Chapter 4. Making Heroes: the Early days of OUN-UPA
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MAKING HEROES: THE EARLY DAYS OF OUN-UPA

Introduction

This chapter examines interpretations of the topic of OUN-UPA as constituents in the process of constructing a national history in Ukraine, and in particular the changing interpretations of this organization in Ukraine. Several introductory premises need to be stated. First, as earlier, the goal is not to determine factual truth per se, but rather to analyze the prevailing narratives. Second, this chapter includes a sampling of newspapers of different political perspectives and readership published in the period from the late 1980s until the early 21st century, from different geographical regions of Ukraine, as well as journals, scholarly works, and contemporary textbooks. Third, no organization is monolithic or static, and OUN-UPA was no exception. Conceivably, also, it might have been possible to focus solely on the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), or one of its branches (Banderivtsi or Melnykivtsi), or even to look at the Ukrainian Insurgent Army without the antecedent of the OUN. However, the tradition of Soviet historiography was to treat the organization as one entity, and historians and government leaders of contemporary Ukraine follow that same practice. Thus we will adhere to the acronym OUN-UPA, with the understanding that in so doing, there is a tendency to simplify the nature of this political and military formation.

The subject matter is as controversial today as it was shortly after the end of the Second World War. It is a topic that continues to divide Ukraine, as exemplified by a recent survey (examined in more detail below), which indicates a geographical split in attitudes toward OUN-UPA: the most favorable are people in the western regions and the least well disposed, those in the far east and south. My focus is on several key events that have elicited the most discussion in recent years, beginning with the formation of UPA. This chapter will ask several questions: in what ways has the interpretation of OUN-UPA changed since the late 1980s? To what extent has one form of propaganda—the Soviet—been replaced by another, which is very supportive of the insurgency of the OUN and the UPA and identifies it with the current independent
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Ukrainian state? In what way has this modern “nationalist” narrative created heroes from the wartime OUN and the early UPA insurgency? Are there common themes in this “hero creation”? Have myths been created about UPA warfare itself? How has what was essentially an anti-Soviet operation directed against the triumphant and powerful Red Army been depicted in modern analyses and in what ways have these analyses changed since the late Perestroika period? How have the writings dealt with the difficult question of collaboration with the Germans? In turn, how have these same narratives dealt with Soviet wartime heroes and to what extent have these figures been removed from the pantheon of heroes suitable for independent Ukraine?

The Late Glasnost Period

Though the later years of the Gorbachev administration in the USSR witnessed a reassessment of Stalinism similar to that of the Khrushchev era, the insurgency of OUN-UPA in Western Ukraine over the years 1942–53 remained more or less a taboo subject. The insurgents were labeled “bourgeois nationalists,” and described as the “worst enemies of the Ukrainian nation,” traitors who fought against their own people and in collaboration with the German invaders. The portrayal was typified by the book of historian V. Cherednychenko, Natsionalizm proty Natsii, one of the basic Soviet texts of the 1970s. The era of Glasnost brought only tentative amendments to this perspective. Even two decades later, P. Maksym’yuk and G. Slyvka, making reference to a 1988 book by the polemicist Klym Dmytruk—author of numerous derogatory works on OUN-UPA and the Ukrainian Catholic Church—agree that Ukrainian nationalism was “the enemy of the Ukrainian people, a servant of German Fascism.” They approve of the way Dmytruk debunks the myths propagated by Ukrainian émigré historians about the OUN’s quest for Ukrainian independence. Also typical were demands for extradition of insurgents now living abroad for alleged war crimes. One such example was that of OUN member Ivan Stetsiv, a native of Canada, reportedly a member of the German-backed police, and responsible for the deaths of several local pro-Soviet activists, as well as 21 Polish families. The usual practice was to inform a local village assembly of the atrocities carried out, after which the assembly demanded the extradition.

At the same time, Soviet writers and propagandists went to great lengths to discredit scholarship in the West, particularly articles and books that emanated from Ukrainian institutions. According to one author, the CIA began to...
establish centers specializing in Ukrainian subjects, such as the Prolog Research and Publishing Corporation in New York in 1952, and Smoloskyp in Baltimore. The American secret services also reportedly created the international Samizdat headquarters in Munich, Germany in 1977. In such an anti-Soviet climate, former “Nazi henchmen” were permitted easy entry into the United States and Canada “disguised as scientists and writers.” This same author maintains that the Russian Institute at Columbia University, spearheaded by Philip Moseley, introduced a project for the study of the Ukrainian SSR in three parts, two of which—1917–20 by J. Reshetar and 1939–45 by J. Armstrong—were completed in 1952 and 1955 respectively. Concerning the OUN and the UPA, the contention is that scholars such as Professor G. Strobel of the University of Mainz tried to introduce the notion, “borrowed from anti-Soviet Ukrainology,” that the UPA directed its operations against both the Germans and the Russians. He perceives the goal as the concealment of the connection of “OUN bands” with Fascist German occupation and the intelligence agencies of the Third Reich. In 1981, under the auspices of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, the “falsifiers” organized a round-table on the topic of Ukrainians in the Second World War, featuring as speakers Armstrong, G. Kulchycky, and K. Farmer, who tried to demonstrate that the UPA was a popular movement in Ukraine. Such works are familiar to anyone who has studied the Soviet versions of Ukrainian history, but this one surprisingly appeared as late as 1987 from the leading publisher in Kyiv and at the behest of the Institute of History, Ukrainian Academy of Sciences.  

In 1989, Pravda Ukrainy published a series of articles on the Bandera movement, which investigated both the early years of the OUN and the UPA insurgency. Having condemned OUN’s earlier leaders Evhen Konovalets’ and Andrii Mel’nyk for “personally” shooting Kyiv workers in 1918, it accuses the Nationalists of the OUN of participating in pogroms in L’viv after the German invasion of the summer of 1941. The writers selectively employ documents to demonstrate atrocities of OUN-UPA in Western Ukraine, particularly innocent victims such as old women and children, under the close supervision of the German occupation forces. The authors also acknowledge that many OUN members were “simple, honest people” who had been “duped” by their leaders. The ostensible purpose of such a remark is to explain to the readers why so many people in Western Ukraine appeared to sympathize with the insurgency in the later years of the war and early postwar years. The campaign against OUN-UPA also required emphasis on the cruelty of their deeds, particularly on individual examples extracted from the general conflict between
the various forces. According to one account, the methods used by the insurgents exceeded those of the Germans in brutality. Before killing their victims, it was pointed out, they would poke out their eyes, cut off their noses and ears, torture them using electric currents, and bury them alive or throw them into wells.\(^8\)

The effectiveness of Soviet propaganda about OUN-UPA is hard to measure. But as late as 1991, a date when the press was relatively open, there were still letters appearing in the press about “nationalist crimes.” A typical example came from the Cherkasy region in the form of a letter to the weekly *Visti z Ukrainy*. Its author pointed out that issue 48 from 1990 had examined the horrors of the Stalin period, “which was all well and good.” But, he wanted to know, why was there nothing about the atrocities of the Banderites against their fellow Ukrainians in Western Ukraine?\(^9\) In his article published in July 1991, V. I. Maslovs’kyi writes that there was a deep political confrontation in Western Ukraine in 1944–52. On one side was the majority of population, the interests of which were protected by the Soviet state under the leadership of the Communist Party and Soviet organs. This sector fought for the final destruction of Nazism and now wished to overcome the political and psychological repercussions of the war. On the other side stood the Ukrainian nationalists and various sorts of German collaborators, organized in military formations and later in an underground army. They fought fiercely against the Soviet state and its people. The peak of this confrontation occurred in 1944–47. Today, the author writes, as new conceptions of many historical events are devised, political forces in Western Ukraine are changing the narrative. Destructive, ultra-radical forces disguised as democrats not only declare their heritage in the nationalist formations of the past, but also create new organizations for young people. They attempt to rehabilitate OUN-UPA, deny its collaboration with Nazi Germany, and either keep silent about the crimes of the Banderites or present them as inevitable sacrifices for freedom. They sing the praises of these same people as national heroes and erect monuments to the leaders of the OUN. Nationalist ideas appear on the pages of newspapers and all the so-called nationalists, as well as remnants of nationalist formations abroad, call the national movement of the 1940s “the national liberation struggle.”\(^10\)

Maslovs’kyi’s article is an indicator of the limits to a revision of views by 1991. Clearly by the end of the Soviet period, the OUN-UPA was still widely treated as a treacherous and collaborative body that had committed war crimes in Ukraine. The very terms Banderite or OUNite were considered the worst of epithets outside Galicia and Volhynia, the former Polish territories of
Ukraine. Conversely, the memory of OUN-UPA in émigré Ukrainian circles was quite different: one of heroism against enemies that were far more powerful, as it fought a dual battle against the forces of Hitler’s Third Reich, on one hand, and the Soviet Red Army and police forces on the other. Over the past decade what may be termed the heroic conception of OUN-UPA, prevalent among these western circles, and perpetuated by the selections of documents in series like Litopys UPA, has gradually come to displace the one-sided and partisan Soviet perspective, though it has been a difficult evolution, not least for historians in contemporary Ukraine.

How the UPA was formed

The creation of the UPA has been dealt with in detail by the American political scientist, John A. Armstrong, who perceives its formation as a direct response to Soviet Partisan raids into Volhynia led by Sydir Kovpak, starting in the late summer of 1942. By the winter of this year, the Germans had begun a counterattack, accompanied by ruthless measures against Communist supporters and the local peasantry. By early 1943, Armstrong notes, the OUN-B decided on a full-scale insurgency, with two main bases in Volhynia. Close to the town of Rovno (Rivne), there were two main OUN groups: one under Kruk, backing the OUN-B, and close by, and working with it, another group under an OUN-M commander called “Khrin.” Several other small groups operated in this area, and the concept of a single command emanated from Taras Bul'ba-Borovets’, leader of the original UPA. By the spring of 1943, the situation became exacerbated with new Partisan raids from Kovpak, following orders from Moscow. Armstrong notes that the negotiations between the OUN-B, OUN-M, and Borovets’ were unsuccessful, and the former began to seize control of the resistance movement. The OUN-B commander, Dmytro Klyachkivs’kyi, expropriated the original name UPA, which was already well known to the local population. The key military leader from Nachtigal, Roman Shukhevych, also arrived in L’viv in the spring of 1943 and was appointed commander of the OUN-B insurgents. In July and August, to ensure its supremacy, the OUN-B had begun to attack units of the OUN-M and those following Borovets’, with the latter fleeing to Warsaw. Armstrong believes that the suddenness of the defeat of these forces and the triumph of the OUN-B was a result of the former groups not wishing to fight their compatriots and cause the outbreak of a civil war. He also attributes the results to the stronger organization of the OUN-B. By the autumn of 1943, it basically
occupied the rural regions of Volhynia and southwest Polissya. Quite clearly then, the UPA emerged from an organization of the same name in the spring and summer of 1943, clearing the area not only of rival Ukrainian groups, but also—as noted below, though curiously not by Armstrong—of the local Polish population.

