

EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UKRAINIAN NATION (1917-1921)

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator

With the proclamation by the Ukrainian Central Council (Ukrainska Tsentralna Rada) of an independent Ukraine in 1917 and with the establishment of its Government, there came many challenges and difficulties. The Central Rada's new form of government had to be organized, so as to legitimize itself in the eyes of its people and the nations of the world. Ministries had to be created; legislation formulated; foreign affairs set in motion, by sending of representatives to various countries seeking from them recognition and support.

All of this work was made even more complicated, because within four years (1917-1920) the new independent State of Ukraine went through three different forms of government: The Government of Central Rada existed from March of 1917 to April of 1918; The Hetman Government of the Ukrainian Statehood (Ukrainska Derzhava) existed from April to December of 1918; The Government of the Directory (Dyrektoriya) of the Ukrainian National Republic existed from December 1918 to 1920.

The financial aspect of a new government was of utmost importance and was addressed as quickly as possible, by the issuing of banknotes and notes of credit.

In our Museum and Library holdings we have practically the complete collection of banknotes issued by these three governments, and then some. In addition to the practical aspect of producing banknotes there are other, much more meaningful and

symbolic features of banknotes, especially those which were produced for the first time by a newly formed government. Members of these committees (each of the three governments in its own way) in charge of this assignment gave it much thought and introspection before the final product was released. The wording, the insignias, and the carefully selected symbolic depictions on a banknote can tell much about the country issuing it. It can inform us about the government's position towards its people, especially towards minorities; it can show certain aspects of the country's heritage, its historic past, the glorifying of certain personages. Last but not least is the artistic aspect of the banknote. All of these elements would become an

integral part of the country's identity for its own people and for all other countries.

The first banknote which was issued in 1917 by the Central Rada was a note of 100 karbovantsiv. The term Karbovanets was used, which comes from the word karbuvaty meaning carving wedges into a long piece of wood. This was an ancient way of keeping accounts. On the reverse side of the note the wording (100 karbovantsiv) is given in three languages – Russian, Polish and Yiddish. This was a very important gesture on the part of the government to show the inclusiveness of the various ethnic groups living in the then Ukrainian State. The face side of the note had only Ukrainian wording

against the background of a highly stylized floral motif, very much reminiscent of the Cossack baroque style from the Ukrainian historic past. But, the most important feature of the note was the incorporation into it of the Trident (tryzub) which was the ancient symbol of Kyievan Rus of Prince Volodymyr's reign. This underscored the idea of a continuity and connection of the Kyievan State with the Independent Ukraine of 1917. The Trident was later integrated into state seals and legalized as the national symbol in 1918. This banknote was the work of the artist Heorhi Narbut (1886-1920). A young talented graphic artist, Narbut was appointed as a professor at the Ukrainian Academy of Arts in Kyiv in 1917, and in 1918 became its rector. He was noted for his graphic illustrations in heraldry books, covers for books and journals, and best known for his designs for currency, postal stamps, and seals. He died prematurely from typhus. The Central Rada also issued a 25 and a 50 karbovantsi notes which was the artistic creation of Oleksander Krasovsky. The images on these notes depict the agricultural aspect of the Ukrainian people. On one side of an ellipse with the Trident centrally located is a peasant male with a spade in his hand; and on the other side is a peasant female kneeling and holding a sheaf of wheat. The Central Rada had planned to issue 5 and 10 karbovantsi notes, but the government fell and these two notes were never printed. More in the next article. ■



EXAMPLES OF BANKNOTES ISSUED IN 1917 BY THE CENTRAL RADA, Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

DIRECTOR'S BOOK REVIEW (MSGR. JOHN TERLECKY):

EVERYONE LOSES: THE UKRAINE CRISIS AND THE RUINOUS CONTEST FOR POST-SOVIET EURASIA, Samuel Charap and Timothy J. Colton, New York : Routledge for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2017 (ISBN 978-1-138-63308-7).

There is a considerable amount of English language material that has been written on Ukraine's political climate in the 21st century: the Orange Revolution, the Maidan protests, the current Donbas and Crimea situations. The authors of this book are associated with the thinktank known as the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

This is not a book for the average reader. The authors themselves label their work as being aimed at "sophisticated observers", that is, readers who have a knowledge of the politics, economics and geoidealistic principles of Eastern Europe, espe-

cially the six "In-between" countries -- former Soviet union republics flanked by Russia and East Central Europe. Of these, Ukraine has been hit the hardest -- right in the middle of an ideological war between Russia, the European Union, and the United States. The life of an average Ukrainian has been turned upside down within all four sectors of the country: Western, Central, Eastern and Southern, especially the Crimean front.

The authors base their assessment of the current situation in this geographical part of the world on what they label as "a negative sum game", that is, a situation in

which no one is really winning. Ukraine is the present paradigm of "upmanship" in containment of twentieth-century territories that were clearly defined between the West and the Soviet Union. One must calculate the chess pieces presently in action as costly, no matter what country or market thinks that it may be making the right moves: ten thousand lives lost in the Donbas War, the sad state of economic growth in Russia, the inability of the West to offer fitting negotiations that would guarantee the influence of Russia over foreign territories while still recognizing the sovereignty of the nations involved. In this vein, I found the cases

presented by the authors to be objectively analyzed without falling into the trap of partisan politics. I think that I am correct in stating that the book is grounded in argumentation equally from all sides.

This is not a book to enjoy for the simple pleasure of reading -- it is a scholarly piece of analysis, supported by hundred of bibliographical footnotes. The authors conclude with a presentation of ideas on how to get out of this political quagmire -- yet, they conclude that their perceptions are most difficult to enact and seem to be even impossible in the present situation.

This is a thought-provok-



ing book that can be studied by anyone who is seriously interested in the political climate of Eastern Central Europe and the "In-Between" countries unfortunately caught in the middle. ■

For more information about The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford, please, visit www.ukrainianmuseumlibrary.org, call 203-324-0499 or 203-323-8866. The museum is open Wednesday through Friday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., or by appointment, and is located at 161 Glenbrook Road, Stamford, CT 06902.