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The article examines how interpretations of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army have changed in the period of Ukraine's independence. By examining narratives from a wide-ranging selection of Ukrainian media, as well as school textbooks and other writings, the author asks whether scholars' perspectives on the war years are as distorted as they were in the Soviet period. Has the former Soviet narrative been replaced by a nationalist one, at the expense of historical accuracy? Have the events in question become too politicized and too divisive to deal with?

Keywords: *Ukraine; Red Army; insurgents; history; memory*

This article examines interpretations of the topic of Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) as constituents in the process of constructing a national history in Ukraine and in particular the changing interpretations of this organization in Ukraine.[1] Several introductory premises need to be stated. First, the goal was not to determine factual truth per se but rather to analyze the prevailing narratives. Second, included here is a sampling of newspapers of different political perspectives and readership published in the period from the late 1980s until the early twenty-first century from different geographical regions of Ukraine, as well as journals, scholarly works, and contemporary textbooks. Third, no organization is monolithic or static, and OUN and UPA were not exceptions. Conceivably, also, it might have been possible to focus solely on the OUN or one of its branches (Banderivtsi or Melnykivtsi), or even to look at the UPA without the antecedent of the OUN.[2] However, the tradition of Soviet historiography was to treat the organization as one entity, and historians and government leaders of contemporary Ukraine follow that same practice. Thus, we will adhere henceforth to the acronym OUN-UPA, with the understanding that in so doing there is a tendency to simplify the nature of this political and military formation.

The subject matter is as controversial today as it was shortly after the end of the Second World War. It is a topic that continues to divide Ukraine, as exemplified by a recent survey, which indicates a geographical split in attitudes toward OUN-UPA: the most favorable are people in the western regions and the least well disposed, those in the far east and south. The *Kyiv Post* in the spring of 2008 included two editorials criticizing Yad Vashem for what it saw as an undocumented attack on

UPA leader Roman Shukhevych and demanded that his status as a hero of Ukraine be revoked. The editorials maintained that Yad Vashem had been influenced by Soviet propaganda against the insurgents.[3] We have also witnessed unseemly clashes between former Red Army and UPA veterans in the streets of Kyiv at a ceremony commemorating the anniversary of Victory Day. In western Ukraine, statues of Bandera and other nationalists can be found in most major towns. At least one scholar—Omer Bartov in his book *Erased*—maintains that the rewriting of history on this part of Ukraine is an insult to the memory of Jewish victims of the Holocaust in Ukraine.[4] And yet history is constantly rewritten because it forms the backbone of state ideology and the construction of a nation. Ukraine is no exception to this generalization.

My focus is on several key events that have elicited the most discussion in recent years, beginning with the formation of UPA. I ask several questions: In what ways has the interpretation of OUN-UPA changed since the late 1980s? To what extent has one form of propaganda—the Soviet—been replaced by another, which is very supportive of the insurgency of the OUN and the UPA and identifies it with the current independent Ukrainian state? In what way has this modern "nationalist" narrative created heroes from the wartime OUN and the early UPA insurgency? Are there common themes in this "hero creation"? Have myths been created about UPA warfare itself? In turn, how have these new narratives been accepted by the current government of Ukraine, which seeks a national history that is notably independent of Russia and thus readily accepts a version of the war years hitherto confined to the Ukrainian diaspora in the West? Modern Ukraine is a state of more than forty-five million inhabitants. Is it possible for narratives that deal with a relatively small part of the Ukrainian state—Galicia and Volhynia—to prevail as the guiding narrative telling the story of a long liberation struggle against the Soviet Union (and, to some extent, the German occupants) culminating in the formation of the independent state of 1991? While all modern nations embrace historical myths about the past, Ukraine is a case in which there are conflicting interpretations that serve to divide the population along regional and historical lines. In turn, these divisions serve to impede the process of nation building and the creation of a common and widely acceptable historical memory.

The Late Glasnost Period

Though the later years of the Gorbachev administration in the Soviet Union witnessed a reassessment of Stalinism similar to that of the Khrushchev era, the insurgency of OUN-UPA in western Ukraine over the years 1942 to 1953 remained more or less a taboo subject. The insurgents were labeled "bourgeois nationalists" and described as the "worst enemies of the Ukrainian nation," traitors who fought against their own people and in collaboration with the German invaders. The portrayal

was typified by the book of historian V. Cherednychenko, *Natsionalizm proty Natsii*, one of the basic Soviet texts of the 1970s.[5] The era of Glasnost brought only tentative amendments to this perspective. Even two decades later, P. Maksym'yuk and G. Slyvka, making reference to a 1988 book by the polemicist Klym Dmytruk—author of numerous derogatory works on OUN-UPA and the Ukrainian Catholic Church—agree that Ukrainian nationalism was "the enemy of the Ukrainian people, a servant of German Fascism." They approve of the way Dmytruk debunks the myths propagated by Ukrainian émigré historians about the OUN's quest for Ukrainian independence.[6] Also typical were demands for extradition of insurgents now living abroad for alleged war crimes. One such example was that of OUN member Ivan Stetsiv, a native of Canada, reportedly a member of the German-backed police, and responsible for the deaths of several local pro-Soviet activists as well as twenty-one Polish families.[7] The usual practice was to inform a local village assembly of the atrocities carried out, after which the assembly demanded the extradition.