Yet the formation of the UPA, according to its participants and supporters, dates from October 1942. Historian Viktor Koval’ outlined the official version of its formation in Ukrainian academic circles in 1996. Koval’ maintains that in April 1942, the Bandera wing of the OUN organized the Second Conference of OUN Independent Statehood Supporters, at which it appraised the Soviet–German war as essentially a struggle of two imperialist powers based in Moscow and Berlin for dominion over Ukraine. At that time, the OUN believed that the Germans would win this war, and therefore adopted the policy of opposition to Hitler. Such a policy was predetermined in part by the Germans’ refusal to countenance an independent state in L’viv in June 1941. A regional war would be fought, after which the OUN might extend its influence to the rest of Ukraine. The first two “hundreds” (cavalry units of 130–200 troops) were created in the Volyn’ region in October 1942, reportedly to protect local residents from terrorist bands from the Polish underground—the Armia Krajowa (AK)—as well as Soviet partisans. The first sustained activities began in March and April 1943. Discipline was said to be exceptionally rigorous, with punishment administered by the security service (Sluzhba bezpeky) on behalf of both the OUN and the UPA. The UPA was divided into three territorial-operative groups: UPA-North, UPA-West, and UPA-South; and its first commander was Klyachkiv’s’kyi (“Klym Savur”).

Writing a few years earlier, V. P. Troshchyns’kyi suggests that if the UPA formed as a response to Germany’s non-recognition of the “Akt” of 30 June 1941, then it would logically have been established in that same year. In fact, he declares, the first armed units were founded only in the spring of 1943, and they were created to fight the Bolsheviks rather than as a response to localized terror in Volyn’ and Polissya. He believes that initial orders were given to Borovets’, who ran the so-called Polis’ka Sich, to put together a nationalist army in the spring of 1943 and direct it against Soviet Partisans concentrated in the Polissyan forests. After November 1943, Borovets’ was isolated as the Germans made a separate agreement with the OUN-B to incorporate his (Borovets’) band into a new unit run by the OUN, under the general umbrella name of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). Another, more recent source (echoing Armstrong for the most part), explains that a negotiated agreement between Borovets’ and the OUN-B was later violated by the latter, which dis-
armed units affiliated with both Borovets’ and Mel’nyk, murdering some of the commanders of these units. According to an overtly hostile source, the historian Wiktor Poliszczuk, the decisive event in the formation of the UPA was the German defeat at Stalingrad, after which the OUN-B recognized that Germany would eventually lose the war. In the hope that the Western allies would create a second front in the Balkans, the OUN-B thus resolved to establish its own force in an effort to control Western Ukraine.

In his 1999 book, Mykhailo Koval’ comments that the basis of the national armed formations of the OUN were the rebel formations established in the forests of Volhynia and Polissya by Borovets’ and called UPA. Many officers who had been part of the Ukrainian battalions Nachtigal and Roland, which accompanied the German army into Western Ukraine in the summer of 1941, took part in its creation. Subsequently it attracted a large number of volunteers who were trained by the OUN, and in October 1942, a united rebel army under Klyachkivs’kyi (Klym Savur) was established along with the SB military intelligence unit. However, he maintains, the initial operations were on a limited scale, and the UPA leaders were careful to avoid German garrisons, dedicating most of their activities to the single cause of preventing a new “Bolshevik occupation.” Local divisions and individuals did conduct spontaneous attacks on German forces. After the end of June 1943, when Germany removed the Waffen SS and police forces from Ukraine, the UPA activities began to expand. The overall picture then suggests first of all that the main body of the OUN-B-UPA forces was formed in the spring of 1943, and that it was an anti-Soviet formation that occasionally resisted the Germans as well, but avoided a sustained conflict with the Wehrmacht, perhaps in the knowledge that the principal contest would inevitably be with the incoming Soviet forces.

There is similar controversy over the size of the insurgent army. The detailed 1991 article by Maslovs’kyi cites figures of 40,000 men in 1943–44 (from the Encyclopedia of Ukraine published in Paris in 1980) and 80,000 with 20,000 sympathizers in early 1944, and support from 100,000 in the OUN underground (from émigré UPA historian Petro Mirchuk). He adds that careful analysis leads to the conclusion that in early 1944 the UPA comprised about 90,000 fighters. Writing in 1997, Kul’chyts’kyi cites German estimates from 1944 that the UPA numbered between 100,000 and 200,000, but notes that Soviet figures were lower at 90–100,000. Ukrainian nationalist sources, in turn, he observes, have mentioned a figure of 30,000 troops. The numbers are difficult to determine, in his view, because of UPA’s peasant composition and the combination of armed resistance with daily life in the villages. However, according to NKVD documents from February 1944 to December 1945, the
Soviet organs had killed 103,000 insurgents, and captured 127,000, while
50,000 had surrendered voluntarily—a total of 230,000. The same author,
writing two years later, states that the UPA was formed from late 1942 and
within a year had 40,000 members. Thus there would logically have to have
been a massive rise in numbers over the next two years to reach the figure of a
quarter of a million men. Further, an army of such size would hardly consti-
tute a partisan or guerrilla force, since it would be impossible to conceal such
numbers of troops, even in the forests. What seems to be the case is that the
population of entire villages has been included in the overall totals of OUN-
UPA membership.

Personalities and Heroes

To reverse the Soviet perspective of the armed insurgency, nationalist his-
torians have produced new narratives that describe the bold and heroic deeds
of individual members of the UPA troops. This device has been employed
consistently in the nationalist as well as the non-nationalist media of Ukraine
in the independence period. The ostensible goal has been to add OUN-UPA
members to a pantheon of local heroes that has appended to the list of Boh-
dan Khmelnyts’kyi, Ivan Mazepa, and Symon Petlyura, the names of Yevhen
Konovalets’, Roman Shukhevych, and Stepan Bandera, and a host of lesser
figures, all of which are said to have had as their primary goal the attainment
of an independent Ukrainian state. Such articles date from the first months
of Ukrainian independence. They include the story of Yaroslav Halashchuk, a
former member of an UPA hundred who spent 44 years in hiding, after con-
cealing himself in his sister’s house in 1948, and avoiding the MGB by hiding
in a closet. Another “hero” was Petro Fedun, a native of the town of Brody,
and former member of the Red Army who later fell into German captivity. In
1943 he joined the UPA, losing his brother, a fellow member in 1946, and
witnessing the deportation of his parents to Siberia. Under the pseudonym
Petro Poltava, Fedun became one of the main ideologues of the underground,
countering the figure of the “new Soviet man” with the Ukrainian patriot,
who knows and is proud of Ukraine’s past, and for whom the highest princi-
ple is “the good of the nation.”

More common were tales of the heroism of UPA members, and conversely
the crimes and general moral degeneracy of their Soviet opponents. An article
about the UPA fighter Petro Saranchuk, for example, notes that the first
drunken people he ever met were “Soviets.” Saranchuk was earmarked for
forced labor in Germany, but escaped from the train and joined the UPA in the forest, even though he was only 14 years of age. The young conscript organized teenagers from neighboring villages, and convinced them to steal weapons from the Germans. Later, while imprisoned in the Gulag—having been arrested by the NKVD in 1946—Saranchuk was reportedly among the organizers of a rebellion in the camp at Noril’sk. The legendary UPA insurgent, Roman Riznyak-Makomats’kyi, together with a companion, disguised himself as a Soviet officer sometime in late 1945 or early 1946, and held up a staff car containing the head of the Drohobych MGB, Saburov. Saburov’s life was spared in return for a box of secret documents. In 1948, however, Makomats’kyi was ambushed by the MGB and incarcerated. Allegedly his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment at the behest of his former captive Saburov. The Makomats’kyi story is somewhat unusual in that the MGB representative appears to have a human side. However, the stories vary, and occasionally one reads of UPA members who were not heroes and even vacillated in loyalty between UPA and the authorities, such as Luka Pavlyshyn, who initially had opposed the OUN policy of terrorism in interwar Poland, and was later accused of collaboration with the Soviet forces. Accused by nationalists of betraying the location of UPA leader Roman Shukhevych, Pavlyshyn was arrested by the Soviet authorities a week after Shukhevych’s death and imprisoned in the Gulag.

Dmytro Hrytsai joined the underground OUN in the early 1930s and was among those arrested for the assassination of Polish Deputy Defense Minister Bronislaw Pieracki. He spent two years in the concentration camp at Bereza Kartuska and “the Poles beat him cruelly.” In 1939, when the German army invaded Poland, Hrytsai was arrested again by the Polish authorities, but he escaped when the Polish guards deserted their post. He was among those who proclaimed an independent Ukrainian state in L’viv on 30 June 1941. In 1943, the Germans arrested Hrytsai, but he was freed “miraculously” by the OUN, who managed to bribe a German prison guard, after which OUN troops, dressed as German guards, escorted him out of L’viv. He later became a well-known UPA general who was killed in December 1945. Another victim of the Germans portrayed in narratives of the early years of Ukrainian independence was Andrii P’yasets’kyi, Minister of Forestry in the government of Stets’ko. He was born in 1909 in Velyki Mosty (L’viv region), and lost an older brother, who died in 1919 serving in the Ukrainian Galician Army. Andrii was a member of the scouting organization Plast, which was dissolved by the Polish authorities during the Pacification of Ukrainian regions. P’yasets’kyi graduated from the L’viv Polytechnical Institute and worked in an
office that looked after forests on private estates. One of his “customers” was the Greek Catholic Church. In 1941 he was arrested by the NKVD and imprisoned not far from L’viv. On 30 June 1941, he was appointed Minister of Forestry in the newly proclaimed Ukrainian government and organized a research institute. He protested the Germans’ cutting down of forests in the following year, after which the Yaniv forests were declared a scientific reserve. The article claims that P’yasets’kyi’s initiatives irritated the Germans and thus they arrested him. He was executed together with 99 other hostages in retaliation for the murder of a German police officer.29

A fairly typical story is that of Ivan Klymiv-Lehenda, a native of the village Sol’tsi (Sokal’ District, L’viv Oblast), who became an OUN member after entering the law faculty at L’viv University. During the Polish pacification campaign, Klymiv was arrested in his native village in September 1930 and “cruelly beaten” by police and gendarmes. In 1932 he was rearrested and given a six-month prison sentence. In 1933 he was sentenced again. In 1936, he began to train OUN members and took the name “Lehenda.” Imprisoned following a trial of forty-two Ukrainian students in Luts’k in 1937, he was freed when the war broke out. He organized the evacuation of Ukrainians from Soviet to German-occupied Poland, and was a close collaborator of Stets’ko in the summer of 1941. The story continues to relate how he saved Jews and spread the OUN network into Eastern Ukraine. He was arrested by the Gestapo in December 1942 and killed shortly afterward.30 In a subsequent article on the same subject, the same author adds to the biography of Lehenda, noting that in 1935 he spread the OUN’s network into Volhynia, as a result of which he was arrested in Luts’k in 1937. During his work in Soviet-occupied Poland, he was responsible for the evacuation into German-held territory of businessmen, priests, lawyers, and writers, and he maintained close contacts with Metropolitan Andrii Sheptyts’kyi in Krakow. When the war broke out, he led mobile groups into Eastern Ukraine, managing to evade arrest for some time by establishing friendly relations with Slovak officers. As with several other nationalist heroes, the story is of a figure who initially seems to have been prepared to cooperate with the Germans (moving people into the German-occupied zone is clear evidence that the USSR was considered the hostile power), but eventually fell foul of them and suffered death as a result.

