

The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists:

The Birth of an Indigenous Fascist Movement in the Ukraine, Part 2



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Written by Identity Redacted



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The Halytsko-Bukovynsky Kurin of the Sich Riflemen, of the Doroshenko Regiment

After Konovalets and Melnyk had escaped from the Dubovka concentration camp and made their way to Kyiv, they joined with the growing Ukrainian independence movement and continued to network and organize until the fateful year of 1917. Entire lifetimes could be devoted to writing about all of the world changing events that took place in 1917, but for the scope of this series, I will briefly go over how Konovalets and Melnyk came to command the Sich Riflemen. In March of 1917, after the February Revolution in Russia and the abdication of Tsar Nicolas II, the Central Council of Ukraine was elected, the Tsentralna Rada. Three months later, the Rada declared Ukrainian autonomy within Russia, which the Russian Provisional Government later accepted and recognized. By November, the October Revolution in Russia had occurred, but the Rada and Bolshevism did not see eye to eye and the Kiev Bolshevik Uprising happened on November 8th. This date, the 8th of November, 1917, is now considered to be the starting date of the Ukrainian-Soviet War, which will be discussed below. The uprising was put down on November 13th, the same day that Konovalets, now a colonel, and Melnyk, his chief of staff, organized and assumed command of the first Sich Riflemen Halych-Bukovyna Kurin. Finally, to end our very abbreviated tour of 1917, one week later, the Central Council of Ukraine declared the creation of the Ukrainian National Republic (UNR) on the 20th, a short lived republic that would be suspended in April of 1918 by Pavlo Skoropadskyi's Ukrainian State. The UNR later regained power when Skoropadskyi's government collapsed five months later and then the UNR united with the West Ukrainian People's Republic in January of 1919.

A Declaration, Another Uprising, Another Government, and Another War

The year is 1918, the First World War has ravaged Eastern Europe, as have the revolts and uprisings. Empires have crumbled, leaving populations searching for an identity, searching for a vision of how to govern themselves. On January 22nd, the Tsentralna Rada declared independence of the Ukrainian National Republic, breaking away from the Russian Soviet officially three days later on the 25th. Four days later, the Kiev Arsenal January Uprising began. Col. Konovalets and the Sich Riflemen were

instrumental in quelling the rebellion and protecting the UNR government. Pro-Bolshevik forces later captured Kyiv in the Antonov-Ovseenko offensive. On April 28th, German military authorities put Skoropadskyi into power and he became the Hetman of Ukraine. Again, this began another short lived reign over the Ukrainian region, but it was the beginning of an anti-Bolshevik front that would lay the groundwork for the West's global fight against Communism and later Russia in the current day. Together with Zaporizhia Corps and Haydamaky Kish, the Sich Riflemen were able to regain control of Kyiv and protect it until Konovalets' unit were disbanded in May of the same year. Curiously, the men that risked their lives for their government were broken up for their view on politics. Was this the beginning of the synthesis of Konovalets' radical beliefs, politics, and violence? If the Sich Riflemen under Konovalets were displaying fascist ideology or openly promoting fascism, it was enough for Skoropadskyi and the Ukrainian State to take action! By December, the government would again collapse, as stated above, and a new permutation of the Ukrainian National Republic (note: now sometimes known as the Ukrainian People's Republic, especially online) would take shape. The remaining Sich Riflemen were crucial in bringing the new ruling body into power, known as the Directorate of Ukraine. The Directorate, as it was commonly called, itself was ruled by one Symon Petliura, a man at the center of much controversy today.

As erratic as the events of these past two years are, the lines on the map were just as, if not more, chaotic!

“The War To End All Wars” That Wasn't... and Wish Me Luck!!

Before we uncover the horrific pogroms and violence committed against the thousands of Jews during this time in the Ukraine, we need to take a step back and look the events that had occurred in the area of modern day Poland and western Ukraine, again back to Galicia. The Austro-Hungarian Empire had collapsed, leaving in its place a power vacuum, much the same way that the collapse of the Russian Empire did, that the Treaty of Versailles tried to fill. Unfortunately, “The War To End All Wars” and its aftermath, coupled with the failed attempts at redrawing the map led to the inevitability of even more wars and conflicts. Poland regained its independence after the First World War, but was plagued with several uprisings, border wars and skirmishes, a major war with the Soviets, and the Polish-Ukrainian War. Once again, there are so many moving parts and pieces to these conflicts and regions, that one can easily lose oneself trying to untangle the veritable den of

snakes this tangled history is. And just like before, we will look to Konovalets and Melnyk and try to stick with them during the Polish-Ukrainian War and into the 1920's as they and several other Austro-Hungarian veterans of the previous World War organized and created the Ukrainian Military Organization (Ukrainian acronym: YBO, romanized: UVO). Hopefully, all of this and more will be included in the next part of this series and hopefully (fingers on one hand crossed), I will have part 3 ready for you by the same day next week!

Although I am trying to release a part of this series weekly, I happened to break my thumb and I am having surgery done on it in about an hour, so I don't know how long it will take for me to recover, but I will do my best to continue our tale (yes, I have been typing this series out with only one hand, if you were wondering). Until then, I will see you in "The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists: The Birth of an Indigenous Fascist Movement in the Ukraine, Part 3".

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