

Restless Legacies and Troubled Memories: The Historical Realities of the Organization of
Ukrainian Nationalists

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

The turbulence of Ukraine's contemporary political climate has resulted in a resurged admiration for the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) whose legacy is marred with accusations of ethnic cleansing, including participation in the Holocaust, subscription to fascist ideology, extended use of political violence, and alignment with Nazi Germany. Apologists for the OUN seek to deny these controversies, deeming them false and de-contextualized Soviet, Polish, and Jewish narratives. Critics of the OUN point to the extensive evidence against the OUN and argue that the opening of the Soviet archives before their subsequent closure only added evidence to their arguments. This thesis seeks to examine the major points of contention and test the validity of these interpretations.

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To my mother, Linda, and father, Doug, thank you for providing me with the foundation needed to accomplish a feat such as this thesis. You instilled in me a sense of drive and dedication that I will carry with me my whole life. Your support means the world to me. And, as a reminder, you are under no obligation to read this thesis beyond the table of contents. I love you either way.

To the Tri-University community, you have my thanks for providing me with the opportunity to approach scholarship in a way that has undeniably changed my life. From my undergraduate degree to this graduate degree, I hold deep gratitude for every professor who has helped build up my education and for every peer who has helped build up the community I was, and forever shall be, a part of.

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Introduction

In February of 2014, the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine, annexed Crimea, and established the pro-Russian puppet People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk. The invasion occurred in the aftermath of the so-called Revolution of Dignity, in which Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich was removed from office by the Ukrainian parliament due to his corruption and refusal to sign an association agreement that the Ukrainian parliament had approved with the European Union.¹ Despite the Minsk Agreements² signed by Russia and Ukraine, Russia again invaded Ukraine in February 2022, annexing more land and sparking a full-scale war. Russian president Vladimir Putin has frequently invoked the supposed rise of neo-Nazism in Ukraine as a justification for his "special military operation." In a speech explaining the invasion, Putin stated that:

Focused on their own goals, the leading NATO countries are supporting the far-right nationalists and neo-Nazis in Ukraine...The purpose of this operation is to protect people who, for eight years now, have been facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kiev regime. To this end, we will seek to demilitarise and denazify Ukraine, as well as bring to trial those who perpetrated numerous bloody crimes against civilians, including against citizens of the Russian Federation...[To the personnel of the Ukrainian Armed Forces],
Your fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers did not fight the Nazi occupiers

¹ Yassin Bahid, Olga Kutsenko, Nancy Rodriguez, and David White. "The Statistical and Dynamic Modeling of the First Part of the 2013-2014 Euromaidan Protests in Ukraine: The Revolution of Dignity and Preceding Times," 2024, 2.

² The Minsk Agreements were a series of agreements focused on creating a ceasefire and demilitarization in Donetsk and Luhansk, as well as providing those regions with semi-autonomy and encouraging political reform in Ukraine.

and did not defend our common Motherland to allow today's neo-Nazis to seize power in Ukraine.³

In an article on Ukrainian history published in 2021, Putin referred to the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and its military wing, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), as well as to OUN leader Stepan Bandera, as Nazi collaborators.⁴ In pulling on a controversial piece of Ukrainian history, Putin has created a *casus belli* for his invasion, as well as reignited a discussion about the OUN-UPA⁵ that had only become dormant, never resolved.

In the contemporary day, the collective memory of the OUN-UPA and Stepan Bandera have seen a revival in Ukraine. The modern relevance of the OUN renders any assessment of its history an inherently controversial and ideologically sensitive topic. Historians are divided in assessing its legacy. Taras Hunczak, Lubomyr Luciuk, and certain other historians from the Ukrainian diaspora in North America maintain that the OUN was a non-fascist political party focused on resisting foreign oppressors and seeking to assert Ukrainian statehood.⁶ They maintain that although this party adopted at first an authoritarian agenda, from 1943 it subscribed to values typical of democracy. They further claim that the UPA, a guerrilla force consisting of idealist freedom fighters, held the popular support of the Ukrainian population.⁷ The image of

³ Vladimir Putin. "March 1st, 2022, Address by the President of the Russian Federation." Office of the President of Russia, March 1, 2022. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>.

⁴ Vladimir Putin. "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians." *Office of the President of Russia*, July 13, 2021.

⁵ In discussions involving the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), the solo UPA initialism will be used when referring exclusively to the armed militia component and its armed actions, whereas the combined OUN-UPA initialism will be used to refer to the intertwined political-military organization.

⁶ See, for instance, Taras Hunczak. "Shukhevych and the Nachtigall Battalion: Soviet Fabrications about the Ukrainian Resistance Movement." *The Day*, 2008; and Lubomyr Luciuk. *The Galicia Division: They Fought for Ukraine*. Kashtan Press, 2023.

⁷ Volodymyr Viatrovych and Lubomyr Luciuk. *Enemy Archives: Soviet Counterinsurgency Operations and the Ukrainian Nationalist Movement – Selections from the Secret Police Archives*. 1st ed. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2023, 33; Roman Goncharenko. "Stepan Bandera: Hero or Nazi Collaborator?" *DW.com*, 2022.

the OUN-UPA being a force representative of the will of the Ukrainian people, engaging in an armed resistance equally against Soviet and Nazi invaders remains popular amongst part of the Ukrainian scholarly diaspora in North America and amongst certain scholars in Ukraine.

The Encyclopedia of Ukraine published by the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, a thorough project praised widely for its pioneering work in providing foundational explanations of Ukrainian history in the English language, displays bewildering ignorance of the OUN's ideological history. In the encyclopedia's entry on antisemitism, originally written in 1984 but available even today on the Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine, it is claimed that while no doubt antisemitism existed in Ukraine, "there has never, for example, been a Ukrainian anti-Semitic organization or political party..."⁸ This claim seems remarkable for most European nations to make and is certainly audacious for any nation with such an extensive modern history of antisemitic massacres on its land to make. This encyclopedia, and the works of Hunczak, show that the OUN's preferred historical memory has infiltrated academic history, being accepted in some spheres as normative. In a topic as understudied as the OUN, this sort of revisionist memory can distort societal perceptions of the past.

Much of the evidence used throughout this thesis is drawn from Lubomyr Luciuk's co-edited archival collection, whose own stances on the OUN misaligns with the evidence compiled within his wonderfully edited collection. Written in the acknowledgements of Professor Luciuk's work is a comment that OUN members being "war criminals, fascists, Nazi collaborators, and so on" is a trope of Soviet, and later Russian Federation, propaganda.⁹ Luciuk, of the Royal

⁸ Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies. "Anti-Semitism." The Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine. Accessed June 28, 2025.

⁹ Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, xv.

Military College of Canada, has been an avid political scientist focusing on Ukrainian history, receiving commendation from the Ukrainian state for his passionate, albeit controversial, work. An admirer of the OUN, Luciuk also promotes a positive image of the ethnically Ukrainian, OUN-M backed, Waffen-SS Division Galizien. In the aftermath of the Yaroslav Hunka scandal in September of 2023, in which a Ukrainian veteran of this division received a standing ovation in Canadian parliament, Luciuk released a brief work titled *The Galicia Division: They Fought for Ukraine*. Luciuk denied that the division committed war crimes, citing the 1987 Deschênes Commission's findings that rendered the division excused from culpability.¹⁰ This argument neglects an acknowledgement of the Commission's critical reception by the wider historical community, and certainly ignores the result of research conducted since that commission occurred nearly forty years ago. In 2005, the Institute of History at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, the most respected scholarly agency in the area of Ukrainian history, confirmed the findings of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, which conclusively determined that the Waffen-SS Division Galizien was responsible for at least one organizational massacre, with its membership otherwise individually suspected, or proven, of involvement in other crimes against humanity throughout the course of the war.¹¹ It seems disingenuous, with modern information available, to deny the involvement of the OUN-M-backed division in war crimes as Luciuk does.¹²

¹⁰ Lubomyr Luciuk. "The Galicia Division: They Fought for Ukraine." Kashtan Press, 2023, 12.

¹¹ David Pugliese. "Whitewashing The SS: The Attempt to Re-Write the History of Hitler's Collaborators." *Espirit de Corps*, October 30, 2020.

¹² When referring to the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) post-1941, this thesis will generally refer to the actions of the OUN-B faction of the OUN, named for Stepan Bandera. The lesser OUN faction, OUN-M (named for Andrii Melnyk), will always be referred to as OUN-M, as the actions of the faction increasingly became distinct and separate from the mainstream OUN policy.

Standing oppositional to the school of thought followed by Hunczak and Luciuk are the works done by the majority of the scholarly community represented by such historians as Per Anders Rudling, John-Paul Himka, Timothy Snyder, and others, which provide an outlook on the OUN that seems more in-line with the interpretations found within this thesis. Professor Rudling, of Lund University, and Professor Himka, of the University of Alberta, have especially made use of expansive and varied primary source bases, allowing for well-rounded accounts of the OUN's history. In their arguments, they present the OUN as a bigoted, fascist, and murderous organization, which was cooperative with the Nazis.

With a historiography as divided, and as sparse, as that of the OUN-UPA, it is imperative for an in-depth analysis of the major points of contention to be examined. This thesis will seek to explore and answer three of these points:

- 1: Did the OUN mostly collaborate with or resist Nazi Germany?
- 2: Was the OUN's primary focus anti-Soviet resistance or ethnic violence?
- 3: To what extent did the OUN hold the support of the Ukrainian population and carry out its will?

In an attempt to address these questions, this thesis will examine a broad range of primary sources: translated archival documents, oral history accounts, census reports, and other governmental documents. To compliment and expand on the information provided by the primary sources, and to avoid incidental bias, secondary sources belonging to all spheres of the historiographical divide will be counterpoised. This thesis will provide evidence demonstrating that the OUN-UPA engaged in ethnic cleansing and violence against Ukrainian civilians as much as it resisted the Soviets, with much greater success for its ethnic persecution and civilian-

targeted violence. The OUN was an organization which was fascist-aligned, ethnically persecutory, and repressive to the Ukrainian people.

Chapter 1: Interwar Period

“Do not marry a foreign woman because your children will be your enemies.”¹³

- Decalogue of the Ukrainian National Party, 1903

The actions of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) remain deeply founded in the political realities of the formative years of 20th century Ukrainian nationalism. These formative years included fledgling Ukrainian states created in the uncertainty of the final years of the First World War (1914-18), a growing emphasis on the right to self-determination, and periods of harsh repression by both the newly established Polish and Soviet governments, under whom the majority of Ukrainians lived. The oppressive sociopolitical environment for Ukrainians in the interwar period provided the foundation for the growth of the OUN's political ideology. Ukrainian nationalists desired to be free of the perceived (and real) foreign oppression derived from the Polish landowning class, the communist Soviets, and the (supposedly) politically and economically powerful Jews. These ideals did not come into existence suddenly, but rather in a slow progression towards during the early decades of the 20th century.

Historical Background

By the early 20th century, lands populated by Ukrainians were divided between the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian empires. With the political chaos brought about by the First World War and the build-up to the Russian Revolution in 1917 the long-denied Ukrainian culture gained an opportunity to seek its autonomy. In these circumstances, various Ukrainian political movements attempted to make themselves the legitimate Ukrainian political authority. Ukraine's Central Rada (Council) based in Kyiv formed the Ukrainian People's Republic, subordinated to

¹³ Per Anders Rudling. “Eugenics and Racial Anthropology in the Ukrainian Radical Nationalist Tradition.” *Science in Context* 32, no. 1 (March 2019): 67–91, 71.

the Russian Provisional Government.¹⁴ Decaying socioeconomic standards and tensions with the increasingly influential Bolsheviks resulted in a move for full independence by 1918.¹⁵ This attempt failed, and the Bolsheviks destroyed the Central Rada's power base around Kyiv. The Central Rada fled west, hoping to receive international support. When the Bolsheviks were pushed back by the Germans later that year, the Rada was reinstalled as a German-puppet government, as a buffer between Bolshevik Russia and the Central Powers. The Central Rada maintained power only with the support of the Central Powers, lacking authority in much of the rural lands nominally under their control.¹⁶ The Rada was soon replaced by the anti-Bolshevik, conservative Ukrainian State.¹⁷ With the growing defeat of the Germans on the Western Front, the ability for the Central Powers to maintain order in Ukraine waned and the Ukrainian State disintegrated by the end of 1918. The following year, Ukraine fell into combat between Ukrainian nationalists who restored the Ukrainian People's Republic, Bolsheviks, Anarchists, White counterrevolutionaries and various warlords. Józef Piłsudski, Poland's Chief of State, signed an alliance with Symon Petliura, the leader of the Ukrainian People's Republic, committing to fight the Soviets together. This deal would be reneged on by mid-1921, with Poland and Bolshevik Russia negotiating peace. According to the Treaty of Riga, most of Ukraine would be integrated into the Soviet state, barring its western part, specifically Galicia and Volhynia, which was incorporated into Poland.

¹⁴ John-Paul Himka. *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust: OUN and UPA's Participation in the Destruction of Ukrainian Jewry, 1941–1944*. Ukrainian Voices. Stuttgart: ibidem, 2021, 120; Wolfram Dornik, Peter Lieb, Alexei Miller, Hannes Leidinger, Georgiy Kasianov, Vasyl Rasevych, and Bogdan Musial. *The Emergence of Ukraine: Self-Determination, Occupation, and War in Ukraine, 1917–1922*. Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2015, 80.

¹⁵ Dornik et al, *The Emergence of Ukraine*, 86.

¹⁶ Dornik et al, *The Emergence of Ukraine*, 96.

¹⁷ Dornik et al, *The Emergence of Ukraine*, 96.

It was within this chaotic period that the antisemitism present throughout Eastern Europe displayed itself. As the confrontation between the Ukrainian People's Republic, the Bolsheviks, and the Russian White Army intensified, anti-Jewish pogroms were committed by forces on various sides of the conflict. With approximately 50,000 to 60,000 Jews killed, the 1919 pogroms were some of the worst pre-Holocaust violence against the Jewish population.¹⁸ The Ukrainian nationalists and quasi-affiliated Ukrainian allies were responsible for an estimated 40% of the pogroms, with a statistically deadlier casualty rate within their pogroms: 38 Jews killed per pogrom compared to the White Army's 25 killed per pogrom and the Bolshevik forces' 7 killed per pogrom.¹⁹ The reasoning for these pogroms was diverse, yet one resounding theme is apparent across all sides of the conflict: Jews were presented in antisemitic propaganda as exploitive and profiteering outsiders aligned with the enemy.

For both the Ukrainian nationalists and the White Army the concept of Judeo-Bolshevism provided reasoning and justification for attacks on the Jewish populace.²⁰ The pogroms of 1919 eventually became something of a rallying memory for nationalists in Ukraine, with Petliura being remembered as a national hero in Ukraine to this day, despite his disputed involvement with the pogroms.²¹ In fact, the 1919 pogroms held such a noted space of memory in the nationalist culture that the anti-Jewish actions in the spring of 1941 were deemed "Petliura Days"

¹⁸ Christopher Gilley. "Beyond Petliura: The Ukrainian National Movement and the 1919 Pogroms." *East European Jewish Affairs* 47, no. 1 (2017): 45–61, 46.

¹⁹ Gilley, "Beyond Petliura," 47.

²⁰ Gilley, "Beyond Petliura," 47.

²¹ The historiography has been divided on Petliura. Various historians have accused him of implicitly approving of the pogroms, lacking the power to stop them despite his best intentions, or simply being indifferent to them. For more on Petliura in popular memory and historical study, see Matthew Pauly. "Symon Petliura, The Ukrainian People's Republic, and National Commemoration in Contemporary Ukraine." In *The Burden of the Past: History, Memory, and Identity in Contemporary Ukraine*, edited by Anna Wylegała and Małgorzata Głowacka-Grajper, 117–39. Indiana University Press, 2020.

given Petliura's perceived connection with the 1919 pogroms.²² The clear connection between the civil war and the Second World War should not be underemphasized, with the former holding a special space in the culture and ideological underpinnings of the interwar nationalists.

While the conclusion of the conflicts had rendered the immediate pursuit for Ukrainian independence a failure, the remainder of the 1920s and the 1930s was rife with expansive Ukrainian politicization. In Soviet Ukraine, the newly drafted constitution in 1919, followed by a treaty with Soviet Russia in 1920, left Ukraine's administrative mechanisms subordinated to the authority of Moscow's Bolsheviks.²³ A policy of Ukrainianization was implemented across Soviet Ukraine to allure the native Ukrainian population to the Soviet program and to follow the communist stratagem of nationality. Ukraine became one of the Soviet socialist republics with Ukrainian as an official language on par with Russian, Ukrainian language schools were opened, and much more. This policy served in stark contrast to the policies of the Tsarist Russians and the Austro-Hungarians before, who had treated the Ukrainian culture as either nonexistent or as a "peasant" culture. The Moscow Communists hoped that the Ukrainianization policy would lure Ukrainians away from other political ideologies and extend their political power outside the urban centres. This policy also corresponded with a heavy urbanization of the ethnic Ukrainian populace. Whereas only 32% of the urban population in Ukraine was ethnically Ukrainian in 1920, close to 60% was by 1939.²⁴ The growing expansion of the Ukrainian culture and the shift of the socioeconomic demographics created a constantly evolving Soviet Ukraine.

²² Wendy Lower. "Pogroms, Mob Violence, and Genocide in Western Ukraine, Summer 1941: Varied Histories, Explanations, and Comparisons." *Journal of Genocide Research* 13, no. 3 (2011): 217–46, 223.

²³ Paul Magocsi. *A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its Peoples*. 2nd rev. and Expanded ed. Books Collection. Toronto [Ont.]: University of Toronto Press, 2010, 566.

²⁴ Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 576.

When Stalin took power after Lenin's death, he initiated harsh economic reforms intended to swiftly modernize Soviet economy. His government implemented a series of Five Years Plans to rush industrialization, nationalization, and collectivization of agriculture. The latter caused mass peasant revolts across the Soviet Union in 1930, with half of them in Ukraine alone. To crush this resistance, the government attacked the so-called kulaks, wealthier peasants. However, the definition of kulak was vague, resulting in many ordinary peasants being targeted in addition to actual wealthier landowners. Tens of thousands of deemed kulaks were deported from Soviet Ukraine, into Siberia, with thousands of this number dying from the elements in their trepid exile.²⁵ Stalin's thoughtless push for economic revolution resulted in the infamous Holodomor (literally "death by hunger").

Between 1933 and 1934, approximately five million Ukrainians died as a result of the famine, with potentially millions more dying in residual consequence over the remainder of the decade.²⁶ The 1933-34 death toll made up fifteen percent of the population of Soviet Ukraine at the time.²⁷ For comparison, roughly seventeen percent of Poland's population died over the course of the entire Second World War.²⁸ The Great Terror (1936-1938) further resulted in horrific political violence, consisting of deportations and executions that affected hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians.²⁹ The Soviet ethnic policy changed from promotion of minorities' ethnic cultures to fostering the overarching Soviet identity; the Ukrainization, along with its

²⁵ Magocsi, A History of Ukraine, 594.