Volodymyr Shchyhel’s’kyi (Burlaka) was another legendary UPA commander who led a “hundred” in the territories of the Zakerzonnya (Eastern Poland after the Second World War). He began his service in the Ukrainian police, and in June 1944, on the orders of the UPA, he and his police unit retreated to the Carpathian Mountains. His first combat operation took place
in the Stanyslaviv (Ivano-Frankivsk) region, when his hundred defeated an NKVD unit. In Zakerzonnya, his operations were directed against Poles. The 1947 agreement between the police forces of the USSR and Poland (Czechoslovakia was also a signatory) made UPA operations in Zakerzonnya impossible, particularly after those sympathetic to the insurgents were deported. Burlaka’s unit was moving westward when it was ambushed by Czechoslovak troops. Burlaka was captured in 1947 and extradited to Poland two years later.31 By contrast, Kharkiv native Andrii Matviyenko entered the UPA via the Red Army, in which he was a lieutenant. In June 1944, a military tribunal sentenced him to death for desertion. He was imprisoned in L’viv but together with a number of inmates he managed to escape during a German air raid. His desertion is portrayed in the nationalist press as a conscious rejection of Stalinism. He joined the UPA and married a woman from Galicia. During his activities, the NKVD deported Matviyenko’s wife and their small child to Siberia as punishment for their link to “an enemy of the people.” Matviyenko was in charge of an UPA security unit and took the name “Zir.” His exploits included the destruction of a large NKVD unit at the village of Yasinka in 1947. In 1949, he was surrounded by NKVD troops and took his own life. The author comments that the Soviet authorities refused to rehabilitate Matviyenko, a state of affairs that the author hopes will be remedied by independent Ukraine.32

Occasionally there are attempts to reconcile the two visions of the war years in Ukraine. Nina Romanyuk focuses specifically on Ukrainian women in the OUN and UPA. She asks whether the Kharkiv nurse working for the Red Army knows that while she carried out her daily work at the front, somewhere far away in Volhynia friends of her age were dying in a different war. They died in disgrace, cursed and forgotten for decades, but all the same young, naïve, and committed to their Motherland, albeit a different one. She asks whether that same Kharkiv nurse would be aware that young Ukrainian girls took care of wounded men in the underground hospitals of the UPA, risking their lives, daily and hourly, just like she did. The names of these UPA nurses are not imprinted on memorials and traces of their graves have long since been obliterated by tractors and bulldozers. Someone might erect a cross to commemorate them, but it would be destroyed again and again. Their photographs remained in the archives of the MGB, along with laconic inscriptions like “sentenced” or “killed in the bunker.” The author then provides several biographical accounts of UPA women that she found in the MGB archives. Included among them is that of Nadiya Borodyuk (born 1921) who heard about the OUN from her brother in 1936, and be-
gan to read the Decalogue and underground literature though she did not participate formally in any organizations. She was very much affected by the NKVD massacres of prisoners in Western Ukraine prior to the Soviet retreat from the Germans. In March 1942 she came into contact with the OUN and was ordered to organize a women’s network in the district. She left her autobiography in a bunker, with the last entry dated 19 January 1948. On 12 March 1949, the note was found in the bunker by the NKVD after its inhabitants had all been killed. Romanyuk also relates the stories of other women killed in postwar conflicts with the Soviet security forces, including one who collected linen for the insurgents, a typist of the local OUN branch in Hirka Polonka, Luts’k region, and the owner of a house who provided a bunker for the insurgents.

A somewhat different vision is presented in the account of Luka Pavlyshyn’s grandfather, who died in 1987. Pavlyshyn studied at the L’viv teachers’ training seminary, became involved with the nationalist movement, and began to read the works of Dontsov. He did not fully accept the nationalist Decalogue, and advocated ideas more akin to democracy and humanism. Reportedly he also opposed the OUN’s campaign of terrorism in interwar Poland. Nevertheless, Pavlyshyn did become a member of the OUN in 1937, and as a graduate of a Polish military school he was responsible for training peasants in the techniques of warfare. In 1939, he appeared in Krakow, where he made the acquaintance of a number of prominent figures, such as Roman Shukhevych (the future commander of the UPA) and Yaroslav Stets’ko. In 1941 he was among those OUN scouting missions dispatched into Eastern Ukraine and subsequently became a member of the UPA. The author offers a sympathetic account of the activities of his grandfather in 1944–47, but it is also evident that he is seeking to defend him from accusations (from OUN-B members) of collaboration with the Soviet authorities. The author maintains that his grandfather worked in the OUN underground and kept in contact with Shukhevych. He responds to reports that Pavlyshyn betrayed the UPA commander by stating that his grandfather and family were arrested one week after Shukhevych’s death in 1950. He also describes how in the Gulag, Pavlyshyn organized a prisoners’ rebellion. The author concludes by stating that

Some patriots died for the idea, others betrayed it to survive. My grandfather did what he could for Ukraine, but he was not a hero. He survived because he chose the middle ground, saying ‘If we cannot be lions, let us be sly foxes.’ The key point is that he did not betray anyone; rather he offered assistance to many people.
In some reports, the hero figure is forced to serve two masters, and most often joined the UPA before being drafted into the Red Army. One case is that of Kostyantyn Oksenyuk, who was forced to join the UPA after an UPA representative arrived in his village and demanded that every family should send one representative to the insurgents. During his time in the UPA, Oksenyuk reportedly was engaged in fighting the Germans on eight different occasions. Meanwhile Soviet Partisans attacked the village of Huta Lisovs'ka and beheaded several villagers, demanding to know where “Banderites” were hiding. The same village was later destroyed by the Germans. In the spring of 1944 as the front moved to the west, Oksenyuk returned to his village and was drafted into the Red Army, serving in a punitive battalion before he returned home in 1946. He was arrested on suspicion of supplying food to the “Banderites” and was tortured by the NKVD. On one occasion near his village, Oksenyuk was obliged to bury slain insurgents in a common grave at Kolky cemetery. After the war he worked on a collective farm, but was never able to shake off the accusations of being linked to the insurgents, and was unable to acquire the status of a war invalid.

Likewise, Ivan Ivanych joined the UPA as an 18-year old to avoid being sent for forced labor in Germany. In October 1943 his unit was attacked by German forces and Ivanych made for his native village. Three months later he was mobilized into the Red Army. However, in 1947 he was arrested as a former insurgent, despite the fact that he held Soviet military decorations.

Myths of UPA Warfare

Alongside the individual heroes, popular discourse in Western Ukraine on the independence period in Ukraine has centered on UPA warfare as a liberation struggle; of heroes fighting oppression; of selfless warriors prepared to give up their lives for the cause of an independent Ukraine. The prelude to this sort of writing is found in the chronicles of UPA warfare by Petro Mirchuk and Lew Shankowsky, published in the West, with many of the latter’s works republished in the late Soviet period in the journal Ratusha in L’viv. One critic notes that Shankowsky’s accounts should be categorized in the realms of fantasy because he describes UPA actions in locations far distant from the location of the insurgents—Odesa, Donbas, Kryvyi Rih, and others. Further, though the totals suggested above indicate heavy UPA losses in the conflict with Soviet forces, many of these accounts present stories of heavy casualties for the Soviets and minimal ones for the insurgents. One describes,
for example, an ambush of Soviet forces near Rushir, organized by Myroslav Symchych (Kryvonis), which reportedly trapped an NKVD unit and killed some 400 of its troops in the ensuing battle. The insurgents in question had formed a base in the forests near the village of Kosmach, which became known unofficially as Bandera’s capital.

Kryvonis was also the subject of a novel by Mykhailo Andrusyak, the description of which, in the newspaper *Ukraina moloda*, adds to the UPA legend. In his early life, it is reported, his main inspiration came from his history teacher, Volodymyr Pryhorods’ko:

Awakened by the wise, passionate word, my child’s imagination hurled me into the depths of historical events. With the prince’s regiments, I defended Rus’ Ukraine against the rapacious aliens... But most of the time I was a Cossack. At 7 years old I was ready to die for Ukraine at any time.

In the novel, the hero joins the OUN at the age of 17, and takes part in stealing the printing press of a German office—already it seems the Germans were the enemy. In 1943, Symchych, our hero joins the UPA which is portrayed primarily as an anti-Bolshevik force that includes members of different national groups. The insurgents, writes Andrusyak, were moved by a knightly spirit “that helped them to fight an armed enemy, but urged them to treat humanely an enemy without weapons.” Symchych, however, would show pity on an adversary if he revealed himself as a brave and skilled warrior. Ultimately, the UPA was destroyed because of the numerical superiority of the enemy and a massive network of informers. The ingredients of the myths of the UPA warrior are thus all present: idealism, self-sacrifice, bravery, and valor, and the links between medieval heroes, Cossacks, and the insurgents are clearly delineated.

Another more lengthy but typical example is the portrayal of Vasyl’ Sydir (Colonel Shelest), a UPA commander in Galicia. In April 1941, Sydir became a member of the OUN Provid (leadership body) after the Second Congress of the OUN-B and was given the assignment of creating professional UPA units in Volhynia. He was also founder of schools for UPA officers: two in Volhynia and one in the Carpathians. By 1946, the UPA had become a popular force in Western Ukraine according to this account because of Soviet repression using mass terror and abuse of the local population. The NKVD tried to change the popular mood by forming fake units of the UPA security service, the SB, which was made up of MGB agents and Soviet Partisans, and which robbed the population, raped the women, and executed civilians. The author, how-
ever, also obfuscates the issue by noting that he once disguised himself as an NKVD officer on a mission to a city. There are some other characteristic trends evident in this series of articles about Shelest: the UPA managed to subvert several NKVD agents, all “Jews who betrayed secrets for money.” The author claims that secret documents reveal that by 1946, “Moscow” had losses of 15,500 dead and 47,000 wounded, including 62 colonels. This information was derived from a Colonel Dorofeyev and is allegedly secret and not to be found in any archives. The account closes with a graphic description of the death of Sydir-Shelest in combat with the NKVD in April 1949, one that the author had not personally witnessed!

