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Reconsidering "Piłsudskiite nationalism"

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This paper examines the intellectual underpinnings of the nationalism articulated by the followers of Marshal Józef Piłsudski (Piłsudskiites), who ruled Poland between 1926 and 1939. Scholarly consensus holds that modern Polish nationalism was solely the domain of the National Democratic movement. Conversely, the Piłsudskiites' conception of the nation is generally seen as anachronistic, poorly articulated, self-contradictory, and lacking a deeper intellectual foundation. Focusing on the formative years of the Second Polish Republic (1918–1922), this paper draws a link between Piłsudskiite political thought and the philosophy of the heterodox Marxist theorist Stanisław Brzozowski. Re-examining the early writings of Piłsudski's followers in light of Brzozowski's philosophy, the paper presents the argument that "Piłsudskiite nationalism" was in fact deeply constructivist, surprisingly sophisticated, and no less "modern" than the nationalist discourse articulated by the National Democrats. In the process, the article interrogates and problematizes the classic "ethnic" vs. "civic" typology of nationalist movements.

Keywords: nationalism; Poland; Pilsudski; Brzozowski; civic

For the better part of the nineteenth century, the most prolific champions of Polish patriotism, such as the insurrectionary leader Tadeusz Kościuszko, the great romantic poet Adam Mickiewicz, or even the conservative statesman Prince Adam Czartoryski, imagined the reconstituted Poland not as an ethnically homogenous state for ethnic Poles, but as a multi-ethnic and democratic federation, which would include Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Jews, and Germans as equal citizens, all of whom would participate in a civically defined Polish political identity.[1] But by the time Poland was on the threshold of regaining independence in 1918, this rosy picture had all but faded away. Indeed, during a very short period of time, between roughly the 1880s and the 1910s, a new strain of Polish nationalism had developed. In this new "ethnic" nationalism, first formulated by the National Democratic (ND) movement, membership in the nation was defined by language and race rather than ties of history or citizenship.[2] Although ND intellectuals, led by the movement's theoretical heavyweight Roman Dmowski, gained a reputation for chauvinism, intolerance, and anti-Semitism, they quickly came to dominate many aspects of Polish political culture. Most importantly, Dmowski, a committed anti-Semite who had been instrumental in organizing anti-Jewish economic initiatives before World War I emerged, by 1918, as one of the most prominent Polish statesmen. It was largely

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for this reason that independent Poland was received with skepticism by many Western liberals and, to an even greater extent, by Jewish communities in western Europe and America.

As the title of Dmowski's paradigmatic work, *The Thoughts of a Modern Pole*, suggests, the National Democrats saw themselves as the only true representatives of "modern" Polish patriotism, and they fiercely opposed the more open and tolerant civic tradition of earlier generations, which they saw as outdated, utopian, and romantic (Dmowski [1903] 1953). Today many scholars have implicitly accepted this ND claim at face value, and see the NDs as the only representatives of modern Polish nationalism. The National Democrats' enemies are alternately portrayed as the nostalgic, even if admirable, holdovers from an earlier romantic insurrectionary tradition or as socialists, for whom class allegiances ultimately trumped national ones.

Yet, if we strip the term nationalism of its emotional baggage, and accept its most basic analytical definition (a doctrine which holds that the nation needs an independent state of its own), then we cannot sustain the claim that the National Democrats were the only spokesmen of Polish nationalism even as late as the early twentieth century (Gellner 1983, 1). Indeed, while the NDs explicitly rejected the sustained struggle for national independence, important political forces on the left of the political spectrum made this struggle their priority, in both theory and practice. As Brian Porter-Szűcs has argued, the development of the modern conception of the nation in Poland was "hotly contested" (Porter 2000, 189). While Porter-Szűcs traces this process of contestation until the 1905 Revolution, the fierce discursive struggle over the meaning of the Polish nation continued well into the interwar period and was not fully settled even by the outbreak of World War II.

The chief rivals of the National Democrats in "the struggle for soul of the Polish nation" were the followers of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, usually referred to as the *Piłsudczyks* (Piłsudskiites). Insofar as scholars have dealt with the discursive alternative to ND nationalism, they have tended to limit themselves to the personal beliefs of Piłsudski. The broad outlines of Piłsudski's own vision of Poland are repeated so often as to be almost cliché, but they are seldom analyzed. The Marshal is most often portrayed as a traditional or even anachronistic patriot, who represents what was best in the multicultural traditions of the early modern Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, as these are encapsulated in the famous adage *gente Ruthenus natione Polonus* (of the Ruthenian people but of Polish nationality). As Snyder (2003) summarizes it, Piłsudski's "patriotism was founded not upon a modern or linguistic definition of Poland but upon nostalgic republican ideas of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which he opposed to a historical notion of an autocratic Russia" (42).[3]

There is no doubt that the image of Pilsudski as a nostalgic patriot of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth contains many elements of truth. The goal of this paper, however, is not to analyze Piłsudski, who has certainly received his fair share of attention from historians and biographers. Whatever Piłsudski himself may or may not have thought, believed, or felt, the far more interesting question concerns his followers, who with his blessing and support articulated a sophisticated theoretical justification of their brand of patriotism, which was not simply a restatement of the tenets of nineteenth-century romantic nationalism. Despite being readily accessible in Piłsudskiite publications, this discourse has not been subjected to any serious critical scrutiny in the literature to date. Indeed, the most puzzling aspect of Polish historiography on this subject is the fixation on Piłsudski himself to the utter neglect of his followers, who *had* in fact put forth a convincing, sophisticated, and quintessentially modern exposition of their vision of the imagined community of the Polish nation.[4]

This paper should be seen as a first step toward addressing this lacuna in the literature. As a first step in what is in fact a very considerable undertaking it cannot claim to be comprehensive. The Piłsudskiites were a diverse group, whose membership and ideology

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evolved and underwent major changes over time.[5] At first glance there may even appear to be little resemblance between the ideas of Piłsudski's followers in early independent Poland, who forcefully defended the rights of national minorities, and those of his successors in the late 1930s, who appropriated many aspects of ND ideology and created the nationalist and openly anti-Semitic Camp of National Unity (*Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego*). In this introductory examination of Piłsudskiite political thought, I will limit myself to delineating its contours and major influences as these presented themselves in the formative years of the Second Republic. This formative period, which lasted between national independence, secured in November 1918, and the first full elections, held in November 1922, was a time of seemingly unbridled nation- and state-building possibilities. Indeed, the reemergence of Poland on the map of Europe opened up a discursive window in which it became necessary to discuss and define the very meaning of seemingly self-evident terms like Poland and "Polishness" (*polskość*). The clash between the Piłsudskiites and the National Democrats was so fierce largely because it involved a disagreement about these fundamental questions. The elections of 1922 settled a number of questions regarding the meaning of the Polish nation and brought closure to some aspects of this debate.[6] For this reason, they opened a new chapter in Piłsudskiite thought and constitute a natural temporal limit for this inquiry.