²⁶ Magocsi, A History of Ukraine, 596.

²⁷ Ukrainian Research Institute Harvard University. "Direct Famine Losses in Ukraine by Region in 1932, per 1000." Accessed September 21, 2025.

²⁸ Office of the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues. *Justice for Uncompensated Survivors Today (JUST) Act Report: Poland*. United States Department of State, 2020.

²⁹ Timothy Snyder. *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*. 2nd ed. New York: Basic Books, 2010, 29; 107.

major proponents, fell victim to this reversal. In the leadup to World War II, Soviet Ukraine was in a state of political terror and abject suffering.

The political situation in the regions of Ukraine under Polish control also experienced political turbulence but in quite a different way. According to the 1931 Polish census, ten percent of the population of the new Poland spoke Ukrainian as their first language.³⁰ This notable Ukrainian minority was largely concentrated in the regions of Galicia and Volhynia, as well as other eastern borderlands. Quite contrastingly to the hurried industrialization in Soviet Ukraine, Polish Ukraine remained a largely agrarian region.³¹ Throughout the interwar period, Polish Ukraine went through intense land reform. Polish war veterans, in reward for loyal military service, were heavily favoured in the land redistribution, sparking the creation of an ethnically Polish landowning class overseeing the Ukrainian peasantry. Furthermore, the Polish state engaged in repressions on Ukrainian culture. Between 1924 and 1929, 67% of Ukrainian-language schools in Poland were closed, in addition to the dismantling of Ukrainian studies at the university in Lviv and persecution of the underground Ukrainian university.³² Those Ukrainians that did manage to receive an education were discriminated against in the work force. It was difficult for a Ukrainian to get any government job. These dire circumstances proved difficult for the conventional Ukrainian political parties operating in the status quo, namely the Ukrainian National Democratic Alliance. These parties struggled to maintain their influence over the Ukrainian population, as radical movements seemed increasingly appealing.

³⁰ "Drugi Powszechny Spis Ludności." Census. Series C. Warsaw, Poland: Statystyka Polski, 1931. Accessed via the Wayback Machine Archive.

³¹ Magocsi, A History of Ukraine, 628.

³² Himka, Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust, 125.

Founding of the OUN

Ukrainian nationalism flourished in eastern Poland. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists was not the first nationalist party in Ukrainian politics by any means, being predated primarily by the Ukrainian People's Party, founded in 1902 and with a declared left-wing pro-proletariat program yet with an additional emphasis on Ukrainian statehood and staunch ethno-supremacy.³³ The leader of the party, Mykola Mikhnovsky, created a ten-commandments system for encouraging Ukrainians to act in a suitable way, including heavy emphasis on engaging with Ukrainian culture and ethnocentrism. These ten-commandments would greatly inspire the OUN's later ideology and social program. Despite being veiled in socialistic language, Mikhnovsky's program became increasingly nationalistic in attitude. The other key forerunner to the OUN was the Ukrainian Military Organization (UVO) whose militant efforts to continue the struggle for an independent Ukraine included attempts to assassinate Piłsudski and the successful assassination of a Ukrainian newspaper editor who violated the UVO's Polish election boycotts, among other such violence.³⁴ The UVO and OUN would exist concurrently, with many UVO leaders being OUN leaders, and membership heavily overlapping. The OUN itself was founded in early 1929, with its formative First Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists, where it revealed its first resolution. The resolution contained vast socioeconomic plotting, including heavy agrarian land reform via the revocation of land from the large landowners.³⁵ In addition, the program made it clear that Ukraine would start as a dictatorship, before transitioning to a democracy during a period of stability.³⁶

³³ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 130.

³⁴ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 134.

³⁵ "Resolutions of the First Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (February 1929)," in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 53-59.

³⁶ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 135.

Notably, the resolution also held an early indicator of the OUN's later much more emphasized ethnic policy, presuming "the complete expulsion of all occupiers from the Ukrainian lands," with all non-Ukrainian minorities deemed occupiers.³⁷ The OUN's politics soon intermingled with the UVO's militantism, and as the interwar period progressed, the OUN's first violent action occurred. In mid-1930, many of the young students belonging to the OUN initiated a sabotage action across Galicia, forcefully deciding that the OUN would follow in the footsteps of the UVO's underground militant style rather than operate as a conventional political party.³⁸ The OUN youth burned down farms and crops (155 cases of arson over the summer), cut telephone wires, and committed other acts of petty sabotage.³⁹ Despite the minimal organizational control over the action, some metric of guidance existed for the action, with Polish authorities recovering an internal OUN memorandum dictating that the buildings of Jews, Poles, and Polish colonists be destroyed.⁴⁰ In response to this action, the Polish authorities cracked down harshly on Galician Ukrainians, enforcing the housing of Polish soldiers on Ukrainian families, closing down cultural centres, beating Ukrainian political activists of all ideologies, and requisitioning property. In this way, the ethnic relations between the Ukrainians and the Poles increasingly degraded as both the Ukrainian nationalists and the Polish government violently reacted to the other. The remainder of the 1930s in Poland was rife with additional OUN political terror.

The infamous Stepan Bandera rose to power within the OUN during the early years of the 1930s. Born and raised in Galicia, Bandera was in his early twenties at the start of the decade,

³⁷ "Resolutions of the First Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (February 1929)," in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 57.

³⁸ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 135.

³⁹ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 135.

⁴⁰ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 136.

with a radical and militant perception of the Ukrainian political situation. He soon took control of OUN operations in Poland, though was nominally subordinate to the exiled leadership in Berlin. In his role, Bandera ramped up the military proficiency of the OUN by insisting that new recruits attend military training and ideological lessons.⁴¹ Under Bandera, the OUN robbed post offices and focused on growing its number by spreading propaganda across Galicia, especially within schools. Bandera orchestrated the OUN assassination of several notable political figures, including Bronisław Pieracki, the Polish Minister of the Interior, and the assistant to the Soviet consul who had been mistaken for the consul himself.⁴²

The assassination of Pieracki in 1934 served as a high point of the OUN's prewar rise. Pieracki was associated with the repression against Ukrainians in Poland and considered a key opponent by the OUN.⁴³ Pieracki was assassinated while walking on the streets of Warsaw by a young Ukrainian nationalist, who was smuggled out of Poland, to Argentina, with the help of various other OUN members.⁴⁴ The OUN perceived this assassination against a high-level civil servant as a major win indicating the strength of their movement. Unfortunately for the OUN, Pieracki's assassin had left an undetonated bomb, as well as a yellow and blue pin (Ukrainian national colours) inside a coat, behind at the scene.⁴⁵ The day before the assassination, Bandera and other OUN members had been arrested during an unrelated police round-up of nationalists. Simultaneously, other OUN members were arrested at an apartment where police found bomb-

⁴¹ Grzegorz Rossolinski. *Stepan Bandera: The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist*. 1st ed. Stuttgart, Germany: Ibidem-Verlag, 2014, 98.

⁴² Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 136.

⁴³ Myroslav Shkandrij. *Ukrainian Nationalism: Politics, Ideology, and Literature, 1929-1956*. Yale University Press, 2015, 38; Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 117.

⁴⁴ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 116.

⁴⁵ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 118.

making supplies, which were eventually tied to the bomb left at the scene of Pieracki's death.⁴⁶ In the subsequent crackdown by the Polish regime, roughly 800 OUN members were arrested. The trial surrounding Pieracki's death was a highly popular political event, which emboldened the OUN and provided it with increased political clout. Bandera was sentenced to death for his role in orchestrating the assassination, a sentence commuted to life imprisonment.⁴⁷

In 1936, Bandera claimed that he alone had ordered several notable assassinations, including Pieracki's, with no consultation or orders from the Berlin leadership.⁴⁸ However, other contemporaries of Bandera claim there was, in fact, an order from the Berlin leadership for the assassinations.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, it was clear that Bandera was increasingly adopting a leadership mentality while also professionalizing the OUN. Bandera went so far as to plan for OUN members with exposed identities to form a partisan band in the forests of Galicia, from where they might fight the Polish. Beyond the militant ambitions, Bandera also focused his propaganda efforts on culture: he created burial mounds for killed Ukrainian soldiers, encouraged Ukrainian students to refuse to speak Polish in class, and sought pledges of alcohol abstinence from local Ukrainians, violently retaliating against those who broke their pledges.⁵⁰ Beyond his anti-Polish views, Bandera also held deep antisemitic views, perceiving the Jews as exploiters of Ukrainians, allies of Polish landowners, and as natural communists.

By the end of the 1930s, the OUN was in a precarious situation. Many of its top homeland leadership, including Stepan Bandera, were imprisoned.⁵¹ Yet the OUN's political notoriety had

⁴⁶ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 118.

⁴⁷ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 136.

⁴⁸ Rossolinski, *Stepan Bandera*, 100.

⁴⁹ Rossolinski, *Stepan Bandera*, 100.

⁵⁰ Rossolinski, *Stepan Bandera*, 100.

⁵¹ Shkandrij, *Ukrainian Nationalism*, 42.

increased substantially in the ensuing years, with the public trials against it providing a platform to espouse their rhetoric. By 1939, the OUN had a membership between 8,000 and 20,000, largely concentrated in Galicia and Volhynia.⁵² The German-Soviet invasion of Poland allowed for Bandera and many other imprisoned OUN members to be released or escape. A Ukrainian nationalist community began to form in German-occupied Krakow, where a younger OUN faction – Bandera and his loyalists – maneuvered against Andrii Mel’nyk, the leader of the OUN since 1938. Historically, the OUN had been led by men beyond the borders of Poland or the Soviet Union, who were geographically detached from the situation on the ground in Ukraine. The homeland executive, at one time led by Bandera, was the OUN leadership on the ground who had pushed for the violence of the 1930s against the wishes of the leadership-in-exile. In 1941, Bandera openly moved against Mel’nyk, creating the so-called Revolutionary Leadership of the OUN which denounced Mel’nyk’s succession to the leadership of the OUN and, eventually, declared it illegal.⁵³ Mel’nyk, in response, declared Bandera’s seizure of power illegal, and continued to operate under the belief that he was the active leader of the OUN. Bandera’s OUN-B faction held substantially more support amongst nationalist-leaning Ukrainians than Mel’nyk’s OUN-M faction did.⁵⁴

Popular Support in the Interwar Period

The OUN experienced a complex relationship with the wider Ukrainian population during its early existence. Because the Polish authorities discriminated against citizens of Ukrainian background, the OUN’s ambition of an independent Ukraine or, alternatively, an

⁵² Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 136.

⁵³ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 171.

⁵⁴ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 143.

autonomous Ukrainian province within Poland, was common across the Ukrainian political spectrum. The OUN's specific ideology and methods to achieve this goal were not. While overzealous reaction by the Polish state increased the popularity of the OUN's militancy, most Ukrainians rejected the OUN's extremism.⁵⁵ Criticism of the OUN came from national democrats, communists, social democrats, religious groups, and others. In 1932, for instance, OUN members attempted to rob a post office, killing a Polish police officer and losing two of their own in the skirmish. When attempting to flee, the remaining four OUN members were captured and detained for the police by local Ukrainian civilians.⁵⁶ Support for OUN violence was lacking in the prewar period. Despite this, the OUN movement continued to grow, slowly but steadily. The OUN's resistance and the arrests of its members became strong propaganda pieces against an increasingly oppressive Polish state.

The assassination of Bronisław Pieracki in 1934 served as a catalyst for OUN popular support. In the immediate days after the assassination, Ukrainian social and political organizations issued condolences in Polish newspapers alongside their Polish equivalents. In Lviv, Ternopil', and Stanyslaviv, majority Ukrainian cities, vast mourning ceremonies were conducted, with resolutions condemning the murder being passed.⁵⁷ However, Ukrainian newspapers were much more reserved with their coverage of the assassination than their Polish counterparts. The Polish newspapers were focused on covering the assassination as a national tragedy, playing into the hand of the government's ideological exploitation of the death.⁵⁸ The Ukrainian newspapers focused on writing of the assassination with more neutral, factual

⁵⁵ Shkandrij, *Ukrainian Nationalism*, 25.

⁵⁶ Shkandrij, *Ukrainian Nationalism*, 29.

⁵⁷ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 122.

⁵⁸ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 119.

recounting while also taking the time to write articles detailing the trials and imprisonments of the various Ukrainians who were suffering under the Polish government's crackdowns.⁵⁹

Only a month after Pieracki's assassination, the OUN assassinated the Ukrainian director of a high school. The Ukrainian newspapers responded to this action with much more open hostility, describing it as a "horrible assassination."⁶⁰ Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, of the Greek Catholic Church, condemned the killing, reportedly stating that "if you [the OUN] want to treacherously kill all those who oppose your work, you will have to kill all teachers and professors who work for the Ukrainian youth, all fathers and mothers of Ukrainian children."⁶¹ During Pieracki's trial, two of the defendants broke from their compatriots and testified in Polish before the court. Both men justified their decision by stating that the killings of fellow Ukrainians, such as the high school director, had disillusioned them to their cause.⁶² One of the testifying defendants, Ivan Maliutsa, stated that Yevhen Konovalets, the leader-in-exile of the OUN, reported his own disapproval of the violence being perpetuated by the OUN.⁶³ Across all sorts of Ukrainian socio-political sects, the escalated OUN violence of the 1930s was met with widespread disapproval, including disapproval from within the OUN.⁶⁴ Throughout the interwar period, the OUN definitively lacked broad popular support, even if some of its ambitions were supported by the Ukrainian population. Its ultranationalist, fascist ideology was not popular, nor were its violent methods to achieve its goals.

⁵⁹ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 125.

⁶⁰ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 126.

⁶¹ John-Paul Himka. "'Christianity and Radical Nationalism: Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky and the Bandera Movement.'" In *State Secularism and Lived Religion in Soviet Russia and Ukraine*. 2013, 97.

⁶² Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 138-139, 140.

⁶³ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 140.

⁶⁴ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 149.

Throughout the interwar period, Ukraine suffered through a series of hardships. All fledging attempts to form an independent state failed, with grave consequences for the native Jewish population along the way, in the form of the 1919 pogroms. Throughout the later 1920s and the 1930s, Ukrainians suffered dually under the repressive Polish state, whose policies resulted in a hampering of Ukrainian culture and the installation of a Polish landowning class, as well as under the Soviet state, whose brash economic reforms and political terror resulted in mass famine, destruction of rural communities, reversal of the Ukrainization policy, and deportations. All these circumstances created a situation in which the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists was able to rise to the forefront of the political scene in eastern Poland, incorporated into Soviet Ukraine after 1939. With idealized notions of socioeconomic reforms, an independent Ukrainian state free of ethnic minorities, the OUN's notoriety grew among west Ukrainians. By the end of the decade, the OUN was greatly emboldened and about to experience events which would boost its opportunities to act even further.

Chapter 2: OUN Relationship with Nazi Germany

“[The OUN were] people who for years had had contacts with the Germans, who were ideologically linked with fascism and nazism, who in word and in print and in deed had for years been preaching totalitarianism and an orientation on Berlin and Rome.”⁶⁵

- Kost' Pan'kivs'kyi, member of the Ukrainian National Council and OUN fellow traveller

The question of OUN collaboration with Nazism remains crucial in its legacy. Historians sympathetic to the OUN speak of it as a populist resistor to Nazi Germany.⁶⁶ Other historians speak of it as engaging in extensive collaboration with the Nazis. The OUN and Germany maintained a relationship defined by fluid, shifting dynamics, as well as simultaneous opposition and cooperation at certain junctures. The OUN took heavy inspiration from Nazi ideology, in addition to perceiving the Germans as prospective allies in the OUN's confrontation with the Soviets. The OUN's wartime relationship with Nazi Germany was opportunistically hopeful, if not outright supportive. Even before the war, the OUN was deeply enamoured with the National Socialists in Germany. Having initially pulled their inspiration from Fascist Italy, the OUN soon derived their primary inspiration from Nazism, resulting in the adoption of Nazi ideological features, such as staunch antisemitism, xenophobia, populist rhetoric, expansionism, and the *Führerprinzip*.⁶⁷ However, the OUN was not as pro-German as they were pro-independence and, in most respects, merely saw the Germans as a means to an end, an ally against the pressing Soviet threat. For many Ukrainians desiring independence, the Germans were a method to achieve this goal, not a perpetual suzerain whose dominance they expected or desired. The OUN

⁶⁵ John-Paul Himka. “The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Carnival Crowd.” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 53, no. 2–4 (2011): 209–43, 222.

⁶⁶ Taras Hunczak. “Problems of Historiography: History and Its Sources.” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 25, no. 1/2 (2001): 129–42, 130.

⁶⁷ Himka, “Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust,” 172.

treated the Germans as an ally worthy of cooperating with, given their need for an anti-Soviet benefactor.

The OUN made extensive use of relations with the Germans before the war. In 1937, the OUN sent delegates to a Nazi foreign political congress and several of their leading figures gave speeches before the assembled crowd.⁶⁸ OUN radio broadcasts from Nazi-controlled Vienna preached geopolitical reform, specifically in relation to the supposed wrongs done to the Ukrainian people in the post-First World War treaties, with the Ukrainian right to self-determination brushed aside.⁶⁹ These broadcasts described the burgeoning struggle for Europe as “between the demo-plutocratic-Jewish-Masonic creatures of Versailles and the principle of national self-determination of fascist states.”⁷⁰ The broadcasts were layered in deep nationalist sympathies with inflammatory language surrounding ethnic minorities, such as the Jews, the Poles, the Hungarians, and more. During Germany’s invasion of Czechoslovakia in March of 1939, Ukrainian nationalists declared a Ukrainian republic in Carpatho-Ukraine, after which they sought recognition and support from Nazi Germany, as allies. Michael Winch, a British journalist who spent time in Carpatho-Ukraine during 1939, remarked that a Ukrainian nationalist he spoke to rejected the idea that Ukraine would become a puppet-state of Germany, stating that once “the new [Ukrainian] State was prepared, and as soon as Germany was occupied elsewhere, it could turn round on Germany. But Germany would probably not make too many demands on it for she would always be aware of this danger.”⁷¹ However, several days later, the

⁶⁸ Yuri Radchenko and Mark Tauger. “The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Mel’nyk Faction) and the Holocaust: The Case of Ivan Iuriiv.” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 31, no. 2 (2017): 215–39, 228.

⁶⁹ Myroslav Shkandrij. “Radio Vienna: Broadcasts by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, 1938–1939.” *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal*, no. 2 (2015): 121–36, 126.

⁷⁰ Michael Winch. *Republic for a Day: An Eye-Witness Account of the Carpatho-Ukraine Incident*. London: R. Hale limited, 1939, 146.

⁷¹ Winch, *Republic for a Day*, 146.