Myths, legends, and reality are all intertwined in the stories of UPA’s heroism. One account offers a retrospective conceptualization of Ukrainian history: “We were insignificant people, but we were aware that the cruel enemy Bolshevik was walking on our land, trampling down with his leather boots everything that was dear to us.” The NKVD men, even in appearance, are portrayed as monsters. On one occasion cited by this author, the UPA member Taras was visiting the author’s family, and—alerted by a treacherous neighbor—the NKVD raided the house. Taras escaped but the author’s sister was taken in reprisal and the family never saw her again. Each Christmas the family would pray for the sister’s return, for the protection of the Ukrainian people and the insurgents, and for all those struggling against “the hateful Communist regime.” Martyrs are commonplace in the narratives of UPA-NKVD warfare. They include the story of the UPA unit in the village Medvezhe, Drohobych region, in 1944, when NKVD troops surrounded the house of UPA members: the brothers Lyalyuk. The insurgents burned compromising literature and after a brief but intense battle, blew themselves up. In Mykolaiv district of L’viv region, the local UPA hundred was led by Ivan Pankiv (Yavir), which reportedly destroyed an NKVD unit in 1945, killing 22 people. This unit, it was reported, would repeatedly raid Ukrainian villages, looting and raping the women. During the skirmish, two prisoners were taken, and one was crying “Kill me, I am Russian!” However, the UPA troops did not kill the prisoners. On 4 May 1950, the account continues, Yavir’s bunker was destroyed by the NKVD, and the last bunker in this district fell on 22 July 1950.

Occasionally, the narratives take on elements of stark realism, rendering the accounts very valuable in terms of ascertaining the precise nature of the conditions during the prolonged warfare. An interview with a former UPA insurgent, Mykhailo Zelenchuk, is a case in point. He starts with a description of a winter’s sojourn in the bunker. For several months the insurgents did not
venture outside, receiving information about world events from a radio. It was a difficult time, he recalls, but they were motivated by the notion of attaining an independent Ukraine. He comments on the hopes of the OUN in 1941 that the Germans would grant independence to Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic States. The arrests of Bandera and Stets’ko, as well as the executions of several hundred rank-and-file nationalists deprived them of any illusions. His statement that the UPA never carried out forced mobilization of the population and that every member was a volunteer is somewhat less convincing. He cites confrontations with Red Army soldiers who were rather reluctant to fight. UPA troops and Soviet soldiers would pass each other without firing. The Soviet authorities, however, developed quite a successful counter-insurgency through a developed network of agents and secret informers. The Soviet side also tried to discredit the reputations of leading insurgents, sowing discord and suspicion within UPA ranks. There were also public displays of violence, such as an insurgent with a rope around his neck being dragged by a horse until his neck was broken. As a result, many peasants agreed to cooperate with the authorities, but others continued to supply the insurgents with food and clothing. By early 1950, Zelenchuk continues, the informers’ network was so extensive that the UPA could no longer eliminate individuals through acts of terror. His unit was often forced to resort to different methods to deal with traitors. These methods became increasingly violent. As the account by Zelenchuk illustrates, the local population had by now been subdued and the position of the insurgents had become precarious. Thus the “realist” discourse tends to offer a more accurate account of events than what might be termed “image-building” or heroic narratives, intended to portray a united struggle against an implacable enemy. At times also the line between hostile and friendly elements in Ukrainian villages blurred and it was impossible to know whether one might be betrayed or for whom a particular individual was working. The situation reflected the gradual strengthening of Soviet power into the late 1940s and early 1950s, particularly after the consolidation of Stalin’s control over Eastern Europe and the collectivization of individual peasant farms in Western Ukraine.

A second example of “realist” narratives is an overview of the book “Thousand Roads” by Mariya Savchyn, who took part in various underground activities, along with her husband Vasyl “the Orlan” Halas, deputy leader of the Zakerzonna division of the OUN. Savchyn was born in the village of Zadvir’ya (L’viv region) and at the age of 14 she joined the youth faction of the OUN. She evaded death numerous times, leaping from trains, escaping through windows, and taking refuge in a bunker that was surrounded by
NKVD troops. Because she survived in miraculous fashion, she decided it was her duty to maintain the memory of the liberation struggle, especially its final phase. While providing a detailed description and some documentary activities of OUN actions, she tried to depict the mood and the atmosphere of the struggle. She describes her companions in meticulous detail even though she often knew them only by their pseudonyms. Most attention is devoted to the final years of the campaign, when special troops and agents of the Soviet security forces were hunting down the remaining insurgents, who in turn by this time were often exhausted and in poor health. Orlan and Mariya Savchyn were finally captured in 1953 with the assistance of former insurgents. By this time, everyone but the commander Vasyli' Kuk had been captured and the authorities could claim a complete victory. As torture was useless with Orlan, he was taken to Zaporizhzhya and shown various examples of the “socialist paradise” such as a kindergarten, a local museum, and a factory. It evidently made little impact on him. Savchyn asks why the authorities were so afraid of a handful of insurgents, and concludes that the Soviet authorities wished to demonstrate to the population of Ukraine that resistance was futile. The insurgents believed, in contrast, that resistance, even if only moral, was still feasible.47

Actions in Eastern Ukraine

Part of these narratives focuses on the so-called “marching groups” that moved into Eastern Ukraine (which is defined as the territories that belonged to Soviet Ukraine at the time of the outbreak of war). Koval’ notes that the marching groups operated as “servants” of the German army and the occupation authorities and thus had permission to travel beyond the borders of Western Ukraine. The groups’ members thus often traveled with the German army and sometimes even wore the same uniforms. However, the initial camaraderie began to dissipate after October 1941, when the OUN-B was outlawed. Koval’ cites German documents, which state that from the fall of 1941 to the fall of 1942, members of both wings of the OUN were able to strengthen their followings in East Ukrainian cities, and in contrast to their hostility in their native regions, they often worked together. They published pamphlets and were occupied with organizational work that proved a major headache for the Abwehr and SD. By 3 January 1942, Koval’ reports, German intelligence revealed that the army was being attacked by supporters of the OUN on the orders of the OUN leadership. Resistance had spread “all the way down to Crimea.” Throughout 1942, the German authorities continued to express anxiety
at the actions of illegal OUN formations in cities such as Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Stalino (Donets'sk), Mariupil', and Odesa. After November 1941, propaganda was disseminated widely by the Bandera group "east of the Dnipro." After this point, the occupiers began to shoot anyone proposing Ukrainian independence, without trial or other legalities.48

Perhaps a more fanciful account is that of Bohdan Chervak, who describes the activities of Petro Voinovs'kyi, commander of the Bukovynian "Kurin'" of the Ukrainian nationalists. Voinovs'kyi was a native of Chernivtsi (born in 1913) who joined the OUN and was eventually arrested by the Romanian authorities and forced to serve in the Romanian army. In 1940, the article continues, when Romania was forced to cede Bukovyna to the Soviet Union, the OUN attempted to take power in the region. Once the Soviet authorities took control, the NKVD arrested Voinovs'kyi, but promptly released him. When the German–Soviet war broke out, Voinovs'kyi initiated the creation of the Bukovynian "Kurin'," which consisted of three fighting groups, composed of 3,000 men. The OUN leadership reportedly ordered the "Kurin'" to move to Kyiv, a transfer of personnel that could hardly have been plausible without German cooperation. The route selected for the journey—Vinnytsya, Berdychiv, Zhytomyr, and Bila Tserkva—suggests that the group went along the main route to the Ukrainian capital. It is also claimed that at each major center along the road, the Bukovynians left people behind to organize "Ukrainian national life." In Kyiv, the article continues, the Kurin' swore allegiance to the Ukrainian National Council, which was under the control of the OUN-M. Voinovs'kyi also made contact with the city's OUN-M leaders. It is alleged that the Bukovynians immediately went about restoring Ukrainian national life in the capital, with some moving to recruit volunteers in neighboring settlements and others forming a local police force and working in the city administration. By late 1941, Voinovs'kyi was obliged to flee to Galicia, but he was arrested there by the Gestapo.49

In 1992, one writer interviewed Evhen Stakhiv, the man responsible for the OUN organization in the Donbas region. Stakhiv dispelled the notion that the OUN underground existed only in Western Ukraine and claimed that it embraced all of the Donbas-Kryvyi Rih Basin. By contrast, the Communist underground was negligible. However, Stakhiv acknowledges, the local population did not support the nationalist ideas of Dontsov, which it equated with Fascism. This attitude led the OUN to modify the doctrine—integral nationalism was abandoned, and the organization introduced calls for social justice, the equality of nations, and humanism. Much of the interview is devoted to Aleksandr Fadeyev's story the Young Guard (1951), in which the local organi-
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zation resisting the Nazis in occupied Ukraine is betrayed by a man called Stakhovich (i.e. Stakhiv). Stakhiv’s explanation is that Fadeyev likely wrote the novel based on existing Gestapo documents and denunciations. Leaflets that included his name were disseminated in the markets of towns such as Donets’k and Horlivka. Stakhiv questions the very existence of the “Young Guard” and claims that the only authentic figure in the novel is Lyubov’ Shevtsova, who was a Red Army radio operator rather than an underground warrior. He questions the acts of sabotage conducted in the novel since only provocateurs or German collaborators would carry out such self-defeating operations. On the other hand, in his opinion, the Germans constantly persecuted nationalists. In Mariupil', in a single day, the Germans allegedly executed 20 members of the OUN.50

One month later, in the same newspaper, A. Nykytenko, director of the museum “Young Guard,” offered a response to Stakhiv’s version of events. Referring to Stakhiv’s remarks, Nykytenko comments that not for the first time when speaking to the press, Stakhiv refers to himself as the prototype for Evhen Stakhovich from Fadeyev’s novel. Nykytenko maintains that by this means he is trying to convince the public that the “Young Guard” could actually be a link in the chain of the nationalist underground in the Donbas region. By making such comments about the Young Guard, Stakhiv attempts to draw attention to himself and events in which he allegedly participated, according to Nykytenko. However, he continues, neither during a meeting with students at Donets’k University nor in the interview with the newspaper did Stakhiv provide any documents or facts to back up his claims. Where, he wonders, are the leaflets with inscriptions like “Death to Hitler!” and “Death to Stalin!”? If the underground really had such an extensive network, Nykytenko continues, then why are there no people left who can support the words of Stakhiv? He believes that the town of Krasnodar has been deliberately omitted from Stakhiv’s narrative because there are Ukrainian patriots from the war years who are still living there, but who have no recollection of the organization cited by Stakhiv. Nykytenko is also adamant that the personality of Stakhiv could not have been the prototype for the character of Stakhovich in Fadeyev’s book. Fadeyev maintained that there was a prototype for this character, but since his parents were still living at the time, the novelist altered the name to Stakhovich.51

Despite the dispute concerning the authenticity of Stakhiv’s account, reports about the effectiveness of the scouting missions continued to appear in the media of the early 1990s. Volodymyr Mazur from Poltava thus recollected that in 1941, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union, his community re-
ceived a visit from mobile groups of OUN-UPA (an error of fact since the UPA had not been formed at that time). They brought a gleam of hope and the notion of national liberation. At this time Mazur joined the OUN, and eventually moved through the ranks until he was in a position of leadership. The interviewer asks whether it was difficult for a 17-year-old nurtured in the tenets of Communism to undergo such a transformation. Mazur responds that his progress was assisted by the atmosphere at his home. His mother was very religious and his family could still remember the Ukrainian National Republic of 1918. Males from his family had fought with Petlyura. Thus his family rather than his school was the defining influence on his career choice. How typical Mazur was as a resident of his city is not known. Two other authors discussed the situation of OUN networks in the Dnipropetrovs’k region. They comment that it was not unusual for people to begin the war in the ranks of the Red Army but end up in the UPA or vice-versa. An OUN underground reportedly existed in Dnipropetrovs’k from 1944. Its members tried to join the UPA in order to avoid relocation for forced labor in Germany. Usually, he writes, they moved in groups through the forests of Kyiv and Kyrovo-Bud regions, carrying literature, weapons, and food. Sometimes such groups were dispersed by the Germans or Soviet Partisans. Some Dnipropetrovs’k OUN members attained high positions in the UPA, including one member who became Shukhevych’s bodyguard.