In 1989, *Pravda Ukrainy* published a series of articles on the Bandera movement, which investigated both the early years of the OUN and the UPA insurgency. Having condemned OUN's earlier leaders Evhen Konovalets' and Andrii Mel'nyk for "personally" shooting Kyiv workers in 1918, it accuses the nationalists of the OUN of participating in pogroms in L'viv after the German invasion of the summer of 1941.[8] The writers selectively employ documents to demonstrate atrocities of OUN-UPA in western Ukraine, particularly innocent victims such as old women and children, under the close supervision of the German occupation forces. The authors also acknowledge that many OUN members were "simple, honest people" who had been "duped" by their leaders.[9] The ostensible purpose of such a remark is to explain to the readers why so many people in western Ukraine appeared to sympathize with the insurgency in the later years of the war and early postwar years. The campaign against OUN-UPA also required emphasis on the cruelty of their deeds, particularly on individual examples extracted from the general conflict between the various forces. According to one account, the methods used by the insurgents exceeded those of the Germans in brutality. Before killing their victims, it was pointed out, they would poke out their eyes, cut off their noses and ears, torture them using electric currents, and bury them alive or throw them into wells.[10]

The effectiveness of Soviet propaganda about OUN-UPA is hard to measure. But as late as 1991, a date when the press was relatively open, there were still letters appearing in the press about "nationalist crimes." A typical example came from the Cherkasy region in the form of a letter to the weekly *Visti z Ukrainy*. Its author pointed out that issue 48 from 1990 had examined the horrors of the Stalin period, "which was all well and good." But, he wanted to know, why was there nothing about the atrocities of the Banderites against their fellow Ukrainians in western Ukraine?[11] In his article published in July 1991, V. I. Maslovs'kyi writes that there was a deep political confrontation in western Ukraine from 1944 to 1952. On one side was the majority of population, the interests of which were protected by the

Soviet state under the leadership of the Communist Party and Soviet organs. This sector fought for the final destruction of Nazism and now wished to overcome the political and psychological repercussions of the war. On the other side stood the Ukrainian nationalists and various sorts of German collaborators, organized in military formations and later in an underground army. They fought fiercely against the Soviet state and its people. The peak of this confrontation occurred from 1944 to 1947. Today, the author writes, as new conceptions of many historical events are devised, political forces in western Ukraine are changing the narrative. Destructive, ultra-radical forces disguised as democrats not only declare their heritage in the nationalist formations of the past but also create new organizations for young people. They attempt to rehabilitate OUN-UPA, deny its collaboration with Nazi Germany, and either keep silent about the crimes of the Banderites or present them as inevitable sacrifices for freedom. They sing the praises of these same people as national heroes and erect monuments to the leaders of the OUN. Nationalist ideas appear on the pages of newspapers, and all the so-called nationalists, as well as remnants of nationalist formations abroad, call the national movement of the 1940s "the national liberation struggle."[12]

Maslovs'kyi's article is an indicator of the limits to a revision of views by 1991. Clearly by the end of the Soviet period, the OUN-UPA was still widely treated as a treacherous and collaborative body that had committed war crimes in Ukraine. The very terms *Banderite* and *OUNite* were considered the worst of epithets outside Galicia and Volhynia, the former Polish territories of Ukraine. Conversely, the memory of OUN-UPA in émigré Ukrainian circles was quite different: one of heroism against enemies who were far more powerful, as it fought a dual battle against the forces of Hitler's Third Reich, on one hand, and the Soviet Red Army and police forces on the other. Over the past decade what may be termed the heroic conception of OUN-UPA, prevalent among these western circles and perpetuated by the selections of documents in series such as *Litopys UPA*, has gradually come to displace the one-sided and partisan Soviet perspective, though it has been a difficult evolution, not least for historians in contemporary Ukraine.[13]

How the UPA Was Formed

The creation of the UPA has been dealt with in detail by the American political scientist John A. Armstrong, who perceives its formation as a direct response to Soviet Partisan raids into Volhynia led by Sydir Kovpak, starting in the late summer of 1942. By the winter of this year, the Germans had begun a counterattack, accompanied by ruthless measures against communist supporters and the local peasantry. By early 1943, Armstrong notes, OUN-B decided on a full-scale insurgency, with two main bases in Volhynia. Close to the town of Rovno (Rivne), there were two main OUN groups: one under Kruk, backing the OUN-B, and close by, and working

with it, another group under an OUN-M commander called "Khrin." Several other small groups operated in this area, and the concept of a single command emanated from Taras Bul'ba-Borovets', leader of the original UPA. By the spring of 1943, the situation became exacerbated with new Partisan raids from Kovpak, following orders from Moscow.[14] Armstrong notes that the negotiations among the OUN-B, OUN-M, and Borovets' were unsuccessful, and the former began to seize control of the resistance movement.

The OUN-B commander, Dmytro Klyachkivs'kyi, expropriated the original name UPA, which was already well known to the local population. The key military leader from Nachtigal, Roman Shukhevych, also arrived in L'viv in the spring of 1943 and was appointed commander of the OUN-B insurgents. In July and August, to ensure its supremacy, the OUN-B had begun to attack units of the OUN-M and those following Borovets', with the latter fleeing to Warsaw. Armstrong believes that the suddenness of the defeat of these forces and the triumph of the OUN-B were results of the former groups not wishing to fight their compatriots and cause the outbreak of a civil war. He also attributes the results to the stronger organization of the OUN-B. By the autumn of 1943, it basically occupied the rural regions of Volhynia and southwest Polissya.[15] Quite clearly then, the UPA emerged from an organization of the same name in the spring and summer of 1943, clearing the area not only of rival Ukrainian groups but also—as noted below, though curiously not by Armstrong—of the local Polish population.