While a comprehensive diachronic definition of the Piłsudskiites or "Piłsudskiism" lies beyond the scope of this paper, in presenting this preliminary argument I will focus primarily on the writers of *Droga* (The Way) and *Rząd i Wojsko* (Government and Army), two publications recognized by both friend and foe as the theoretical organs of the Piłsudski movement (Osiński 2004, 2).[7] Unfortunately, questions as to exactly how these ideas were received and consumed by the rank and file of Piłsudski's followers and how they influenced the political practice of the Piłusdskiites, especially in post-1926 Poland, will have to await separate treatments. For now, my purpose is to demonstrate that there was such a thing as Piłsudskiite political thought (quite a controversial proposition in itself!) and that it presented, at least on the level of theory, a coherent and surprisingly modern alternative to ND nationalism.[8]

More specifically, this paper will present the argument that the Piłsudskiites' vision of the national community owes an unacknowledged debt to the philosophy of the unorthodox Marxist theorist Stanisław Brzozowski. Brzozowski's influence, the paper will show, was most evident in the almost entirely forgotten writings of Adam Skwarczyński, the "ideologue of the Piłsudski camp," and his colleagues from *Droga* and *Rząd i Wojsko*, such as Tadeusz Hołówko, Marceli Handelsman, or Janusz Jędrzejwicz (Micewski 1968, 62).[9] Skwarczyński, who was seen as one of the most influential political thinkers of the Second Republic, is almost entirely forgotten today and insofar as his work is discussed, it is treated superficially and without deeper theoretical grounding.[10] Part of the reason for this state of affairs is the failure of historians to draw the connection between Skwarczyński's thought and the political philosophy of Brzozowski. Indeed, as I will attempt to show in this article, the thought of Skwarczyński and other important Piłsudskiite writers is virtually incomprehensible without reference to Brzozowski. This may explain why scholars who failed to connect Piłsudskiite ideology to Brzozowski's thought have almost entirely missed the former's sophistication and significance.

The heritage of the Polish Socialist Party

Any analysis of Piłsudskiite political thought must begin with the Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna* or PPS). The importance of the PPS in Polish history is

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twofold. First, as a well-organized, mass-based, working-class party, the PPS would play a critical role in Polish politics in its own right throughout the interwar years. Second, the PPS can be seen as the nucleus of a larger and more nebulous political "orientation" (*orientacja*) as contemporaries called it, known as the Patriotic Left (*Lewica Niepodległościowa*). This broad umbrella grouping included other parties, informal networks, paramilitary formations, and independent political figures. Not all of these groups could necessarily be described as "socialist," but the vast majority had their intellectual or organizational roots in the PPS, and shared many elements of its program. In the initial years of Polish independence, this broad coalition, loosely grouped around the charismatic leadership of Piłsudski, would challenge the National Democrats' attempts to lay sole claim to representing Polish patriotism.

The first PPS programs called for the recreation of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in its 1772 boundaries as a democratic federation and demanded "the full equality of all the nationalities inhabiting the Commonwealth" (Tych (1975, 253). The unspoken assumption was that these nationalities would undoubtedly want to join a Polish-led federation precisely because it would offer them freedom. Such an outlook was indeed inherited from the romantics and, arguably, was nostalgic and even naïve. However, as we will see, the political thought of the Polish left, and more specifically of the followers of Piłsudski, was not static. While the 1905 Revolution marked a high point for socialism in Polish society, it also forced the socialists to grapple with a multitude of hitherto unforeseen questions. Within the PPS, debates over tactics prompted fundamental fissures. For Piłsudski and much of the party's old guard, known as the "old ones," the defeat of the revolution showed the impotence of unorganized action by the masses against the military might of the modern state. This tactical assessment reinforced their disdain for cosmopolitan socialists and pre-existing commitment to Polish patriotism and its insurrectionary tradition. The answer, Piłsudski believed, was to engage the Russian forces militarily in the tradition of the Polish insurrections. At the same time, experiences gained during the revolution convinced many PPS activists that emphasizing patriotism was the surest way to win the hearts of Polish workers and guarantee the party success (Sokolnicki 1936, 263). This reemphasis of the party's patriotic (or nationalist) dimension raised fierce opposition from a younger group of activists who became known as the PPS-Left, and eventually led to a schism within the party in 1906. At the 10th Party Congress, held in Vienna in November 1906, "young ones" were successful in capturing the Central Committee of the PPS, which prompted Piłsudski and his followers to pull out of the party and start their own splinter group. The "young ones" renamed their rump party the PPS-Left, while the "old ones" called their splinter group the PPS-Revolutionary Faction, in order to highlight their emphasis on armed struggle (Ładyka 1972).

The split within the PPS foreshadowed Piłsudski's eventual departure from the party (and from socialism) and his full-time dedication to the cause of national independence. In fact, even though the larger of the two PPS organizations remained firmly committed to the question of national independence, Piłsudski and his closest followers soon went even further and began to organize non-partisan clandestine military units for an eventual armed showdown with the Tsarist state.[11] At the same time, the postulate of creating a single democratic state for all the nationalities of the old Republic was beginning to look increasingly idealistic and untenable in the face of intensifying national movements among its former constituent peoples, especially the Ukrainians, but also the Lithuanians and Jews. With the increasing commitment to patriotism, and continued de-emphasis of socialism's internationalist dimension, the Patriotic Left faced a growing need to clearly define its own political vision and defend itself from both nationalist critics on the right and internationalist ones on the left.

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Could the twin commitments to independence within the 1772 boundaries of the Republic and justice for all the other peoples who lived in that area be reconciled? The National Democrats, who openly proclaimed to care *only* about the welfare of the Poles, were at least consistent in their position. So were the internationalist socialists of the PPS-Left and the communists of the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (*Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy* or SDKPiL), who rejected the particular national aspirations of the Poles in favor of universal justice, international brotherhood, and unabridged cosmopolitanism. The PPS and the followers of Piłsudski were left in a somewhat unstable intermediate position.

The "national realism" of Stanisław Brzozowski

It is my contention that no serious discussion of Piłsudskiite nationalism, as it was articulated by its key exponents in the early 1920s, can take place without reference to the strikingly original heterodox Marxist theorist Stanisław Brzozowski, whose thought formed an intellectual bridge between the early ideology of the PPS and the later vision of the Piłsudskiites.[12] Brzozowski, who died at the age of 30 in 1911, nevertheless managed to leave behind a staggering amount of writing. While it is impossible to analyze all his views here, or give an account of his intellectual development, the most important aspect of Brzozowski's thought for our purposes is his transition from a position of cosmopolitan socialism to an acknowledgement of the key role of nations, or national cultures, in human life. In this respect, Brzozowski was an exemplar rather than forerunner of the intellectual trend which, as we saw, was gripping the entire right wing of the PPS. However, even if Brzozowski's intellectual evolution may have been to some extent concurrent with that of some Piłsudskiites, his thought provided the theoretical grounding on the basis of which others, like Skwarczyński, would later be able to coherently argue the positions they may have arrived at independently. As we will see, key terms utilized by the Piłsudskiites in the late 1910s and early 1920s, like "service" (*służba*), "creativity" (*twórczość*), and "labor" (*praca*), are either incomprehensible or sound like facile slogans without reference to Brzozowski.

Today, Brzozowski is remembered chiefly as the precursor of Antonio Gramsci and so-called humanist Marxism.[13] Indeed, his Marxism was so starkly modern, almost postmodern, that he was largely misunderstood and ignored by his contemporaries. He drew inspiration from an eclectic list of influences which, aside from Marx, included Friedrich Nietzsche and Cardinal John Newman, and his thought had few parallels in Poland or beyond its borders (Miłosz 1982, 6). In contrast to most of his contemporary Marxists, who subscribed to the economic determinism of Marx's later writings, Brzozowski emphasized the problem of alienation. Marxism's importance, according to Brzozowski, lay in its freeing man from abstract idealism and setting philosophy on the concrete ground of economic reality and actual *lived experience.* Man's alienation from his own labor was a crucial component of the experience of modernity, but it did not necessarily point the way toward the future in a teleological manner. For Brzozowski, Marxism was not a prophecy, or much less a social "science;" it was a tool used to interpret and change the present.