Hungarians, with tacit approval of Germany, crushed the Carpatho-Ukrainian “state.” From this point on, the Vienna radio broadcasts increasingly became German parrot-pieces, focusing on issues that aligned with German rhetoric, such as Judeo-Bolshevism and Polish oppression, which led to some measure of discreditation amongst the wider international community.⁷²

Defining OUN Ideology

In 1939, Andrii Mel’nyk, at the time head of the OUN, stated to German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop that the OUN was “related in world outlook to the same type of movements of Europe, in particular National Socialism in Germany and fascism in Italy.”⁷³ Throughout the 1930s, increasing alignment with Nazi Germany and fascist Italy greatly influenced the OUN’s ideology, especially in regards to its antisemitism. The OUN’s ideology was distinctly fascistic throughout its existence, regardless of any claims that the OUN subscribed to so-called integral nationalism or some other ideological variation. Especially amongst the younger generation of the OUN – the generation of Stepan Bandera, Mykola Lebed, and Yaroslav Stetsko – fascist ideology was alluring. The works of nationalist author Dmytro Dontsov, who rose to popularity in the 1920s and 1930s, foundationally shaped this second generation of the OUN, as well as influenced the founding generation – men such as Andrii Mel’nyk and Yevhen Konovalets – and provided the OUN with ideological inspiration. In 1936, one Ukrainian writer remarked “how many little Mussolinis and little Hitlers” that Dontsov’s work had created in Ukraine.⁷⁴ While some of the older OUN generation, including Konovalets, disagreed with associating the OUN with ideologies connected to other nations, fascism was

⁷² Shkandrij, “Radio Vienna,” 135-136.

⁷³ Himka, “The Lviv Pogrom of 1941,” 222.

⁷⁴ Shkandrij, *Ukrainian Nationalism*, 44.

undeniably popular with many of the OUN's members.⁷⁵ Many of the OUN's top ideological architects referred to the OUN's ideology as being in-line with Nazism and Italian Fascism.⁷⁶

In defining fascism, Juan Linz established an extensive, detailed definition:

We define fascism as a hypernationalist, often pan-nationalist, anti-parliamentary, anti-liberal, anti-communist, populist and therefore anti-proletarian, partly anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois, anti-clerical, or at least, non-clerical movement, with the aim of national social integration through a single party and corporative representation not always equally emphasized; with a distinct style and rhetoric, it relied on activist cadres ready for violent action combined with electoral participation to gain power with totalitarian goals by a combination of legal and violent tactics. The ideology and above all the rhetoric appears for the incorporation of a national cultural tradition...⁷⁷

The ideology espoused by the OUN greatly overlaps with this definition. The first clause of the OUN's 1939 draft constitution stated that "Ukraine is a sovereign, authoritarian, totalitarian, and corporate state."⁷⁸ The OUN focused on anti-communism, ultranationalism, populism, and totalitarian leadership. The OUN supported staunch ethnic supremacy and the creation, and expansion, of a Ukrainian state. Economically, the OUN supported the establishment of nationalized heavy industry and the ownership of other industry by Ukrainian peasant committees.⁷⁹ The OUN's key beliefs were fascist in nature. The OUN's defining members

⁷⁵ Alexander Statiev. "The Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists as the Leader of a Unique Fascist Armed Resistance." In *Violent Resistance: From the Baltics to Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe 1944-1956*. Brill U Schoningh, 2020, 146.

⁷⁶ Statiev, "The Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists as the Leader of a Unique Fascist Armed Resistance," 147.

⁷⁷ Laqueur, Walter, ed. *Fascism: A Reader's Guide: Analyses, Interpretations, Bibliography*. University of California Press, 1976, 12-13.

⁷⁸ Statiev, "The Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists as the Leader of a Unique Fascist Armed Resistance," 148.

⁷⁹ "Resolutions of the Third Extraordinary Grand Assembly of the OUN (August 1943)," in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 94.

considered themselves linked geopolitically and ideologically with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. It is undeniable that the OUN was certainly a fascist party, even if it never universally identified as falling under that label.

OUN-German Relations in the Second World War

The Second World War created a new dimension for OUN-Nazi relations. The planned Nazi redesign of European borders inspired hope among OUN members, who believed they could have a chance at an independent Ukraine within a new Nazi world, while overlooking the Nazi anti-Slavic sentiments. Yet, from the outset of the war in 1939, the German government had been explicit with the OUN that they did not desire an armed OUN movement in Ukraine, whether that was in Soviet Ukraine or German-occupied Poland.⁸⁰ Simultaneously, the Abwehr under Wilhelm Canaris was making propositions to Hitler that a Ukrainian rump state be created and informing Mel'nyk to prepare his people for armed insurgency. This misleading, unclear communication frustrated the OUN and complicated their relationship with the Germans. The OUN was sorely disappointed when the base of their power, western Ukraine (at the time, eastern Poland), was left to the Soviets in the division of Poland organized by the Nazi-Soviet Pact. The OUN suffered thousands of arrests in the two years of Soviet occupation, further inspiring anti-Bolshevik ideology amongst their ranks.⁸¹ Stepan Bandera spent the early years of the war in Krakow, alongside many other nationalists, who sought refuge in the German-occupied city from the Soviet-occupied territories.⁸² Krakow became a centre for Ukrainian nationalists, something which the German administration tolerated and, to a certain extent,

⁸⁰ Paweł Markiewicz. *Unlikely Allies: Nazi German and Ukrainian Nationalist Collaboration in the General Government during World War II*. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2021, 32.

⁸¹ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 177-178.

⁸² Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 169.

encouraged, creating the Ukrainian Central Committee. The UCC was responsible for organizing Ukrainian cooperatives, youth groups, and schools throughout the General Government in occupied Poland.⁸³ The OUN perceived the Soviets as a primary enemy, and the Germans as a potential tool, in the path to independence.

In the build-up to Germany's invasion of the USSR, the OUN saw an opportunity to initiate their pursuit for independence. In 1940, the OUN became split between Mel'nyk's OUN-M faction based in Berlin and Bandera's OUN-B faction based in Krakow. In April of 1941, OUN-B hosted the Second Grand Assembly of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists that set its primary goals. OUN-B prepared to take advantage of the chaos of war to not only exert nationalist power in general, but also to hamper the influence of their rival OUN faction, about which they stated: "The action of Colonel Andrii Melnyk and his comrades is an act of sabotage against the OUN, and it seeks to smash the united liberation front of the Ukrainian people.... Colonel Andrii Melnyk ended up at the head of the OUN in an illegal manner."⁸⁴ Notably, the Second Assembly never referred to the Germans, speaking only of the hostility towards the USSR and its intention to rally fellow anti-communist nations to its cause, additionally identifying Polish oppression as an obstacle to Ukrainian independence.⁸⁵ The OUN-B silence on specific relations with the Germans was likely a pragmatic move: the Germans were the hosts of Ukrainian nationalists and OUN-B hoped their assistance would create a Ukrainian state, yet seemed unwilling to entirely tether themselves to the German state.

⁸³ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 169.

⁸⁴ "Resolutions of the Second Grand Assembly of the OUN (April 1941)," in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 78-79.

⁸⁵ "Resolutions of the Second Grand Assembly of the OUN (April 1941)," in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 72.

Both OUN factions prepared so-called “task forces” which were each composed of nationalists who would follow behind the advancing German military upon the German invasion of the Soviet Union and take control of civic administration in the western Ukrainian areas.⁸⁶ In Lviv, an OUN-B unit arrived only hours after the Germans on June 31st of 1941, led by Yaroslav Stetsko, deputy leader of the OUN-B and a close confidante of Stepan Bandera. Upon his arrival in Lviv, Stetsko organized a meeting in the building of the local *Prosvita* Society⁸⁷ where the National Assembly of the Ukrainians of Western Ukraine was convened before nearly a hundred attendees.⁸⁸ Before the assembled crowd, Stetsko, in the name of Bandera, declared the creation of a Ukrainian state. Following this proclamation, various Ukrainian religious, political, and military delegates spoke, pledging their loyalty and devotion to the Ukrainian cause.⁸⁹ Hans Koch, a professor of history, German military officer, and former member of the Ukrainian Galician Army spoke before the crowd, and appealed for the Ukrainian nationalists to work closely alongside Adolf Hitler and the German Army.⁹⁰ The assembly also issued a series of greetings to individuals and groups of merit:

Greetings to the Creator and Leader of Great Germany – Adolf Hitler.

Greetings to the Great, Invincible German Army.

Greetings to Metropolitan Andrei [Sheptytsky].

⁸⁶ Karel C. Berkhoff and Marco Carynnyk. “The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and Its Attitude toward Germans and Jews: Iaroslav Stets’Ko’s 1941 Zhyttiepyss.” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 23, no. 3/4 (1999): 149–84, 150.

⁸⁷ The *Prosvita* was a meeting place, a club, for intellectual discussion and the preservation of Ukrainian culture.

⁸⁸ “Report on the Act of Restoring Ukrainian Statehood,” in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 148; Berkhoff and Carynnyk, “The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and Its Attitude Towards Germans and Jews,” 150.

⁸⁹ “Report on the Act of Restoring Ukrainian Statehood,” in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 148.

⁹⁰ “Report on the Act of Restoring Ukrainian Statehood,” in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 150.

*Greetings to all Fighters for Ukraine's Freedom.*⁹¹

The higher German authorities responded angrily to the declaration and immediately demanded OUN-B rescind it, regardless of their pledged alliance with Germany.⁹² Bandera, Stetsko, and the rest of OUN-B refused and Gestapo immediately conducted a crackdown of OUN-B, resulting in the arrest of Bandera and Stetsko, who would be variously placed on house arrest, confinement to Berlin, or imprisonment in a concentration camp for much of the duration of the war.⁹³ Mykola Lebed assumed command of OUN-B in the absence of Bandera and Stetsko.⁹⁴

From this point onward the nature of OUN-German relations became complicated. Despite the crackdown of OUN-B in the aftermath of the proclamation of independence, the OUN-B follow-behind task forces were still able to install civic administrators throughout local occupation government with the consent of the Germans. In Galicia alone, the OUN controlled 187 of 200 raions (districts).⁹⁵ Furthering the cooperation, nearly six hundred OUN members had engaged in military collaboration with the Abwehr before the invasion, joining the Nachtigall Battalion and Roland Battalion, whom the OUN referred to as Brotherhoods of Ukrainian Nationalists.⁹⁶ These battalions, in addition to OUN collaboration in civic administration and support as translators, informers, and such, created a determinedly supportive dynamic, in the early days of Operation Barbarossa. OUN-B focused its growth on young nationalists throughout western Ukraine and operated in a semi-legal status, both preparing underground activists and

⁹¹ "Report on the Act of Restoring Ukrainian Statehood," in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 150.

⁹² Berkhoff and Carynnyk, "The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and Its Attitude Towards Germans and Jews," 150.

⁹³ Berkhoff and Carynnyk, "The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and Its Attitude Towards Germans and Jews," 151.

⁹⁴ Berkhoff and Carynnyk, "The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and Its Attitude Towards Germans and Jews," 157.

⁹⁵ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 213.

⁹⁶ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 189.

legal administrators, resulting in an opportune level of control over the region. Conversely, OUN-M focused on legal party activism and preached a stauncher doctrine of loyalty to the Germans, resulting in lesser persecution for their membership, but also increasingly lowered relevance at the political stage.⁹⁷ OUN-M did little to prepare for any armed struggle independent of the Germans, whereas OUN-B made these preparations the focus of its doctrine.

Despite the popularity of OUN-B in western Ukraine in the early days of the war, the OUN-B struggled to achieve support in eastern Ukraine as they followed the German military farther into that territory. The local Ukrainians there occasionally assumed that OUN-B activists they encountered were Polish-speaking Germans, with one schoolteacher even showing a group of children some OUN-B activists and describing them as “a remnant of Petliura’s army, a German agent,” and shouting for the OUN-B men to leave.⁹⁸ Public perception in eastern Ukraine associated the OUN with collaboration with the Germans. While the OUN attempted to portray it as a temporary alliance, the general populace cared little for such a distinction, when the outcome was largely the same to them.

In the first months of the invasion, OUN-M and OUN-B began to more thoroughly diverge from each other in their perceptions of relations with the Germans. In August of 1941, the Germans cracked down even harsher on the OUN-B membership, in response to their assassination of OUN-M members and continued disregard for German territorial ambitions.⁹⁹ Erich Koch (not to be confused with Hans Koch), *Reichskommissar* of the *Reichkommissariat Ukraine*, was reported to have stated that if he met any Ukrainian worthy of sitting at a table with

⁹⁷ Radchenko and Tauger, “The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Mel’nyk Faction) and the Holocaust,” 232.

⁹⁸ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 243.

⁹⁹ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 248.

him, he would have them shot.¹⁰⁰ By the end of 1941, the OUN-B had lost 1,500 of its membership to German arrests.¹⁰¹ Stepan Bandera's brothers, Vasyl' and Oleksandr, were both imprisoned in Auschwitz with other OUN-B members, where they would later perish. From his imprisonment, Bandera spent much of the remainder of 1941 and early 1942 attempting to repair relations with the Germans, frequently writing German leadership, such as the Reich Minister for the Eastern Occupied Territories, Alfred Rosenberg, to little success.¹⁰²

In late 1941, OUN-B propaganda began to officially condemn collaboration with the Germans, while still remaining a part of German civic administration and auxiliary units.¹⁰³ In April of 1942, at the Second Conference of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, the OUN adopted the belief that the Germans would defeat the Soviets but then lose to the Allies, resulting in a potential Ukrainian state, reliant on Allied goodwill. As such, the OUN began to pursue a doctrine disaligned from Germany.¹⁰⁴ By the end of the summer of 1942, OUN-B veered further towards a policy of anti-German sentiment. In October of that year, OUN-B released a pamphlet in which it explained its views on partisan resistance, stating that:

For more than a year the Ukrainian land has been marked by the struggle between two mutually hostile imperialisms, Muscovite-Bolshevik and German... Today we regret every person that is dying for the interests of Moscow or Berlin. True, the Germans are driving the population to despair, and it is true that we could rise up, but we know straight off how it would end today, despite the greatest heroism

¹⁰⁰ Timothy Snyder. "The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing 1943." *Past & Present*, no. 179 (2003): 197–234, 210.

¹⁰¹ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 250.

¹⁰² Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 250.

¹⁰³ Radchenko and Tauger, "The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Mel'nyk Faction) and the Holocaust," 232.

¹⁰⁴ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 260.

on our part. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists is well aware that its task as the leading element in the liberation struggle *is not to give the nation a chance to die heroically, but to achieve power in our own land and finally to become masters in that land.*¹⁰⁵ (emphasis in original)

It is apparent, then, that OUN-B viewed their primary goal as living through the invasions to, hopefully, see the creation of a Ukrainian state at some point, rather than dying in a vain attempt to expel their invaders faster. With the “Judeo-Bolshevik” Soviet Union considered the OUN’s primary opponent, the Germans were seen as a lesser threat, despite their status to the OUN clearly shifting from potential ally to likely rival.

Nonetheless, both OUN factions continued to exploit the recruitment of Ukrainians for German-led police to receive training, arms, and regional influence.¹⁰⁶ The Germans attempted to purge the police of OUN members, but were unable to completely do so, resulting in heavy OUN presence amongst the police ranks, including commandants of police training schools.¹⁰⁷ OUN-B even went as far as to attempt to have OUN-M members removed from their police roles, to monopolize infiltration of the police for their own faction. The OUN’s eventual guerrilla force, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), found many of its recruits from amongst the ranks of German auxiliary units. While certainly not all ethnic Ukrainians within the German police were OUN members, the OUN was represented throughout with high membership. Many of the collaborationist police’s actions can be considered at least partially associated with OUN ambitions and policy.

¹⁰⁵ “Leaflet: The Partisan Movement and Our Attitude to it (October 1942),” in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 160-161.

¹⁰⁶ Radchenko and Tauger, “The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Mel’nyk Faction) and the Holocaust,” 229.

¹⁰⁷ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 256.

In the first half of 1943, the OUN-B's anti-German rhetoric started to turn into anti-German action, although full detachment from Germany never occurred even into the final months of Germany's time in Eastern Europe. This decision was partly inspired by the German failure in Stalingrad which suggested that Germany would not be successful on the Eastern Front, as the OUN had earlier predicted, but rather Germany would likely lose to the Soviets.¹⁰⁸ In response to the raids of Soviet partisans into western Ukraine in the early 1943, OUN-B established its first military units, based out of Volhynia, under the name the Ukrainian Liberation Army (UVV). In the coming weeks, the OUN-B military took on the name of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), taking the name from an unaffiliated, but well-known, preexisting nationalist partisan band, who would later rename themselves the Ukrainian People's Revolutionary Army (UNRA). The OUN swiftly took over the UPA moniker and membership and purged previous UPA leadership.¹⁰⁹ The OUN thus created the UPA as an alternative to Soviet partisanism and as a means to maintain their authority in Ukraine, especially in Volhynia and Galicia. The OUN thoroughly indoctrinated the UPA members, subjecting them to education on ideological matters and cultural nationalism. At its peak in 1944, the UPA numbered some thirty thousand active partisans with the ability to mobilize tens of thousands more.¹¹⁰

The UPA focused on attacking Soviet partisans, Poles, Jewish refugees, and, later, Soviet troops, barring wider anti-German attacks.¹¹¹ While the OUN desired a focus on combatting Soviet partisans who were spreading into western Ukraine, they were compelled to permit some metric of anti-German action from the UPA, whose membership was less aligned with Germany

¹⁰⁸ Per Anders Rudling, "The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of Historical Myths." *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, no. No. 2107 (November 2011), 10.

¹⁰⁹ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 261.

¹¹⁰ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 262.

¹¹¹ Rudling, "The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust," 10.

than the OUN leadership was.¹¹² In mid-1943, the UPA had 47 clashes with German troops, and, in Volhynia, six percent of OUN-UPA leadership were killed by Germans.¹¹³ The OUN eventually ordered the UPA to engage in combat with German troops only in unavoidable circumstances or to prevent the transport of food and labourers from Ukraine to Germany.¹¹⁴ Additionally, the UPA made use of the OUN's connections to the Germans to feed them information on political rivals, including Soviet and Polish partisans, as well as traded intelligence and food for weaponry. The OUN was strategically closer to the Germans by mid-1944 than it had been in mid-1941, despite the rhetoric of both sides.¹¹⁵ This rhetoric, from the Germans, included a mass produced 1943 leaflet which claimed that "in the OUN leadership are agents of Moscow...The OUN is a tool of Jewish Bolshevism."¹¹⁶ However, in private, the Germans set out internal guidelines which outlined that the OUN "believe fanatically in the achievement of [independence], and for that reason both the Germans and the Russians are its enemies. At the present time they wish to conduct negotiations with us because they view the Russians as more dangerous enemies ... Owing to their suspect nature, joint actions with the UPA are out of the question for us in the long run."¹¹⁷ This situation led to a convoluted dynamic, exemplified by the forest outside Mizoch, where Jews would hide from Germans, who would refuse to enter the OUN-UPA controlled terrain, while the OUN-UPA simultaneously hunted the Jews hiding from the Germans to be killed regardless.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Alexander Statiev. *The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 80.

