

EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

The Establishment of the Ukrainian Nation (1917-1921) - Part IV

Military and Commemorative Medals and Awards

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator



(1) The Iron Cross, Y. Butsmaniuk, Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

The tradition of expressing recognition to individuals or groups for distinguished acts of valor, dedicated service, outstanding achievement in the form of various awards, medals, and decorations has been known for many centuries. This form of expression, as well as the use of emblems, insignias, regalia symbolizing powers of authority, coat of arms of noble families, and state seals was also used in historical periods in Ukraine. In time the use and production of different types or classes of medals became very popular. For examples: organizational or societal insignias as a badge of membership, commemorative medals for individuals or events, souvenir type of medals for expositions, medal awards for agricultural and trade shows, sports organizations, political party insignias, etc.

Military medals and awards as a distinct Ukrainian category came into usage in the 20th century during the years of Ukraine's struggle for freedom, 1917-1920. Prior to that time, Ukraine was divided between two great empires -- the Tsarist Russian and the Austro-Hungarian empires and did not have an army of its own. Young Ukrainian men had to serve in the army of the rulers in power and be

under its jurisdiction, and wear their uniforms and insignias.

The first Ukrainian army unit was formed in 1914 in Halychyna, namely the Legion of Ukrainian Riflemen (Legion Ukrainskykh Sichovykh Striltsiv). Although it was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Army it was strictly a Ukrainian national army unit. The soldiers first wore the blue Austrian uniform which later was changed to green and introduced its own military cap "the mazepynka", as well as specific Ukrainian insignias. Later the Army of the

Ukrainian National Republic was formed, and then the Ukrainian Galician Army. During the years of Independence, mainly in 1919, rules and regulations were added to charters, deeds, projects of war crosses, medals, ribbons and the like. However, because of continuous wartime fighting, not all of the projects were produced at that time, but at a later date. In our Museum and Library archives we have an extensive collection of Ukrainian military Medals and Orders. I would like to acquaint you with three of them.

1. The Order of Knights -- the Iron Cross of the Army of the Ukrainian National Republic. It was established and confirmed on October 19, 1920 by Symon Petliura, Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Ukrainian National Republic. It was produced in Warsaw. This Medal was to be awarded to all participants of the First Winter Campaign which took place from December 6, 1919 to May 6, 1920, under the command of General Omelianovych-Pavlenko. There were two issuances of this Cross. This campaign is considered to be one of the most heroic feats accomplished by the UNR Army under the most difficult of

conditions -- fighting on two fronts against the Russian White and the Bolshevik Red Armies. This Order is in the shape of a black enamel square cross with yellow edging. In the center of the Cross is a gold four-pointed star with the trident in the center on blue background. On the reverse side the inscription reads "For Winter Campaign and Battles, 6.12 1919- 6.5 1920". The same Cross was also issued in miniature form. The designer was Yulian Butsmaniuk.

2. The Order (Cross) of Symon Petliura. This Order was established on May 22, 1932 and was instituted by the High Command of the Army of the Ukrainian National Republic and was confirmed by the President of the UNR in Exile, A. Livitsky. A miniature form of this Cross was also issued. It was a wide-armed Cross of black enamel with white metal edging. In the upper part of the Cross is a silver trident. In the lower part, there is a silver sword with the tip pointing upwards. Attached is a moire ribbon

of yellow, blue and black colors. This award was designed by M. Bytynsky.

3. The Cross of the Legion of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen (Hutsulian). It was established in 1918 by the Central Executive of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen in Vienna, Austria. It was awarded to all soldiers who were members of the Legion. It was designed of gilt bronze and blue enamel. There are two sizes of the Cross. The larger one for "parade" and the smaller one for daily usage. On the face of the Cross, at the ends of each arm, are the Ukrainian letters "YCC" and the year 1914. The attached ribbon has two vertical yellow stripes over horizontally placed dark blue and yellow narrow stripes.

Medals and Orders of this category were worn on the uniform jacket from the center of the chest towards the left side above the pocket. They were usually attached to an appropriate ribbon which in Ukrainian medals had a combination of blue and yellow, vertical or horizontal stripes. □



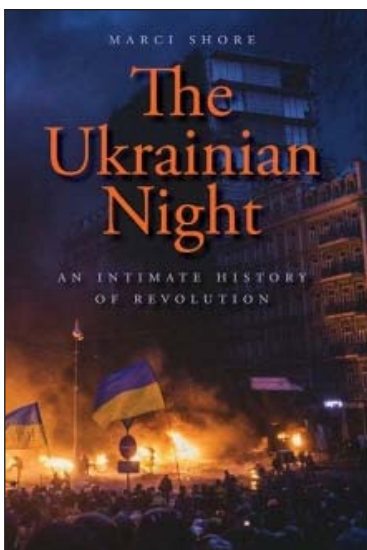
(2) The Order (Cross) of S. Petliura, M. Bytynsky, Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford



(3) The Cross of the Legion, M. Bytynsky, Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

Book Review by Museum Director

Msgr. John Terlecky



THE UKRAINIAN NIGHT: AN INFINITE HISTORY OF REVOLUTION by Marci Shore. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018. (ISBN 978-0-300-21868-8)

Marci Shore is an associate professor of history at Yale

University, whose writings have concentrated on recent events in Eastern Europe. This book is unique in its coverage of the EuroMaidan protests in Kyiv during November 2013 through February 2014).

Many have called the Maidan protests a "revolution for dignity"; the author uses the phrase "a revolution for new values". The book is not about the politics and government of Ukraine which dominated the national psyche during that time. I think the book is rather a celebration of many firsthand interviews with those who were ready to sacrifice their lives for values that any open society longs for and often is deceived by those who hold power. In reading the first half of the book, I was reminded of the rock song performed in the 1960s entitled "We won't be

fooled again". [check its lyrics and note some similarities].

The book is divided into two sections: the experience of the Maidan events and the experience of the Maidan upon the psyche of Eastern Ukraine. Both topics are well documented by the author as if she was right there in the middle of the action taking place from the protestors' point of view.

I experienced a lot of emotions in reading the first half of the book. The stories of motivation that rallied not only young people but people from all walks of life, I believe, would be deeply felt by any reader. What uplifted me in the moments of this protest tragedy was learning about the solidarity of Ukraine's citizens and the new values that distinguished them from traditional modes of Ukrainian thought that I was raised up

even here in the United States. The Maidan was filled with genuine citizens longing for change and the dissolution of the social chains that were suffocating them. There were different ethnic groups involved in the heart of the movement: Ukrainians, Russians, Poles, Jews, Armenians, Tatars and others. There was no quarreling over what language a citizen should be required to speak -- those who were involved basically accepted the makeup of one another binding them in unity during crisis and chaos. It was quite difficult for me emotionally reading about the beatings, the medical attention needed, the harsh conditions of living outdoors in the midst of winter, and of course the heroic lives that were sacrificed along the way through the dynamics of revolution.

The second half of the book focuses on how the Maidan events were received in Eastern Ukraine. The city of Dnipropetrovsk eventually embraced what took place and accepted such rights as freedom of assembly and the rejection of state-sponsored propaganda. I think each one of us knows by now what happened in the Donbas basin.

This is a wonderful book of raw exposure to what took place in the most memorable event in a 21st century Ukraine to date. One element that I found missing in the Maidan experiences shared with the author was how the Church and religion may have contributed to the spirit of that time. Nevertheless, this is a book that any engaged reader just cannot put down and must read to the very end. □