Brzozowski was a radical constructivist and, in this respect, is more reminiscent of our contemporaries than those of his own generation. Nature and science, he wrote, were constituted historically. The social world, including all knowledge, was the product of past human productivity and labor. Yet, there was one value which saved his thought from relativism and provided a firm foundation from which to think about one's place in the world and responsibility for the latter – that value was labor itself. All the life worlds inhabited by

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human beings had been constructed in different historical circumstances but always through hard labor and struggle with the non-human forces of nature. The daily grind of labor, or the participation in the struggle against the non-human world, gave life its ultimate meaning. "Whoever exists in his daily life, all the while holding it in contempt," Brzozowski wrote, should "be excluded, by his own conscience, from taking part in shaping collective human consciousness" (Brzozowski [1912] 2007, 87). Yet, instead of giving labor its proper place in the hierarchy of values, Western philosophy sought transcendental truths that were said to lie beyond the physical world. According to Brzozowski, like it or not, human beings were inextricably bound to the physical world, and only labor, understood as the active struggle against nature, could maintain our continued existence (Brzozowski [1912] 2007, 86–87). As Andrzej Walicki has demonstrated this "philosophy of labor" constituted the core of Brzozowski's philosophical output since at least 1906 (Walicki 2011, 143–144).

Despite being critical of romanticism, which he saw as just another attempt to escape the necessity of labor, Brzozowski accepted the Polish romanticism of Mickiewicz, Słowacki, and the Great Emigration writers. In fact, though he was extremely critical of Polish culture in general, he went so far as to argue that Polish romanticism constituted the one "real revelation, won by our nation for all humanity" (Walicki 2011, 51). The reason for Brzozowski's endorsement of the Polish romantics lies in their emphasis on individual agency in humanity's political and socioeconomic struggle for liberty. Indeed, it is his emphasis on the importance of the individual creative act in history that sets Brzozowski apart from other Marxists. But what were to be the ends of this creativity and "labor?" In answering this question, Brzozowski's views underwent a profound evolution between 1905 and his death in 1911. While his earlier ideas echoed Marx in their universalism and focus on class struggle, it was his preoccupation with understanding the actual lived experience of human beings that led him to question universalism and, in the end, to embrace the particularism of national cultures.

In his early writings, Brzozowski was a scathing critic of the National Democrats and their brand of nationalistic chauvinism, a position which he never moderated (Miłosz 1982, 34–35). His most forceful attack on the NDs can be found in his 1906 article entitled "The All-Polish Leprosy" (*Trąd Wszechpolski*) in reference to the "All-Polish Review" (*Przegląd Wszechpolski*), the National Democrats' chief organ at the time. In the article he accused the NDs of wanting Polish independence just so that they could erect "their own scaffolds," in place of Russian or German ones (Brzozowski (1906), quoted in Miłosz (1982, 38). In 1910, he wrote the following words, presciently attacking the new Polish and German nationalisms:

> These hysterical neurasthenics believe that they somehow resemble the ancient Teutons … and soon no doubt in Cracow some new café-based [King Bolesław] Chrobry movement will arise, claiming that Chrobry was a forerunner of Nietzsche. (Miłosz 1982, 52)

Brzozowski's reference to King Bolesław Chrobry was almost prophetic – in the interwar period the National Democrats adopted his mythical sword as the symbol of their movement.

To the very end of his life Brzozowski remained opposed to any kind of biological racism, chauvinism, or anti-Semitism. Yet in his very last book, he claimed to have arrived at a position he called "modern national realism" (Brzozowski [1912] 2007, 232). Brzozowski explained this new doctrine in an article about the early nineteenth-century literary critic and revolutionary leader Maurycy Mochnacki, whom he considered to be the most "modern" figure in Polish history. Mochnacki's greatness, in Brzozowski's

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presentation, lay in his fully self-conscious awareness of himself as the product of a particular national history. But this self-understanding did not prompt him to move "beyond the nation" and assume a position of internationalism or cultural relativism. Nor did it lead him to subsume his own individual responsibility within "some kind of murky national mysticism," as the National Democrats were doing in Brzozowski's own day (Brzozowski [1912] 2007, 235). For Mochnacki, the nation and its traditions were not idols, gods, or vehicles of transcendence; instead they became the materials for his own individual, active, self-conscious, and creative "historical construction" (Brzozowski [1912] 2007, 235).

Paradoxical though it may initially seem, this quasi-Nietzschean emphasis on individual creation (*twórczość*) is absolutely key to understanding Brzozowski's endorsement of "national realism." For Brzozowski, national cultures were "real" in the sense that they shaped and, ultimately, created the individual. But in turn they also constituted the canvas or raw material for individual action and *creation*. Thus, Mochnacki utilized the traditions of the Polish nobility, despite being painfully aware of all their shortcomings and imperfections, because they were the only instrument available to him in "shaping men and constructing history" (Brzozowski [1912] 2007, 242). He *used* them fully consciously, in order to amplify his own will, power, and capacity for historical creation. His goal, as Brzozowski put it, was "to break into history" and leave his individual mark upon the collective labor of generations (Brzozowski [1912] 2007, 240). Unlike Mickiewicz, Słowacki, or subsequent Polish romantics, who sought salvation in transcendental historiosophical teleologies and deterministic grand narratives, Mochnacki was fully aware that only his own action could change the world, and that it would be effective only if it was based on "real" and concrete foundations.

For Brzozowski nations were "real" not in any objective sense, but because they shaped the lives and identities of millions of Europeans. Brzozowski also appreciated the emancipatory potential offered by the social glue that was national culture – nations could be thought of as "organisms of labor" and could unite millions of people toward a common life-affirming goal (Brzozowski [1912] 2007, 242). But he was always aware of nationalism's darker side. He sought strength and glorified willpower, but not at the expense of individual responsibility. He rejected racism, tribalism, biological determinism, sentimentalism, and any form of national mysticism that allowed the individual to relinquish responsibility for his actions. Brzozowski's hero, Mochnacki, knew that human life was fundamentally irrational but he nevertheless tried to harness this irrationality and make use of it in a conscious, constructive, and rational manner, rather than surrendering to it.[14]

Brzozowski's own life unfolded in a deeply tragic manner. Accused of leaking confidential information about the Polish student movement to the Tsarist secret police, he spent his last years in exile and poverty, rejected by most of his former friends and comrades from the PPS. But although he is still poorly known in Poland (and almost totally unknown anywhere else), his writings exerted a tremendous influence on the country's intellectual elite, especially on the left.[15] Yet, his influence on the political thought of the Piłsudskiites has never been adequately highlighted, let alone analyzed.[16] But there is no doubt that Brzozowski was a major influence on a generation of left-leaning young Poles coming of age in the 1900s and 1910s. His thought appealed to those who believed in patriotism and social justice, but were reluctant to accept Marxist economic determinism or the radical internationalism of the far left. As Katelbach ([1948] 2001), later a prominent Piłsudskiite, reminisced of his youthful intellectual encounter with Brzozowski:

> [His work] was a revelation and a consolation. I felt that I finally found the right synthesis of my own sociopolitical views, or rather preferences. From the perspective of social justice, Brzozowski stood on the side of the working class without any reservations, but he equally

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> strongly emphasized the unbreakable, as he said, irrational bond uniting the individual with history, man with the nation, and with the latter's past and present. (26)

In sum, while the extent to which Brzozowski's work was understood by his contemporaries can be debated, there is no doubt that it had an impact on young Poles who were looking for a doctrine capable of providing a coherent synthesis of patriotism and socialism.