¹¹³ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency*, 81; Rudling, "The OUN, the UPA, and the Holocaust," 14.

¹¹⁴ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency*, 81.

¹¹⁵ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency*, 83.

¹¹⁶ "German Anti-Insurgent Leaflet: Moscow is Issuing Orders to the OUN (1943)," in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 422.

¹¹⁷ "Guidelines of the German Command Towards the UPA (January 1944)," in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 447.

¹¹⁸ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 383.

In February of 1943, the OUN's Third Conference made their newfound rhetoric in regards to Germany more widely known, stating that:

At the present moment Ukraine has found itself between a rock and a hard place, the two mutually hostile imperialisms of Moscow and Berlin, which treat it as a colonial object in equal measure....there is an urgent need for the Ukrainian people to wage a struggle against both imperialisms on the platform of its own forces, and to place at the base of their cooperation with other peoples their recognition of our right to our own state...in a joint struggle against German, Muscovite, and other imperialisms.¹¹⁹

The rhetoric of the OUN placed the Germans in equal measure of hostility as the USSR, even though their actions continued to show that the OUN greatly prioritized combat against the Soviets compared to the Germans. In October of 1943, the OUN furthered this process, beginning to sanitize the OUN's legacy, such as its involvement in ethnic cleansing operations and in mutual collaboration with the Germans. Documents were to be prepared and collected which "would affirm that the anti-Jewish pogroms and liquidations were carried out by the Germans themselves without the help of the Ukrainian police, and that, on the contrary, before the shootings, the Germans made the Judenrat... confirm the cooperation of Ukrainian police in the actions."¹²⁰

Notably, in August of 1943, the OUN held its Third Extraordinary Congress, where it shifted its entire political platform, in words if not deed. This congress pledged a program with

¹¹⁹ "Resolutions of the Third Conference of the OUN Leadership (February 1943)," in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 164-165.

¹²⁰ Rudling, "The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust," 14-15.

some quasi-democratic overtones, alongside the various social liberties and minority protections popular with European leftist movements.¹²¹ Pluralism and civic nationalism, as opposed to ethno-hierarchy and radical nationalism, became the supposed tenets of the OUN. It weaned off its calls for ethnic violence, despite the fact that the OUN was at the peak of its ethnic cleansing campaign against the local Polish population. The OUN was well-aware that it had an image problem, with support in local Ukrainian villages dropping and only an estimated 40% of the UPA being OUN supporters by the end of 1943.¹²² The Germans continued to be largely exempt from UPA attacks, with German soldiers typically captured and released, once deprived of their equipment, while all other targets of the UPA were brutally killed.¹²³ These new political efforts, despite unchanging actions, were intended to make the OUN appear a more appealing ally for the West, especially the United States. Rewriting OUN history would make it seem as if they had been staunch opponents of both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

OUN-M, who had largely been brushed aside as a fringe group detached from the main OUN body, continued to pursue a policy of outright German collaboration without even the pretense of a façade of resistance to the Germans, which, alongside attacks from OUN-B, resulted in their faction further shrinking. OUN-M's membership and supporters composed of a key piece of the Waffen-SS Division Galizien, formed in 1943.¹²⁴ The Red Army destroyed the division within one week of its first action on the Eastern Front, after which the division's remnants were withdrawn from the front to participate in counterinsurgency operations against

¹²¹ Per Anders Rudling, "Historical Representation of the Wartime Accounts of the Activities of the OUN-UPA (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists—Ukrainian Insurgent Army)," *East European Jewish Affairs* 36, no. 2 (2006): 163–89, 169–170.

¹²² Rudling, "Historical Representation of the Wartime Accounts of the Activities of the OUN-UPA," 170.

¹²³ Rudling, "Historical Representation of the Wartime Accounts of the Activities of the OUN-UPA," 171.

¹²⁴ Rudling, "Historical Representation of the Wartime Accounts of the Activities of the OUN-UPA," 171.

anti-Nazi resistance in Slovakia and Slovenia. Much like OUN-B, OUN-M cleansed its ethnically discriminatory language from its organization, however, OUN-M only did this postwar.¹²⁵ They continued to be isolated and removed from the core OUN body, fading into obscurity.

Despite the OUN's shifting rhetoric, its actions still indicated a willingness to cooperate with the Germans. In September of 1943, when the OUN learned of a Soviet plot to kill the Governor of German-occupied Galicia, the OUN warned him, stating that although they were not supporters of German policy in the east, they thought he was quite a good man, and that the OUN's main enemies were the Soviets.¹²⁶ In 1944, Stepan Bandera was released from his confinement in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, with the Germans seeking to exploit his more favourable perceptions of them to help keep the OUN-UPA focused on combatting the Soviets.¹²⁷ The Germans provided weaponry and funding to facilitate OUN-UPA resistance to the Soviets, and left behind supplies for the OUN-UPA when they retreated. As the Red Army took control of western Ukraine in the summer of 1944, the OUN continued to target its political and military enemies as best it could. Bandera's popularity and German imprisonment were considered ideal features for global propaganda efforts for the nationalist movement.¹²⁸ The postwar OUN seemingly learned its lesson regarding their overreliance on the Germans to assure their national independence. A 1946 OUN document issuing instructions for the Ukrainian national cause in the event of a Third World War (between the US and the USSR), stated that:

¹²⁵ Radchenko and Tauger, "The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Mel'nyk Faction) and the Holocaust," 230.

¹²⁶ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 283.

¹²⁷ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 286.

¹²⁸ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 287.

We emphasize most clearly that no one will make us a gift of true liberation in order to live freely in their own sovereign state; the Ukrainian people must achieve and build such a state with their own efforts... However, a war situation, and even the destruction of the occupier, does not entirely enable the enslaved nation to bring the liberation struggle to its natural conclusion – the construction of a sovereign state. The war between Germany and the USSR (1941-45) was only a change of occupier for a whole array of enslaved nations...the Ukrainian people must be aware of the possibility of such a scenario and therefore should not appease themselves with unfounded hopes and illusions.¹²⁹

In preparing for an eventual conflict with the Soviets, the OUN seemed more inclined to be self-reliant in these future wartime opportunities for independence, even though it continued to seek the United States, and the global West, as a benefactor. The OUN's mid-war revisions to its legacy and platform seemed to have found some sympathizers in the West. An author of a document from the Central Intelligence Agency, dated January of 1953, wrote that "the OUN has not maintained any friendly contacts with the Germans at any time...In view of [German] refusal to discuss Ukrainian aspirations for national independence, Col. Mel'nyk turned a cold shoulder to their overtures."¹³⁰ This document testifies either to profound ignorance of the CIA officers or their intentional distortion of facts in the view of justifying political support for those who could be recruited as U.S agents in the Cold War against the Soviets.

¹²⁹ "Instructions: Possible Outbreak of the Third World War (June 1946)," in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 260.

¹³⁰ Central Intelligence Agency. "CIA Information Report - Organization and Operations of Ukrainian Nationalist Organization," 1953, 1.

Popular Attitude to the OUN's Affiliation with Nazism

The OUN's connection to Nazi Germany complicated the Ukrainian population's willingness to support their cause. As the greatest authority within the OUN by 1941, Bandera remained a charismatic, populist figure in Ukrainian nationalist culture. His identity was increasingly mythicized, and he was worshipped as a guiding figure of the Ukrainian independence movement.¹³¹ Cooperation with Germany allowed for the OUN to secure some control over local administrative agencies, which, it believed, granted it powers, however limited, within much of western Ukraine. This, in turn, allowed the OUN to engage in propaganda, grassroots activism, and other efforts meant to spread its influence and grow its support base. However, this limited leverage over local administrations should be taken as a reflection of the OUN's cooperation with Germany rather than a reflection of popular support. Further, what the OUN said and what it did remained two different things. In terms of rhetoric, the OUN claimed to represent the needs of the entire Ukrainian people; its 1942 resolution on statehood pledged its revolution to respond to these needs.¹³² In reality, the OUN sought most of all the achievement of national independence at any cost but anticipated compliance with the German authorities as a necessity to achieve this end.

When Ukrainian nationalist collaborator battalions entered Lviv in 1941 in the aftermath of Operation Barbarossa, the local Ukrainian population welcomed them eagerly.¹³³ As the soldiers, dressed in German uniforms, marched into the city's market, local Ukrainians threw them flowers, genuflected to them, and cheered. It is undeniably clear that the arrival of Ukrainian

¹³¹ Yuri Zhukov. "Examining the Authoritarian Model of Counter-Insurgency: The Soviet Campaign Against the Ukrainian Insurgent Army." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 18, no. 3 (2007): 439–66, 445.

¹³² "Guidelines for the First Days of the Organization of State Life (April 1941)," in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 136.

¹³³ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 197.

nationalists, and German troops, was received well by Ukrainians in Lviv. This must be contextualized in the prior two years, which had Lviv suffering under the oppression of the Soviet Union, who had taken the city in 1939. Popular support for the OUN clearly existed to some extent in large parts of western Ukraine in these early years of the war, but nothing suggests that this popularity was dominant.

With the chaos of wartime and the overall lack of research into the topic, it is difficult to say for certain what the mood of the Ukrainian populace was in the early years of the Second World War. It is apparent that the OUN existed as one of the key underground movements in western Ukraine, certainly the only major one for Ukrainians specifically. There is no doubt that in the summer of 1941 pogroms against Jews conducted by the Nazis and OUN saw heavy support from the populace. The liberation from Soviet oppression pursued by the OUN was certainly a popular idea in western Ukraine. However, the OUN still entirely lacked any genuine popular support in eastern and central Ukraine, that is, among about 80% of ethnic Ukrainians. The difficulty is in assessing the sincerity of the support it received in western Ukraine at this point. Was the OUN genuinely popular in western Ukraine or was it merely popular as an alternative to the Soviets with people disinterested or uneasy about other points of OUN's political program beyond independence? This much is unclear and certainly requires further scholarly study. What can be concluded is that in the early years of the war, the OUN did hold popular support in most of western Ukraine, except northern Bukovina, which had belonged to Romania in 1919–1940 and Transcarpathian Ukraine, part of Czechoslovakia before 1939.

This popularity existed in spite of, and perhaps because of, OUN cooperation with Nazi Germany. As the German occupation became increasingly destructive, especially sweeping requisitions of provisions and livestock and forced labor draft to Germany, and the Nazi odds of

victory increasingly decrease, the OUN's ties with Nazi Germany became unfavourable to the local Ukrainian population. The revamping of the OUN policy was undertaken, precisely to attempt a repair of the OUN's popular, and geopolitical, support. In undertaking this, the OUN misrepresented itself as longtime rivals of the Germans, rather than avid allies.

Over the course of the 1930s and 1940s, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalist's relationship with German National Socialists was largely centered around mutual cooperation for aligned goals. However, the OUN underappreciated the Nazi emphasis on anti-Slavism and their extensive *Lebensraum* plan for Eastern European territories. This resulted in a complex relationship where the OUN and the Nazis had overlapping ambitions when it came to the genocide of the Jewish population and the persecution of the Polish population, as well as hatred of the USSR, yet diverged when it came to the topic of Ukrainian statehood. As the war developed, the OUN adopted an anti-German rhetoric, yet never fully totally broke with the Germans. The OUN always considered the Soviets their primary enemy and made use of that hostility to secure semi-favourable treatment from the Germans. As the war dragged on, the OUN relationship with the Germans became increasingly undesirable from a publicity perspective. The OUN foresaw the German defeat and adopted a plan to seek the support of the West, primarily the US, in an apparently inevitable global conflict with the Soviets which the OUN predicted would occur shortly after the Second World War. This new path resulted in the OUN adopting the language remotely resembling that of liberal democracy, even though their actions remained fascistic, and involved extensive collaboration with Germans coupled with ethnic cleansing conducted on their own initiative, which was successful enough to complicate the legacy of the OUN into the 21st century. Nonetheless, the historic evidence proves

emphatically that the OUN were supportive of Nazi Germany and remained attached to them until the Red Army expelled the Wehrmacht from all regions of Ukraine.

Chapter 3: OUN Persecution of Poles and Jews

“We will butcher the Jews, strangle the Poles, and establish a Ukrainian state!”¹³⁴

- Folk song of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists

OUN-UPA violence resulted in tens of thousands of Poles and tens of thousands of Jews being killed, with concurrent destruction of cultural and economic markers of these ethnic groups. Summer of 1941 brought forth mass antisemitic pogroms across Ukraine, notably in the city of Lviv. The pogroms of Lviv formed the core of a wider trend of antisemitic actions by the OUN, whose efforts to kill Jews was outdone only by the Nazis themselves. While violence of this sort was committed across the entirety of the Second World War, the liquidation of Poles by the OUN, and its partisan affiliate, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), peaked in 1943 and 1944. The UPA carried out village-wide massacres of Polish civilians, combined with arson and looting, across western Ukraine. The OUN-UPA saw the liquidation of the Poles and the Jews as the next step on the path towards Ukrainian statehood. These actions arose from decades of nationalist rhetoric and from exploitation of the chaos created by the war.

Interwar Ukrainian nationalism emphasized the alleged role of Jews in the failure of the attempted Ukrainian state. Various forms of propaganda held the Jews as facilitators of Polish imperialism, beacons of Russian Bolshevism, and economic drains to the Ukrainian people.¹³⁵ The OUN’s primary inspiration for their ideology was nationalist author Dmytro Dontsov, whose interwar works shaped their thought on a variety of topics. Dontsov believed that the foundation of a state was a strong, mythical literary and artistic basis, which relied on heavy emotionalism, such as that an antisemite ought to react to the sight of a Jew as a dog reacts to the sight of a cat;

¹³⁴ Rudling, “The OUN, the UPA, and the Holocaust,” 12.

¹³⁵ Berkhoff and Carynnyk, “The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and its Attitudes Towards Germans and Jews,” 155.

with an animalistic hostility.¹³⁶ However, the early OUN was not wholly antisemitic. Mykola Stsiborsky, a member of the OUN leadership, wrote in 1930 that he believed Jews could be integrated into the future Ukrainian state as strong economic proponents and be granted the ability to develop a loyalty to Ukraine, which was something they, he claimed, had lacked insofar.¹³⁷ While Stsiborsky's opinion was no doubt a minority view within the OUN, it does provide insight into the type of ideological variations that existed within the OUN's early years. This variation would disappear in the late 1930s, as the OUN became increasingly radical and specific in its antisemitism. When Stsiborsky drafted the potential, future Ukrainian constitution, at the end of the decade, Jews were excluded from receiving citizenship and subject to special laws, a clear indicator in the shifting tones of OUN's opinion towards Jews.¹³⁸ This shift in tone came as a consequence of OUN increasing affiliation with Nazi Germany, resulting in Nazi virulent antisemitism bleeding into the OUN's fascist ideology. The German occupation beginning in mid-1941 exacerbated the situation, leaving the political field open for exploitation by the OUN, whose ambitions for a monoethnic state grew increasingly stronger.

With the attack on the Soviet Union by Nazi Germany in 1941, the OUN found itself able to realize its ethnic policies. These policies were set in guidelines issued in April of 1941:

National minorities are divided into a) those that are friendly to us, that is, members of heretofore enslaved nations [and] b) those that are hostile to us: Muscovites, Poles, Jews.

¹³⁶ Shkandrij, *Ukrainian Nationalism*, 84.

¹³⁷ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 160.

¹³⁸ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 161.

With respect to a: They have rights on par with Ukrainians, [and] we enable their return to their fatherland.

With respect to b: The destruction in the struggle particularly of those who will defend the regime; resettlement in their lands; the destruction mainly of the intelligentsia, which may not be allowed into any positions, and, in general, we hamper the production of the intelligentsia – that is, access to schools, etc. For example, so-called Polish peasants are to be assimilated, making them realize, all the more so during this hot period, which is replete with fanaticism, that they are Ukrainians, but of the Latin Rite, who were forcibly assimilated. Leaders are to be destroyed. Jews are to be isolated, dismissed from positions in order to avoid sabotage – all the more so, Muscovites and Poles. If there would be an unavoidable need to leave a Jew, for example, in the economic apparatus, place one of our militia men over him and liquidate for the slightest infraction. Only Ukrainians may be heads of individual branches of life, not foreigners who are enemies.

Assimilation of the Jews is excluded.¹³⁹

OUN rhetoric avidly preached of a monoethnic nation, one detached from the historically muddled region populated by Poles, Jews, and other minorities alongside the Ukrainian population. Decades of nationalist propaganda and socioeconomic misfortune had hardened the

¹³⁹ “Guidelines for the First Days of the Organization of State Life (April 1941),” in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 146.

OUN's membership to notions of ethnic cleansing. 'Liquidation' was seen as not only a potential path forward, but the best path forward.

Pogroms against Jews in the summer of 1941 were not isolated events but rather connected to a wider trend throughout German-occupied Eastern Europe in this period. In Ukraine's case, Galicia and Volhynia especially saw a heavy anti-Jewish escalation, consisting of over 150 pogroms in the summer of 1941 alone.¹⁴⁰ These pogroms were not wholly locally inspired, but rather encouraged by the Germans, with Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA), issuing a telegram to his *Einsatzgruppen* units that instructed them to provoke and enflame anti-Jewish actions, while remaining distant enough to avoid any tangible order or promises being made to local militias.¹⁴¹ The Germans inspired and provoked anti-Jewish actions across Ukraine, although such actions were unpopular in the parts of Ukraine that had been held by the Soviets before 1939, lacking the local fascist element that they had with the OUN in western Ukraine.

The Lviv Pogrom of 1941 is perhaps the most glaring example of the Nazi-inspired antisemitic violence. German troops arrived in the city on June 30th, discovering thousands of corpses in the NKVD prisons within the city: the Soviet police executed prisoners, unable to evacuate them with the beginning of the Operation Barbarossa.¹⁴² The Germans forced Jews to exhume corpses that were then displayed publicly for the wider Lviv community to see. Families of missing victims came to seek out their loved ones from amongst the dead.¹⁴³ The angered populace associated the Jews with the Soviets, with the former having received preferential (i.e.

¹⁴⁰ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 199.

¹⁴¹ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 200.

¹⁴² Himka, "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941," 210.

¹⁴³ Himka, "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941," 211.

not exceptionally oppressive) treatment under the occupation of the latter.¹⁴⁴ Ukrainian crowds beat and robbed Jews and sometimes raped Jewish women who were often stripped in the streets.¹⁴⁵ Kristine Keren (nee Krystyna Chiger) was a young Jewish girl in Lviv when the German occupation began. When describing the arrival of the Germans during a recorded interview with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, she remarked that:

...the Germans, the...the... on the motorcycles are roaring through the... through the street, and the Ukrainians who... who were so glad that the German came [sic]. They were happy, the women, Ukrainian women were giving flowers to... to the Germans, because the Germans promised them that they will have the independent Ukraine now. This is why they were so... so happy. And the one [sic] who were suffering the most, they were the... Jews, because Ukrainian [sic] hate the Jews before the war, and did... the pogroms before the war, now they had the free hand from the Germans and they did... did a...very good job by killing and beating the Jews... I could see how the Ukrainian [sic] were hitting the...the Jewish people. The...the German didn't got involved so much, they... they left the...the bad work to the Ukrainians. And [the Ukrainians] took advantage of this and they really were... *they were terrible, they were worse than Germans.*

[emphasis added]¹⁴⁶

Among the many humiliations that the Jews suffered in the Lviv pogrom, some included crowds of Ukrainians marching Jews through the streets, forcing them to chant praises of Stalin

¹⁴⁴ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 203.