Yet the formation of UPA, according to its participants and supporters, dates from October 1942. Historian Viktor Koval' outlined the official version of its formation in Ukrainian academic circles in 1996. Koval' maintains that in April 1942 the Bandera wing of the OUN organized the Second Conference of OUN Independent Statehood Supporters, at which it appraised the Soviet–German war as essentially a struggle of two imperialist powers based in Moscow and Berlin for dominion over Ukraine. At that time, the OUN believed that the Germans would win this war and therefore adopted the policy of opposition to Hitler. Such a policy was predetermined in part by the Germans' refusal to countenance an independent state in L'viv in June 1941. A regional war would be fought, after which the OUN might extend its influence to the rest of Ukraine. The first two "hundreds" (cavalry units of 130–200 troops) were created in Volyn' region in October 1942, reportedly to protect local residents from terrorist bands from the Polish underground—the Armia Krajowa—as well as Soviet Partisans. The first sustained activities began in March and April 1943. Discipline was said to be exceptionally rigorous, with punishment administered by the security service (Sluzhba bezpeky) on behalf of both the OUN and the UPA. The UPA was divided into three territorial-operative groups, UPA-North, UPA-West, and UPA-South, and its first commander was Klyachkivs'kyi ("Klym Savur").[16]

Writing a few years earlier, V. P. Troshchyns'kyi suggests that if the UPA formed as a response to Germany's nonrecognition of the "Akt" of 30 June 1941, then it would logically have been established in that same year. In fact, he declares, the first

armed units were founded only in the spring of 1943, and they were created to fight the Bolsheviks rather than as a response to localized terror in Volyn' and Polissya. He believes that initial orders were given to Borovets', who ran the so-called Polis'ke Sich, to put together a nationalist army in the spring of 1943 and direct it against Soviet Partisans concentrated in the Polissyan forests. After November 1943, Borovets' was isolated as the Germans made a separate agreement with the OUN-B to incorporate his (Borovets') band into a new unit run by the OUN, under the general umbrella name of the UPA.[17] Another, more recent source (echoing Armstrong for the most part) explains that a negotiated agreement between Borovets' and the OUN-B was later violated by the latter, which disarmed units affiliated with both Borovets' and Mel'nyk, murdering some of the commanders of these units.[18] According to an overtly hostile source, the historian Wiktor Poliszczuk, the decisive event in the formation of the UPA was the German defeat at Stalingrad, after which OUN-B recognized that Germany would eventually lose the war. In the hope that the Western allies would create a second front in the Balkans, OUN-B thus resolved to establish its own force in an effort to control western Ukraine.[19]

In his 1999 book on Ukraine in the Second World War, Mykhailo Koval' comments that the basis of the national armed formations of OUN were the rebel formations established in the forests of Volhynia and Polissya by Borovets' and called UPA. Many officers who had been part of the Ukrainian battalions Nachtigal and Roland, which accompanied the German army into western Ukraine in the summer of 1941, took part in its creation. Subsequently it attracted a large number of volunteers who were trained by the OUN, and in October 1942 a united rebel army under Klyachkivs'kyi (Klym Savur) was established along with the SB (*Sluzhba bezpeky [Ukrainian]* or Security Service) military intelligence unit. However, he maintains, the initial operations were on a limited scale, and the UPA leaders were careful to avoid German garrisons, dedicating most of their activities to the single cause of preventing a new "Bolshevik occupation." Local divisions and individuals did conduct spontaneous attacks on German forces. After the end of June 1943, when Germany removed the Waffen SS and police forces from Ukraine, the UPA activities began to expand.[20] The overall picture then suggests first of all that the main body of the OUN-B-UPA forces was formed in the spring of 1943 and that it was an anti-Soviet formation that occasionally resisted the Germans as well but avoided a sustained conflict with the Wehrmacht, perhaps in the knowledge that the principal contest would inevitably be with the incoming Soviet forces.

There is similar controversy over the size of the insurgent army. The detailed 1991 article by Maslovs'kyi cites figures of 40,000 men in 1943–44 (from the *Encyclopedia of Ukraine* published in Paris in 1980) and 80,000 with 20,000 sympathizers in early 1944 and support from 100,000 in the OUN underground (from émigré UPA historian Petro Mirchuk). He adds that careful analysis leads to the conclusion that in early 1944 the UPA comprised about 90,000 fighters.[21] Writing in 1997, Kul'chyts'kyi cites German estimates from 1944 that the UPA numbered between

100,000 and 200,000 but notes that Soviet figures were lower, at 90,000 to 100,000. Ukrainian nationalist sources, in turn, he observes, have mentioned a figure of 30,000 troops. The numbers are difficult to determine, in his view, because of UPA's peasant composition and the combination of armed resistance with daily life in the villages. However, according to NKVD documents from February 1944 to December 1945, the Soviet organs had killed 103,000 insurgents and captured 127,000, while 50,000 had surrendered voluntarily—a total of 230,000.[22] The same author, writing two years later, states that the UPA was formed from late 1942 and within a year had 40,000 members.[23] Thus, there would logically have to have been a massive rise in numbers over the next two years to reach the figure of a quarter of a million men. Furthermore, an army of such size would hardly constitute a partisan or guerrilla force since it would be impossible to conceal such numbers of troops, even in the forests. What seems to be the case is that the population of entire villages has been included in the overall totals of OUN-UPA membership, giving rise to the suggestion that the two units had overwhelming support in western Ukraine.