A more detailed account of alleged extensive OUN underground networks in Dnipropetrovs’k, reportedly the OUN capital in Eastern Ukraine, came from a conversation with local historian Dmytro Kudelya, published in the summer of 1995. According to this account, OUN members appeared in the city as members of expeditionary groups that followed the German army deep into Soviet Ukraine. They were mainly followers of Bandera and engaged in propaganda that in the early period of the occupation was “not anti-German.” However, relations with the Germans were deteriorating after the Akt of 30 June 1941 and the German reprisals that followed. From 1942, says Kudelya, the struggle against the occupiers became overt. Subsequently, the author compares the OUN and the Communist underground in the city, and claims that the latter did not exist outside the materials of Soviet propaganda organs. By contrast, the Nationalists had a well-developed network and had connections to many prominent citizens, including Mayor Panas Oliinychenko. Kudelya maintains that the OUN underground in Dnipropetrovs’k had 2,000 members, several of which were prominent in later years. In order to reach accurate conclusions about the state of the OUN in this city, the author reports that he and his colleagues compared the memoirs of Evhen Stakhiv with
the detailed NKVD examinations, and drew conclusions only when they were completely convinced of the correctness of their interpretation.\textsuperscript{54} They appear to have concluded that the network was considerable and owed allegiance to Bandera.

Writing three years later, Vakhtang Kipiani elucidates the situation in Mykolaiv region in Southern Ukraine in the years 1941–1943. He outlines his personal perspectives quite openly: whereas the OUN-M was pro-German in orientation, in his view the OUN-B relied on its own strength to combat both “the Bolsheviks” and the Germans. He reports that when the war broke out, both wings of the OUN organized expeditionary groups and sent them to the east to establish local governments and distribute propaganda. Group South, led by Zenon Matla and Tymish Semchyshyn, comprised around 10,000 members. In Mykolaiv, most of the OUN members derived from Bukovyna, and joined the local administration, the auxiliary police, and the editorial boards of newspapers. Following Germany’s failure to acknowledge the government of Stets’ko and the arrest of OUN-B leaders, expeditionary groups North and East were destroyed. Meanwhile, the network in Mykolaiv came under attack in late 1941 and early 1942. Forty-five members were arrested, reportedly as a result of their betrayal by one Kokot, who held the chair in Ukrainian language at Mykolaiv Pedagogical Institute. The author avows that the available materials testify that the OUN had substantial support in Soviet Ukraine, and cites an organization called “For an independent Ukraine,” which was active in the village Pisky in Mykolaiv region. He refers to a statement by an OUN political leader, Yaroslav Haivas, that residents of Kharkiv, Poltava, Dnipropetrovs’k, Mykolaiv, and Kherson sympathized with OUN slogans and principles and considered themselves as true members of the organization.\textsuperscript{55} Such claims seem inflated.

A more academic and balanced account of the expeditionary groups appears in the 1999 textbook on Ukraine in the Second World War by Mykhailo Koval’, cited above. He maintains that the OUN-B operated initially as the “servants” of the German army, with which its members traveled, and even wore the same uniforms when they entered the various cities. They provided assistance to the Gestapo, the police, and the organs of the occupation. However, after October 1941, the OUN-B began to carry out anti-German actions, which they expanded to areas of Ukraine beyond their native one. In 1941–42, both wings of the OUN—which he claims could work together in Eastern Ukraine—strengthened and intensified their work to recruit new followers. In addition to underground organizations, they issued flyers and caused the occupiers great anxiety. German intelligence and Special Forces were thus or-
dered to regard the OUN as an organization that was harming German interests in Ukraine (obviously, one can deduce from this statement that this was not the case hitherto). Gestapo documents point to anxiety among the Germans concerning the activities of illegal OUN units in various cities, including Kyiv, Dnipropetrov’sk, Kharkiv, and Stalino. On the other hand, Koval’ indicates, prior to the German occupation, the OUN propaganda network was invisible. The Germans began to lose trust in the Ukrainian auxiliary police, which it believed had been infiltrated by the OUN. Henceforth, the occupiers began to shoot all proponents of Ukrainian independence, including, according to historians from the “Ukrainian Diaspora,” 621 OUN members in Kyiv alone.56

How can one summarize these accounts in terms of new narratives? Clearly the Soviet version of events in the early war years—particularly of the early war years in Eastern Ukraine—has been discredited. The new interpretation undermines in particular the early activities of the Soviet Partisans or former Communist officials working with them or in the rear of the German army. What is more difficult to ascertain is the degree to which it has been supplanted by the Nationalist one with respect to the expeditionary groups and indeed OUN influence in Eastern Ukraine generally. A Ukrainian administration was established in Kyiv by the OUN-M, which tried to open, or reopen, Ukrainian universities, organized a Union of Writers, and convened a form of the Ukrainian Parliament. On the other hand, the figures released in the various newspaper accounts of the OUN networks in East Ukrainian cities seem unrealistic, if not outright fantasy. The accounts also corroborate the two clearly demarcated events of the early war years: OUN–German collaboration in the summer and early autumn of 1941, followed by a period of OUN–German hostility. The narratives hardly alter the fundamental issue: that without the first event, the second could not have occurred. The German occupation thus facilitated the expeditionary groups, whereas German anger and repression of the OUN served to distinguish them from the regular occupiers in the minds of the East Ukrainians.

**UPA–German Relations**

One of the most sensitive issues in the reinterpretation of UPA’s role during the war is its relationship, and that of the OUN before it, with the Germans. In order to illustrate the change of direction, some examples of the earlier narrative need to be demonstrated. Writing in Ukraine’s most authoritative historical journal, V. P. Troshchyns’kyi commented in 1988: “Despite all
their efforts, nationalist historians have found no materials in foreign archives that testify to authentic battles of the UPA with Hitlerite military units. The reason is that there were no such battles. Another writer notes that the relationship of the OUN-B with the Germans became complex after the latter had failed to recognize the Ukrainian government proclaimed in L'viv on 30 June 1941. However, the OUN-B, in his opinion, never fought the Germans. Later, grassroots UPA units periodically engaged German forces, but acted on their own initiative, without orders from above. He cites German sources to show that UPA representatives allegedly assured the German side from the outset that the UPA would not attack its forces. From 1944, moreover, the UPA became an overt ally of the Germans in the struggle against the advancing Red Army. An interview with former insurgent Petro Hlyn, who received a 25-year prison sentence from a Soviet tribunal, also offers evidence that the UPA “massacred not only Poles, but their own fraternal Ukrainians” (the Polish issue is discussed in Chapter 6).

Further support for the theory of a sustained alliance between the UPA and the German forces is derived from archival documents from both the Germans and the KGB. Between 1988 and 1991, this interpretation constituted the official Soviet line, but already it was coming under fire. One source cites an interview with Robert Rupp, a German who worked for the SD, and served as a conduit between the UPA and the Germans. After his arrest in Prague in April 1945, Rupp revealed that he had established contacts with the OUN in 1942 on the order of the SD chief Kleinert. The OUN promised to cease attacks on Germans (so evidently they were occurring), if the Germans agreed to Ukrainian autonomy under a German protectorate. Another German officer reportedly revealed other agreements between the Wehrmacht and the UPA (rather than the OUN), according to which the UPA would cease its assault on Germans, and the Germans would not prevent UPA’s elimination of the Polish population in August 1944. Yet another document cited in the pro-Soviet press was a secret directive of a General Brenner, Brigade Leader 22, from 12 February 1944, which mentioned German negotiations with UPA: the UPA pledged not to attack German units and to supply intelligence information. The general in turn ordered his subordinates not to attack the insurgents even if provoked. By 1944, it should be recalled, the Soviet forces were advancing rapidly through the former Polish territories of Volhynia and Galicia, and thus there was some logic to focusing forces on a common enemy. However, if the Soviet version of events had become more moderate, the nationalist narrative developed into an analysis that at the least was far-fetched, and at times entered the realms of mythmaking.
Thus writer Volodymyr Kosyk, author of a book called *Natsional-sotsialists’ka Nimechchyna i Ukraina*, comments categorically that with the exception of a few individuals, mainly associated with the Ukrainian Central Committee in Krakow, “no Ukrainian organization collaborated with the Germans.” Those who cooperated with the occupation authorities were either of German pedigree or “Volksdeutsche.” Though Soviet historiography often wrote about the collaboration between the Nazis and the OUN, German documents testify that the OUN-B “struggled actively” against the Fascists. In the winter of 1942, the OUN-B began to organize armed units, and by April 1943 these units were turned against the Nazi forces in Polissya, Volyn’, and Zhytomyr regions. Omitted in this approach is the formation of Ukrainian battalions in German occupied territory, as well as the creation of the SS Division Halychyna in 1943, to say nothing of the extensive contacts of both wings of the OUN with German forces prior to the outbreak of the German–Soviet conflict. Similarly, another author argues that the UPA did not collaborate with the Germans in any way. In 1944, she notes, UPA commander Antonyuk-Sosenko was executed for negotiating with the Germans. She also denies that the UPA committed any atrocities, arguing that these were always carried out by NKVD agents disguised as insurgents.