¹⁴⁵ Himka, "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941," 213.

¹⁴⁶ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Oral History Interview with Kristine Keren," 2007. Kristine is incorrect that the Germans promised the Ukrainians a Ukrainian state, this was never the case.

or sing Russian communist songs, demonstrating the presence of the Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theory.¹⁴⁷ However, there were also financial motivations at play; some pogromists stole the clothes and shoes of Jewish victims.¹⁴⁸ Over the course of the pogrom, several dozen Jews were killed, some by the mobs and some by the Germans.¹⁴⁹ The pogroms in Lviv were public, widespread events, drawing in large crowds of onlookers, with the mood jubilant (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). The pogroms in Lviv were not the only pogroms which occurred in Ukraine at the outset of the German advance into western Ukraine. Raoul Harmelin, a Jewish resident of Boryslav, recalled a concise, efficient pogrom occurring upon the German arrival to the town that ended as quickly as it began twenty-four hours later. This pogrom was conducted mostly by local Ukrainians, with some local Poles, under the guide of the Germans.¹⁵⁰ Harmelin and his family only survived through the day because a Pole they knew hid them, despite the fact he was assisting with the pogroms elsewhere. All in all, over 15,000 Jews died in eastern Galicia alone in the pogroms that occurred in summer of 1941, and thousands more died across western Ukraine in these pogroms.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Himka, "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941," 214.

¹⁴⁸ Himka, "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941," 214.

¹⁴⁹ Himka, "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941," 217-218.

¹⁵⁰ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Oral History Interview with Raoul Harmelin." With Edith Millman and Raoul Harmelin. 1992.

¹⁵¹ Lower, "Pogroms, Mob Violence, and Genocide in Western Ukraine, Summer 1941," 221.



Figure 1. *Jews in Lviv with their hands raised are beaten before a crowd of onlookers.*

(Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Leonard Lauder)



Figure 2. *A group of youths in Lviv beat a Jewish man alongside smiling adults.*

(Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Leonard Lauder)

The OUN's Ukrainian National Militia (a precursor to the UPA) served central roles in the pogroms, leading the rounding up of Jews, using their local knowledge to identify Jewish

households, and bringing Jews to German troops for execution.¹⁵² The evidence of the National Militia's involvement is overwhelming, despite the efforts of OUN leaders like Yaroslav Stetsko to claim otherwise in the postwar sphere. In June 1941, Stetsko reported to Bandera: "We are raising militia that will assist in the extermination of Jews." As he explained, "I am of the opinion that the Jews should be annihilated by applying the German methods of extermination in Ukraine."¹⁵³ Vast amounts of witness testimony exists, which identifies the militiamen by their white armbands with 'National Militia' written on them or, alternatively, their blue and gold armbands.¹⁵⁴

The pogroms themselves were remarkably well-documented, in many cases by the Germans, who videoed and photographed the acts of violence. In this footage, presumable militiamen are regularly present. Figure 3 showcases an image of such footage, where a baton-wielding man wearing a white armband oversees forced Jewish labourers exhuming bodies from NKVD mass graves. Figure 4 showcases a baton-wielding man with a white armband beating a Jew who attempts to walk away from him at another exhumed mass grave, while several German soldiers watch on passively. Both images, drawn from a longer clip of footage of the Lviv pogrom, indicate a sort of leadership taken on by the militia, and the more laissez-faire role of the Germans, which is corroborated by the evidence more broadly. While it is certainly possible that the militiaman pictured is part of a non-OUN militia organized by the Nazis, the research on the Lviv pogrom done by John-Paul Himka and Per Anders Rudling confirms that the OUN was deeply involved in the bulk of the militia present in Lviv at the time of the pogrom.¹⁵⁵ Witnesses

¹⁵² Himka, "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941," 230-231.

¹⁵³ Alexander Statiev. "The Strategy of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists in Its Quest for a Sovereign State, 1939-1950." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 43, no. 3 (2020): 443–71, 452.

¹⁵⁴ Himka, "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941," 230.

¹⁵⁵ Himka, "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941," 229; Rudling, "The OUN, the UPA, and the Holocaust," 8-9.

and survivors specifically identify the militiamen involved as having been organized by the Ukrainian nationalists.¹⁵⁶



Figure 3. *A likely National Militia member oversees the exhumation of bodies. Note the baton in his right hand and armband on his left arm.*

(Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

¹⁵⁶ Himka, "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941," 229.



Figure 4. *A likely National Militia member walks after a Jew near an exhumed mass grave, intermittently hitting him with a baton. Note the German soldiers watching on in the background.*

(Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

The Lviv pogrom serves as one of many examples of antisemitic actions conducted against the Jewish population with the involvement of the OUN. What began in mid-1941 carried on for the duration of the war. At some point, at least formally, the OUN attempted to lessen its violence against the Jewish population. In its April of 1942 Second Conference, the OUN program specified that:

Regardless of the negative attitude towards Jews as a tool of Muscovite-Bolshevik imperialism, we believe it would be reckless to take part in an anti-Jewish action at the present moment in the international situation so as not to become a blind instrument in foreign hands and distract the attention of the masses from the key enemies.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ “Resolutions of the Second Conference of the OUN Leadership (April 1942),” in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 156.

The OUN did not deny its antisemitism, however there was an attempt from the OUN leadership to moderate the acts of violence against the Jewish population. This was done in order to try and diverge its international reputation from Nazi Germany, as the war seemed to begin to turn against Germany. Despite the changing focus, OUN propaganda continued to associate Jews with Moscow's imperialism and communism, and with the oppression of Ukrainians.¹⁵⁸ Letters of support continued to be written to Stepan Bandera's German captors, pleading for release in order to continue to help the Ukrainian people fight against the Jews as alleged communist supporters.¹⁵⁹ The OUN's call for moderation in its rhetoric never impacted the antisemitism of the OUN and it continued to persecute and kill Jews throughout the remainder of the war.

The military defeats the Germans had suffered throughout late 1942 and early 1943, in addition to the clear political differences between OUN ambitions for Ukraine and German ideas about Ukraine, resulted in the splintering of relations with Germany. As Ukrainians began to defect en masse from the German police, and as support for Soviet partisans began to swell, the OUN realized it had to do something to take advantage of the situation. The establishment of the OUN's Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) in 1943, many of whose recruits were former collaborationist policemen, provided the OUN with a military force capable of the kind of grand massacres that the Germans had been organizing against the local Jewish population in years prior, with a core body having experience in conducting massacres.¹⁶⁰ For the OUN, this experience proved invaluable as they organized their continued persecution and cleansing of the Jewish populations within western Ukraine. John-Paul Himka establishes a deep body of primary sources of various origins which demonstrate that in 1943 the OUN issued orders to its internal

¹⁵⁸ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 371.

¹⁵⁹ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 232.

¹⁶⁰ Snyder, "The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing 1943," 211.

security service, the SB-OUN, as well as to the UPA, to kill any remaining Jews it encountered.¹⁶¹ These orders came from various organizational leaders, indicating that the violence against the Jewish populations were not the actions of individual partisans, but rather an intentional policy.

Despite the clear evidence that the OUN-UPA massacred Jews, certain historians, and the OUN's own postwar revisionism, point to the fact that the OUN-UPA occasionally had Jews among their partisan ranks, as evidence against allegations of OUN antisemitism.¹⁶² These Jews, however, were merely accepted because of the logistical necessity to have certain trades and professions amongst the OUN-UPA partisan bands, such as doctors and metal workers. Of the prewar craftsmen population in Volhynia, Jews represented two-thirds, making their value as labourers virtually irreplaceable, especially during wartime.¹⁶³ Their usage as professionals by the OUN-UPA did not result in them being accepted as full members of the partisan bands but rather confined to essentially forced labour roles.

In 1943 and 1944, the OUN-UPA operated hidden labour camps where Jewish craftsmen were forced to work to benefit the nationalist cause.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, the greatest rebuttal to the notion of Jews working alongside (as opposed to for) the OUN-UPA is the simple question of where any of these Jews were by 1945. The vast majority of Jewish labourers controlled by the OUN-UPA had been killed in 1944, as the Soviets approached and the OUN-UPA opted to go underground.¹⁶⁵ In one such situation in 1943, several hundred Jewish refugees had been lured

¹⁶¹ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 372.

¹⁶² Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe. "Survivor Testimonies and the Coming to Terms with the Holocaust in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia: The Case of the Ukrainian Nationalists." *East European Politics and Societies* 34, no. 1 (February 1, 2020): 221–40, 226.

¹⁶³ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 404.

¹⁶⁴ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 404.

¹⁶⁵ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 405.

out of hiding by a OUN-UPA unit's promises of fair treatment, made labourers in an OUN-UPA labour camp, and then were massacred in 1944 as the unit prepared to retreat from the advancing Soviets.¹⁶⁶ One Jewish survivor, whose father repaired weapons for the OUN-UPA at one of their camps, recounted how her and her family only escaped execution because an OUN-UPA captain forewarned them that they would be killed the following day.¹⁶⁷

By this time, German industrialized genocide had largely decimated the Jewish community. Ukrainian collaborators, and the OUN-UPA, were present through this decimation in Ukraine. However, what the OUN was responsible for itself was not the initial destruction of the Jewish population (although many of its eventual members did participate in that), but rather the hunting down and liquidation of those Jews who had escaped the German genocidal machinery. The SB-OUN zealously persecuted Jews hiding throughout their realm of influence and even issued death sentences to Ukrainians who helped Jews hide.¹⁶⁸ The OUN massacred the inhabitants of Jewish refugee camps, searched farms for hiding Jews, and lured Jews out of hiding in order to kill them.¹⁶⁹ UPA reports themselves confirm instances of massacres against Jews, with a typical occurrence involving under a half-dozen Jews captured from any given hiding place, taken into the forest, and shot.¹⁷⁰ As the Soviets advanced into Volhynia by the end of 1943, the OUN-UPA members continued to kill Jews there and in Galicia. Between Galicia and Volhynia, the OUN-UPA killed tens of thousands of Jews between 1943 and 1945.¹⁷¹ This mass killing was a high proportion of the Jews remaining in western Ukraine, estimated to be only 80,000 alive by mid-

¹⁶⁶ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 405.

¹⁶⁷ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 409.

¹⁶⁸ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 373.

¹⁶⁹ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 380-382.

¹⁷⁰ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 383.

¹⁷¹ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 241.

1943.¹⁷² Yet the Jews were not the only, nor even the main, focus of the OUN-UPA's ethnic violence in this period.

OUN rhetoric was also staunchly anti-Polish from its early days. Throughout the interwar period, the OUN perceived not only the Polish state but also the Polish populace as a whole as the oppressors of the Ukrainian people who deliberately infringed on the Ukrainian culture. This was especially the case in Volhynia, where 68 percent of the population were Orthodox Ukrainians, compared to only 17 percent who were Catholic Poles.¹⁷³ The Soviet occupation in the first two years of the war repressed the better-off residents of Volhynia, especially Poles, complicating ethnic relations. OUN-B released a 74-page manifesto in mid-1941 calling for the liquidation of "undesirable Poles, Muscovites, and Jews..."¹⁷⁴ The OUN further called for Polish peasantry to be forcibly assimilated to Ukrainian culture with the leadership and *intelligentsia* of the local Poles liquidated. The Poles were presented as colonists and imperialists who had forced their domination upon the Ukrainian people. Despite the rhetoric, the catalyst encouragement for the OUN to begin its ethnic cleansing of the Polish population in 1943 was more pragmatic. In the months prior, Soviet partisans had begun to operate in western Ukraine, especially Volhynia, leading to concern from the OUN about their potential loss of control over the territory.¹⁷⁵ This concern extended to Polish partisans as well, whom the OUN knew were operating in areas they considered Ukraine, such as Galicia. In October of 1942, the OUN wrote:

The Bolshevik partisan movement has been operating since the summer of last year; the Polish one, for the past several months... The Poles or the Bolsheviks

¹⁷² Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 242.

¹⁷³ Snyder, "The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing 1943," 202.

¹⁷⁴ Jared McBride. "Peasants into Perpetrators: The OUN-UPA and the Ethnic Cleansing of Volhynia, 1943–1944." *Slavic Review* 75, no. 3 (2016): 630–54, 635.

¹⁷⁵ McBride, "Peasants into Perpetrators," 636.

could have engaged in partisan warfare on their own territory as much as their energies permitted, and we would not be occupied with the partisan movement if their tip was not directed against us too. Stalin and Sikorski deliberately chose our lands in Volyn for this: they predicted that the Germans would be pacifying the population of those territories in which the partisan movement would be operating. Both Stalin and Sikorski wanted to protect – one of them, the Muscovite population and the other, the Polish – from the Germans’ reprisals. They wanted us, Ukrainians, to pay for their countrymen’s “strolls.” Thus, they wanted to kill two birds with one stone: to harm the Germans and to strike the Ukrainians with the Germans’ hands.¹⁷⁶

The OUN held an open opposition for the encroaching of partisans on their territory and believed, not without reason, that the actions of Soviet and Polish partisans provoked German retaliation targeting local Ukrainians. Furthermore, with the increasing skepticism among Ukrainians about prospects of the sovereign Ukrainian state promised by the OUN, the latter needed a spectacular action to attract peasants to the nationalist cause. Radical agrarian reform would be such an action. The OUN decided that it could acquire land for the reform by simple means: killing or expelling all Poles living in western Ukraine and distributing their properties among their Ukrainian neighbours. This idea received an additional impetus after the OUN leaders realized in 1943 that Germany was losing the war. They started to think about a postwar design of the borders. Poland was a member of the anti-Axis alliance and its government-in-exile announced its war aims as a restoration of Poland within its pre-1939 territories in the east

¹⁷⁶ “Leaflet: The Partisan Movement and Our Attitude to it (October 1942),” in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 160.

and annexation of German lands in the west. It never offered Ukrainians any more than an autonomous existence within the Polish state.¹⁷⁷ Britain, the main sponsor of this Polish government, could potentially support these war aims during peace negotiations pointing to the presence of a large Polish minority in the eastern part of interwar Polish territory. If this minority vanished, however, the basis for such a territorial claim would have been greatly weakened. These diverse considerations sparked extreme anti-Polish violence committed by the OUN-UPA.

The specific order to target the Polish population seems to have not initially come from the top OUN organizational command in Krakow, but rather began on the initiative of regional OUN-UPA leadership in Ukraine, no doubt inspired by the wider anti-Polish OUN rhetoric, with these regional commanders issuing instructions to willing subordinates to “liquidate” the Polish population.¹⁷⁸ OUN-UPA figures like Mykola Lebed, a key leader of the OUN in western Ukraine, issued orders to the UPA, calling for the total liquidation of Poles when the sporadic violence against Poles began in early 1943.¹⁷⁹ One UPA senior officer alleged that the commander of the UPA-North region gave him an order in July of 1943 on behalf of the OUN top leadership to cleanse all of western Ukraine of Poles.¹⁸⁰ It is clear that quite quickly the anti-Polish action was sanctioned, and encouraged, by the OUN’s top leadership. However, some OUN leaders apparently privately opposed the cleansing of the Poles, with Mykhailo Stepaniak reportedly arguing with the other OUN leaders that the cleansing made the OUN seem like “bandits.”¹⁸¹ Much like the OUN’s issuance of an order to limit anti-Jewish violence, calls from

¹⁷⁷ Timothy Synder. “‘To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem Once and for All’: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ukrainians in Poland, 1943–1947.” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1, no. 2 (1999): 86–120, 96.

¹⁷⁸ McBride, “Peasants into Perpetrators, 638;” Snyder, “The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing 1943,” 220.

¹⁷⁹ McBride, “Peasants into Perpetrators,” 637.

¹⁸⁰ Statiev, *The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 86.

¹⁸¹ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 267.

within the OUN for a limitation on anti-Polish violence were hollow and short-lived. Regardless, the OUN-UPA was fervently involved with the persecution of the Poles and the culpability for it certainly extends to the upper leadership of the OUN, even if the initial instruction for the cleansing originated more with the regional OUN-UPA leadership.

The Polish persecution's widespread nature and seemingly sudden initiation shocked the local population, Ukrainians and Poles alike. In the first days of the cleansing in late March and early April of 1943, seven thousand Polish men, women, and children were killed across Volhynia.¹⁸² According to the 1931 Polish census, the Voivodeship Wołyńskie (Volhynia) had a total population of 2,085,574, of whom a mere 346,640 were Polish, compared to 1,418,324 Ukrainians.¹⁸³ Timothy Snyder's research confirms these figures remained almost entirely unchanged by 1937.¹⁸⁴ While the population figures no doubt fluctuated in the first four years of the war, these figures nonetheless present the image that the OUN-UPA killed approximately two percent of the Polish population of Volhynia in only a few days. Over the course of 1943, approximately 50,000 Poles were killed by the OUN-UPA in Volhynia, marking nearly 15 percent of the Polish population of Volhynia massacred within one year.¹⁸⁵ The summer of 1943 proved to be the most lethal period of this cleansing. At that time, Poles were killed by the OUN-UPA in several waves, with the violence culminating in the so-called Peter and Paul Action of July 11th-12th, named after the religious holiday it fell upon.¹⁸⁶ Over a hundred towns and villages were targeted over the course of these two days with 4,000 Poles massacred. Many

¹⁸² Snyder, "The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing 1943," 220.

¹⁸³ "Second General Census of Polish Population, December 1931, All Poland." Second Polish Republic, 1931. RG-18.01.12.01.05. Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, X.

¹⁸⁴ Snyder, "The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing 1943," 202.

¹⁸⁵ Snyder, "The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing 1943," 202.

¹⁸⁶ McBride, "Peasants into Perpetrators," 640.

others would be massacred across Volhynia until the end of 1943, when the region was purged of virtually all Poles.