Adam Skwarczyński and the "progressive" justification of patriotism

The unofficial ideologue of the Piłsudski movement was Adam Skwarczyński. Born, like Piłsudski, Brzozowski, and many leading representatives of the Polish left, into a dislocated and relatively impoverished noble family, Skwarczyński shared many of the same formative influences – chief among them romantic poetry. His early career was that of a paradigmatic Piłsudskiite. In 1908, he became involved in Piłsudski's non-partisan Union of Active Combat (*Związek Walki Czynnej*), which operated in Galicia with the aim of preparing the Poles for an armed conflict with the Russian Empire. In 1909, he joined the PPS, and began writing for the journal *Promień* (Ray of Light) in which Piłsudski and Brzozowski had also published.

Skwarczyński articulated his early understanding of the nation in two articles published in consecutive issues of *Promień*. The first one, entitled "The National and International Position of our Organization," responded to internationalist socialists, who rejected the Polish patriotism of the PPS as heterodox (Płomienisty 1910). The second, "Questions of Polish Patriotism," was directed at critics on the right and sought to refute the opposite charge – that the PPS lacked patriotism (Lux 1910).

The first article recapitulated the PPS position articulated by thinkers like Bolesław Limanowski and Stanisław Mendelson in the last decades of the nineteenth century.[17] "We believe," Skwarczyński began,

> that only the independence and unification of Poland can be counted as her true liberation, that freedom and equality should also reign within [Poland], and we see people of different nationalities as brothers, as long as they call for the independence of peoples and respect our ideals. (Płomienisty 1910, 10)

This, in other words, was the romantic nationalism of Mickiewicz. But there was also an entirely new element to Skwarczyński's argumentation. Skwarczyński wrote:

> We do not live somewhere between Sirius and Orion but amidst Polish society, among masses of Polish workers and students. We want to have an influence on the youth, for our voice to be heard in this society. We can accomplish this only be identifying ourselves as Poles. (Płomienisty 1910, 12)

In other words, Skwarczyński argued that Polishness was not some ideological superstructure but constituted the real, "concrete," as Brzozowski might have said, life world of the Polish masses. To ignore this social fact was to become politically irrelevant.

But this does not mean that Skwarczyński was moving toward the National Democrats' idea of the moral primacy of the nation or coming to embrace their doctrine of "national egoism." To understand what differentiated Skwarczyński's position from that of the NDs, it is necessary to take a closer look at the article in which he sought to rebut those who attacked the PPS as "anti-national." Skwarczyński defined nationalism as a doctrine in which "the nation, understood as a unitary whole, becomes an end in itself, and all desires, whether of social classes or individuals, must be subordinated to the interest of the whole" (Lux 1910, 1). And he vehemently rejected this position. "Positing the interest of the nation as the highest ideal of human activity amounts to a fundamental negation of

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life and creativity," he wrote (Lux 1910, 2). The end of an individual's life was, in fact, "creativity, the acquisition of ever higher forms of culture, and the opening of new horizons of reality."

At the heart of Skwarczyński's understanding of "creativity" (*twórczość*) was Brzozowski's philosophy of labor. The struggle of the PPS, Skwarczyński wrote, was not only about the equitable distribution of goods but, more importantly, about "the intrinsic value of liberated and self-possessed labor, the key element of all culture and creation." (Lux 1910, 3). Labor, as for Brzozowski, was fundamentally understood as man's eternal struggle with the non-human world. The nation form was both a product of this struggle and a key tool in mankind's continued ability to continue to wage it. "The progressive, revolutionary, socialist justification of patriotism," Skwarczyński wrote, "depends on the recognition of the nation as the only basis for creating human values, and the best possible conditions for labor, creativity, and development" (Lux 1910, 3).

Therefore, nations were historical constructs, whose importance in human life was based on their historical role and not on any essential qualities. Another striking feature of Skwarczyński's patriotism is its universalism. As for Brzozowski, the nation was a vehicle or tool which enhanced man's capacity to labor creatively and to act in the world. But the nation did not itself point the way towards the *ends* of human action, which always had be carried out with a view to the enhancement of human life as such and not just the life of a particular people, especially if it were to take place at someone else's expense. (Lux 1910, 3). Skwarczyński went on to argue that this was the view of Adam Mickiewicz and the romantics.[18] But his reference to Mickiewicz should not obscure important differences between his thought and Polish romanticism. Most importantly, the romantics rested their hopes for the "resurrection" of Poland on a metaphysical foundation. For Skwarczyński, on the other hand, there was no teleology or promise of a future utopia, whether romantic or Marxist. History made no promises and neither did the nation. The Polish nation for Skwarczyński, like for Brzozowski, was neither a social organism nor a historiosophical force, but a contingent cultural product with no necessary transcendent value. What differentiated him from the majority of constructivists, however, is that for Skwarczyński nations *were* real, and important, precisely *because* they were rich and deeply textured cultural constructs.

From the outbreak of World War I, Skwarczyński's biography is emblematic of Piłsudski's closest followers, who would later play key leadership roles in the Second Republic. At the outbreak of the war he joined Piłsudski's Legions, and fought as an officer in the famed First Brigade until 1916. When Piłsudski shifted focus from the Legions to the secret Polish Military Organization (*Polska Organizacja Wojskowa* or POW), he sent Skwarczyński to Warsaw in order to organize political backing for the group.[19] Once in Warsaw, Skwarczyński promptly began to organize a press organ for the Piłsudskiite movement. On 29 September 1916, he was able to publish the first issue of *Rząd i Wojsko* (Government and Army).[20] Although Skwarczyński himself was soon arrested by the Germans along with scores of other high-ranking Piłsudskiites, and *Rząd i Wojsko* appeared only intermittently under German occupation, it immediately raised its head after independence and quickly changed its name to *Droga* (The Way). Both journals were edited by Skwarczyński and regarded as the primary publications of the followers of Piłsudski (Nałęcz 1975, 592, 1998, 13).

The influence of Brzozowski, along with the latter's Nietzschean emphasis on individual "creativity," upon these journals is particularly important because it will help explain the flexibility (and instability) of the Piłsudskiites' conception of the nation. To be sure, the memory of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was more than a whimsical

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idiosyncratic dream of Piłsudski himself. As we will shortly see, it was part of a deep and sophisticated political vision. But it was not an unconditional ideological commitment, in the sense in which the dream of an ethnically pure Polish nation constituted a veritable dogma for the NDs. While it is difficult to tell precisely the extent to which Piłsudski himself shared the worldview expounded by Brzozowki and Skwarczyński, in his most candid writings the Marshal appeared to be very close to it. [21] More importantly, it must have had his tacit approval since his followers continued to expound their world view in independent Poland.

Piłsudskiite thought in early independent Poland

During World War I, questions of theory and ideology understandably took a backseat in Piłsudskiite calculations – all their efforts were focused on the military and diplomatic struggle for Polish independence. But when independence was secured, and Piłsudski was suddenly catapulted into the virtually dictatorial position of "Head of State" (*Naczelnik Państwa*), it became imperative for his followers to articulate a clearer vision of precisely what he stood for. Not surprisingly, in the period between 1918 and 1922 a large number of articles dealing with the Piłsudskiites' vision of the imagined community of the Polish nation appeared on the pages of *Rząd i Wojsko* and *Droga*.

