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Ukrainian Attempts at State Building in 1917–1921 and the Idea of Intermarium: A Historiographical and Archival Note

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Abstract

This paper aims to shed light on the historiographical and archival component of an important topic — the efforts to build an independent Ukrainian state in the period 1917–1921. It also scrutinizes Polish Eastern Policy of that period to provide background for further research. The issues touched upon in this brief review indicate the need for further research in this thematic realm. The historiography given in this article captures the views of Polish political elites at the turn of the twentieth century. It could be argued that these elites were strongly focused on the resurrection of an independent Polish state. One of the strongest positions was formulated by the National Democrats, the so-called Endeks, led by the well-known political figure Roman Dmowski, who in his *Thoughts of a Modern Pole* (1903), or in *Germany, Russia, and the Polish Problem* (1908), as well as in his *Polish Politics and the Rebirth of the State* (1925) and other works stressed the idea of incorporating Ukrainian lands into the Polish state, and called Ukrainians an “ahistorical,” “non-state” nation, i.e. a nation with no right to have a state of their own. The Endeks believed that only those lands along its eastern border should be incorporated. These were lands that Poland could “digest” and gradually Polonize completely, thus becoming a monoethnic state. He considered Eastern Galicia, Volhynia, and Podillia to be such territories. Other Ukrainian lands according to the Endeks should belong to Russia and act as a counterweight to German hegemony. Simultaneously the idea of *antemurale*, of Poland being a bulwark of Christianity confronting the East, was seen as part of the great mission to protect Western civilization from the Bolshevik threat. Thus, in this part of the Polish political elite’s vision there was no place for an independent Ukraine.

Key Words: Ukrainian National Republic, Polish Eastern Policy, Intermarium, Józef Piłsudski.



Other visions that competed in Poland in the aftermath of the Great War with the vision of the Endeks oscillated between an approach that had its roots in the intellectual tradition of Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (a family of Ukrainian origin that had converted to Catholicism) that endeavored to constitute a vital link between the 16th-century Jagiellonian proto-federalist state and Józef Piłsudski’s federative Prometheism program.

The Piłsudski tradition influenced the Polish-Lithuanian aristocrat Jerzy Giedroyc, whose military service under General Władysław Anders and later editorial work in the Paris-based journal *Kultura* contributed immensely to continuation of the idea that, in Piłsudski’s words,

“There can be no independent Poland without an independent Ukraine.”¹ The strategic goal of Józef Piłsudski was to resurrect the 18th-century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, with the long-term goal of dismantling the Russian Empire in any of its forms. Therefore he viewed the Intermarium Federation as a counterweight to Russian and German imperialism.²

In the aftermath of the Polish-Soviet War (1919–1921) Piłsudski’s concept of a federation of Central and Eastern European countries, based on a Polish-Ukrainian core, unfortunately did not bear fruits. This failure to create a strong counterweight to Germany and the Soviet Union doomed the potential member-countries of this project to the fate of victims of World War II.³ An endeavor to reanimate the idea of a “Central European Union” — a triangular geopolitical entity placed in between the Baltic, Black, and Adriatic or Aegean Seas — was made during World War II by Władysław Sikorski’s Polish Government in Exile. A declaration of the Polish Underground State from that period called for the creation of a Central European federal union, without the domination of any particular state.⁴

The idea survived until today and can be traced in regional-security cooperation. In light of the recent Ukrainian crisis the well-known international intelligence and security organization Stratfor has been discussing an alliance system recalling the *Intermarium* concept. Given the re-appearance of Russian power, the idea of the *Intermarium* seems to be coming back onto the international agenda.⁵

Much research has been done on the topic of the Ukrainian revolutionary period and Ukrainian People’s Republic as a whole by John S. Reshetar, Jr. in his *The Ukrainian Revolution, 1917–1921* (Princeton, N.J., 1952; reprinted New York, 1972) as well as by Isidore Nahayewsky in the *History of the Modern Ukrainian State, 1917–1923* published in Munich in 1966, or by Matthew Stachiw, Peter G. Stercho, and Nicholas L. F. Chirovskyy in *Ukraine and the European Turmoil, 1917–1919* that was published in two volumes in 1973, New York. Very enriching is a collection of essays about various aspects of the entire era — *The Ukraine, 1917–1921: A Study in Revolution* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1977) — a monograph edited by Taras Hunczak. Whereas this volume omits developments in western Ukraine, it does include translations of the Ukrainian government’s four universals declaring Ukrainian independence.

There are two substantive monographs on the revolution during its first two years, one written from the perspective of a professional historian and participant as Minister of foreign affairs in the Hetmanate government — Dmytro Doroshenko’s *History of Ukraine, 1917–1923* (Vol. II: The Hetmanate, Winnipeg, Toronto, and Detroit, 1973); another one from the perspective

1 W.J. Wagner, “Joseph Piłsudski — A European Federalist, 1918–1922 by M. K. Dziewanowski,” *Études Slaves et Est-Européennes* 15 (1970): 132–35.