Personalities and Heroes

To reverse the Soviet perspective of the armed insurgency, nationalist historians have produced new narratives that describe the bold and heroic deeds of individual members of the UPA troops. This device has been consistently employed in the nationalist as well as the non-nationalist media of Ukraine in the independence period. The ostensible goal has been to add OUN-UPA members to a pantheon of local heroes, appending to the list of Bohdan Khmelnyts'kyi, Ivan Mazepa, and Symon Petlyura the names of Yevhen Konovalets', Roman Shukhevych, and Stepan Bandera, and a host of lesser figures, all of whom are said to have had as their primary goal the attainment of an independent Ukrainian state.[24] Such articles date from the first months of Ukrainian independence. They include the story of Yaroslav Halashchuk, a former member of an UPA hundred who spent forty-four years in hiding, after concealing himself in his sister's house in 1948, and avoiding the MGB (USSR Ministry of Sate Security) by hiding in a closet.[25] Another "hero" was Petro Fedun, a native of the town of Brody and former member of the Red Army who later fell into German captivity. In 1943 he joined UPA, losing his brother, a fellow member in 1946, and witnessing the deportation of his parents to Siberia. Under the pseudonym Petro Poltava, Fedun became one of the main ideologues of the underground, counteracting the figure of the "new Soviet man" with the Ukrainian patriot, who knows and is proud of Ukraine's past and for whom the highest principle is "the good of the nation."[26]

More common were tales of the heroism of UPA members and conversely the crimes and general moral degeneracy of their Soviet opponents. An article about the UPA fighter Petro Saranchuk, for example, notes that the first drunken people he

ever met were "Soviets." Saranchuk was earmarked for forced labor in Germany but escaped from the train and joined the UPA in the forest, even though he was only fourteen years of age. The young conscript organized teenagers from neighboring villages, and convinced them to steal weapons from the Germans. Later, while imprisoned in the Gulag—having been arrested by the NKVD in 1946—Saranchuk was reportedly among the organizers of a rebellion in the camp at Noril'sk.[27] The legendary UPA insurgent, Roman Riznyak-Makomats'kyi, together with a companion, disguised himself as a Soviet officer sometime in late 1945 or early 1946 and held up a staff car containing the head of the Drohobych MGB, Saburov. Saburov's life was spared in return for a box of secret documents. In 1948, however, Makomats'kyi was ambushed by the MGB and incarcerated. Allegedly his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment at the behest of his former captive Saburov.[28] The Makomats'kyi story is somewhat unusual in that the MGB representative appears to have a human side. However, the stories vary, and occasionally one reads of UPA members who were not heroes and even vacillated in loyalty between UPA and the authorities, such as Luka Pavlyshyn, who initially had opposed the OUN policy of terrorism in interwar Poland and was later accused of collaboration with the Soviet forces. Accused by nationalists of betraying the location of UPA leader Roman Shukhevych, Pavlyshyn was arrested by the Soviet authorities a week after Shukhevych's death and imprisoned in the Gulag.[29]

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

forests in the following year, after which the Yaniv forests were declared a scientific reserve. The article claims that P'yasets'kyi's initiatives irritated the Germans, and thus they arrested him. He was executed together with ninety-nine other hostages in retaliation for the murder of a German police officer.[31]

A fairly typical and better known story is that of Ivan Klymiv-Lehenda, a native of the village Sol'tsi (Sokal' District, L'viv Oblast), who became an OUN member after entering the law faculty at L'viv University. During the Polish pacification campaign, Klymiv was arrested in his native village in September 1930 and "cruelly beaten" by police and gendarmes. In 1932, he was rearrested and given a six-month prison sentence. In 1933, he was sentenced again. In 1936, he began to train OUN members and took the name "Lehenda." Imprisoned following a trial of forty-two Ukrainian students in Luts'k in 1937, he was freed when war broke out. He organized the evacuation of Ukrainians from Soviet to German-occupied Poland and was a close collaborator of Stets'ko in the summer of 1941. The story continues to relate how he saved Jews and spread the OUN network into eastern Ukraine. He was arrested by the Gestapo in December 1942 and killed shortly afterward.[32] In a subsequent article on the same subject, the same author adds to the biography of Lehenda, noting that in 1935 he spread the OUN's network into Volhynia, as a result of which he was arrested in Luts'k in 1937. During his work in Soviet-occupied Poland, he was responsible for the evacuation into German-held territory of businessmen, priests, lawyers, and writers, and he maintained close contacts with Metropolitan Andrii Sheptyts'kyi in Krakow. When war broke out, he led mobile groups into eastern Ukraine, managing to evade arrest for some time by establishing friendly relations with Slovak officers. As with several other nationalist heroes, the story is of a figure who initially seems to have been prepared to cooperate with the Germans (moving people into the German-occupied zone is clear evidence that the Soviet Union was considered the hostile power) but eventually fell foul of them and suffered death as a result.

Occasionally there are attempts to reconcile the two visions of the war years in Ukraine. Nina Romanyuk specifically focuses on Ukrainian women in the OUN and UPA. She asks whether the Kharkiv nurse working for the Red Army knows that while she carried out her daily work at the front, somewhere far away in Volhynia friends of her age were dying in a different war. They died in disgrace, cursed and forgotten for decades, but all the same young, naïve, and committed to their motherland, albeit a different one. She asks whether that same Kharkiv nurse would be aware that young Ukrainian girls took care of wounded men in the underground hospitals of UPA, risking their lives, daily and hourly, just like she did. The names of these UPA nurses are not imprinted on memorials, and traces of their graves have long since been obliterated by tractors and bulldozers. Someone might erect a cross to commemorate them, but it would be destroyed again and again. Their photographs remained in the archives of the MGB, along with laconic inscriptions such as

"sentenced" or "killed in the bunker." The author then provides several biographical accounts of UPA women whom she found in the MGB archives. Included among them is that of Nadiya Borodyuk (born 1921), who heard about the OUN from her brother in 1936 and began to read the Decalogue and underground literature, though she did not formally participate in any organizations. She was very much affected by the NKVD massacres of prisoners in western Ukraine prior to the Soviet retreat from the Germans. In March 1942 she came into contact with the OUN and was ordered to organize a women's network in the district. She left her autobiography in a bunker, with the last entry dated 19 January 1948. On 12 March 1949, the note was found in the bunker by the NKVD after its inhabitants had all been killed. Romanyuk also relates the stories of other women killed in postwar conflicts with the Soviet security forces, including one who collected linen for the insurgents, a typist of the local OUN branch in Hirka Polonka, Luts'k region, and the owner of a house who provided a bunker for the insurgents.[33]

