnitsa during the Hetmanate they did not function, despite the multiple requests of townspeople; [Anonymous \(1918f\)](#). On average, in the settlements, where no arbi-

tration councils existed, the rents were higher. In June 1918, the landlords of Proskurov, for example, raised the rent by 500%; [Anonymous \(1918a\)](#).

Another disadvantage of the rent control acts was that housing construction became unprofitable because the rental revenues of the landlords did not cover their expenditure for building and maintaining the houses.

The state intervention also brought some advantages. It allowed, to a certain extent, the weakening of social tensions in the urban settlements. The law abiding landlords raised the rent only up to the legally allowed ceilings, while the dwelling owners, who broke the law, were punished by fines and their names were published in the newspapers; [Archive \(c\)](#), p. 2.

## 6. Conclusion

The war led to significant movements of population on the territory of Ukraine and to the redirection of resources to serve the military machine. As a result, the housing issue rapidly deteriorated into a housing crisis.

The state tried to alleviate the crisis relying on prohibitive policies. Each new legal act adopted by the authorities extended the list of accommodations and settlements subject to rent controls and strengthened tenant protection. At the same time, unable to check the rent increases, the state raised the legal rent ceilings.

However, in the situation of an economic crisis caused by the war, all these attempts were, to a large extent, fruitless, since they were combating the symptoms but not the “sickness.” At the end of the day, everybody suffered. On the one hand, the tenants were forced to pay an increasingly higher rent for an increasingly uncomfortable housing, suffering the bullying of landlords. On the other hand, the landlords incurred losses due to an ever growing inflation, with the possibilities of rent increases being severely restricted.

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## Appendix

Table 1: Housing legislation that was in force in Right-Bank Ukraine, 1915–1918

Date	Title	Sphere of application	Rent controls	Protection from eviction	Conflict settlement bodies	Period of validity
July 30, 1915	Compulsory ordinance of the commander-in-chief of Kievskiy military district	<b>Region:</b> Kievskiy military district. <b>Settlements:</b> not indicated. <b>Subject:</b> all apartments, furnished chambers, and hotel rooms. <b>Exceptions:</b> none.	<b>Setting:</b> not exceeding the rent level as of August 12 (July 30), 1915. <b>Updating:</b> only in case of house refurbishing. <b>Advance payment:</b> for the family members of military — no more than 1 month, for others — no more than 3 months ahead.	not provided for	not indicated	not defined
September 10, 1915	Compulsory ordinance of the commander-in-chief of Kievskiy military district	<b>Region:</b> Kievskaya governorate. <b>Settlements:</b> towns and boroughs ( <i>mestechki</i> ), except Kiev. <b>Subject:</b> apartments, furnished chambers, and hotel rooms. <b>Exceptions:</b> written housing rental contracts concluded prior to the publication of the compulsory ordinance.	<b>Setting:</b> not exceeding the rent level as of August 14 (1), 1915. <b>Advance payment:</b> no more than 1 month ahead for all tenants.	not provided for	not indicated	not defined

Table 1: Legislation on rent controls and tenant protection (continued)

Date	Title	Sphere of application	Rent controls	Protection from eviction	Conflict settlement bodies	Period of validity
April 8, 1916	Compulsory ordinance of the commander-in-chief of Kievskiy military district	<p><b>Region:</b> Kievskiy military district. Settlements: all settlements. <b>Subject:</b> apartments and all premises: both residential and non-residential. <b>Exceptions:</b> 1) written housing rental contracts concluded prior to the publication of the compulsory ordinance; 2) houses built after August 12 (July 30), 1914 — the payment is set freely on the negotiation basis.</p>	<p><b>Setting:</b> rent on December 28 (15), 1915 + 5%. If the landlord can prove that prior to December 28 (15), 1915 he collected a higher rent than on that date, then the allowed rent = prior rent + 5%. <b>Advance payment:</b> for the family members of military — no more than 1 month, for others — no more than 3 months ahead.</p>	<p><b>Prolongation:</b> automatically, if the tenant pays rent diligently. <b>Termination reasons:</b> 1) landlord or apartment tenant has an extreme need for the dwelling and can incontestably prove it; 2) if the behavior, life style, or occupation of the tenants require their expulsion from the dwelling.</p>	not indicated	not defined
August 27, 1916	On prohibition to increase the housing rents (О воспреещении повышать цены на жилые помещения)	<p><b>Region:</b> Russian Empire. <b>Settlements:</b> 510. <b>Subject:</b> apartments, rooms, corners, and beds. <b>Exceptions:</b> 1) dwellings, for which the rent (without heating) doesn't exceed 2400 rubles in the settlements of class I, 1800 rubles — class II, 1000 rubles — class III, 600 rubles — in all other settlements; 2) offices, shops, and non-residential premises, which are rented out with apartments; 3) different premises that were not rented out after August 1 (July 19) 1914.</p>	<p><b>Setting:</b> rent level on August 1 (July 19), 1914 + 10%. <b>Updating:</b> 1) proportionally to rise in price for fuel after January 14 (1), 1915; 2) proportionally to rise in wages of yard-keepers and porters; 3) in case of inner refurbishment after January 14 (1), 1915.</p>	<p><b>Prolongation:</b> provided that tenants obey all contract conditions, 1) for apartments and rooms: for 1 year, 2) for corners and beds: for an indefinite period. <b>Termination reasons:</b> 1) when all contract conditions are broken; 2) when the landlord needs the premises for himself or his family; 3) if tenants infringe conditions of co-habitation in the house.</p>	justice of the peace; district judges; city judges; or district captains ( <i>zemskie nachal'niki</i> )	from September 22 (9), 1916 till September 13 (August 31), 1919