2 Jonathan Levy, *The Intermarium: Wilson, Madison & East Central European Federalism* (Boca Raton, FL: Universal-Publishers, 2007), 166–67.

3 Joshua B. Spero, *Bridging the European Divide: Middle Power Politics and Regional Security Dilemmas* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 36.

4 Józef Garliński, “The Polish Underground State 1939–1945,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 10.2 (1975): 219–59.

5 Stratfor Global Intelligence, accessed April 28, 2015, <https://www.stratfor.com/sample/geopolitical-diary/washington-returns-cold-war-strategy#axzz3PvfxlbLw>.

of a patriotic émigré — Oleh Pidhainy's *The Formation of the Ukrainian Republic* (Toronto and New York, 1966). Another influential monograph about the first head of the Central Rada is an impartial biography by Thomas M. Prymak *Mykhailo Hrushevsky. The Politics of National Culture* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London, 1987), especially in chapters VI–VIII.

An attempt by Symon Petliura to save the Ukrainian National Republic by allying with the new state of Poland is covered by Michael Palij in *The Ukrainian-Polish Defensive Alliance, 1919–1921* (Edmonton, 1995).

In an effort to achieve a more balanced appraisal of Józef Piłsudski's total political career Professor M. K. Dziewanowski, in *Joseph Piłsudski: A European Federalist, 1918–1922* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1969), has chosen to examine what he considers the “peak” of Piłsudski's career: the four-year period between the end of World War I and the Treaty of Riga while he was Head of State of the reborn Polish Republic, the Commander-in-Chief of its armed forces, and the architect of Poland's eastern policy. M. K. Dziewanowski has subjected to scrutiny Marshal Piłsudski's political, diplomatic, and military strategies, which, had they succeeded, would have created a Polish-led federation of East-European borderland states to serve as a permanent buffer against German and Russian historic expansionism. Piłsudski's vision of federal association — to a degree similar to the Jagiellonian Commonwealth of the seventeenth century — could have been a resemblance of the “Polish-Lithuanian Union” as large as a Polish-Lithuanian-Belorussian-Ukrainian Federation stretching from the Oder to the Dnieper, yet might also have been extended to include Latvia, Estonia, and Finland in a bigger Baltic Confederation.

M. K. Dziewanowski has thoroughly mastered the secondary literature on the subject and utilizes the vast amount of published documents pertaining to borderland diplomacy. The originality of the study lies in the author's disclosure of unpublished archival material from the Józef Piłsudski Institute in New York, the National Archives in Washington, the Hoover Institute in Stanford, and the Symon Petliura archives in Paris. The author has made use of oral testimony from Józef Piłsudski's contemporaries who were able to shed additional light on the marshal's federalist scheme. Józef Piłsudski seldom used the term “federalism” and never expounded his ideas in a systematic way. Józef Piłsudski, according to M. K. Dziewanowski, is said to have had a strong dislike for ideology, consequently “his federalism was not theoretical: it was more instinctive and pragmatic, derived as it was from a traditional respect for the diversity that had surrounded him from his earliest days.”⁶ M. K. Dziewanowski argues that Piłsudski's virtue lay in the fact that he was a realist and a pragmatist. This kind of thinking *inter alia* brought Poland to a prosperous stance within the future project of the European Union that was to emerge after WWII.

In order to make a contribution to the conventional understanding of the emergence of new states following the break-up of empires one needs to examine closely Ukrainian-Polish relations from the end of the Great War until the ultimate failure of Ukrainian endeavors to create an independent Ukrainian state in 1921. The ideas put forward during this period for a federal union of states could be viewed as a prototype of the EU project that took root after WWII.

6 M. K. Dziewanowski, *Joseph Piłsudski: A European Federalist, 1918–1922* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1969), 350.

The situation in which Ukraine was placed in between the “first Soviets” aggression and a Polish state being not entirely interested in a strong independent Ukraine was very much ambivalent. The foundation of this research shall be based on the cooperation between Józef Piłsudski and Symon Petliura — what were the preconditions for it before the Treaty concluded by the UNR and Poland in Warsaw on April 24, 1920, which meant also recognition of the independent Ukrainian People’s Republic by Poland. The Ukrainian army in alliance with the Polish went to war against Bolshevik Russia in order to restore the Ukrainian Directory in Ukraine. Yet, Poland failed to stick up to the Treaty provisions, abandoning the UNR to Bolshevik Russia and under the Endek’s pressure signing a cease-fire on March 18, 1921, at the Treaty of Riga with the Russian Federation and the Ukrainian SSR. The Treaty of Riga provided that the Ukrainian lands were divided between Poland and Russia, and that the Poles recognized Soviet Ukraine as an independent state. In the aftermath Poland retained the Kholm/Chełm region with Pidliashia, Polissia and Western Volhynia in addition to Galicia (Eastern Galicia was annexed by Poland on March 15, 1923, following the decision of the Council of Ambassadors). UNR troops were afterward interned in Poland. However, much more interesting is to see what further happened to the interned UNR troops in Szczypiorno: how did the life of the 700 strong Ukrainian community look like, what was the role of the church that was functioning there?