The critical importance of Stanisław Brzozowski's thought in this discourse is underscored by an article dedicated to Brzozowski in the second issue of *Droga*. According to the article's author, Jan Rundbaken, Brzozowski's most important insight was that all humans beings were "historically constituted" by their national culture, which was fundamentally impossible to transcend. This is why, according to Rundbaken (1922), Brzozowski was "the enemy of everything international, trans-historical, and abstract" (13–14). Authentic life was always and necessarily embedded in concrete cultures and histories, and therefore, living in society, the individual had to consume and build upon the "collective historical labor of others." To participate in this process in a meaningful manner one could not turn one's back on the nation (Rundbaken 1922, 17). According to Rundbaken, Brzozowski demanded that the individual "labor creatively" change one's nation and, through the nation, the world. Thus, when Brzozowski called on the individual to "serve" or "labor for" his or her society, he understood this "service" as "creative" and morally transformative. As we will see, the terms "service," "creativity," and "labor," as defined by Brzozowski, are crucial to understanding the political ideology articulated by Piłsudskiites in early independent Poland.

Perhaps the most explicit and concise attempt to define and explain what it meant to be a Piłsudskiite was made by Adam Skwarczyński on the pages of *Rząd i Wojsko* in 1919, in an article entitled, quite bluntly, "The Piłsudskiites."[22] According to Skwarczyński, the followers of Piłsudski could best be defined by an ethic of "service." A Piłsudskiite, Skwarczyński wrote, is "someone who, with his life, attempts to address a specific cluster of national, social, and individual questions."[23] It is important to note the surprisingly open-ended character of this definition; a Piłsudskiite is not defined by devotion to Poland or Piłsudski. Rather, the key element in the definition is the desire for *engagement in public life as such*, without this engagement necessarily having a clear, concrete, or specific object or goal.

The world, according to Skwarczyński, was "an arena for one's labor and initiative," and a true Piłsudskiite was someone who grasped this fundamental fact about life, and accepted the responsibility it implied.[24] As such, he had to consciously strive to be in a position where he could be the "co-creator of his own life world."[25] It is for this reason that the

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Piłsudskiite had to both "want and need" to exercise political power (*władza*).[26] Power was what allowed him to actively shape the world and to live a full and creative life. This was the very opposite of the ND doctrine, in which the individual was portrayed as a cog in a larger bio-sociological machine and where the emphasis was placed very much on discipline rather than creativity. Here, it is the individual who assumes the position of primary importance and it is the individual, not the collective, who constitutes the ultimate reference point of all binding norms and values.

Piłsudski's role in Skwarczyński's vision is simple. The Marshal emerges as a model, an educator, and a living embodiment of the ideals of his followers.[27] He is someone who embodies and exemplifies the "psychological makeup" and attitude toward life that characterizes, to a greater or lesser extent, all those who can legitimately call themselves Piłsudskiites. In fact, while Skwarczyński does not make this analogy, on the basis of his presentation it is possible to see in Piłsudski what Brzozowski saw in Maurycy Mochnacki – the archetypal "modern man" and "conscious creator and participant of the nation."

But to understand Skwarczyński's justification of Polish patriotism, we must delve deeper into his view of history. For Skwarczyński, the history of all nations possessed a particular "content" (*treść*).[28] Like for Brzozowski, this content was not something metaphysical, but culturally constructed, and resulting from the particularities of each nation's unique historical development. Nor did it predetermine the future, which was always ultimately in the realm of human agency. Still, the Polish nation possessed a particular potentiality which, Skwarczyński argued, could under the right circumstances provide a singular contribution to human history. The history of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and the so-called nobles' democracy, Skwarczyński wrote, was

> animated by questions of universal importance: questions of freedom, responsibility, service to the common political good, and most importantly the excellent question of the Republic, this fantastic social construction (*konstrukcja życiowa*) which made possible the creative, self-sustaining life of equals within the framework of mutual obligations.[29]

It is important to note that Skwarczyński did not idealize this past. He readily acknowledged its many failures and wrote that in order to move forward Poland must jettison the reactionary landowners of the *Kresy* (Borderlands) region, who had for centuries represented the bastion of Polish culture in the east, and "look beyond the tradition of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth."[30]. Tradition was to be used selectively and, to use Skwarczyński's own word again, "creatively." The goal was not to remain faithful to some glorious past but to use what was good in the past in order to create a great future. Hence, when the tradition of the Commonwealth, with its legacy of serfdom and Polish cultural domination over Lithuanians and eastern Slavs, failed to offer a convincing answer to the country's future, Skwarczyński had no problem looking to other sources for inspiration. In the case of Poland's relationship with Lithuania, still very amorphous in 1919, he hoped to find a creative synthesis between the "golden age" of the Commonwealth and the radical revolutionary tradition of the romantics, with its emphasis on social emancipation.[31]

The great Polish–Jewish historian Marceli Handelsman, whose articles frequently appeared in *Droga* and other Piłsudskiite publications, saw it in a similar manner. According to Handelsman, the logic of Polish history contained two opposite poles. On the one side was

> pride, private interest, serfdom, and the bloody sea of the Polish-Ukrainian Wars … on the other, the power resulting from the fusion of Polish, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Lithuanian, German, and Jewish races into a single Polish citizenship, with the result of these diverse

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> elements dedicating themselves to the Republic and, through it, to the good of humanity, with limitless sacrifice and idealism. (Handelsman 1922, 16–17)

Both these potentialities were contained in Polish history. Which of them would triumph, Handelsman wrote, depended on human agency (Handelsman 1922, 23).

For Skwarczyński, too, the content of Polish history offered a potentiality which could be actualized through human agency. And herein lies the key to understanding Skwarczyński's thought – just as it was the individual's calling to make a mark on his culture and nation so, through the nation, he could make his mark on human history:

> The question now is the following: Will the Polish nation, entering into the union of the peoples of the world as an independent state, enrich it with the dowry of its historical development, will it make a contribution to [universal] human culture, will it propel the latter through its labor, or will it, to the contrary, come to resemble some Serbia, Montenegro, or Albania, nations which use the cultural heritage of the world without offering it anything, or hardly anything, in return?[32]

Admittedly, Skwarczyński's frequent references to the Jagiellonian period as the "golden age" of Polish history may sometimes make him appear as nothing more than a nostalgic apologist for the Commonwealth, and this could well be how he was read by at least some of his less-discerning readers. But to leave it at that would be a gross oversimplification. In the first place, we can easily discern, just as we did in his earlier writings, references to universal human culture and norms or values that are beyond the nation, and from the standpoint of which the nation could (and should) be judged. There is no room in his thought for the nationalist slogan "my country right or wrong" or for the National Democrats' doctrine of "national egoism." The old Republic was great not because it was Polish but because it was "a fantastic social construction." And if Poland was to achieve greatness again, it could only be for the same reasons.

A careful reader should also notice that Skwarczyński's defense of Polish patriotism ultimately rests, as it did in his earlier writings, on the basis of a highly individualist psychology or philosophy. To put it in simplest terms, Skwarczyński believed that the Piłsudskiites had the potential to create positive changes within their nation and, equally important, through the latter to make their mark on shaping the development of world history. Marceli Handelsman summarized it as follows: "Service for humanity through service for the nation" (Handelsman 1922, 17). This pursuit of individual and collective (national) glory or *kleos* within the framework of a universal human culture was the deepest justification of patriotism offered by Skwarczyński. Thus, Skwarczyński hoped, the new Polish state would, like the old Republic, become a "great" and positive force in history and an exemplar of universal values. *That* was the Poland for which the Piłsudskiites longed and for which they were ready to die. And they believed that it was *up to them* to bring that Poland into being.