In some reports, the hero figure is forced to serve two masters and most often joined the UPA before being drafted into the Red Army. One case is that of Kostyantyn Oksenyuk, who was forced to join the UPA after an UPA representative arrived in his village and demanded that every family should send one representative to the insurgents. During his time in UPA, Oksenyuk reportedly was engaged in fighting the Germans on eight different occasions. Meanwhile, Soviet Partisans attacked the village of Huta Lisovs'ka and beheaded several villagers, demanding to know where "Banderites" were hiding. The same village was later destroyed by the Germans. In spring of 1944, as the front moved to the west, Oksenyuk returned to his village and was drafted into the Red Army, serving in a punitive battalion before he returned home in 1946. He was arrested on suspicion of supplying food to the "Banderites" and was tortured by the NKVD. On one occasion near his village, Oksenyuk was obliged to bury slain insurgents in a common grave at Kolky cemetery. After the war, he worked on a collective farm but was never able to shake off the accusations of being linked to the insurgents and was unable to acquire the status of a war invalid.[34] Likewise, Ivan Ivanych joined the UPA as an eighteen-year-old to avoid being sent for forced labor in Germany. In October 1943 his unit was attacked by German forces and Ivanych made for his native village. Three months later he was mobilized into the Red Army. However, in 1947 he was arrested as a former insurgent, despite the fact that he held Soviet military decorations.[35]

Creating Myths about UPA Warfare

Alongside the individual heroes, popular discourse in western Ukraine on the independence period in Ukraine has centered on UPA warfare as a liberation struggle, of heroes fighting oppression, of selfless warriors prepared to give up their lives for the cause of an independent Ukraine. The prelude to this sort of writing is found in

the chronicles of UPA warfare by Petro Mirchuk and Lew Shankowsky, published in the West, with many of the latter's works republished in the late Soviet period in the journal *Ratusha in L'viv*. One critic notes that Shankowsky's accounts should be categorized in the realms of fantasy because he describes UPA actions in locations far distant from the location of the insurgents—Odesa, Donbas, Kryvyi Rih, and others.[36] Furthermore, though the totals suggested above indicate heavy UPA losses in the conflict with Soviet forces, many of these accounts present stories of heavy casualties for the Soviets and minimal ones for the insurgents. One describes, for example, an ambush of Soviet forces near Rushir, organized by Myroslav Symchych (Kryvonis), which reportedly trapped an NKVD unit and killed some four hundred of its troops in the ensuing battle. The insurgents in question had formed a base in the forests near the village of Kosmach, which became unofficially known as Bandera's capital.[37]

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

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

In the novel, the hero joins the OUN at the age of seventeen and takes part in stealing the printing press of a German office—already it seems the Germans were the enemy. In 1943, Symchych, our hero, joins UPA, which is portrayed primarily as an anti-Bolshevik force that includes members of different national groups. The insurgents, writes Andrusyak, were moved by a knightly spirit "that helped them to fight an armed enemy, but urged them to treat humanely an enemy without weapons." Symchych, however, would show pity on an adversary if he revealed himself as a brave and skilled warrior. Ultimately, the UPA was destroyed because of the numerical superiority of the enemy and a massive network of informers.[38] The ingredients of the myths of the UPA warrior are thus all present, idealism, self-sacrifice, bravery, and valor, and the links among medieval heroes, Cossacks, and the insurgents are clearly delineated.

Another more lengthy but typical example is the portrayal of Vasyl' Sydir (Colonel Shelest), a UPA commander in Galicia. In April 1941, Sydir became a member of the OUN Provid (leadership body) after the Second Congress of the OUN-B and was given the assignment of creating professional UPA units in Volhynia. He was also founder of schools for UPA officers: two in Volhynia and one in the Carpathians. By 1946, the UPA had become a popular force in western Ukraine according to this account because of Soviet repression using mass terror and abuse of the local population. The NKVD tried to change the popular mood by

forming fake units of the UPA security service, the SB, which was made up of MGB agents and Soviet Partisans and which robbed the population, raped the women, and executed civilians. The author, however, also obfuscates the issue by noting that he once disguised himself as an NKVD officer on a mission to a city. There are some other characteristic trends evident in this series of articles about Shelest: the UPA managed to subvert several NKVD agents, all "Jews who betrayed secrets for money." The author claims that secret documents reveal that by 1946, "Moscow" had losses of 15,500 dead and 47,000 wounded, including sixty-two colonels. This information was derived from a Colonel Dorofeyev and is allegedly secret and not to be found in any archives. The account closes with a graphic description of the death of Sydir-Shelest in combat with the NKVD in April 1949, one that the author had not personally witnessed![39] Myths, legends, and reality are all intertwined in the stories of UPA's heroism.

One account offers a retrospective conceptualization of Ukrainian history: "We were insignificant people, but we were aware that the cruel enemy Bolshevik was walking on our land, trampling down with his leather boots everything that was dear to us." The NKVD men, even in appearance, are portrayed as monsters. On one occasion cited by this author, the UPA member Taras was visiting the author's family, and—alerted by a treacherous neighbor—the NKVD raided the house. Taras escaped but the author's sister was taken in reprisal, and the family never saw her again. Each Christmas the family would pray for the sister's return, for the protection of the Ukrainian people and the insurgents, and for all those struggling against "the hateful communist regime."[40] Martyrs are commonplace in the narratives of UPA–NKVD warfare. They include the story of the UPA unit in the village Medvezhe, Drohobych region, in 1944, when NKVD troops surrounded the house of UPA members: the brothers Lyalyuk. The insurgents burned compromising literature and, after a brief but intense battle, blew themselves up.[41] In Mykolaiv district of L'viv region, the local UPA hundred was led by Ivan Pankiv (Yavir) and reportedly destroyed an NKVD unit in 1945, killing twenty-two people. This unit, it was reported, would repeatedly raid Ukrainian villages, looting and raping the women. During the skirmish, two prisoners were taken, and one was crying, "Kill me, I am Russian!" However, the UPA troops did not kill the prisoners. On 4 May 1950, the account continues, Yavir's bunker was destroyed by the NKVD, and the last bunker in this district fell on 22 July 1950.[42]