The prolific Stanislav Kul’chyts’kyi has written frequently on the most sensitive topics of the Stalin period, including the Famine-Holodomor and OUN-UPA. He provides an interesting example of how an historian has made the metamorphosis from writing Soviet-style polemics to one who has slowly but clearly adopted something closer to the nationalist narrative. In a 1997 article, he asks the question: was the UPA a force that was collaborating with the Germans? His answer is that the relationship between OUN-UPA and Nazi Germany was far too complex to be dismissed simply as collaborationist. Western Ukrainians, having suffered ruthless NKVD reprisals prior to the Soviet retreat from their territory, “were not appalled” by the arrival of the Germans. The OUN tried to use the Germans for their own ends, i.e., the establishment of an independent Ukrainian state. The failure of the Germans to satisfy OUN aspirations in the long term led to the creation of the UPA. Kul’chyts’kyi provides some examples of the UPA fighting the Germans, but notes that with the approach of Soviet Partisans and the Red Army, the nationalists began to perceive the Germans as the lesser evil. Local agreements were made with German army units, but the Germans considered the UPA unreliable and did not seek any long-term commitment. Nevertheless, the greatest danger for the Ukrainian people was National Socialism, and the Soviet Army was the only force that could defeat the Germans. Therefore by not
fighting the Wehrmacht, the UPA was working against the interests of the Ukrainian people, even though the Red Army presence signified a return to totalitarianism.\textsuperscript{64}

In an article written two years later, Kul’chyts’kyi elaborates his views. Noting that the OUN are “national heroes for some people and traitors for others,” he explains the polarity of views by the fact that in the past, Ukraine was divided between different states that harnessed the Ukrainian population to their own national and ideological values, and used Ukrainians in their conflicts as “cannon fodder.” The situation, he adds, became especially acute during the German–Soviet war, which history has largely supplanted by myth. If there was collaboration between the OUN and the Germans, it existed only within an unequal alliance. The OUN was in fact willing to agree to such an alliance because of the harsh Soviet policy in Western Ukraine. He acknowledges that there were some ideological similarities between the Ukrainian nationalism of the OUN and German National Socialism, but the OUN ideology, in his view, was devoid of any racist content. Kul’chyts’kyi then partially contradicts his earlier comments with the assertion that the OUN activists were not collaborators because the Nazi leadership did not want such an alliance, and the OUN aspired for an independent Ukrainian state. The UPA, in turn, was essentially anti-Soviet, rather than anti-German, because Stalin was the principal enemy and was winning the war.\textsuperscript{65}

An attempt to find a middle ground between anti-OUN and anti-Soviet polemics was made by historian Mykhailo Koval’, in his 1999 book on Ukraine during the Second World War. Koval’ correctly separates links between the OUN and the Germans, and those of the UPA and the Germans. In the case of the former, he observes that the OUN SB was organized by and modeled on the German secret police. Almost all its leaders were graduates of the German military school in Zakopane, Poland, in 1939–40. The SB’s objective was to sentence and punish members of Soviet Partisan forces, Communists, Soviet and collective farm activists, so-called “easterners,” and other “enemies of the Ukrainian people.” The OUN strategy changed after the German defeat at Stalingrad. The concept of developing a simultaneous two-front war against the two armies representing totalitarian states was simply unrealistic. Though Hitler’s attitude to Ukraine was by now well-known, compared to the prospect of outright and total “Sovietization,” with massive repressions of innocent people, even the harsh German occupation appeared to be the lesser of two evils.\textsuperscript{66} Koval’ thus clearly links the OUN to the Germans even in the middle years of the war, when leaders like Bandera and Stets’ko had been placed under arrest, and OUN-B members were systematically rounded up.
OUN-UPA contacts with the Germans, however, occurred somewhat later, starting in February 1944 and continuing until the summer of that year. According to documents of the German administration, as cited by Koval’, the OUN-B wished to remain outside the Soviet–German conflict, but sought assistance from the German side. The eventual outcome was that the OUN-B would trade information about the presence of Red Army troops in return for weapons. Koval’ comments that the “indisputable fact” of the OUN-B-UPA leadership conducting negotiations with the Germans was something about which Ukrainian historians in the Diaspora preferred to remain silent. Soviet historians, on the other hand, chose to emphasize it, since it depicted the OUN-UPA as collaborators. The Soviet authorities discovered evidence of the talks between the OUN-UPA and the German occupiers only in April 1945. The Ukrainian NKVD informed party secretary N. S. Khrushchev in a special memorandum it had obtained after removing the Germans from the city of L’viv. However, and conversely, the documents discovered also revealed that the Germans had questioned OUN-B leaders as to why its earlier actions had been directed against the German occupying forces. Though after April 1944 they agreed to unite against a common enemy, such amity had not always been the case. Thus the relationship was essentially a tactical one, and opportunistic in character. And in terms of resolving the “Ukrainian question” the results of the cooperation were minimal.67

The tactical issues of the later war years need to be measured alongside the more overt collaboration with the Germans in the prewar and early years of the war, at which point the German Reich was the obvious agent for change. Nevertheless the OUN espoused extreme policies similar to those of European dictatorships, not least those of Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany. Again, a key question is whether OUN-B ideology changed during the course of the war as its adherents claim, or whether it was moderated to appeal to residents of other parts of Ukraine, or for that matter to the Western allies, which—the Ukrainian nationalists reasoned—would sooner or later become embroiled in a new war with Stalin’s USSR. That all these events occurred within the broader context of the most brutal war between Germany and the USSR should never be forgotten. But nor should it be overlooked that, as Timothy Snyder has pointed out, the war brought to the fore, through a combination of circumstances, “led by immature and angry men,”68 the most fanatical wing of the most extreme faction of Ukrainian nationalism, one that in a democratic setting could not have hoped to win the support of the majority of the population. That it collaborated with Hitler’s regime in order to win
independence for Ukraine seems quite clear; but whether the anticipated independent state would have satisfied the aspirations of most residents of a free Ukraine is another issue.

The Death of Soviet Heroes

YAROSLAV HALAN

Yaroslav Halan (1902–1949) was a Socialist Realist, writer, and playwright, born in Galicia, who served as a propagandist for the Soviet regime, particularly against the Ukrainian Catholic (Uniate) Church and nationalist underground, both of which he accused of collaboration with the German occupiers. He attended the Nuremberg Trials and published numerous books and pamphlets, some of which were translated into English. He also wrote at times under the pseudonym Volodymyr Rosovych. He was assassinated by Ilarri Lukashevych, son of a Catholic priest, and Mykhailo Stakhur, a member of the OUN. The two assassins were discovered almost two years later and sentenced to death. As with several assassinations of Soviet hero-figures (and for that matter nationalist heroes who suffered the same fate), there is considerable conjecture as to who might have done the killing. According to Ukrainian nationalist sources, Stalin and the KGB may have been responsible for the murder of a writer who was a former member of the Communist Party of Western Ukraine (dissolved in the late 1930s, with many of its leaders murdered on Stalin’s orders); opposed to the anti-Semitic campaigns in the Soviet Union toward the end of Stalin’s life; and who maintained close friendships with Poles and others. The discourse on Halan occurs quite frequently in the Soviet and post-Soviet media without ever resolving satisfactorily the circumstances behind his death or even his outlook and loyalties. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the debate around Halan.

In 1990, the official Ukrainian Communist Party newspaper issued an article in response to a Ukrainian radio broadcast that Halan had been murdered by the KGB in October 1949. It observed that the “nationalist” version of his death made several arguments. First, two to three weeks prior to his death, Halan was expelled from his newspaper and forced to hand over his gun to the authorities. Second, the advocates of the KGB murder theory spent some time going over original materials in order to demonstrate that Halan was killed on the orders of Kaganovich and Stalin. However, the Communist author claims, the real motive for the assassination was Halan’s stand against
The debate continued in the pages of *Literaturna Ukraina*, in which author Stefaniya Andrusiv asked whether Halan was a writer whose talent was warped by Communist ideology, or a militant nobody, elevated to the heights of world literature through collaboration with the enemies of his people, servitude, reports, provocations, and insinuations. Her essay, she remarks, poses more questions than it provides answers. She was unable to find any new materials on Halan’s death in the archives of the secret services, most likely because they do not exist. Instead, her article is based on Soviet publications, as well as the book on Halan published in Toronto in 1992 by P. Tereshchuk; thus a classic case of material available in the West to the Ukrainian community being transferred back to Ukraine as evidence of a widespread polemical debate on a former Soviet Ukrainian hero. Andrusiv makes her position plain at the outset with her remark that Halan was the Pavlik Morozov of Ukrainian literature, whose image was crafted by the NKVD-KGB for others to follow.

Andrusiv provides a detailed account of the life of Halan, who was born into a Muscophile family in the Peremyszl region. During the First World War, the Austrian government imprisoned Halan’s father for his pro-Russian activities, and the family was sent to Rostov-on-Don, where Yaroslav attended a gymnasium. Later he studied at the University of Vienna and the University of Krakow, from which he either graduated (the Soviet version) or failed to graduate (Tereshchuk’s account). In 1924 he joined the Communist Party of Western Ukraine, later moving to the parent organization, the Communist Party of Poland. At that time he worked for the Communist magazines *Vikna* and *Novi shlyakhy*. The author points out that several foreign sources have maintained that Halan was a double agent who worked for both the Polish and Soviet intelligence services. Another author, writing in the mid-1950s, had also declared that Halan was a Polish agent and provocateur who actively recruited agents for the Polish service. However, Halan tried to establish himself as an opinionated journalist who worked against leaders of the national-liberation movement in Galicia. During the Second World War, Halan worked at the Saratov radio station, and after 1942 he joined the editorial board of the newspaper *Sovetskaya Ukraina*. Subsequently, he worked for the Kharkiv radio station, the newspaper *Radyans’ka Ukraina*, as well as several Polish organs. The author notes that Halan’s rationale was that “The last 30 years have taught us that love for Moscow is love for Ukraine, that to hate Moscow is tantamount to hating Ukraine.” Despite being a Greek Catholic and being married to one (his wife was a victim of the Stalin Purges), he was one of the most active proponents of the
liquidation of that church, and it was Halan’s pamphlets, such as “With cross or knife?” and “What is the Union?” that paved the way for the dissolution of the Uniate Church and the establishment of the Russian Orthodox Church in Western Ukraine.\textsuperscript{73}

Andrusiv remarks that Halan was original in attacking the Pope while issuing the usual smear campaign against traditional enemies. His failing was that he did not recognize that the Communist system could destroy its own advocates. There was a need for a ritual victim in order to introduce Soviet terror into Western Ukraine, and it was relatively easy for the authorities to blame Halan’s murder on the Banderites. By the late 1940s, some of Halan’s writings were not being accepted in Moscow and Kyiv. His book \textit{The Faces} was banned, reportedly because it exaggerated the impression of the strength of OUN-B forces. Before his death, his dog had been killed and the guards removed from around his house. Andrusiv cites a letter from the KGB in Moscow to its West Ukrainian counterpart concerning how to react to Halan’s death. The letter was written prior to the assassination. Two years later, the two alleged killers of Halan, Stakhur and Lukashevych, were arrested, tried, and executed. The author states that there are three possible versions of Halan’s murder. The first version, appearing in Soviet publications and popular abroad, is that he was killed on the orders of the nationalist underground by Stakhur and Lukashevych. A second version is that Lukashevych believed he was acting on behalf of the nationalist underground, but that Stakhur had been compromised by the NKVD and belonged to a fictitious unit of the OUN created by the NKVD. Andrusiv cites the existence of special “Banderite” schools in Russia, which instructed Western Ukrainian youths. The third version is of Soviet responsibility, and the author compares the axe assault on Halan to that on Trotsky. Militarily educated Banderites would likely have shot him. Resolution of the question of who killed the Ukrainian writer, the author believes, will likely come from those born after August 1991 and will be taught in Ukrainian schools.\textsuperscript{74}