The major part of the Petliura regime archival materials were stored in Tarnów (Poland), where the UNR had purchased a building that served as one of its operation centers during its active participation as a Polish ally in the military operations against the new Bolshevik regime. These included the records of the UNR Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Finance. Some of the Ukrainian emigrants had stayed on in Tarnów during the interwar period, and the city even had a Ukrainian history museum. During the wartime occupation of Poland Nazi authorities discovered a significant body of UNR records in Tarnów, that were most probably held in the same building where the museum was located. Part of the archive reportedly had been purchased by Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky, and accordingly, the Nazi archival administration initially planned to transfer it to Lviv to be consolidated with the Sheptytsky archive there, as is evidenced in an early report in 1941.⁷

It was subsequently transferred from Tarnów to Kraków. Heinz Goring, Third Reich archivist, who served as a head of the State Archive in Kaliningrad (Königsberg), during the war took charge of the State Archive in Kraków, and he personally supervised the transportation of Petliura’s UNR materials to Kraków in March 1942.⁸

7 TsDIAL (Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy, Lviv [Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine, Lviv]), 55/1/253.

8 Details of these actions can be found in the files of the Nazi Archival Administration in Kraków, headed by Dr. Randt, that are kept in the same fund in the Kraków archive. Copy of one of Randt’s reports to Berlin and his survey of these materials “Archiv der Ukrainischen Nationalregierung (Petlura) aus den Jahren 1917–1922” (Kraków, March 25, 1942), also remains in the records of Nazi Archival Administration in Kyiv, TsDAVO, 3206/5/26, fols. 2–5. Transfer and inventory work on UNR records in Kraków were summarized in the typewritten report of Włodzimierz Budka, “Archiwum Państwowe w Krakowie podczas okupacji niemieckiej (September 6, 1939 –January 17, 1945),” dated Kraków, March 2, 1946, Archiwum Państwowe w Krakowie, Zespół APKr, 167, fols. 25–26.

Those materials in Kraków were deemed of such high priority that even during wartime individuals were made responsible for carefully processing and archiving them. Włodzimierz Budka, a Polish archival director who was involved in the Nazi archival service in Kraków during the war, was put in charge of the arrangement and description of the UNR materials from Tarnów.

In the time between November 1942 and late February 1943 he arranged three groups of materials, among which were archival documents, bank notes, and publications. By July 1943, with the assistance of a Ukrainian expert from Lviv, Volodymyr Matsiak, he arranged the Foreign Ministry files and prepared an inventory covering 258 files and bound volumes.⁹ These portions of the UNR Foreign Ministry records were evacuated to the Wieliczka salt mine in January 1944, along with other Kraków archives.¹⁰

However, not all of the UNR records found in Tarnow were immediately brought to Kraków in 1942. Among 70 crates left in Tarnow were bank notes and the printing press for the bank notes (found in a cellar at Parkstrasse 22).¹¹ Files from the Ministry of Finance survived the war, later on all materials taken to Wieliczka were returned safely to the State Archive in Kraków in January 1945 after the liberation of the city. If we shall believe marginal notes on the report of archival developments in Kraków during the war, at the end of March 1945 Soviet authorities relocated UNR materials (approximately 93 boxes) from the State Archive storage area.¹²

Materials from the Tarnów and Kraków archives that encompass both Petliura's library materials as well as of the Ministry of Finance and UNR Foreign Ministry shed further light on the processes of state building endeavors that were taken by Petliura in cooperation with Piłsudski and his allies, keeping in the background the field of great empire ruptures and the emergence of new national states.

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9 Op.cit., fol. 26.

10 A list of records evacuated to Wieliczka dated 16 January 1944 (Nr 20/ 44)-APKr, Zespół APKr, 69 — includes as no. 43 “Ukrainische Akten — Akten der Ukrainischen Volksrepublik (Direktoriat, Ministerial, Auswartiges Amt — 1,47 m.).

11 ERR (Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg/Special Command of Reichsleiter Rosenberg) report (March 1942), TsDAVO (Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv derzhavnoi vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (Central State Archive of Higher Authorities and State Governance of Ukraine), Kyiv (formerly TsDAZhR URSR), 3206/5/26, fols. 4–5.

12 Włodzimierz Budka report, APKr, Zespół APKr, 167, fol. 26v: “Cały ten zespół, więc także uporządkowane przez d-ra Budkę i Maciaka akta min. spraw zagranicznych, min. skarbu... banknotów, przeważna część druków, został zapakowany do 93 worków, wywieziony przez władze rosyjskie w dniu 29.3.1945 z magazynu przy ul. Grodzkiej 53.” A marginal note in the hand of the Kraków archivist Adam Kamiński on the Budka typescript report records the removal of those records by Soviet authorities in March 1945.

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