Occasionally, the narratives take on elements of stark realism, rendering the accounts very valuable in terms of ascertaining the precise nature of the conditions during the prolonged warfare. An interview with a former UPA insurgent, Mykhailo Zelenchuk, is a case in point. He starts with a description of a winter's sojourn in the bunker. For several months the insurgents did not venture outside, receiving information about world events from a radio. It was a difficult time, he recalls, but they were motivated by the notion of attaining an independent Ukraine. He comments on the hopes of the OUN in 1941 that the Germans would grant independence to Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic states. The arrests of Bandera and Stets'ko as well

as the executions of several hundred rank-and-file nationalists deprived them of any illusions. His statement that the UPA never carried out forced mobilization of the population and that every member was a volunteer is somewhat less convincing. He cites confrontations with Red Army soldiers who were rather reluctant to fight. UPA troops and Soviet soldiers would pass each other without firing. The Soviet authorities, however, developed quite a successful counterinsurgency through a developed network of agents and secret informers.

The Soviet side also tried to discredit the reputations of leading insurgents, sowing discord and suspicion within UPA ranks. There were also public displays of violence, such as an insurgent with a rope around his neck being dragged by a horse until his neck was broken. As a result, many peasants agreed to cooperate with the authorities, but others continued to supply the insurgents with food and clothing. By early 1950, Zelenchuk continues, the informers' network was so extensive that the UPA could no longer eliminate individuals through acts of terror. His unit was often forced to resort to different methods to deal with traitors. In one village, for example, they discovered that the local priest was informing for the MGB. The insurgents confronted him and offered him a choice: immediate execution or confession in front of the villagers. The priest confessed and betrayed the location of the radio set through which he kept in touch with the MGB. Several days later, the authorities arrested the priest for losing the radio set and gave him a ten-year prison sentence. Zelenchuk also maintains that in 1948 the MGB resorted to methods of biological warfare. According to his account, an informer supplied insurgents with clothing infected with typhoid lice. He was infected himself and even made a deathbed confession of his sins to his sister. However, though all the insurgents in the bunker became ill, none died.[43]

A second example of "realist" narratives is an overview of the book "Thousand Roads" by Mariya Savchyn, who took part in various underground activities, along with her husband Vasyl' "the Orlan" Halas, deputy leader of the Zakerzonnya division of the OUN.[44] Savchyn was born in the village of Zadvir'ya (L'viv region), and at the age of fourteen she joined the youth faction of the OUN. She evaded death numerous times, leaping from trains, escaping through windows, and taking refuge in a bunker that was surrounded by NKVD troops. Because she survived in miraculous fashion, she decided it was her duty to maintain the memory of the liberation struggle, especially its final phase. While providing a detailed description and some documentary activities of OUN actions, she tried to depict the mood and the atmosphere of the struggle.[45] She describes her companions in meticulous detail, even though she often knew them only by their pseudonyms. Most attention is devoted to the final years of the campaign, when special troops and agents of the Soviet security forces were hunting down the remaining insurgents, who in turn by this time were often exhausted and in poor health. Orlan and Mariya Savchyn were finally captured in 1953 with the assistance of former insurgents. By this time, everyone but the commander Vasyl' Kuk had been captured, and the authorities could claim a complete victory. As torture

was useless with Orlan, he was taken to Zaporizhzhya and shown various examples of the "socialist paradise" such as a kindergarten, a local museum, and a factory. It evidently had little impact on him. Savchyn asks why the authorities were so afraid of a handful of insurgents and concludes that the Soviet authorities wished to demonstrate to the population of Ukraine that resistance was futile. The insurgents believed, in contrast, that resistance, even if only moral, was still feasible.[46]

Conclusion

Though new narratives, such as those described here, are now in the ascendancy, the history of the war period continues to divide Ukraine and to provide conflicting narratives. There are also divisive issues such as the OUN-B's responsibility for the attack on Polish-inhabited villages in Volhynia in 1943 and the legacy of a Great Patriotic War in which "liberation" came from the Soviet east but which is viewed by many Ukrainians as a period of further occupation.[47] What sorts of interpretations are now finding their way into school textbooks? From the books surveyed at all levels of the school and university system of Ukraine, it can be seen that the narrative of events critical to the history of Ukraine in the twentieth century, which can be called decisive in the formation of a national history, has changed radically from the Soviet period. The OUN and UPA are increasingly portrayed as national heroes in official publications. On the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of Stepan Bandera in Munich, for example, the leadership of the Svoboda political party called for his elevation to the status of "hero of Ukraine."[48] However, the change, though fundamental, appears to be still in process and is not simply a case of what was right in the past is now wrong. Indeed, there appears to be much confusion concerning the German–Soviet war and which events merit inclusion and elaboration.[49]

Has one form of propaganda (nationalist) replaced another (socialist)? One can say yes, but with some reservations. The consensus on the emergence of the OUN is that it reflected the political environment of the time and the harsh political conditions of interwar Poland. Most sources make a distinction between the pro-German line of the OUN-M and the more tactical position of the OUN-B. Historians seem to go out of their way to try to show that the OUN-B formed an alliance with the German army for its own purposes. In doing so, they have a tendency to start the story with 30 June 1941 and to ignore the earlier and close cooperation between the OUN-B and certain elements in the Hitler government, particularly the German army and intelligence forces. The Nazi–Soviet Pact is treated in unanimous fashion as a cynical action on the part of the Stalin regime, though there is disagreement as to why one of its consequences—the warm welcome given to the Soviet invaders of western Ukraine—occurred. The formation of the UPA is regarded as the beginning of a long liberation struggle, which has received overt and outspoken support

from President Viktor Yushchenko, who has taken part in commemorative acts and parades by veterans of the insurgent army.