Evidence of the Soviet disillusionment with—and possible implication in—the murder of Halan, is provided in an article by Mykola Oleksyuk, an historian at the State Musical Institute. Initially, Oleksyuk had a conversation with the notorious Pavel Sudoplatov, the ex-KGB general linked to the assassination of Trotsky, as well as Evhen Konovalets’. In an earlier article, Oleksyuk had not managed to prove Soviet complicity in Halan’s death. In a series of articles published in 1993, he turns to the testimony of OUN member Petro Duzhyi. Duzhyi recalls that during his interrogation by the secret police, Tymofii Strokach, deputy chairman of the Ukrainian NKVD, asked
whether Roman Shukhevych knew Halan personally and then added: “We will try Halan. Halan is a traitor.” Duzhiy’s response was: “Why is Halan a traitor when he writes exactly what the Soviets want?” Stroka reportedly responded that Halan had lied to them, by suggesting that if the authorities arrested Metropolitan Slipyi and other leading Greek Catholic bishops, then the rest of the priests would be cowed. In reality, it had incited a general revolt. It is a strange story, which suggests that Strokach would share information with a leading OUN member during an interrogation. To support his theory, Oleksyuk also cites the assassination of the Mukachiv bishop, Teodor, by agents of Strokach and Sudoplatov. Teodor’s carriage was run over by a Soviet tank, and although Teodor was not killed instantly, he died later in hospital. The suggestion is that he was poisoned there by a nurse posted by the MGB.75

These articles demonstrate the difficulty sometimes encountered in uncovering the details of the assassination of a prominent figure, in this case of one intricately linked with the various parties in the protracted struggle between Ukrainian insurgents and the Soviet regime. Halan, however, was clearly despised at the time of his death by both sides. Three years later, Oleksyuk returned to the same theme. By this time, he seems to have reconciled himself to the likelihood that Stakhiv and Lukashevych operated on the instructions of the district OUN leader, Roman Shchepans’kyi. In the first half of the newer article, he tries to present Halan’s murder as an MGB/NKVD provocation and hints strongly—albeit without much evidence—that Shchepans’kyi (pseudonym Bui-Tur) was an NKVD agent. However, in the latter part of the article, which is reliant on testimony from various OUN members, he acknowledges that Stakhiv could have been functioning on the orders of the OUN. He concludes by stating that however one interprets this tragedy of the past, the cause of all the suffering of Ukrainians was Stalin’s regime, which was resented by all. It nurtured freedom fighters, among whom were some prepared to carry out murder.76 Such a conclusion appears to be offered to account for the relative ruthlessness of OUN actions, and there is no question that the removal of Halan is an example of how far ideological enemies were prepared to go. There were very few Soviet heroes who survived the test of time. Sooner or later most were discredited, imprisoned, demoted, or eliminated. On the other hand, the pro-Moscow version of events was simply unacceptable to the OUN.
NIKOLAI KUZNETSOV

A more authentic Soviet hero was Nikolai Ivanovich Kuznetsov (1911–1944), a Soviet intelligence agent and Partisan who operated in Ukraine during the war years, and who led various operations against German officials in Rivne and L'viv. A native of Yekaterinburg region, Kuznetsov moved to Moscow and joined the NKVD in 1938. After the German occupation of Ukraine, he fought in a guerrilla group in Central and Western Ukraine called “Victors,” led by Dmitrii N. Medvedev. On 9 March 1944, he was killed during a skirmish with Ukrainian insurgents near L'viv, and subsequently he was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union posthumously.77 A fairly typical Soviet account of the career of Kuznetsov comments that he was a civilian with an outstanding knowledge of German and a good athlete. This article cites his official biography, which notes that he was parachuted into the Medvedev [Partisan] unit on 25 August 1942 under the pseudonym Nikolai Vasil'evich Grachev. The article’s author believes that he was responsible for procuring intelligence information about German plans for the offensive the following summer at the Kursk Salient. The later section of the article discusses Kuznetsov’s time in L’viv during which he had no contact with the Partisans. He and his group arrived there on 18 January 1944, and little is known about Kuznetsov over the following month. German documents report that he organized the assassination of the Vice-Governor of Galicia, Bauer, as well as several German generals.78 For years, tourists visiting Western Ukraine during the Soviet era were taken to the “Hill of Glory” and other locations in L’viv known to have been frequented by Kuznetsov. The Sverdlovsk film studio also produced a movie about Kuznetsov’s exploits called “Strong in Spirit.” But like Halan, Kuznetsov did not fit easily into the modern era of independent Ukraine and before long his exploits came under close scrutiny.

Writing in 1992, Bohdan Dem’yanchuk observes that in the recent past the general attitude toward Kuznetsov has been that of veneration for a legendary hero. However, some organizations began to question his status in the pantheon of heroes, and even alleged that he was a provocateur, who was responsible for the deaths of dozens of Ukrainian patriots through German reprisals against his actions. As a result, youths from the militant nationalist organization UNSO79 had thrown Molotov cocktails at Kuznetsov’s memorial and the Kuznetsov museum in L’viv had been closed. Dem’yanchuk relies on the memoirs of D. Medvedev, the commander of Kuznetsov’s Partisan detachment. Here, Medvedev recalls that Kuznetsov dropped a wallet that had been taken from one of Bandera’s emissaries and added to it a fake directive calling...
for a struggle against the Germans, following the attempted assassination of General Dargel (deputy of Reichskommissar Erich Koch) in September 1943. In response, the Germans executed 38 Ukrainian hostages, all of whom were Ukrainian nationalists. In summing up this event, Dem’yanchuk recommends that readers focus on the memoirs of Vlas Samchuk, who in 1943 was a journalist and editor of the newspaper Volyn’. According to Samchuk, shortly after the assassination of the head of finances in Koch’s office, Zehl (the attempt had been on the life of Dargel), there were rumors that the murder had been carried out by someone in the uniform of a German officer, but who was in fact a Partisan or a Ukrainian nationalist. Some Ukrainians even welcomed the action. However, Samchuk believes that the assassination was a provocation directed by Moscow. Altogether, about 500 people lost their lives in reprisals for this murder. Dem’yanchuk concludes by asking whether this memoir-literature is enough to incriminate Kuznetsov for the deaths of Ukrainian citizens.

The following year, Roman Pastukh explored the circumstances around the death of Kuznetsov. According to the Soviet version, Kuznetsov died in February 1944 in Brody region during a battle with Ukrainian nationalists. The author discovered witnesses to his death among UPA fighters of the Chornohora (Karpii) unit. According to one of these witnesses, Myron Pavlyuk, the unit was quartered in the village of Boratyn, near Brody. It was learned that two German officers had been detained and were confined at the house of Holubovych. Pavlyuk and a companion arrived at the house to discover the two Germans guarded by two UPA men. Chornohora arrived, at that point dressed in Gestapo uniform and followed by guards, and demanded that the two Germans surrender their weapons. Evidently he greeted one of the Germans as Herr Siebert, which was one of Kuznetsov’s pseudonyms. “Siebert” gave up his pistol, but his fellow officer exploded a hand grenade. In the confusion that followed, Siebert jumped out of the window, but was killed by machine gun fire. Pavlyuk did not discover what happened to the bodies. Pastukh, however, puts together the following narrative: in 1944 Kuznetsov was fleeing L’viv and entered the hut to keep warm, and was apprehended by Chornohora’s unit. Therefore the remains of a body found in Boratyn and later identified by a Soviet anthropologist indeed belonged to Kuznetsov. However, documents about the discovery were never made public. Pastukh thinks that the files might contain materials about the Medvedev brigade, including details of countless deaths of hostages killed by the Germans in reprisal. Possibly also, there would be cases of the NKVD committing crimes while dressed as UPA fighters.
The same theme is pursued by Petro Yakovchuk, who claims that the body buried in L’viv, and to whom a memorial is erected, does not belong to Nikolai Kuznetsov. Rather it is the body of a German officer. His story relates that Kuznetsov was a terrorist of the Medvedev Partisan brigade who specialized in attacks on prominent functionaries of the German administration. Yakovchuk maintains that such attacks were deliberate provocations in order to turn the Germans against OUN-UPA. In September 1943, Kuznetsov killed Zehl, and the Germans retaliated by arresting 38 nationalists. They took this action after discovering the wallet of an OUN member that had been deliberately dropped by Kuznetsov to divert blame to the nationalists. Subsequently, Kuznetsov threw a hand grenade at General Paul Dargel, and 300 hostages were executed. Following another attack—this time on Deputy Gauleiter Knust—the Germans shot 300 inmates of Rivne prison. In L’viv, Kuznetsov attempted the assassination of deputy governor Bauer, while crying “Glory to Ukraine!” He then tried to flee from L’viv but was abandoned by his Partisan detachment, which was being pressured by UPA forces. Kuznetsov was then apprehended by the nationalists and executed. In the 1950s, Yakovchuk writes, the Soviet authorities organized a search for Kuznetsov, but the body that was found—the author offers no corroboration—was that of a German officer. Once again, then, the claim is that the Partisan hero had a mission to eliminate members of OUN-UPA through assassinating German officials and leaving behind evidence that incriminated the nationalists. In this way, a Soviet war hero is depicted as being both duplicitous and working against the interests of Ukraine.

NIKOLAI VATUTIN

Nikolai Fedorovich Vatutin (1901–1944) had a spectacular military career. He was born near Kursk into a peasant family, and joined the Red Army in 1920. The following year he was accepted as a member of the Communist Party. He attended military schools and academies in Kyiv and Moscow, and subsequently served as the deputy commander and commander of the headquarters of the Kyiv Military District. From 1940 he was head of the Operative Group and the Deputy Chairman of the General Headquarters of the Red Army. After the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, he was chairman of the headquarters of the North-Western Front, and the deputy chairman of the General Headquarters. From 1942 he commanded the armies in the Voronezh region, the Southwestern region (at the time of the Battle of Stalin-
grad) and the First Ukrainian Front (Kursk Salient). Armies led by Vatutin took part in the liberation of various cities, including Belgorod, Kharkiv, and Kyiv, and his armies had forced their way across the Dnipro River. On 29 February 1944, he was wounded during an ambush of his cortège by UPA forces and died on 15 April from gangrene. A statue of Vatutin was erected in Kyiv. His case is an interesting one because of the juxtaposition of two heroic narratives during the war: that of the Soviets and that of the Ukrainian nationalists. The hero of the war was regarded as an enemy of Ukrainians according to the nationalist version of events that slowly took shape after Ukraine became independent. But how did the nationalist version depict Vatutin and the events surrounding his death?