Of course, *that* Poland was still a matter of the future and of human agency or "creation." Indeed it has been frequently observed that the Piłsudskiites focused on "Poland" or the Polish the state, and largely ignored the "nation" in their rhetoric and political thought (Nałęcz 1975, 593; Paruch 1997, 57). "The state became the centre of Piłsudskiite ideology," writes Daria Nałęcz in her analysis of *Droga,* "and was elevated to the rank of a philosophical category" (Nałęcz 1975, 593). The claims of historians like Nałęcz further reinforce the Piłsudskiites' classification as civic nationalists, which can be neatly contrasted with the National Democrats' ethnic nationalism. However, while there is undoubtedly some truth to this assertion, Nałęcz's statement needs to be qualified in two separate ways.

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First, the role of the state was ultimately justified by its importance in the life of the individual and was, again, heavily influenced by the writings of Brzozowski. Janusz Jędrzejewicz, one of Piłsudski's most trusted political operatives (and future Premier under the *Sanacja* regime), explained the importance of the state in Piłsudskiite thought in language obviously borrowed from Brzozowski. According to Jędrzejewicz, most statist political forces in European history could be described as having been conservative (Jędrzejewicz 1922, 1). In Poland, these included "the landowner, the rich peasant, and the priest," who had no fundamental concerns about the actual "content" of the state as long as it fulfilled its basic functions and allowed citizens to live their private lives in peace. As a result, Polish conservatives had for the most part been loyal citizens of the Russian, Prussian, and Austrian states (Jędrzejewicz 1922, 2).

The Piłsudskiites, Jędrzejewicz argued, viewed the state in an entirely different light. For them, the state was a "vehicle for a creative life" or an instrument which would allow them to "transform, change, or create" life in their society and nation (Jędrzejewicz 1922, 2). In other words, the state was *not* "the centre-point of Piłsudskiite ideology." It was not a fetish or an end in itself – it was a tool which could be utilized by a self-selected elite (the Piłsudskiites of course!) to change society and the world. Obviously, only certain kinds of states met these stringent criteria. And the Piłsudskiites' goal was to create a state that made creative life possible – not a state where, to quote Brzozowski again, the Russian hangman would be replaced by a Polish one (Brzozowski 1906). Handelsman made the same point in an even more explicit manner: Poland will achieve greatness only if "it will be strong not through external strength but through conviction of the rectitude of her cause and the latter's congruence with universal ideals" (Handelsman 1922, 23). The normative content of the state, and its ability to offer the individual genuine liberty to live a creative life, was what gave it legitimacy.

Second, the *national* "content" of the state was critical. The Piłsudskiites never understood the state in abstraction from the nation, and those who would like to see their patriotism as entirely civic miss an important point. The Polish state demanded loyalty *because it was Polish* and not simply because it was a state. This point was made most forcefully by Stanisław Bukowiecki, one of the leaders of the National Civic Union (*Unia Narodowo-Państwowa*), a political party generally seen as the most serious Piłsudskiite attempt at entering electoral politics prior to the 1926 coup d'état. According to Bukowiecki, the existence of a "national interest" separate and opposed to "state interest" (*racja stanu* or *raison d'état*) made perfect sense when the Poles had no state of their own. But with the emergence of a Polish state such a distinction became a "misunderstanding." What was good for the Polish state, Bukowiecki wrote, could not be bad for the Polish nation! Conversely, by undermining the state, the nation could only hurt itself (Bukowiecki 1922, 13–15). But it was the nation which ultimately justified the state, and not the other way around.

Nations, nationalities, and great powers

Writing on 9 February 1919, Skwarczyński criticized the narrowly partisan programs put forth by the socialists and other radical left-wing parties allied to the Piłusdkiites, and bemoaned the lack of a "genuine Polish program," especially with regard to Poland's eastern neighbors.[33] In practice, the Piłsudskiites' plans with regard to the Lithuanian and Ukrainian "Questions," as they called them, fluctuated in response to constantly changing diplomatic and military factors, and this is not the place to discuss this complicated history. However, is important to briefly consider the manner in which these plans were articulated and presented to the (often skeptical) Polish public. There is little doubt that

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Piłsudski considered himself to be a Lithuanian, in the historical or political sense, as well as a Pole. But while a number of prominent "Polish-speaking Lithuanians" attempted to promote precisely such a Polish–Lithuanian identity, this was not at all the line of argumentation pursued by the Piłsudskiites in justifying their "federalist" or expansionist eastern plans. Significantly, nowhere in *Rząd i Wojsko* or *Droga* was the argument advanced that the multiethnic Grand Duchy of Lithuania ought to be resurrected, or an independent Ukrainian state established, because these lands had once been part of the Commonwealth.

Rather, the key to understanding Skwarczyński's and his collaborators' articulation of Poland's eastern policy was not history but their overriding concern with their own country's "greatness" or "great power status." The Polish terms used, "*wielkość*," "*mocarstwowość*," "*mocarstwo*," would become popular slogans in the political rhetoric of the 1930s, and became synonymous with Poland's imperial and even colonial dreams. In the early 1920s, however, the term *mocarstwowość* referred to the somewhat more modest idea of creating in Warsaw an independent power able to fend off Germany and Russia (Handelsman 1922, 17). Because of Poland's demographic weakness, the argument went, the country could become a full-fledged independent player in European politics only with the support of its immediate neighbors, specifically Lithuania, Ukraine, and Belarus, and in some formulations also the other Baltic states and Romania. Inevitably, Poland would play the hegemonic role in this arrangement. This is not the place to present the strategic considerations or political and military maneuvering involved in this project, which have been amply discussed elsewhere (Dziewanowski 1969; Okulewicz, 2001). What is important for our purposes, however, is to see what these schemes revealed about the Piłsudskiites' understanding of the imagined community of the Polish nation.

It is often asserted that Piłsudski himself, and by implication his followers, worked on the basis of an early modern multiethnic idea of the Polish nation, which lacked an ethnic component. But as we will see, this is simply not true. At least in the arguments presented to the public, the rationale for *mocarstwowość* and for expanding Poland's sphere of influence to the east was quite different. On the basis of what we have seen of the Piłsudskiites' thought thus far, it should not be difficult to see why "greatness" was an overriding priority – it was the natural fulfillment of the full, creative, and active life demanded by Brzozowski and Skwarczyński and epitomized by Piłsudski. More problematic, however, was the question of whether the Poles' desire for greatness would be compatible with similar desires on the part of Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and Belarusians or with Skwarczyński's injunction that Poland make a positive contribution to "universal culture" without trampling upon the rights of others. In order to understand the Piłsudskiites' position on this issue, it is necessary to go beyond Piłsudski's own longing for old Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Rather, the key to understanding the position articulated by Skwarczyński and others in *Rząd i Wojsko* and *Droga* is their faith in the Poles' ability to draw consciously and selectively from the past in order to construct a new imagined community. This new Poland would be a great power or *mocarstwo* because, despite not having enough demographic resources of her own, she would be able to win non-Poles, and particularly Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, and (to a lesser extent) Jews, to her cause. Admittedly, one could argue that Skwarczyński and the Piłsudskiites used such realpolitik arguments in order to "sell" their desires for the resurrection of the Commonwealth to a skeptical Polish public. Indeed, it appears that these "nostalgic" desires and "rational" great power calculations were in fact tangled together and constituted a single worldview which cannot be neatly mapped out along a line of logical progression.[34] Nevertheless, it is significant that in public discourse, the historical or "nostalgic" line of argumentation was entirely absent. The glorious past was, at best, used to show the potentialities of various

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future arrangements rather than to legitimate a particular program. The arguments of the Piłsudskiites, Skwarczyński wrote, "carry behind them the weight of the partially successful historical experience of the Republic and the ideas of those who, up to this point, have understood Polish history and culture most profoundly."[35] Hence, Piłsudski's program was based on *one* understanding of Polish history; but not the only possible one. Skwarczyński consciously and explicitly emphasized certain aspects of the national heritage and openly condemned and rejected others.