Much like with the killing of Jews, the persecution of Poles did not confine itself to Volhynia either and after 1943 it spread more widely into Galicia. Additional anti-Polish violence was sporadically present across western Ukraine/eastern Poland. In early 1944, for instance, an OUN report exists of the UPA liquidation of the village of Hanaczów (today Hanachiv), in the Lesser Poland Voivodeship. The report describes the liquidation concisely:

Approximately 180 Liakhs [Poles] were killed, around two hundred were wounded, and the rest were burned in a fire. Eighty percent of the village was burned. Only brick houses and the [Roman Catholic] church remained. The Liakhs [Poles] mounted great resistance: They fired from three machine guns, MPs [machine pistols], rifles, grenade launchers, and hand grenades. Many also defended themselves with pitchforks, axes, and the like. Their weapons were not captured. Everything was burned. On our side, 734 rounds of ammunition and grenades were expended. There were no human losses.¹⁸⁷

This report obviously distorts facts. The idea that the Poles, equipped with machine guns, rifles, grenade launchers, and such were unable to score a single casualty against the UPA while suffering 180 losses (and twice as many wounded) of their own is implausible. The UPA was seemingly able to light eighty percent of the village on fire, yet reportedly well-armed, defensively positioned Polish units were unable to kill any of their attackers. The report that none of the

¹⁸⁷ "Report on an Anti-Polish Operation in the Village of Hanachiv (February 1944)," in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 471.

Polish weaponry was captured suggests that this was a straightforward massacre of unarmed people.

This incident, however, does make it clear that the liquidation of the Polish villages, along with their entire populations, was a high priority. This was not the sole example of such liquidation, and further OUN-UPA reports indicate exactly how vicious the ethnic cleansing was. In early 1944, the village of Zemianok was liquidated by the OUN-UPA, for reasons explained in a brief report:

On 2nd April 1944 an oblast fighting group and the Haidamaky group, numbering fifty men, carried out an operation against the above-mentioned colony. During the operation forty Poles were liquidated and fifty-two farms were burned down.

The operation was carried out in retaliation for the attack by a Polish fighting group against two couriers who were passing through the forest not far from this colony.¹⁸⁸

Forty Poles were killed, and fifty-two farms were destroyed in retaliation for the killing of two OUN-UPA couriers, a retaliation which no doubt rings as excessive in nature. This report, and the great many others like it, give an insight into exactly how violent the OUN-UPA was towards the Polish population, perceiving it as a primary obstacle to Ukrainian statehood.

In mid-1944, the OUN-UPA issued ultimatums for Poles to leave the region or face liquidation. Many Poles opted for emigration. The OUN summarized the course of events:

¹⁸⁸ "Reports about Anti-Polish Operations in the Stanyslaviv Region (April 1944)," in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 475.

Ultimatums were issued in Bezoruky, Ostriv, Balochyn, and Zashkiv. Everywhere with complete success. Abandoned farms are going up in smoke.... Krasna Station is overflowing with Polish refugees. Every day thirty to fifty train cars depart; there is a lineup to get on the train. In the Brody area the Poles left ahead of time, and on 15 April UPA units burned down seventeen farms in the colony.¹⁸⁹

The Poles in these villages would have found it remarkably difficult to resist OUN-UPA. When the Germans declared a labour draft for the German economy, the Ukrainians who dominated local governments targeted Poles in place of Ukrainians to be deported to Germany as labourers.¹⁹⁰ This, plus other wartime circumstances, rendered many Polish villages deprived of able-bodied men, leaving villages defenceless to OUN-UPA attacks. Entire communities were decimated, tortured, and destroyed to the point of erasure.

Fierce combat occurred between the Polish partisans, components of the Home Army (Armia Krajowa) loyal to the Polish government-in-exile that operated from London, and the OUN-UPA. Some of those many Poles who fled the Ukrainian massacres enlisted into the Home Army; others joined the Soviet partisans or German police. Poles who were fleeing from OUN-UPA violence made ideal candidates for replacing the deserters from German collaborator police units. The German occupiers unleashed these new Polish police on a path of retaliation, targeting the families and villages of Ukrainians who had deserted from the police.¹⁹¹ Other Poles who had fallen in with Home Army or Soviet partisan units engaged in retaliation of their own. Over the course of the remainder of the war, Poles killed approximately 15,000 Ukrainians, most of whom

¹⁸⁹ "Fragment from a Political Report from the Lviv Region (July 1944)," in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 486.

¹⁹⁰ Timothy Snyder. *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*. 1st ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003, 261.

¹⁹¹ Snyder, *Reconstruction of Nations*, 264.

were located outside of Volhynia and Galicia.¹⁹² These massacres were never part of any deliberate policy on the part of the Polish government or any organization to cleanse the territories of Ukrainians but rather represented a more localized revenge effort rooted in burgeoning ethnic tensions.¹⁹³ These retaliations served as further incentive for OUN-UPA attacks against Polish civilians, culminating in anywhere from 70,000 to 100,000 Poles killed between 1943 and 1945.¹⁹⁴

By late 1945, the OUN-UPA had again shifted its focus to that of the USSR being the primary enemy, rendering the Poles a lesser enemy, just as they had done with the Germans and Jews previously. In October of that year, the OUN-UPA regional command in Lublin organized a negotiation with its adjacent Polish Home Army unit, both of whom were operating underground as chief disrupters to Soviet occupation. The conversation between the two sides seemed more collaborative than not, and cooperation was a frequent topic. One of the UPA representatives remarked that it was “crucial for the AK [Home Army] to prepare the general Polish population propagandistically, so that when we enter a Polish village the Poles do not act surprised, and so that they do not treat us, the UPA, with mistrust.”¹⁹⁵ The Polish representatives and OUN-UPA representatives agreed to a mutual intelligence exchange and to “prepare” their populaces to support each other against the Soviets, while they remained in secrecy underground. This tone seemed remarkably different than that of only months prior, when both sides were fiercely targeting each other. Indeed, by this point, the OUN-UPA command had issued orders to stop the persecution of Poles. In an order surrounding the planned destruction of farms of

¹⁹² Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 270.

¹⁹³ Snyder, “To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem,” 99.

¹⁹⁴ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 271.

¹⁹⁵ “Report on a Meeting Between the UPA and the AK in the Kholm Region (October 1945),” in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 499.

deported/arrested Ukrainians by the OUN-UPA (to prevent usage by Soviets), the command added an addendum which stated:

It is mandatory to burn down depopulated Ukrainian villages so that no buildings or building materials remain. Before the burning, in so far as there is a possibility, supply us with farming property from those villages (store up food and supplies, some equipment, tin-plate and boards from buildings, etc.) ... Polish villages are not to be burned. In mixed villages, burn down or dismantle part of the village that was inhabited by Ukrainians but in such a way that the Polish civilian population does not suffer. In an extreme case, individual houses or even certain parts can be left alone. Do not molest the Polish population. Infuse the action with an anti-Bolshevik, not anti-Polish, character.¹⁹⁶

Here it is clear to see that the focus of the OUN-UPA had again shifted to a primacy of anti-Bolshevik stance. One might make the argument that this arrangement was more circumstantial than ideological, with the Soviet threat causing great risk to the OUN-UPA's stability and the Home Army presenting as a mutual enemy of the Soviets. The OUN sought to limit their anti-Polish stance to seem appealing to the western Allies, who were supporting the Polish government-in-exile. Despite these sentiments and these attempts at cooperation, the OUN-UPA and Polish forces continued to operate in some form of opposition, until the dissolution of the latter.

¹⁹⁶ "Order of the OUN Leader in Zakerzonnia Against Deportations of Ukrainians (September 1945)," in Viatrovykh and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 492.

Popular Support for the OUN's Ethnic Persecution

The ethnic cleansing that the OUN conducted against the Poles and Jews would not have been possible without the mobilized support of the Ukrainian population. The popular support that existed for OUN-UPA actions against the Jews and the Poles came from decades of harsh circumstances. The ethnic prejudices, border disputes of the 1920s, the repression of the 1930s, discrimination against Ukrainians by the Polish state, Jewish overrepresentation within the political left in eastern Poland, OUN instigations, and the enflamed tensions by the Soviets and Nazis during their respective occupations all formed fierce ethnic tensions.¹⁹⁷ The Lviv pogrom is a stark example of exactly the kind of popular support that the OUN experienced in its anti-Jewish actions and the 1943 mass cleansing of Poles in Volhynia and Galicia required the certain enthusiasm of local Ukrainian villagers turning on their Polish neighbours.¹⁹⁸ Of course, there were great many Ukrainians, including influential cultural figures, who denounced the OUN's ethnic cleansings and provided whatever assistance they could to the victims of the OUN-UPA.¹⁹⁹

The origin of support for the OUN-UPA's cleansing actions is multifaceted and complicated. While ideology, a misdirected desire for revenge, and the pursuit of a secure Ukrainian state was undoubtedly motivating for some individuals, much of the OUN-UPA's civilian support during these ethnic cleansings came from individuals who found their motivation in the opportunity for material gain or to avoid retaliation against them by the OUN-UPA

¹⁹⁷ Piotr Wróbel. "Polish-Ukrainian Relations during World War II: The Boryslav Case Study: A Polish Perspective." *East European Politics and Societies* 26, no. 1 (2012): 213–35, 232.

¹⁹⁸ McBride, "Peasants into Perpetrators," 643.

¹⁹⁹ McBride, "Peasants into Perpetrators," 641.

itself.²⁰⁰ Jared McBride summarizes his point in this matter quite succinctly: “if there was a lesson that Ukrainian nationalist leaders may have learned in German service or from the Germans in general...is that it was possible to get men to kill who had no vested interest in the politics of killing.”²⁰¹

Outside of these broad generalizations, discussing the popular support for the OUN-UPA’s ethnic cleansing of Jews and Poles presents a complex task. Many of the markers that might be identified as indicating popular support for the OUN-UPA (civilian engagement in massacres, for instance) could also be presented as evidence that Nazi Germany enjoyed high levels of popular support across their occupied territories. This is, obviously, not the case. In reality, the depth of popular support for the OUN ethnic cleansing actions is difficult to ascertain. With a remarkably chaotic wartime circumstance and so many varied possible motivations, it cannot be said for sure how much true support the anti-Jewish and anti-Polish actions experienced. What is clear is that these cleansing actions do not appear to have been a major deterrent for support from the OUN’s western Ukrainian base, nor do they seem to have been entirely unpopular across western Ukraine. The Ukrainian population, for a myriad of reasons, found it easy enough to support the ethnic cleansing actions conducted against their Jewish and Polish neighbours, and the OUN-UPA was able to secure enough impromptu manpower in many western Ukrainian villages to reliably decimate vast Polish populations. And indeed, these cleansing actions were distinctly western Ukrainian. Outside of the OUN-UPA’s base of Volhynia and Galicia, no such ethnic cleansing action against the Polish population occurred. This further dissuades the notion that these cleansings maintained high popular support from the

²⁰⁰ McBride, “Peasants into Perpetrators,” 653.

²⁰¹ McBride, “Peasants into Perpetrators,” 654.

Ukrainian population at large and suggests that it was the OUN rather than accumulated ethnic tensions that were directly responsible for the massacres. As with much of the OUN's popular support, it can be answered simply: it was only popular in a geographically and circumstantially specific period.

From its inception, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists framed the problems of Ukrainian statehood as one inseparable from ethnic purity. They believed that both Poles and Jews were key groups that prevented the development of a Ukrainian state and worked against Ukrainian interests. With the chaos of the Second World War, the OUN was positioned, via the UPA, to initiate ethnic cleansing actions against the Polish population, while additionally persecuting Jews who escaped the lethality of the Holocaust. In pursuit of a monoethnic Ukrainian state, the OUN-UPA killed nearly a hundred thousand Poles and tens of thousands of Jews. Many of the OUN-UPA's membership had deep experience committing this sort of ethnic violence through previous collaboration with Nazi Germany. The OUN-UPA's mass killings of Poles and Jews were a voluntary and independent policy, disconnected from any cooperation with Nazi Germany. The killing of Poles, in fact, directly contradicted German wishes, with many Poles seeking the protection of German troops in cities against the slaughter being perpetrated by the OUN-UPA. These actions enjoyed the broad support of a non-committal ethnic Ukrainian public but only in the western regions of Ukraine. While there was some retaliation from the Polish population against Ukrainians, the scale and disorganized nature of these revenge killings were in no way equal to the well-planned and thorough killings conducted by OUN.

Chapter 4: Resistance to the Soviet Union

“The UPA is for the Ukrainian people’s total liberation from the Muscovite-Bolshevik yoke, for the construction of a [Ukrainian Independent United State] without landowners, capitalists, and without Bolshevik commissars, the NKVD, and party parasites!”²⁰²

- Leaflet of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA)

Apologists of the OUN-UPA portray armed resistance of Ukrainian nationalists against the Soviet Union during the Second World War as a heroic fight for freedom and self-determination of the Ukrainian nation. They present the OUN as a national liberation movement oppositional to a regime that undoubtedly committed many atrocities, and attribute negative interpretations of the nationalists to Soviet propaganda and misinformation.²⁰³ Once Poland fell victim to Germany and the Soviet Union, the latter was the main impediment to Ukrainian statehood. Therefore, anti-Soviet armed resistance was inevitable and became a cornerstone of OUN’s ideology. The UPA’s main combat was allegedly against Soviet security forces; as for ethnic violence it committed, the Jews were framed as allies and leaders of Soviet Bolshevism; while Poles were a privileged and oppressive minority that occupied the territory of Ukraine.

As the war progressed, the OUN-UPA increasingly had to prepare itself for armed resistance against a Soviet government which was invariably going to reoccupy the Ukrainian lands it had once held, in addition to the remainder of Ukraine which had been a part of prewar Poland. The OUN-led armed resistance lasted long after the end of World War II until it finally expired in the early 1950s. During the brewing Cold War, the anti-Soviet nature of the OUN resulted in curious international ties, including minor political support from the USA and Britain. The OUN, like most fascist movements, saw itself as an anti-communist bulwark, and it fought the Soviet

²⁰² “Leaflet: What the UPA is Fighting For,” in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 102.

²⁰³ Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 5; Hunczak, “Shukhevych and the Nachtigall Battalion: Soviet Fabrications about the Ukrainian Resistance Movement,” 2008.

regime in its earnest. However, victims of ethnic cleansing conducted by the OUN and its victims among Ukrainian civilians who disapproved of OUN by far outnumbered casualties it inflicted on the armed representatives of the Soviet regime.

When the OUN was founded in 1929, its First Congress spoke of the need to expel all occupiers from Ukrainian land.²⁰⁴ Both the USSR and the Second Polish Republic were the occupiers in mind, yet neither were explicitly named. The OUN was opposed to communism from its inception, inspired by various nationalist writers and the actions of its spiritual predecessor, the Ukrainian Military Organization (UVO). Stepan Kasiian, an early member of the OUN, wrote that the OUN's early transition to political terror in Poland was partially initiated to lure supporters away from communism, to give them an alternative strong, radical means of national struggle.²⁰⁵ The OUN's rhetoric further turned against the Soviets during Holodomor, in which millions of Ukrainians in Soviet Ukraine were starved and/or purged by the Soviet government. In 1933, OUN member Mykola Lemyk shot and killed Alexei Mailov, a Soviet consular employee in Lviv, with the blessing of the OUN leadership, in revenge for the communist oppression of Ukrainians.²⁰⁶ Furthermore, a Ukrainian communist newspaper had a bomb left at its office, both a display of anti-communist and anti-Soviet ideology.²⁰⁷

The political rise of Stepan Bandera, who joined the OUN in its early years and quickly climbed the ranks of the organization, facilitated the radicalization of the OUN. As a child, Bandera witnessed the Polish-Soviet War decimate his homeland. As a young man, he became

²⁰⁴ "Resolutions of the First Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (February 1929)," in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 57.

²⁰⁵ David R. Marples. *Heroes and Villains: Creating National History in Contemporary Ukraine*. New York; Yale University Press, 2015, 23.

²⁰⁶ David R. Marples. "Stepan Bandera: The Resurrection of a Ukrainian National Hero." *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 4 (2006): 555–66, 559; Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 104.

²⁰⁷ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 104.

influenced by the works of nationalist author Dmytro Dontsov.²⁰⁸ As Bandera's popularity and influence grew within the OUN, the anti-Soviet rhetoric grew too. In the late 1930s, in Vienna, the Nazi German-backed Ukrainian radio preached an anti-Soviet, anti-Polish, anti-Romanian, and anti-Czechoslovak doctrine, supporting the notion that all Ukrainians in these countries should be united in one Ukrainian state.²⁰⁹

These broadcasts were convenient for the Germans, who sought to undermine governments they were opposed to. The influence that Germany held over the OUN's broadcasts is clear, with the anti-Soviet rhetoric being silenced after the signing of the Nazi-Soviet pact.²¹⁰ Between 1939 and 1941, while the OUN was aligned with Germany, they were not granted permission to organize any active resistance to the Soviets in the half of Poland that they had occupied.²¹¹ Bandera's OUN faction released a manifesto in 1940, where they pledged to "[fight] for the liberation of the Ukrainian people and all peoples enslaved by Moscow."²¹² Despite their passionate manifesto, the OUN engaged in no sincere anti-Soviet combat, obeying the commands of their German benefactors. In describing the role of the OUN in the fight against the Soviets, Stepan Bandera is quoted as stating that they were "not passive observers, but active members, in the form that the German side allows them."²¹³ This meant that the OUN, in fact, were not actively fighting the Soviets, but rather side-lined by order of the Germans.

Nonetheless, the OUN's political activism stretched into Soviet-controlled eastern Poland (western Ukraine), where the OUN had always received the bulk of its support. Up until

²⁰⁸ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 106.

²⁰⁹ Shkandrij, "Radio Vienna," 122.

²¹⁰ Shkandrij, "Radio Vienna," 121-122.

²¹¹ Markiewicz, *Unlikely Allies*, 32.

²¹² "Manifesto of the Revolutionary Leadership of the OUN (December 1940)," in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 60.

²¹³ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 245.

Operation Barbarossa in June of 1941, the OUN operated in a mostly non-violent, purely activist method, as it balanced its relations with the Germans against its stated opposition to the Soviets. The OUN distributed leaflets and spread propaganda amongst the peoples of Galicia and Volhynia and passively resisted Soviet regulations. In response, the Soviets engaged in mass repression of the OUN and its supporters. In an internal Soviet security forces memorandum from spring of 1941, mere weeks before the Germans attacked the Soviets, it was decided that because of OUN actions, it was “necessary to continue arrests of the OUN members, as well as to expel families of the members of Ukrainian and Polish organizations for 20 years with confiscation of their property.”²¹⁴ On the 22nd of May, 1941, the Soviets deported over 11,000 people on the basis of connection with anti-Soviet elements.²¹⁵ The overwhelming majority of these deportations (85%) were Ukrainians who had family ties to nationalist activists.

After the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the OUN took control of local administrative positions and engaged in terror against civilians believed to be communist supporters. However, only in late 1942, when the Soviet partisans began penetrating western Ukraine and the German loss on the Eastern Front was becoming increasingly apparent, the OUN formed its insurgent army, the UPA, in preparation for the inevitable combat with the Soviets, and for cleaning of Ukraine from ethnic minorities. The UPA was moulded into a politically reliable organization, purged of the anti-OUN leadership that previously operated under the UPA organizational name. As the Soviet partisans, and the Red Army, advanced on Ukraine, the OUN-UPA reassured itself that the Soviet victory over the Germans was merely a temporary setback, and that the West would soon go to war with the Soviets, giving them yet

²¹⁴ Andriy Kohut. “Soviet Deportations of OUN Family Members from Western Ukraine in 1940–1952.” *Acta Historica Neosoliensia* 23, no. 1 (2020): 72–90, 80.

