

Research Report  
IREX Short Term Travel Grant  
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Summer 2002

1. Title: "Brotherlands: A Family History of the East European Nations." The short-term travel grant was used to research book considering the family history of national politics in eastern Europe. The book takes the form of a series of biographies of families in which brothers and sisters choose different national identities and become important in rival national movements and states.

2. The intention is to find a different approach to certain central questions in the field: in what measure are national self-identifications a matter of choice, and in what measure a matter of previous history? does the dominant scheme of ethnicity have much to do with the empirical past, or is it itself a political creation of a certain epoch? The approach involves taking cases in which choices were clearly made, since siblings chose different self-identifications, and inquiring closely about the circumstances and motives of these choices. A secondary aim is to follow the path of the far left to the conviction that forceful resolutions of national questions are necessary.

3. The cases will be presented against a backdrop of social and political history researched in previous IREX-supported projects. This time, the research involves personal and family histories. This summer was spent at the Archive of the Institute of Literature, Kyiv, the Archive-Museum of Literature and Art, Kyiv, the Archive of New Files, Warsaw, the Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw, the Archive of the Higher Organs of State Power, Kyiv, and the Archives of the Basilian Monastery, Warsaw. I found a good deal of what I had hoped to find, and in general emerged with the conviction that the necessary materials are available. I also presented the project at an international conference in Poland in June.

4. Since this grant financed the first weeks of an entirely new project, it is too early to present findings with great confidence. Certain interesting patterns have emerged. It does appear, for example, that family is connected to nationality, but not in the ways that ethnic nationalism would expect, and perhaps not in the ways that contemporary sociology would anticipate. Many of the first generation of national political leaders treated in the book seem to have explicitly or implicitly regarded the nation as a family, with stages of development, but also moments of choice. As the first generation experienced the First World War, interwar nation-states, and the Second World War, this frame held, although it very often involved disappointment with the nations that emerged. This suggests a second finding: that many of those who embraced national revivals in the nineteenth century did so as a means to other ends, and then watched as national politics became an end in itself.

5. The aim of the book is to connect micro- and macro-history, cultural and political history, in a study of prominent individuals active in the origins of national politics and the creation of national states. A similar approach might work as well or better in a study

of early multinational trade: one thinks of what Roman Szporluk did with List and what Barany did with Szechenyi. Perhaps a comparison of the national ideas of early builders of economies is warranted? I also tend to think that the sociology of the first generation of Polish communists is understudied. We seem to know much more about the generation of the 1890s and the generation of the 1950s than we do of the generation of the 1920s. But these are just suggestions.