Have new heroes been created? Clearly, leader of the UPA, Roman Shukhevych, is a new hero, a status officially accorded him by President Yushchenko. Bandera may soon follow. These figures have long been recognized as builders of the modern state in western Ukraine and in the Ukrainian diaspora. But their elevation has been attained largely through a fairly one-sided analysis of their lives and careers. Indeed, UPA's indiscretions and atrocities under Shukhevych and others are largely overlooked. Though Polish historians condemn the attempt to eliminate the Poles of Volhynia, many Ukrainians refer to Polish misrule of Western Ukrainian territories during the 1920s and 1930s as the root cause of the problem. The leadership of the OUN-B in UPA's struggle is an accepted fact, as is the heroism of that long battle. The general histories place the contest in the context of the quest for an independent Ukraine that was successful in 1991. Though the regional context is of a relatively small area of Ukraine—essentially Galicia and Volhynia—it is increasingly regarded as the foundation of the modern Ukrainian state, thus directly equating OUN and UPA with a liberation struggle from the late 1920s to 1991, that is, one that was ultimately successful, and with Russians depicted as "the other" or "the enemy" in contemporary narratives.[50] The result is not merely a narrow interpretation of history as well as its politicization but also the alienation of those Ukrainians and their descendants who associate themselves with the Red Army, Soviet Partisans, or other forces that played a role in the defeat of the German occupation regime in Ukraine.

Have common themes about the heroes been adopted? There are several common features: commitment to the Ukrainian nation, self-sacrifice, a battle against overwhelming odds during which the freedom fighters struggled against two powerful totalitarian states, Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia (and Russia rather than the Soviet Union), and direct links between anti-Soviet guerrilla warfare of the late 1940s and early 1950s and contemporary Ukraine, and specifically the independent state that was formed in 1991. The heroes are also depicted as morally impeccable figures with deep ties to their native land and associated with a history of persecution that dates back several centuries. Correspondingly, the Russians are seen as the villains following the demise of the German occupants, thus allowing a portrayal of the postwar Soviet period as a continuation of the sort of policies that brought the famine of 1933 and the wartime occupation by not only Germany but also Stalinist Russia. In some cases the new heroes are linked with historical figures, such as Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi, Ivan Mazepa, and Symon Petlyura. Generally more connections are made with military figures than with politicians or statespersons.

Are these changes to the interpretation of the past accepted by the current government of Ukraine? One can assert that over the past two years in particular they have been accepted wholesale by the president in particular, especially in his public speeches in Ukraine and abroad. It is possible that Yushchenko has embraced

nationalist heroes in an attempt to improve his popular standing in Ukraine, which had fallen dramatically by 2008. Moreover, the involvement of the Yushchenko administration and the president personally in this effort to rewrite the past is not conducive to accuracy or a deep and protracted survey of archival materials. Rather, it has a tendency to become part of a political campaign with all the accompanying defects and idiosyncrasies of such a process. Interestingly, the identification of Yushchenko with figures such as Shukhevych is not shared with other Ukrainian political leaders. Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko has hinted at such recognition but without enthusiasm. Regions Party leader Viktor Yanukovych, who led opinion polls on prospective new presidents before the January 2010 election, is most definitely opposed to the veneration of nationalists and—implicitly at least—retains admiration for former Soviet heroes. The obvious question to be raised therefore is whether a majority of Ukrainians will accept the revisions to past history and the establishment of new national heroes as an accomplished fact. In the first decade of the twenty-first century at least, there is little indication that this will happen, and, as before, Ukrainians remain very divided on the recent past and what it means to them.

Notes

1. OUN and UPA refer to the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

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

3. *Kyiv Post*, 13 March 2008. Also see John-Paul Himka, "Be Wary of Faulty Nachtigall Lessons," *Kyiv Post*, 27 March 2008.

4. Omer Bartov, *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

5. V. Cherednychenko, *Natsionalizm proty natsii* (Kiev, Ukraine: Vydavnytstvo politychnoi literatury Ukrainy, 1970).

6. P. Maksym'yuk and G. Slyvka, "Ispytannym oruzhiyem pravdy," *L'vovs'kaya pravda*, 20 February 1988, 3.

7. Myron Sluka, "Palacha k otvetu," *L'vovs'kaya pravda*, 12 March 1988, 3.

8. This is not to suggest that such pogroms did not take place. Clearly they did. See, e.g., Frank Golczewski, "Shades of Grey: Reflections on Jewish-Ukrainian and German-Ukrainian Relations in Galicia," in *The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization*, ed. Ray Brandon and Wendy Lower (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2008), 131.

9. V. Zarechnyi and O. Lastovets, "Banderovshchina," *Pravda Ukrainy*, 9 August 1989, 3–4; 10 August 1989, 4; 17 August 1989, 3–4; and 19 August 1989, 3.

10. A. Gorban', "Krovavyye sledy banderovtsev," *Pravda Ukrainy*, 11 October 1989, 3.

11. *Visti z Ukrainy* 3 (January 1991): 1.

12. V. I. Maslovs'kyi, "Shchto na 'oltari svobody'? Dekil'la utochen' viiny 'na dva fronty,' yaku vela UPA, ta skil'koma nevynnymy zhertvamy oplachuvas' tsey propahdandyts'kyi myf," *Komunist Ukrainy* 7 (July 1991): 67–68.