²¹⁵ Kohut, “Soviet Deportations of OUN Family Members,” 81.

another foreign benefactor to bank their hopes of independence on.²¹⁶ The important matter, for the OUN-UPA, was to remain politically relevant in anticipation of the conflict between the Soviets and the liberal democracies. Armed resistance to the Soviets would make the OUN politically relevant in that context, in the opinion of its leaders.

Ideological motivations alone did not fill the ranks of the UPA. Pragmatism and the allure of a lesser evil were strong motivators. As the Soviet forces pressed through Ukraine, men by the thousands fled from possible conscription, escaping into the forests. They, and also those who had fled from the deportations to Germany in the form of the labour draft, found themselves compelled to join OUN-UPA bands, the only viable alternative they saw opposed to fighting for a foreign occupier.²¹⁷ The OUN-UPA saw much of its manpower derived from such draft dodgers or those who had been conscripted to join the UPA. Altogether, conscripts formed the key component of the OUN-UPA.²¹⁸ This situation meant that the membership of the UPA partisan bands were not inherently loyal to the OUN's ideology, nor to the cause of Ukrainian independence. Defection to the Soviet partisans from the OUN-UPA was common. In November of 1943, an entire UPA company defected to the Soviet partisans, wholesale.²¹⁹ The relationship between the Soviet Union and the Ukrainians was not as black and white as one side versus another, but rather, involved a layered perspective. Ukrainians had been part of the Soviet Union for decades before the war and a part of the Russian Empire for centuries before that. The OUN-UPA and the Soviets were not fighting only for the territory of Ukraine, but also for the status as the legitimate authority for the Ukrainian people and culture.

²¹⁶ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 89.

²¹⁷ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 104.

²¹⁸ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 98.

²¹⁹ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 84.

When the OUN-UPA began to prepare itself for an extended guerrilla conflict with the Soviet forces as they swept through Ukraine, they released a policy for their troops describing how their efforts should be concentrated, laying out that:

2. Right now [November 1943] UPA units are faced with two immediate goals:

a) the acquisition of weapons.

b) the consolidation of our control over forests.

Means: the constant search for the enemy and strikes against him, training, additional arming, numerical increase of units. The defence of villages, peasants, [and] premises is irrelevant here. A unit can carry out such exceptional defence of individual raions or communities only with a special order from the UPA Command.²²⁰

The OUN sought to demonstrate the viability of its political ambitions and geopolitical value by engaging in armed resistance against the Soviet regime until the beginning of the next world war between the Soviet Union and the West.

The OUN-UPA continued to cooperate with the Germans who provided weaponry in exchange for the OUN-UPA attacking Soviet troops (including derailing trains) and handing over captured Soviet partisans. This sponsorship ended as the Soviets pushed the Germans further back, out of Ukraine altogether.²²¹ The OUN-UPA turned their attention to the Western

²²⁰ “Operational Order of UPA Command on the Struggle Under Soviet Occupation (November 1943),” in Viatrovykh and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 516.

²²¹ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 106.

nations (the US, the British, etc.) and sought them out as new benefactors. However; the Western intelligence agencies were interested only in information, with the British MI6 discouraging the OUN-UPA from guerrilla actions.²²² The OUN-UPA became increasingly isolated and faced competition with the Polish Home Army's in what the OUN considered Ukraine, including 6,500 troops in Volhynia alone.²²³ The Home Army fought the Germans and the OUN-UPA, sometimes alongside the Soviets, only for their units to be dissolved by the Red Army and partially integrated into the regular 1st Polish Army that operated under the Red Army's command.²²⁴ The OUN-UPA soon remained the only notable anti-Soviet guerrilla force organization left in Ukraine.²²⁵

The OUN-UPA organized itself into cells, with regional and national UPA commanders typically holding equivalent importance in the OUN.²²⁶ As political activists with minimal military experience took command of military units, their losses grew. There were instances of partisan commanders hurling UPA soldiers against well-entrenched, experienced Soviet troops with no strategy except a perceived moral righteousness.²²⁷ The OUN's political activism remained more successful than their military combat. Despite all the chaos of war, the OUN-UPA still managed to disperse hundreds of thousands of propaganda leaflets and managed to take advantage of the west Ukrainian population's anti-collectivization sentiments to make their ideology seem alluring.²²⁸ The devotion that many OUN-UPA members showed to their committed anti-Soviet fight was notable. Despite a heavy presence of conscripts amongst their

²²² Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 106.

²²³ Snyder, "To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem," 99.

²²⁴ Snyder, "To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem," 100.

²²⁵ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 106.

²²⁶ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 107.

²²⁷ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 108.

²²⁸ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 107.

ranks, the OUN-UPA also had many stories of self-sacrifice from members on the verge of capture by Soviet forces, including blowing oneself up with a grenade or fatally throwing oneself off a cliff.²²⁹

As the Soviets pushed into Ukraine and Poland, they began to work on modifying their growing Eastern European hegemony. The Soviets expanded the Ukrainian SSR by annexing lands that had previously been part of Poland, unifying Ukraine under one political entity for the first time. They further began preparing Poland to be a Soviet satellite state.²³⁰ Additionally, the Soviets orchestrated a mass resettling of peoples to make Ukraine and Poland more ethnically homogenous. Hundreds of thousands of Poles living in what became the Ukrainian SSR were sent to Poland and hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians in Poland were sent to the Ukrainian SSR.²³¹ These population transfers began in 1944, even as the Soviets were fighting the Germans, and carried on until 1947. In this way, 85% of prewar Poland's Ukrainian population found itself within the Ukrainian SSR.²³² The Soviets further interfered with the population of Ukraine by conscripting roughly 700,000 Ukrainian men into the Red Army from western Ukraine alone.²³³ Additionally, in 1944, 10,000 west Ukrainian residents fought for pro-Soviet militia, alongside the security services, with three to six times that number by 1946.²³⁴ These conscriptions and recruitments served the additional purpose of depleting the OUN-UPA's recruiting pool, though the OUN-UPA in 1944 still consisted of upwards of 25,000 soldiers, with the potential to mobilize up to 100,000.²³⁵ Western Ukraine was the centre of anti-Soviet

²²⁹ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 108.

²³⁰ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 290.

²³¹ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 290.

²³² Snyder, "To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem," 101.

²³³ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 293.

²³⁴ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 214; 127.

²³⁵ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 294.

sentiment across Soviet-occupied territories in Eastern Europe by the end of the war, as represented by the casualties suffered by the various anti-Soviet guerrilla forces across the region.

In 1944, 107,799 anti-Soviet guerrillas in western Ukraine were killed or arrested. This is compared to a combined 19,153 anti-Soviet guerrillas killed or arrested in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and western Belarus.²³⁶ Population wise, Ukraine had approximately 37,000,000 people against the Baltics and Belarus' combined approximately 11,700,000 people.²³⁷ The resulting ratios state that roughly 2.9 out of every 1,000 Ukrainians were killed/arrested as anti-Soviet guerrillas in western Ukraine, compared to roughly 1.6 out of every 1,000 residents of the Baltics/western Belarus. As anti-Soviet resistance was winding down across the rest of Soviet occupied lands, western Ukraine remained proportionally much higher in casualties, with 99.2% of all anti-Soviet guerrilla casualties in Ukraine occurring in its western regions.²³⁸ In 1945 and 1946, the OUN-UPA suffered its highest casualties with nearly 46,000 killed in 1945, dropped down to under 11,000 by 1946, and certainly continuing to drop from there.²³⁹

Beyond deaths and arrests, the OUN-UPA was further hampered by Soviet amnesties, demonstrating the pure quantity of OUN-UPA members that were conscripts, or whose ideological devotion was outweighed by a desire to guarantee their own life. From 1944 to mid-

²³⁶ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 110.

²³⁷ Valentyna Steshenko. "Demographic Situation in Ukraine in the Transition Period." In *New Demographic Faces of Europe: The Changing Population Dynamics in Countries of Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by Tomáš Kučera, Olga V. Kučerová, Oksana B. Opara, and Eberhard Schaich. Springer, 2000, 348; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. "Population of the Baltic States 1950-2020." Statista, 2019; Liudmila P. Shakhotska. "Demographic Development of the Republic Belarus." In *New Demographic Faces of Europe: The Changing Population Dynamics in Countries of Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by Tomáš Kučera, Olga V. Kučerová, Oksana B. Opara, and Eberhard Schaich. Springer, 2000, 30.

²³⁸ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 111.

²³⁹ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 117.

1946 alone, nearly 115,000 “bandit” fugitives surrendered to the Soviets in western Ukraine alone, stripping the OUN-UPA of an important manpower pool.²⁴⁰ The ratio of amnesties to guerrillas killed also presents an interesting picture. In 1944, for every 100 guerrillas killed in western Ukraine less than 28 guerrillas surrendered. In 1945 and 1946, roughly 36 and 37 guerrillas were amnestied for every 100 killed in western Ukraine, respectively.²⁴¹ As the quantity of guerrillas killed in western Ukraine sharply dropped, down 81% in 1946 from 1944, the proportion of guerrillas amnestied increased sharply, then plateaued. This suggests that the OUN-UPA’s ability to field troops against the Soviets in 1946 was impeded greatly by Soviet amnesties. Simultaneously, it is clear that the OUN-UPA’s morale was sagging, as troops in great number surrendered and defected to the Soviets. These amnesties, which were carried out repeatedly across the postwar period, sapped the OUN-UPA of both active members and potential recruits, as the Soviets pardoned not only those who had fled to avoid conscription but also active guerrillas. These amnesty statistics combined with the casualty statistics present a picture of Ukraine where anti-Soviet resistance was noteworthy enough to warrant substantial response efforts by the Soviet government. The quantity of losses and amnesties granted in Ukraine compared to those in the Baltics and other Soviet occupied territories further presents the image of the OUN-UPA as being exceptional in the scale of its anti-Soviet resistance.

The OUN-UPA took large strides to cleanse its history, in an effort to be more appealing to the wider world and to inspire support from the anti-communist West. The torment of the Polish and Jewish populations at the hands of the OUN-UPA was absent from this wartime reconstruction of events. What was highlighted, however, was the suffering of Ukrainians during

²⁴⁰ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 202.

²⁴¹ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 110.

the war. The OUN-UPA framed themselves as victims of the Second World War.²⁴² In postwar memory, the OUN leadership released memoirs and histories which overplayed the UPA's dual anti-Soviet and anti-German ideology. These memoirs and histories intentionally overrepresented UPA fighters killed by the Germans, as evidence of the OUN-UPA anti-German alignment. They additionally positioned themselves as Ukraine's defenders from Soviet oppression. These authors emphasized the OUN-UPA's pursuit of independence to make them seem increasingly relatable to the liberal democracies of the West, who found peoples pursuing self-determination in the context of the Soviet regime to be politically and culturally admirable.²⁴³ This self-cleansing, in addition to the genuine anti-Soviet resistance that the OUN-UPA was engaged in, created a perception of fervent freedom fighting, without the separate pieces of cooperation with Nazi Germany and ethnic cleansing of Poles.

This revision of facts worked well for the OUN-UPA, with a 1951 Central Intelligence Agency memorandum regarding the OUN stating that:

The Germans used all means necessary to force the cooperation which the Ukrainians were unwilling to give. Thus by summer 1941 a battle raged on Ukrainian soil between two ruthless exploiters and persecutors of the Ukrainian people, the Third Reich and Soviet Russia. The OUN and the partisan arm it created in late 1942, the URA [*sic*], fought bitterly against both the Germans and the Soviet Russians.²⁴⁴

The document further explains that, because the OUN targeted those who were pro-Soviet, the American government has made no attempt to disband its operations in West Germany. The

²⁴² Rossoliński-Liebe, "Survivor Testimonies," 226.

²⁴³ Rossoliński-Liebe, "Survivor Testimonies," 227.

²⁴⁴ W.G. Wyman. "Vasyl Gogosha and the OUN/Bandera," May 23, 1951. F-2021-00927. CIA.gov, 3.

OUN-UPA claimed to have killed over 35,000 members of the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) and Ministry of State Security (MGB) in the years since the end of the Second World War.²⁴⁵ This figure is not credible. Archival research suggests that the OUN-UPA killed only approximately 5,000 Soviet soldiers, police, and militia (across all organizations) in its peak of 1944-46, with less in the subsequent years.²⁴⁶ They killed many lower-ranking civil servants but most of all west Ukrainian peasants whom they suspected, rightly or wrongly, of collaboration with the Soviet administration. Nonetheless, the perception of OUN-UPA effectiveness remained pertinent in the minds of the organization's contemporaries, regardless of its on-paper results. One Soviet veteran, Boris Kravitz, had initially joined the Red Army in 1944 before joining the MVD in late 1945. Kravitz reported that "after the [Second World War] we had to fight more than during the war. I had only been in the war for 8 months. And after the war ended we were sent to liquidate bandit groups until '50. We stayed [at] war for 5 more years."²⁴⁷ Kravitz further reported that in his MVD academy class of 150, eighty were killed in combat across 1947, 1948, and 1949. In arguably its most effective action, the OUN-UPA assassinated Soviet General Nikolai Vatutin in March of 1944.²⁴⁸ UPA partisans ambushed Vatutin, one of the most talented Soviet commanders, while he was driving through western Ukraine and mortally wounded him; he died of his injuries shortly afterwards.

In response to the fierce resistance to Soviet occupation, the authorities began mass deportations of Ukrainians, similar to the deportations of the early 1930s but much larger in

²⁴⁵ Wyman, "Vasyl Gogosha and the OUN/Bandera," 3.

²⁴⁶ Alexander Statiev. "The Strategy of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists in Its Quest for a Sovereign State, 1939-1950." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 43, no. 3 (2020): 443–71, 466.

²⁴⁷ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Oral History Interview with Boris Kravitz," 2012.

²⁴⁸ Yuri Tys-Krokhmaluk. UPA Warfare in Ukraine: Strategic, Tactical, and Organizational Problems of Ukrainian Resistance in World; Society of Veterans of Ukrainian Insurgent Army, 1972, 297.

scale. Between 1944 and 1946, Soviet sources indicate some 36,000 people were deported from Ukraine. The Ministry of State Security reported that “expulsion of families of the OUN members and bandits proved to be a rather effective method of combating the OUN resistance.”²⁴⁹ Between the 21st and 26th of October 1947 alone, the Soviets deported over 77,000 western Ukrainians, well over half of whom were women and children under fifteen, for supposed familial ties to the OUN.²⁵⁰ Rather than undermining the OUN-UPA, as the authorities initially believed, the deportations served only to provoke further conflict. Writing to Nikita Khrushchev, then First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party, the Deputy Minister of State Security for Ukraine wrote that “after the expulsion of families of bandits and nationalists from the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR, Ukrainian-German nationalists sharply intensified their bandit activities, primarily seeking to disrupt the party and the government’s collectivization initiatives and preparations for the election to the councils of workers’ deputies.”²⁵¹

The targeting of the Soviet’s collectivization efforts was a cornerstone of the OUN-UPA’s postwar resistance. As combat with Soviet troops directly proved wasteful of both manpower and resources, the OUN-UPA instead targeted weaker features of the Soviet administration. They threatened farmers and villagers, prohibiting them to cooperate with the Soviets.²⁵² The OUN-UPA targeted collective farms and destroyed farms whose owners they perceived to have aligned themselves with the Soviets. In this, the OUN-UPA killed not only the Soviet administrators, but also those perceived as Soviet supporters. The Soviets, in turn, did

²⁴⁹ Kohut, “Soviet Deportations of OUN Family Members,” 83.

²⁵⁰ Kohut, “Soviet Deportations of OUN Family Members,” 84-85.

²⁵¹ Kohut, “Soviet Deportations of OUN Family Members,” 85.

²⁵² Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 128.

their best to enforce collectivization across the newly acquired western Ukrainian territory they had taken hold of, with a much greater ability to wait out the OUN-UPA than vice versa. This end-stage of the OUN-UPA's anti-Soviet resistance rendered them increasingly ineffective. They lacked the ability to organize substantial guerrilla resistance to the Soviets and increasingly lacked the ability to even target rural infrastructure. In 1952, the OUN published its Decisions of the Conference of OUN Leadership, which stated, quite begrudgingly, that "as a result of such mass, protracted, and frequent actions, the Bolsheviks have managed to achieve some successes in the struggle against us."²⁵³ The OUN-UPA units were ordered to remain underground and continue to wait for a hopeful war against the Soviets by the West. The focus of the OUN shifted away from outright partisan resistance towards underground subterfuge. Mykola Lebed, a leader of the OUN, made a deal with the CIA which offered access to the OUN's intelligence networks and military capabilities to be directed against the Soviets as the CIA desired, in exchange for American support.²⁵⁴ Such an offer was apparently so contentious within the OUN that it led to Lebed firing a gun at Bandera during an argument, and Bandera authorizing Lebed's assassination (which never came about).²⁵⁵ This arrangement, while seemingly useful, was slowly rendered impotent by continued OUN-UPA losses and less immediately confrontational relations between the USSR and USA.

In 1950, Soviet security forces killed and ambushed Roman Shukhevych, the commander-in-chief of the UPA.²⁵⁶ This coincided with the beginning of the end for the OUN-

²⁵³ "Decisions of the Conference of the OUN Leadership (May 1952)," in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 270.

²⁵⁴ Burds, Jeffrey. "The Early Cold War in Soviet West Ukraine, 1944–1948." *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, no. 1505 (2001), 16.

²⁵⁵ Burds, "The Early Cold War in Soviet West Ukraine," 16.

²⁵⁶ Burds, "The Early Cold War in Soviet West Ukraine," 37.

UPA, whose capabilities increasingly depleted over the course of the early 1950s. By the mid-1950s, the UPA was largely destroyed and the faint remnants of the OUN's network remained only outside of the Soviet Union. Various émigré groups tied to the OUN appeared across the world, but the OUN itself faded away. Mykola Lebed emigrated to the United States by the end of the 1940s, engaging in such émigré work. In 1959, Stepan Bandera himself was assassinated in Munich, where he had lived for years, by a KGB agent via potassium cyanide poisoning, presumably under orders of Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev.²⁵⁷ The loss of the OUN's key leadership to combat, emigration, and assassination rendered the organization severely weakened. By the end of the 1950s, the Soviets put the final nail in its organizational coffin.

Popular Support for the OUN's Anti-Soviet Actions

The OUN can be said to have experienced popular support in the mid-1940s, at the height of the war in Ukraine. This support, according to OUN apologists, came from its heroic anti-Soviet resistance inspiring the local Ukrainians. However, this support was not as authentic as it may seem. The OUN proclaimed itself for the Ukrainian people, in opposition to its invading enemies. Local Ukrainians supported the OUN as an alternative to the oppression of foreign invaders. The OUN believed it would hold this popularity as its struggle for national liberation extended over the course of years.