It is most interesting that in *Rząd i Wojsko* and other Piłsudskiite publications, the Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians were almost always designated with the term *narody* or "nations" rather than *narodowości* or "nationalities." In other words, they were treated as full-fledged political partners and equals of the Poles, rather than as ethnic groups which could be included in the civic Polish nation. It was precisely by treating these peoples as fully fledged subjects that the Piłsudskiites hoped to make possible the powerful Poland they dreamed of. Skwarczyński explained it as follows:

> We have a [traditional] way of dealing with foreign nations … . It is a way full of beauty and happiness and full of positive results far more tangible than any ever provided by narrow and greedy egoism. We have forgotten this way. We have forgotten about the moral power and the political power flowing from it … .[36]

Clearly, Skwarczyński's argument was not only moral but pragmatic. By treating other nations justly, the Polish nation would be augmenting its own power. Ethical and pragmatic arguments, or moral and political power, not only went hand in hand, but reinforced one another. From this perspective, the problem with the National Democrats' "national egoism" was not just that it was immoral but, perhaps even more importantly, that it disregarded the real and long-term interests of the Polish nation in favor of immediate but ultimately illusory gains. But it was still the *interests of the Polish nation*, rather than the hopes of creating some kind of multicultural imagined community, that were paramount in Piłsudskiites' calculations.

Another aspect of the mutually reinforcing relationship between moral and political power pertained to questions of social justice. A Poland that would be an attractive ally, model, or protector to the Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians had to be radical, egalitarian, and just. And it had to give up on Polish landowners, in exchange for winning over the trust of the Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and Belarusian peasants. Failing to set up a just social order in Poland, according to an article in *Rząd i Wojsko*, would "lock us in the narrow confines of our borders."[37] Hence, again, it appears that considerations of justice went hand in hand with those of national interest.

In short, the ultimate justification for the Piłsudskiites' eastern policy was creating a Poland that was "great." "If we are to become a great nation," Skwarczyński wrote, "we must learn to think about [nationality conflicts] in terms of our historical mission and from the perspective of [long-term] historical development."[38] The term "historical mission" might seem reminiscent of the Romantics. But for Skwarczyński and his collaborators, the "historical mission" of Poland lacked the metaphysical dimension which it had for poets like Mickiewicz. The "mission" was a certain potentiality, made possible by the trajectory of Polish history. But to be meaningful this potentiality had to be turned into a "concrete" political project, and this depended entirely on the will and ability of individual historical actors. [39] It depended, in other words, on men like Piłsudski (and Skwarczyński himself), who were actively trying to shape the Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and Belarusian nations, and bend them to their own will in an act of historical creation.[40]

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Conclusion

On the basis of this analysis of the Piłsudskiites' vision of the imagined community of the nation it is possible to make a number of generalizations. In the first place, the Piłsudskiites' imagined community of the nation was not simply the result of Piłsudski's own idiosyncratic childhood or nostalgia for the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. Nor was it quite as vague, anachronistic, or nostalgic as scholars sometimes suggest (Snyder 2003, 41). In fact, it was articulated in an intellectually sophisticated manner and in some ways, especially in its self-reflexive social constructivism, was starkly modern. If historians have largely misunderstood this point, it is because they have failed to understand the intellectual underpinnings of the Piłsudskiites' vision of the imagined community and, in particular, the influence of Stanisław Brzozowski on their thought. In fact, the very language of Skwarczyński and other Piłsudskiite writers is incomprehensible without reference to Brzozowski. Without understanding terms like *praca* (labor), *odpowiedzialność* (responsibility), and *twórczość* (creativity) as they were used by the latter, the work of Skwarczyński and Jędrzejewicz, in particular, cannot be understood in its full complexity.

For the Piłsudskiites, nations were both constructed and "real." In fact, it was precisely their status as historical cultural creations constructed through generations of human labor, which dictated their importance for an individual's identity. This was as true of the Poles as it was of any other human collectivity. Yet, the Piłsudskiites believed that the particularities of Polish history offered certain traditions, potentialities, and models which could be used to offer a unique contribution to human history as a whole. This made Polish history particularly appealing for them. But it was up to *them* to make use of this historical heritage in a creative fashion.

This brings us to the second point. Contrary to widely held views, nowhere in Piłsudskiite writings can we find appeals to history as a legitimating factor for Polish national aspirations. The multiethnic Jagiellonian tradition and the Republic were to be seen by the Poles as sources of inspiration for "creative" future-oriented action, rather than as sources of legitimacy. It was this creative potential of the nation which became the latter's fullest philosophical justification – the individual needed to be grounded in the nation (or national culture) in order to act in the world in a meaningful and creative manner. This is why the Piłsudskiites often talked about "what was best" in Polish history, rather than about Polish history as such. For his followers, Piłsudski was a model of the individual who was able to impose his will upon history, bend the latter to his design, and create new values and forms of human organization.

The Polish nation articulated by the Piłsudskiites was defined neither by citizenship and the state, as classical models of civic nationalism would have it, nor by ethnicity, as it was for the National Democrats. Rather, the nation was a cultural construct, continuously shaped and redefined by human agency. The influence of Brzozowski, along with its Nietzschean emphasis on "creativity," is particularly important because it can help explain the flexibility (and instability) of the Piłsudskiites' conception of the nation. In particular, it can also help us understand their de-emphasis, and eventual abandonment, of the multicultural conception of Poland in the 1930s. It also lends support to the contention of theorists who argue that what is commonly called civic nationalism is always ultimately framed by culture, and that the role played by citizenship in defining imagined national communities is negligible (Yack 1996).

To be sure, the memory of the Commonwealth was more than a whimsical idiosyncratic dream of Piłsudski himself – it was part of a deep and sophisticated political vision. But it was not an unconditional ideological commitment, in the sense in which the dream of an

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ethnic Poland constituted a veritable dogma for the National Democrats. This perhaps can help explain its abandonment by some of Piłusdski's followers after the Marshal's death. Indeed, the failure of the Piłsudskiites to win the masses' allegiance for their ideas should not be entirely surprising. The philosophical underpinnings of their view of the imagined community were quite complex – so much so that they seem to have eluded many historians. Piłsudskiite publications such as *Rząd i Wojsko* and *Droga,* or even the more populist *Głos Prawdy* (Voice of Truth), were pitched at a fairly elite level of readership. Perhaps it was the very sophistication and complexity of the Piłsudskiite vision of the national community, especially when contrasted with the simplicity of the ND alternative, which was partly to blame for its ultimate failure.

Notes

1. For more on this question see Walicki (1982, 1989b).
2. In civic nationalism, usually identified with the French tradition of statehood, the nation constitutes a common political space, defined around a set of institutions, values, and political projects. Conversely, ethnic nationalism, which has its roots in German political thought, imagines a primordial nation based on (some combination of) shared ancestry, language, culture, and religion. For more on this question see Brubaker (1992).
3. Similarly, Dziewanowski (1969, 350) writes that

> [Piłsudski's] essentially practical approach to politics, his distaste for ideology, prevented him from formulating a federal program, let alone a federal theory. His federalism was not theoretical: it was more instinctive and pragmatic, derived, as it was, from a traditional respect for the diversity that surrounded him from his earliest days.