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

14. John A. Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism*, 3rd edition (Englewood, CO: Ukrainian Academic Press, 1990), 146-52.

15. Ibid., 153–56.

16. Viktor Koval', "Ukrains'ka Povstans'ka Armiya: Dovidka Instytutu istorii AN URSR dlya Komisii Verkhovnoi Rady Ukrainy z pytan' bezpeky vid 1 lypnya 1991 roku," *Ukraina i Svit* 35 (18–24 September 1996): 9–10.

17. V. P. Troshchyns'kyi, "Proty vyhadok pro tak zvany 'antyfashysts'kyi rukh oporu' ukrains'kykh natsionalistiv," *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 5 (1988): 83–84.

18. Kost' Bondarenko, "Istoriya, kotoruyu ne znaem, ili ne khotim znat'," *Zerkalo nedeli* 12 (29 March–5 April 2002).

19. Wiktor Poliszczuk, *Legal and Political Assessment of the OUN and UPA* (Toronto, 1997), 32.

20. M. V. Koval', *Ukraina v Druhii svitovii i Velykii vitchyznyanii viinakh (1939–1945 rr.)* (Kiev, Ukraine: Vydavnychyi dim Al'ternatyvy, 1999), 152–53.

21. Maslovs'kyi, "Shchto na 'oltari svobody'?" 67–73.

22. Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi, "Trahediya pysana samoyu istoriyeyu," *Za vil'nu Ukrainu*, 14 October 1997, 2.

23. Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi, "Ukrainski natsionalisty v chervono-korechnevii Yevropi (do 70-richchya stvorennya OUN," *Istoriya Ukrainy* 5 (February 1999): 6–7.

24. See, e.g., Maslii, "V UPA buly heroi," *Visti z Ukrainy* 42 (October 1991): 4.

25. Ivan Krainii, "Sorok chotyry roky strakhu," *Ukraina moloda*, 21 January 1992, 7.

26. Ihor Hulyk, "Petro Poltava i ioho kontseptsiya ukrains'koho derzhavnosti," *Za vil'nu Ukrainu*, 18 July 1992, 2.

27. Ol'ha Ivanova, "Kotyhoroshko povstans'koho lisu," *Samostiina Ukraina* 38 (October 1992): 3.

28. Roman Pastukh, "Enkavedysts'kyi heneral u rukakh u nashykh povstantsiv," *Za vil'nu Ukrainu*, 19 July 1997, 2.

29. Bohdan Zalyps'kyi, "Zberehty sebe, shchob vykhovuvaty nove pokolonia," *Za vil'nu Ukrainu*, 7 April 2000, 6–7.

30. Roman Pastukh, "Dmytro Hrytsai-heneral UPA," *Za vil'nu Ukrainu*, 20 March 1991, 2.

31. Myroslav Horoshko and Volodymyr Dudok, "Lystar ukrains'koho lisu," *Za vil'nu Ukrainu*, 8 September 1992, 3; and 10 September 1992, 3.

32. Ivan Vashkiv, "I stav vin Lehendoyu," *Za vil'nu Ukrainu*, 31 October 1991, 2.

33. Nina Romanyuk, "Vony ishly do lyubovi i myloserdya, a pomyraly zradnykamy i vorohamy," *Ukraina moloda*, 19 May 1995, 7.

34. Ivan Romanyk, "Banderivs'kyi chervonoarmiets," *Ukraina moloda*, 12 September 2001, 13.

35. Nina Romanyuk, "Khoroshyi u vas cholovik. Ot choho vin u tii UPA buv?" *Ukraina moloda*, 12 October 2002, 4.

36. Maslovs'kyi, "Shchto na 'oltari svobody'?" 72.

37. Panteleimon Vasylevs'kyi, "Bii za 'banderivs'ku stolytsu," *Za vil'nu Ukrainu*, 13 January 1995, 2.

38. Mykola Vasyl'chuk, "Pobratani z hromom: Nova knyha Mykhaila Andrusyaka pro UPA," *Ukraina moloda*, 30 January 2002, 6.

39. Bohdan Mak, "Polkovnyk Shelest," *Za vil'nu Ukrainu*, 27 April 1996, 2; 30 April 1996, 2; 4 May 1996, 2; 7 May 1996, 2; 14 May 1996, 2.

40. Fedir Solovei, "Sumni svyata buly v sorok shostomu rotsi," *Za vil'nu Ukrainu*, 19 January 1991, 4.

41. Ostap Moroz, "Na terenakh Drohobychchyny," *Za vil'nu Ukrainu*, 24 November 1992, 2.

42. Ivan Vorobel', "Ostannii bunker," *Za vil'nu Ukrainu*, 17 October 1996, 2–3.

43. Ivan Krainii, "Ostanni z pidzemnoho bunkera," *Ukraina moloda*, 15 November 2002, 5.

44. "Orlan" translates literally as white-tailed eagle.

45. Based on this review, the book makes no distinction between activities linked to the OUN and those associated with UPA.

46. Mariya Lytvyn, "Povstanskymy stezhkamy," *Literaturna Ukraina*, 18 September 2003, 1.

47. See, e.g., Timothy Snyder, "The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing," *Past and Present* 179, no. 1 (2003): 197–234.

48. *Financial Times*, 13 October 2009.

49. See, e.g., Nancy Popson, "The Ukrainian History Textbook: Introducing Children to the 'Ukrainian Nation,'" *Nationalities Papers* 29, no. 2 (2001): 325–50.

50. It is an odd theory for a number of reasons, not least the unexpected way in which Ukraine gained independence in August 1991, that is, a failed putsch in Moscow and the subsequent ban on the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on Russian (and then Ukrainian) lands.

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