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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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Dear Sir:

I am grateful to Professor Oleh W. Gerus for his generous appraisal of my collection of essays on the history of modern Ukrainian social and political thought, *Mizh istorieiu i politykoiu* (*Canadian Slavonic Papers*, XVIII, no. 2 [June 1976], 224-26). In one important point, however, he misrepresents my views. According to Professor Gerus, I deny that the Ukrainian extremist nationalist movement of the interwar era, represented by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (O.U.N.), was fascist or Nazi in nature. What I have actually said about this issue is the following: "For the closest relatives of Ukrainian [O.U.N.] nationalism one must look not to German Naziism or Italian Fascism, which were products of industrial and urbanized societies, but rather to parties of that type among the agrarian, economically backward, peoples of Eastern Europe: the Croatian Ustashe, the Rumanian Iron Guard, the Slovak followers of Hlinka, the Polish National-Radical Party, etc. Ukrainian [extremist] nationalism was genetically independent, but in its development it had undergone undeniable influences of corresponding foreign models" (pp. 240-41). According to my understanding, the O.U.N. was totalitarian in ideology, structure, and methods of action, and it clearly fell within the broad category of fascist-type trends which, of course, did not exclude a number of specifically Ukrainian traits. Evidence in support of this interpretation is provided in my book (pp. 235-39).

To clarify my point of view, I would add that, in spite of a firm rejection of totalitarianism, I do not think that everything was "bad" about the movement headed by the O.U.N. In the western Ukrainian lands, then under Polish, Rumanian and Czech rule, it obtained in the 1930's the enthusiastic support of thousands of idealistically-minded men and women, mostly of the young generation, who paid little attention to the totalitarian character of the movement but who were drawn to it because they considered it the standard-bearer in the struggle for independence of their enslaved country. During the terrible years of World War II the O.U.N. became the leading force in the armed resistance of the Ukrainian people against Nazi German and Soviet Russian oppressors. The Ukrainian extremist nationalist movement perpetrated great mistakes, and accomplished many deeds of heroism and self-sacrifice. It also underwent an internal process of partial liberalization of its program and mentality, but under the given circumstances this hopeful, revisionist trend could not come to full fruition. It is a world-wide tragedy of our age, by no means limited to Ukraine, that legitimate grievances and aspirations, such as the striving for social justice and/or national liberation, are being diverted into totalitarian channels of the left or the right. This distressing phenomenon, which is largely due to the default of democratic forces in

providing leadership, needs to be pondered by those who uphold the ideals of democratic rule of law for their own respective nations and for the world-at-large.

Ivan L. Rudnytsky