Writing in 1997, Bohdan Fīk illustrates what he perceives as the general’s crimes against Ukrainian youth born from 1924 to 1926. He points out that they were mobilized to fight against the Germans, and although they were ill equipped and poorly trained, they were flung forward against the German machine guns. Fīk writes that according to official statistics, only 3% of people born in these years survived. Vatutin, who was in charge of the campaign to liberate the city of Kyiv, dispatched 250,000 Ukrainian young men who had been mobilized in Chernihiv, Cherkasy, Poltava, and Kyiv regions to certain deaths in the cold waters of the Dnipro River. Some Moscow newspapers reported in the 1980s that those who could not swim were shot so that they did not instinctively drown others when crossing the river at Kyiv. As a result of such measures, the UPA sentenced Vatutin to death for crimes against the Ukrainian people. He ponders why the statue of Vatutin in Kyiv bears an inscription in Ukrainian, whereas the other Soviet heroes all have inscriptions in Russian, and posits that the reason may have been that he was killed by nationalist Ukrainians.\(^{53}\) In a related article, Panteleimon Vasylevs'kyi agrees with the reason behind the assassination of Vatutin and describes the attack in more detail. Vatutin’s cortège was attacked near the village of Mylyatyn on the border of Rivne and Zhytomyr oblasts. Vatutin was hit in the legs and evacuated from the skirmish area, but it was some time before medical assistance could reach him. Members of his cortège removed his left leg but could not stop infection from spreading. Fifteen soldiers of the Red Army reportedly died in the ambush, along with three insurgents. In 1947, the sculptor Vuchetich made the monument to Vatutin, with the inscription “To General Vatutin from the Ukrainian people.” Several days later someone had added the words “three bullets.” The MGB arrested two students from Nizhyn whose fathers had drowned at Kyiv.\(^{54}\)
Vasylevs'kyi continues with this theme later in the same year with a list of enemy generals and other targets assassinated by the UPA. He states that all were prepared in advance because the UPA had been informed of the movements of the targets by the OUN-UPA security force. In addition to Vatutin, they include SA general Viktor Lutze, SS General Funk, NKVD boss of the Ternopil' region, General Morozov, NKVD General, D. Fedorov, and General Karol ['Walther'] Swierczewski, the Polish Deputy Minister of Defense. The source does not elucidate why such assassinations conducted by the UPA differed significantly from those carried out by Communists such as Kuznetsov. In both cases they led to German reprisals against the local population. However, when Communists murdered Germans they are accused of doing so to provoke a German response. Why would UPA murders not produce the same consequences one wonders? Bondarenko believes that after the defeat of Ukrainian SS Division Halychyna near Brody (see Chapter 5), servicemen from the Division joined the UPA forces near the Brody River. At that time the UPA was considering the question of whether to negotiate a neutrality agreement with Soviet troops. Such an arrangement had already been made with an underground attachment of the Partisan forces of Sydir Kovpak. However, in early 1944 in the Rivne region, UPA paratroopers fired on the car carrying Vatutin and mortally wounded the general. Soviet forces then began a ruthless cleansing operation against the UPA, during which the civilian population was brutalized. Those who helped UPA members with food and shelter were proclaimed accomplices and sent to Siberia with their families. Those who refused to assist in this way were killed by the UPA.

The lengthy efforts to resurrect OUN-UPA and provide accounts of the heroism of its members has as its natural counterpart, attempts to “de-heroize” existing Soviet heroes, who were linked in some way to events in those regions of Ukraine in which OUN-UPA were fighting or hiding. It is difficult to discern how successful these writings were in their mission. Most of the sources cited come from the radical L'viv newspaper, Za vil'nu Ukrainu rather than the mainstream press, though Literaturna Ukraina was also part of this campaign. The Soviet authorities had behind them years of propaganda and lengthy volumes about the glorious campaigns of the “Great Patriotic War.” What was different here was that in the past, the Ukrainian participation in that war, and Ukrainian sacrifices, had been melded into the official version of history. Kyiv, after all was a “city of glory.” The nationalist narrative, on the other hand, was dissecting accounts of the Soviet drive to the West to demonstrate that Ukrainians were deliberately sacrificed by generals such as Vatutin. Because of this needless loss of lives, it was necessary for the
UPA (or the OUN) to exact revenge by eliminating the man who had given the order for the crossing of the Dnipro. It need hardly be added that the accounts simplify what occurred and that the drowned soldiers were not exclusively of Ukrainian origin. On the other hand, perhaps slowly but without doubt, the Soviet version of events has come under closer scrutiny. In turn, the "nationalist" version is becoming more plausible, particularly when the reader of such accounts can have in mind events such as the 1932–33 Famine. What stands in the way of a complete vindication of OUN-UPA, aside from the long-term effects of Soviet propaganda on a large section of the Ukrainian population, are the events of the latter years of the war and early postwar years, which we will turn to in Chapter 5.

Summary

The efforts to reinterpret the events of the Second World War in order to create heroes out of "villains" and to reexamine former heroes accordingly are incomplete. Many of the versions of the past are unclear and subjected frequently to new interpretations. Moreover, the war years are the most difficult in terms of historical memory because new narratives often coincide and clash with the results of new archival research. To date, despite a plethora of articles that seek to reshape the image of the OUN and the UPA, the impact of Soviet propaganda has still not been entirely eradicated. It remains problematic to convince a reading public that of the two major warring powers, Hitler’s Germany and the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian nationalists opted for the former as the lesser of two evils. Whether or not such a perception—that the USSR under Stalin constituted a worse threat to Ukraine than the German occupiers—may be accurate or not, such judgment has not received widespread acceptance outside Ukraine and in many areas within it. Since the Red Army was bearing the brunt of the war against Hitler’s troops, a complete reassessment of the Soviet campaign seems unlikely. The Western allies could only express gratitude to the USSR, despite the obduracy of Stalin at summit meetings in Tehran and Yalta, and his suspicion of Allied motives throughout the war. Some Ukrainian sources suggest that lives were wasted by Stalin, or that Ukrainian soldiers were sent on missions in which death was unavoidable. There is also the issue of overall Ukrainian “losses” under the Stalin regime, in which historians, journalists, and writers take into account events such as the Famine of 1932–33, the Purges, deportations, as well as the prolonged conflict with various Soviet forces both during the war and afterward.
The casualties when tallied render Stalin’s regime a worse enemy to Ukrainians than the Germans, and thus a temporary alliance with Germany could be justified on these grounds. Nevertheless, outside the confines of their own environment, the advocates of such a perception of the Stalin years have not found widespread support and, in some cases, have provoked hostile responses.

Likewise the campaign to make heroes out of the adherents of the OUN-B or the UPA can be considered thus far no more than a partial success. In the case of the OUN-B there are far too many road blocks, which can be listed as follows: an ideology that was authoritarian and even extreme by the standards of Central or Eastern Europe in the interwar period; the period of collaboration with the Germans that applies to both wings of the OUN up to the summer or fall of 1941; the question of the OUN-B’s attitude toward the Jewish population of Ukraine, as well as the overtly anti-Semitic nature of some of the propaganda issued by the Ukrainian Central Committee in Krakow; and the nature of the campaign to unite the UPA, involving the enforced cooperation and partial elimination of rival groups, particularly the followers of Bul’ba-Borovets. In the latter part of the war, there is also no question that the OUN-B and the UPA made a conscious decision to—at the least—adhere temporarily to the side of the retreating Germans in what was a logical maneuver to consolidate and replenish their forces prior to the arrival of Stalin’s armies. The relationship between the German occupiers and the nationalists was ambivalent. Possibly one could say that both sides tried to exploit the other for their own benefit. If so, the ploy was unsuccessful, in both cases. The Germans regarded the OUN-B as an unreliable ally that was dangerously ambitious. The OUN-B likely thought that the Germans reneged on earlier promises to permit the establishment of an independent Ukraine. The problem for historians or indeed those trying to create a national history is that a portion of the wartime narrative must make sense of this relationship and perceive that there were times of cooperation and times of animosity. It is akin to an alliance with one devil in order to avoid another devil. However, the supporters of the OUN-B and the UPA have yet to produce a really convincing wartime narrative that takes all the fluctuations of the period into account and includes both the good and the bad. One can write history in a different way, but only in the form of propaganda.
Notes

1 The acronym refers to the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

2 Peter J. Potichnyj, a professor emeritus of political science at McMaster University in Canada, notes that UPA is often portrayed as the military arm of the OUN. As a result, he maintains, the OUN’s collaboration with the German forces prior to June 1941 is often applied to UPA as well, and despite what he perceives as UPA’s very definite anti-German direction. Peter J. Potichnyj, “The Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and the German Authorities,” in Hans-Joachim Torke and John-Paul Himka, ed. German-Ukrainian Relations in Historical Perspective (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1994), p. 168.

3 V. Cherednychenko, Natsionalizm proty natsii (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo politychnoi literature Ukrainy, 1970).


5 Myron Sluka, “Palacha k otvetu,” L’vov’s’kaya pravda, 12 March 1988, p. 3.


11 Litopys UPA, edited by Peter J. Potichnyj and Yevhen Shtendera, has published over 50 volumes of UPA memoirs. The collection has been criticized, however, for offering a one-sided selection of documents in order to portray the insurgents in a favorable light. According to one account, UPA did not generally maintain a detailed record of its activities. Also the surrounded guerrillas destroyed documents rather than allowing the enemy access to them. Many of the documents captured are today held in the archives of the former KGB and inaccessible to scholars. Litopys UPA thus represents a small fraction of the collection, mainly documents from the archives of the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council and the UPA central command. See Yurii Kyrychuk, “Heroichniy litopys,” Za vil’nu Ukrainu, 11 July 1996, p. 2. The accusation that the selection of documents was in any way partial was denied strongly by Professor Potichnyj at a symposium on “Ukraine in World War II,” held at the University of Alberta on 29 November 2006.

12 Armstrong, Ukrainian Nationalism, pp. 146–152.

13 Ibid., pp. 153–156.


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17 Wiktor Poliszczuk, Legal and Political Assessment of the OUN and UPA (Toronto, 1997), p. 32.
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45 “Orlán” translates literally as white-tailed eagle.
46 Based on this review, the book makes no distinction between activities linked to the OUN and those associated with UPA.
57 Troschchyns’kiyi, “Proty vyhadok pro tak zvanyi ‘antifashysts’kyi rukh oporu’ ukrains’kikh natsionalistiv,” p. 82.
60 B. Gusev, “Kak ono bulo,” L’vovs’ka pravda, 30 June 1990, p. 3.
67 Ibid. pp. 155–156.
69 For example, Yaroslav Halan, Lest People Forget: Pamphlets, Articles, and Reports (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1986).
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73 Ibid. On the dissolution of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, the most authoritative source is Bohdan R. Bociurkiw, *The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Soviet State (1939–1950)* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1996).

74 Ibid.


77 [http://www.psychcentral.com/psypsych/Nikolai_Ivanovich_Kuznetsov].


79 UNSO refers to the Ukrainian Self-Defense Organization, the paramilitary wing of the Ukrainian National Assembly, one of the most radical extremist political parties to emerge in post-1991 Ukraine. It perceives as its “divine destiny” an empire modeled on that of Kievan Rus’. See, for example, Taras Kuzio, “Loyal Nationalism in Postcommunist States,” *RFE/RL Newsline*, Vol. 7, No. 122 (30 June 2003).


81 Roman Pastukh, “Zahynu pokynutyi napryzvolashche svoimy,” *Za vil’nu Ukrainu*, 6 May 1993, p. 2. The intriguing question of why the UPA commander was dressed in Gestapo uniform is not addressed.

82 Petro Yakovchuk, “Pam’ятнyc fashystu.” *Za vil’nu Ukrainu*, 4–10 July 1993, p. 3.