4. While there are a number of works dealing with the policies of the "Piłsudski camp" in specific areas, there is not a single study which can be said to seriously engage its political thought and examine its vision of the Polish national community. For attempts to implement Piłsudski's "federalist" plans see Wandycz (1970, 25–39); Okulewicz (2001); Dziewanowski (1969). However, these works do not address the theory behind Piłsudski's *praxis.* Yet, as Osiński (2004, 2) points out, even though Piłsudski purposefully distanced himself from theoretical concerns, he "placed the burden of formulating the latter on the shoulders of his followers." The few works which focus on Piłsudskiite political thought, in practice limit themselves to the study of political programs and largely ignore its deeper philosophical underpinnings. For example see Paruch (2005).
5. For example, many early followers of Piłsudski, such the radical Andrzej Strug, found themselves in opposition as the mainstream of the Piłsudski movement drifted further to the right. Conversely, cynical observers noted the phenomenon of the "Fourth Brigade," that is newly minted Piłsudskiites who joined the Marshal's cause only after his successful coup d'état in 1926. In reality, of course, Piłudski's Legions, where his most dedicated followers earned their stripes, only had three brigades.
6. For an interpretation of the 1922 elections as a critical rupture in Polish history see Brykczynski (2013).
7. In Polish historical writing the term "Piłsudskiite" is sometimes reserved for the period after 1926, while prior to that date the Marshal's followers are designated with the term the "Camp of the Belweder" (*Obóz Belwederski*), after Piłsudski's residence at the Belweder Palace. However, since the latter term is cumbersome in English and the word *Piłsudczyk* was readily used and discussed in early independent Poland, it will be employed for analytical purposes in this article.
8. By the word "modern" in this context I mean drawing on and being in conversation with the contemporary political philosophy of thinkers like Marx and Nietzsche rather than, as most scholars implicitly argue, being beholden to nostalgic memories of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth.
9. So far only one publication dedicated to Skwarczyński has appeared in print, and it is little more than a collection of his articles (Nałęcz 1998).
10. To this day, the most insightful treatment of Skwarczyński remains Micewski's chapter on the subject in *W cieniu marszałka Piłsudskiego* (Micewski 1968).

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11. In the long run it was the "old ones" who emerged with the larger following and were more successful in appropriating the unhyphenated acronym PPS. The PPS-FR program, composed by Feliks Perl, demanded "in the political realm, the creation of an independent Polish Republic … and in the national realm, the elimination of all national oppression." Quoted in Syzdek (1986, 69).
12. Despite being an important forerunner of "Marxist humanism," Brzozowski is almost entirely unknown in the West (Kennedy 1992, 735).
13. On Brzozowski see: Mencwel (1976); Miłosz (1982); Walicki (1989a, 2011).
14. According to Brzozowski ([1912] 2007, 242), he understood that "relinquishing responsibility" for life could only lead to "disaster."
15. He has been cited as an influence by Miłosz, Adam Michnik and, most recently, the *Krytyka Polityczna* group.
16. Histories of the Piłsudskiite movement do not mention Brzozowski at all. Conversely, the only monograph dealing with the legacy and influence of Brzozowski's thought in the interwar period contains only a brief, tendentious, and wholly unsatisfying treatment of his influence on the Piłsudski camp (Stępień 1976, 36–39).
17. For more on this see (Syzdek 1986).
18. Skwarczyński cites Mickiewicz, who, in *Wykłady literatury słowiańskiej*, defines the fatherland not as "a bounded piece of land beyond which the existence and national action of Poles should end" but an idea "which has as yet no power on this earth, and is still actualizing itself (Lux 1910, 4–5).
19. There, he formed deep friendships with many men who would later play key roles in the Polish state and contribute significantly to the elaboration of Piłsudskiite ideology. Key among them were Tadeusz Hołówko, Janusz Jędrzejewicz, Kazimierz Świtalski, Aleksander Prystor, and Stanisław Thugutt.
20. It is noteworthy to point out the audacity of its title, since at the time Poland had not had anything close to either a government or an army since 1830!
21. In a candid letter written to his friend Feliks Perl before leading a daring and dangerous attack on a Russian bank train in the village of Bezdany, Piłsudski wrote:

> I ask you [if you write my obituary] not render me 'a good officer, a whiner, or a sentimentalist,' that is a good man stretching himself out on the cross of humanity, or whatever. I used to be like that to some extent, but that was during my lofty and grim youth. Now, it has passed, it has passed forever—the whining and self-crucifying has bothered me so much when I witnessed it among our intelligentsia—it is so weak and hopeless. I fight and I will die because I can no longer live in the outhouse that is our life, because it is offensive—you hear!—offensive to me as a man with a non-slavish dignity. Let others play at tending the flowers of socialism or Polishness in this outhouse … atmosphere—I can't! This is not [about] sentimentalism, whining, the little machine of social progress, or whatever else, it is [about] plain old human dignity. … I hope you understand me. I am not driven by despair or sacrifice but by the desire to win and to prepare the foundations for victory.

Clearly Piłsudski shared to some extent Brzozwski's and Skwarczyński's Nietzschean emphasis on the key role of the individual creative act in history and saw himself, first and foremost, as an individual making his mark on history rather than as a cog in the struggle of the nation against its enemies (Piłsudski 1937, 299–300).

22. "Piłsudczycy," *Rząd i Wojsko,* 26 January 1919, no. 4, pp. 1–2. While Piłsudski himself kept an arms-length distance from any attempts by his followers to formulate a concrete ideology or political philosophy, this does mean that he took no interest in such matters and that attempts by his followers to articulate a more concrete intellectual foundation for his movement did not have his tacit support or even input. It is doubtful that an article under such a provocative title could have appeared without Piłsudski's approval (Nałęcz 1975, 590).
23. "Piłsudczycy," 1.
24. "Piłsudczycy," 1.
25. "Piłsudczycy," 1.
26. "Piłsudczycy," 2.
27. "Piłsudczycy," 2.

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28. "Misja Polski," *Rząd i Wojsko*, 19 January 1919, no. 3, pp. 1–2. Piłsudski's own vision of history was much less theoretical. For an excellent discussion see Dabrowski (2011, 73–110).
29. "Misja Polski," 2.
30. "Sprawa Litwy," *Rząd i Wojsko*, 12 January 1919, no. 2, pp. 3–4.
31. "Sprawa Litwy," 2.
32. "Misja Polski," 2.
33. The two parties singled out for criticism were the Polish Socialist Party and the radical Polish Peasant Party – "Liberation" (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe – "Wyzwolenie"*). Both of these enthusiastically supported Piłsudski and had many Piłsudskiites in their ranks. "W sprawie programu polskiego," *Rząd i Wojsko*, 9 February 1919, no. 6, pp. 1–2.
34. I would like to thank Porter-Szűcs for suggesting this formulation.
35. Adam Skwarczyński, "Polska a Ukraina." *Rząd i Wojsko*, 25 May 1919, no. 21, pp. 2–3.
36. "Mniejszości narodowe," *Rząd i Wojsko*, 15 June 1919, no. 24, pp. 1–2.
37. "Mniejszości narodowe," 1.
38. Skwarczyński, "Polska a Ukraina," 2.
39. Dabrowski identifies a very interesting tension between romantic and pragmatic modes of thought in her insightful analysis of Piłsudski's own writings. While more analysis would be necessary to bear this out, I would be tempted to suggest the hypothesis that Piłsudski also saw what he called "moral force" (*siła moralna*) as ultimately being a necessary component of any realistic power calculus. At any rate, the lack of faith in teleological historical progress, or the metaphysical support for morality in the universe, is what differentiates the romanticism of Piłsudski and his followers from that of Mickiewicz (Dabrowski 2011, 82–83).
40. "Sprawa Litwy," *Rząd i Wojsko,* 12 January 1919, 3.

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