Table 1: Legislation on rent controls and tenant protection (continued)

Date	Title	Sphere of application	Rent controls	Protection from eviction	Conflict settlement bodies	Period of validity
August 5, 1917	On establishing the maximum rents for apartments and other premises (Об установлении предельных цен на квартиры и другие помещения)	<p><b>Region:</b> Russia. <b>Settlements:</b> 510.</p> <p><b>Subject:</b> apartments, rooms, corners, and beds rented out or sublet. Apartments = premises occupied by the public offices, educational, health care, and charity establishments as well as commercial and industrial enterprises, if in the premises the owners of the establishments lodge and if they were rented out by the date of issuing of this act. <b>Exceptions:</b> 1) dwellings, for which the rent (without heating) does not exceed 1800 rubles in the settlements of class I, 1200 rubles — class II, 700 rubles — class III, 400 rubles — in all other settlements; 2) offices, shops, and premises occupied by commercial and industrial establishments, if not rented out prior to August 18 (5), 1917; 3) hotel rooms, corners, and beds as well as corners and beds rented out in the summer residence areas on a seasonal basis, in the health resorts — for the guests coming for a short while for health recovery; 4) hotel rooms and furnished chambers if their owner rents out &gt;10 rooms in the same building.</p>	<p><b>Setting:</b> normal rent on August 1 (July 19), 1914 + 15–100% depending on the class of settlement and rent level. Normal rent for a premise rented out for the first time after August 1 (July 19), 1914 = rent for the first payment term. <b>Updating:</b> 1) proportionally to rise in wages of yard-keepers and porters; 2) in case of inner refurbishment after August 1 (July 19), 1914; 3) to compensate increasing expenses for removal of waste and snow, sanitation and water supply in the absence of running water; and 4) proportionally to rise in price for fuel.</p>	<p><b>Prolongation:</b> automatically, provided that tenants obey all contract conditions, but not allowed, if 1) premise was rented out by landlord because he was absent and he needs it now for his personal use and 2) premise in a public, municipal, or county building. <b>Termination reasons:</b> 1) if contract conditions are substantially infringed or 2) if tenants infringe conditions of cohabitation in the house.</p>	<p>arbitration councils and justice of the peace</p>	<p>from August 18 (5), 1917 till August 14 (1), 1919</p>

Table 1: Legislation on rent controls and tenant protection (continued)

Date	Title	Sphere of application	Rent controls	Protection from eviction	Conflict settlement bodies	Period of validity
October 20, 1918	Act on renting premises (Закон про наймання приміщень)	<p><b>Region:</b> Hetmanate. <b>Settlements:</b> 1) Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa; 2) all other governorate capitals as well as Berdichev, Vinnitsa, Gomel', Yelizavetgrad, Nikolaev, Nezhin, and Uman'; 3) all other urban settlements and suburbs as well as the summer residence areas and residential parishes Yuzovka, Kamenskoe, Yenakievo, and Lozovoye of Yekaterinoslavskaya governorate and Krivoy Rog of Hersonskaya governorate. <b>Subject:</b> hotels, restaurants, shops, and other commercial premises; apartments rented out to private persons and public, educational, health care, and charity establishments; rooms, corners, and beds rented out by the landlords, owners of share apartments, and tenants. <b>Exceptions:</b> 1) dwellings in houses that were built or reconstructed after August 18 (5), 1917; 2) apartments and rooms rented out in the summer residence areas on a seasonal basis.</p>	<p><b>Setting:</b> normal rent on August 1 (July 19), 1914 + 50–100% depending on the class of settlement and rent level. Normal rent for a premise rented out for the first time after August 1 (July 19), 1914 = rent for the first payment term. <b>Up-dating:</b> 1) proportionally to rise in wages of yard-keepers, porters, and chimney sweepers; 2) to compensate increasing expenses for removal of waste and refuse; sanitation and drainage; and water supply; and 3) proportionally to rise in price for fuel.</p>	<p><b>Prolongation:</b> automatically, provided that tenants obey all contract conditions, but not allowed, if 1) premise was rented out by landlord because he was absent and he needs it now for his personal use and 2) premise is in a public, municipal, or county building. <b>Termination reasons:</b> if 1) rent is not paid within 7 days; 2) lodging is used for other purposes than indicated in the contract; 3) tenant intentionally or unintentionally damages premises; 4) tenant infringes conditions of cohabitation in the house; 5) tenant speculates with lodging; 6) tenant is absent in the lodging longer than 5 months; 7) tenant was fired and his employment was related to the occupation of the dwelling (manager, porter, yard-keeper, etc.).</p>	<p>justice of the peace</p>	<p>from November 2 (October 20), 1918 till September 14 (1), 1919</p>

Figure 1: European part of Russian Empire and Right-Bank Ukraine

■ Right-Bank Ukraine    □ Kievskii military district



Figure 2: Urban settlements of Right-Bank Ukraine