This, however, was not the case. Even as early as 1944, OUN regional leadership believed that 90% of the Ukrainians in western Ukraine were neutral to the OUN.²⁵⁸ One OUN member was quoted as saying in 1947 that “the population looks at us as if we’re sentenced to death. They sympathize with us but don’t believe in our success and don’t want to tie their own fate to

²⁵⁷ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 347, 348.

²⁵⁸ Statiev, *Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 127.

ours. The majority of the population, particularly elderly persons, would like to live in those conditions like [we have] now, but only so no one troubled or disturbed them.”²⁵⁹ As the Soviets gained control over Ukraine, they supplied schoolteachers, doctors and nurses, engineers, and more drawn from eastern Ukraine.²⁶⁰ Communist propaganda was spread and returnees from forced labour in Germany were, generally, reintegrated back into Ukrainian society, despite being branded as traitors. The greatest loss of OUN popular support came from peace and from its inability to fend off foreign occupiers. The OUN’s appeal was largest only when Ukrainians felt the most threatened. As the immediate threat to their lives faded under the auspices of peace and integration into the Soviet Union, affiliation with the OUN became one of few things liable to risk a Ukrainian’s life.

The overzealous nature of the OUN’s security service, the Sluzhba Bezpeky (SB), was a key reason the OUN lost popular support in its fight against the Soviet Union. Founded in early 1939 by the OUN-B, the SB was analogous in many ways to the early NSDAP’s *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD). In addition to policing, intelligence and counterintelligence duties, the SB was responsible for the protection of OUN leadership.²⁶¹ The SB held a wide mandate to persecute communists, rival fascists (both OUN-M and German), Poles, Russians, disloyal Ukrainians, and others.²⁶² Much like the SD, the SB had minimal oversight. Only the SB itself, and OUN top command, was able to discipline its rank, while holding authority over the lives of virtually everyone

²⁵⁹ Jeffrey Burds. “AGENTURA: Soviet Informants’ Networks the Ukrainian Underground in Galicia, 1944-48.” *East European Politics and Societies* (Berkeley) 11, no. 1 (1997): 89–130, 102.

²⁶⁰ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 294.

²⁶¹ Marta Penkal’s’ky. “Activities of the Sluzhby Bezpeky of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists: Myths and Reality.” *Ukrainian Catholic University*, 2021, 10.

²⁶² Penkal’s’ky, “Activities of the Sluzhby Bezpeky,” 11.

else.²⁶³ This circumstance, unsurprisingly, permitted widespread violence against individuals guilty of everything from clearcut treason to the movement, to merely being family of a UPA deserter, to simply being deemed “spineless” by a local SB officer.²⁶⁴ Even OUN-UPA members feared the SB. In November of 1943, for instance, the SB shot 24 members of a single UPA company to prevent their potential desertion.²⁶⁵

When the Soviets reoccupied Ukraine, the SB’s violence against Ukrainians increased immensely in response. Hundreds of civilians and UPA partisans were killed on the slightest suspicion for connection to the Soviets, the faintest indicator of disloyalty to the OUN, or familial relation to someone purged by the SB.²⁶⁶ Peasants who complied, under force or otherwise, with Soviet grain requisitions were considered traitors. One leaflet distributed in 1946 by the OUN across western Ukraine read: “Soon the Bolsheviks will conduct the grain levy. Anyone among you who brings grain to the collection points will be killed like a dog, and your entire family butchered.”²⁶⁷ The same logic was applied to peasants who were unable, or unwilling, to follow OUN directives. In one 1946 case, the SB killed a Ukrainian who sold milk to a Soviet policeman.²⁶⁸ In 1945, in Volhynia, the SB has been estimated to have killed as many as 1,000 UPA members.²⁶⁹ One OUN regional commander informed his superiors that political activism was useless in areas where the SB operated, as they turned the local population against the nationalist movement.²⁷⁰ Roman Shukhevych was reported as saying after the Soviet

²⁶³ “Guidelines for the Activities of the OUN’s SB (December 1944),” in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 379.

²⁶⁴ Penkal’s’ky, “Activities of the Sluzhby Bezbecky,” 36-37.

²⁶⁵ Statiev, *Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 84.

²⁶⁶ Statiev, *Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 129.

²⁶⁷ Burds. “AGENTURA,” 109.

²⁶⁸ Statiev, *Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 131.

²⁶⁹ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 301.

²⁷⁰ Statiev, *Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 129.

reoccupation of western Ukraine that “[the] OUN should destroy all those who recognize Soviet authority. Not intimidate but destroy. We should not be concerned that people might damn us for brutality. Nothing horrible would happen if only half of the 40 million Ukrainians survived.”²⁷¹

The widespread violence directed against the Ukrainian population inevitably contributed to the loss of popular support OUN held in the early 1940s. In some cases, the OUN-UPA directed collective punishment against entire Ukrainian villages.²⁷² By the beginning of 1945, the SB formally outlawed collective punishment but violence against Ukrainian civilians and partisans alike remained widespread by the SB.²⁷³ In 1946, an OUN partisan captured by the Soviets was made to recount his crimes before a gathering of local Ukrainian peasants. Enraged at what he had done, the peasants killed the captured partisan on the spot, before subsequently denouncing several pro-OUN villagers to the present Soviet authorities.²⁷⁴ Between 1944 and 1946, the OUN-UPA killed just over 11,000 Soviet activists, of whom more than 6,000 were local Ukrainians.²⁷⁵ By the end of the OUN-UPA conflict with the Soviets, the former had killed twice as many civilians (20,000) as Soviet agents (10,000).²⁷⁶ If the OUN truly held popular support in its conflict with the Soviets, the SB would not have been so paranoid about disloyalty amongst local Ukrainians, nor so violent towards civilians and OUN-UPA members alike. This cycle of violence spiralled the loss of popular support for the OUN. The less loyal the populace was to the OUN, the more widespread OUN violence became. The more widespread OUN violence became, the greater lack of loyalty became among the local populace. Violence directed against

²⁷¹ Statiev, *Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 131.

²⁷² Statiev, *Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 131.

²⁷³ Penkal's'ky, “Activities of the Sluzhby Bezbekey,” 39; “Guidelines for the Activities of the OUN’s SB (December 1944),” in Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 380.

²⁷⁴ Burds, “AGENTURA,” 98.

²⁷⁵ Burds, “AGENTURA,” 109.

²⁷⁶ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 307.

civilians only turned this apathy into antagonism, into cooperation with the Soviets and acceptance of Soviet rule.²⁷⁷

Of course, the Soviets committed mass atrocities and oppression against the Ukrainian population itself in much greater quantity than the OUN-UPA ever had the manpower to do. Deportations, killings, population transfers, and more all marked the early Soviet rule. 490,000 Ukrainians suffered a mixture of these fates by 1953.²⁷⁸ However, these oppressive acts were in addition to the reintroduction of social services and administrative development. The Soviets offered what the OUN-UPA could not: stable government and relative peace, although with many unattractive strings attached. The OUN and the Soviets offered the same metaphorical ‘stick’ to the Ukrainian population, yet the OUN alone lacked the ability to offer any ‘carrot’ in return. Popular support for the OUN’s fight against the Soviets was greatest during the harshest wartime period, when peace felt distant. As the OUN’s ability to create an independent Ukraine or resist foreign invaders dwindled, and the Soviets became the default authority in Ukraine, popular support for combat against the Soviets dwindled as well.

From its inception, the OUN framed itself as a bastion of anti-Soviet resistance. Typical of fascism, the OUN considered communism its greatest enemy. They sought to undermine Soviet control of lands they considered Ukrainian and took advantage of the chaos of the Second World War to engage in conflict with the Soviet Union. The actions organized by the OUN-UPA, while often heroic, were still far less impressive than supporters of the organizations depict. The quantity of civilians killed by the OUN in western Ukraine hovered in the low thousands in the

²⁷⁷ Penkal’s’ky, “Activities of the Sluzhby Bezbeke,” 39.

²⁷⁸ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 307.

postwar era while the casualties incurred by Soviet troops increasingly fell lower and lower.²⁷⁹ While the OUN's anti-Soviet efforts were genuine and emphatic in the mid-to-late 1940s, there is no doubt that the majority of the OUN's existence was not focused on combatting the Soviet security forces. Rather, the OUN-UPA continuously focused itself on civilian-targeted violence. This violence was intended to target the weaker aspects of society, those with which the OUN-UPA could deal with under minimal risk. This includes Polish, Jewish, and Ukrainian civilians perceived to be align against the OUN cause. Combat with the Soviet security forces peaked in the mid-1940s. This period of resistance was genuinely impressive, with tens of thousands of OUN-UPA partisans fighting against an encroaching Soviet Union. This resistance began to crumple under Soviet occupation, with OUN-UPA partisans defecting and receiving amnesties from the Soviets or dying in combat. The OUN-UPA continued to hedge its interests in the hope some foreign power would be able to successfully invade the USSR, while also allowing for the creation of a Ukrainian state. As postwar legacy was shaped by Cold War geopolitics, the OUN-UPA was able to secure vague sympathy among Western democracies. Its struggle was exemplified in the writings of émigré apologists, who created works which focused on the OUN-UPA's fight against Soviet security forces. While there is no doubt the OUN-UPA engaged in virulent anti-Soviet efforts, it is unreasonable to claim, as some authors do, that such a fight was a primary focus of the organization.

²⁷⁹ Statiev, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, 125.

Conclusion

In January of 2010, Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko named Stepan Bandera “Hero of Ukraine,” an award that was revoked by the Donetsk regional court three months later because, according to the law, this title could be awarded only to a citizen of Ukraine, and Bandera had never been such.²⁸⁰ Furthermore, he had never been to Soviet Ukraine and spent only a couple of weeks in western Ukraine immediately after it had been occupied by the Red Army in September 1939. Unlike many top OUN leaders— all of them odious persons who, however, fought Soviets for years and in the end died as resistors to foreign occupation — Bandera played no direct role in anti-Soviet resistance. His main deeds were confined to Pieracki’s murder and compiling the infamous guidelines in April of 1941 that OUN faithfully followed during pogroms targeting Jews several months later and during wholesale slaughter of Poles in 1943. The debate over Bandera, and the broader OUN legacy, is largely inclusive of the questions answered through this thesis: Did the OUN mostly collaborate with or resist Nazi Germany? Did the OUN focus on ethnic cleansing or anti-Soviet resistance? Did the OUN’s actions maintain the popular support of the Ukrainian population? In Ukraine, the legacy of the OUN is divided, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine further complicating the identification of national heroes; framed as a valiant resistance movement, the OUN are treated as heroes by its sympathizers.

In 2012, the debate over the OUN’s legacy was reignited in North America. Per Anders Rudling wrote an open letter, condemning the North America university speaking tour of Ruslan Zabily.²⁸¹ Zabily, at the time a non-academic historian and Ukrainian museum curator, has organized extensive apologia for the OUN. The museum he runs minimizes the perpetration of

²⁸⁰ Goncharenko, “Stepan Bandera: Hero or Nazi Collaborator?,” 2022.

²⁸¹ Per Anders Rudling. “Ukrainian Ultrnationalists Sponsor Lecture Tour Across North American Universities.” Searchlight Magazine, November 1, 2012.

atrocities against Jews and Poles during the Second World War and instead focuses on the persecution of Ukrainians by the Soviets. Quite literally, Zabily's museum has erased Jews from historical imagery they have on display.²⁸² What Rudling objects to is the populist nature of Zabily's work, which frames Second World War Ukrainian nationalism as something for the people, by the people, and in defense against foreign tyranny. In response to Rudling's objection to Zabily's speaking tour, an open letter was published, signed by various Ukrainian activists from Canada. This letter claimed Rudling's words bordered on hate speech against Ukrainians and accused him of lacking common sense.²⁸³ This controversy demonstrates the complexity of examining the OUN. As an issue steeped in contemporary political debate, the topic of the OUN remains clouded by ideological bickering. In Ukraine today, the OUN sees some resurgent support in both scholarly and mainstream spaces.

Generally, sympathizers of the OUN argue several key points. First, according to them, the OUN staunchly resisted Nazi Germany. Second, the OUN allegedly focused on combatting the Soviets; they downplay or deny OUN massacres of Polish and Jewish civilians. Finally, they argue that the OUN held the support of the Ukrainian population. This thesis has demonstrated that these claims are not grounded in the historical realities. The OUN engaged in deep, extended cooperation with Nazi Germany. This cooperation involved geopolitical connections in the prewar years as well as heavy OUN membership in collaborator militia and police formations, with cooperation between the two groups up until Nazi Germany left Ukraine altogether. While the OUN did engage in virulent anti-Soviet resistance, this was greatly outshone by its ethnic cleansing of Poles and Jews and terror against fellow-Ukrainians who rejected OUN's agenda.

²⁸² Rudling, "Ukrainian Ultrnationalists Sponsor Lecture Tour Across North American Universities," 2012.

²⁸³ "Canadian Missile Lands in Sweden." Canada. *Defending History*, October 11, 2012.

With tens of thousands of Poles and thousands more Jews killed by the OUN and the UPA, ethnic cleansing was a focal priority of the OUN.²⁸⁴ Popular support for the OUN peaked in the mid-years of the Second World War but quickly eroded upon Soviet occupation of Ukraine.

The misrepresentation of the OUN's history persists in the OUN's legacy to this day, where figures like Bandera have become resurgent national heroes within Ukraine and the Ukrainian diaspora. Persons sympathetic to the OUN whitewash the OUN's connection to Nazi Germany, downplaying or denying their collaboration. Taras Hunczak wrote that the OUN's relationship with the Germans was no different than the United States or Britain allying with the Soviet Union during the Second World War.²⁸⁵ Hunczak's argument neglects the ideological differences between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies, compared to the ideological overlap between the OUN and Nazi Germany. Hunczak additionally claimed that the OUN merely took advantage of Germany, in an effort to advance its own territorial goals. While this much is true, the OUN served German ideals long after it was apparent that the Germans would not be serving their ideals in return, to the detriment of many Ukrainians.

Lubomyr Luciuk further writes that those who deem the OUN “a rag-tag assemblage of fascist collaborators, bandits, war criminals, and the like, an extremist minority of predominantly right-wing fanatics whose overall record of words and deeds must be condemned,” are generally Soviet historians, or these days agents of the Russian Federation, in addition to a “coterie” of academics who have a distaste for nationalism.²⁸⁶ This characterization presents the critiques of the OUN as ideological in nature; either pro-Russian or excessively anti-nationalist. While

²⁸⁴ Per Anders Rudling. “The Cult of Roman Shukhevykh in Ukraine: Myth Making with Complications.” Brill, May 26, 2016, 44.

²⁸⁵ Hunczak, *Problems of Historiography: History and Its Sources*, 132.

²⁸⁶ Viatrovych and Luciuk, *Enemy Archives*, 3.

Luciuk openly acknowledges that some OUN members were involved in some collaboration, he seems to underwhelm the relationship with Nazi Germany as being sometimes individualistically cooperative, but organizationally hostile, which this thesis has established was not the case.

In addition to revision about its relationship with Nazi Germany, the OUN and its sympathizers muddle its involvement in ethnic cleansing and genocide. From late 1943 and onward, the OUN began collecting, and retroactively creating, documentation that would present a version of events where the Germans were the sole persecutors of Jews in Ukraine and that no Ukrainians, not even the Ukrainian collaborator police, committed acts of violence against the Jewish people.²⁸⁷ The OUN sought to create a cleaner legacy devoid of any ethnic persecution. This revision has echoed in the diasporic and native Ukrainian scholarly communities, where certain historians deny that there was ever an organizational UPA order to cleanse the Jewish and Polish populations or argue that the killings were part of an equally lethal conflict between Ukrainians and Poles in general.²⁸⁸ These arguments fall short of evidential reality but remain prominent in certain spheres, important to the populist narrative. Decades of postwar revision by apologists in the Ukrainian diasporic communities as well as by some Ukrainians still living in Ukraine has complicated the otherwise clearcut evidence of OUN involvement with Nazi Germany, as well as with the ethnic cleansing and genocide of Poles and Jews.

In many respects, parallels exist between the OUN's popular support during its lifetime and the resurgent approval for the OUN in Ukraine today. The OUN peaked in popularity when it demonstrated resistance to those foreign actors who threatened Ukrainians. Today, it has become

²⁸⁷ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Survivor Testimonies and the Coming to Terms with the Holocaust in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia*, 226.

²⁸⁸ Katchanovski, Ivan. "Ethnic Cleansing, Genocide or Ukrainian-Polish Conflict? The Mass Murder of Poles by the OUN and the UPA in Volhynia." SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 3158052. Social Science Research Network, April 24, 2014, 6.

popular again as a symbol of resistance to Russian expansionism. Volodymyr Kravchenko writes that between 2014 and 2015, the percentage of the Ukrainian populace who support recognizing the OUN-UPA as fighters for Ukrainian independence increased from 27 to 41 percent.²⁸⁹ Furthermore, in 2016 Moscow Avenue in Kyiv was renamed after Stepan Bandera, a clear indicator of Bandera, and the OUN, holding newfound importance in Ukrainian national identity.²⁹⁰ Even prior to the Russian invasions of Ukraine, the OUN-UPA legacy was divisive in Ukraine. When UPA commander Roman Shukhevych was posthumously granted the title of Hero of Ukraine in 2007, UPA veterans marching in the streets brawled with Red Army veterans, while right-wing nationalists and anti-Shukhevych counter-protesters brawled alongside them.²⁹¹ This geopolitical relevance and the societal divide surrounding the OUN complicates any historical assessment.

As Ukraine strives to distance itself from Russian culture and Russian history, certain individuals contort organizations such as the OUN to idealize their distinctly Ukrainian identity. This pursuit for national identity in addition to the OUN's postwar revision creates a circumstance where the historical realities of the OUN can be dismissed in favour of a more acceptable history. This complication has only increased exponentially since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, with a growing push in Ukraine to celebrate parts of its history which present as anti-Russian. In the case of Shukhevych, for instance, those who celebrate him as a soldier for Ukraine's independence remain silent on his direct responsibility for massacres of Poles throughout 1943-44.²⁹² As the OUN increasingly regains prominence in the modern

²⁸⁹ Volodymyr Kravchenko. "Fighting Soviet Myths: The Ukrainian Experience." Harvard Ukrainian Studies, 2015.

²⁹⁰ Kravchenko, "Fighting Soviet Myths," 2015.

²⁹¹ Rudling, "The Cult of Roman Shukhevych," 29.

²⁹² Rudling, "The Cult of Roman Shukhevych," 46.

Ukrainian cultural landscape, it is imperative that the realities of its ideology and actions are clearly articulated, to prevent misplaced glorification and idolization. The unprovoked aggression of Russia that has itself gradually evolved into a fascist state, should not absolve Ukrainian fascists of the gruesome crimes they have committed. This thesis counters this trend by offering arguments that momentary scholarly opportunists and passionate journalists posing as historians would find hard to dismiss.

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