

INTERNATIONAL HELLENIC UNIVERSITY



MASTER IN BLACK SEA CULTURAL STUDIES

NATIONALISM AND WAR: WESTERN UKRAINE, 1939-
1956

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ABSTRACT

This thesis will examine the history of the geographic area comprising Western Ukraine (Galicia, Volhynia, Carpatho-Ukraine, and Northern Bukovina) through its political, military, and religious/cultural aspects, during a turbulent period characterized by violent political changes, war, and extreme ethnic/ideological animosity.

Beginning with an overview concerning the origins of the Ukrainian nationalism, I will then focus on its primary exponents in the examined period: the OUN, the UPA and the Greek-Catholic Church that eventually became the "spiritual" pillar of the movement.

I continue with the issue of collaborationism during the German occupation, including the participation of Ukrainians in the implementation of the Holocaust, in anti-partisan operations, and the culmination of their commitment with the formation of the 14. Waffen-Grenadier-Division SS 'Galizien'.

Furthermore, I will examine the violent shift of regional control, leading to a titanic war of extermination: the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and the Soviet occupation of Western Ukraine (1939-1941), the Nazi invasion and occupation (1941-1944), Red Army's counteroffensive and the recapture of the region (1944), the final fate of Ukrainian collaborators following the retreating Germans (1944-1945), and the localized insurgency fought between the Ukrainian nationalists and the Soviet state (1944-1956).

Finally, I close my thesis with a brief mention about the Ukrainian nationalist movement's legacy today, and its catalyst role in the unfolding Ukrainian crisis since November 2013.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	Error! Bookmark not defined.
INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER ONE: POLAND'S COLLAPSE AND THE RESURGENCE OF UKRAINIAN NATIONALISM, 1939-1941	10
THE MOLOTOV-RIBBENTROP PACT AND THE POLISH CAMPAIGN	10
THE SOVIET OCCUPATION OF WESTERN UKRAINE ..	Error! Bookmark not defined.
THE UKRAINIAN-GERMAN CONNECTION AND THE SPLIT OF OUN	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER TWO: WESTERN UKRAINE UNDER AXIS OCCUPATION, 1941-1944.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
OPERATION BARBAROSSA.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
THE "NEW ORDER" IN WESTERN UKRAINE	Error! Bookmark not defined.
THE UKRAINIAN INSURGENT ARMY	30
THE SS-GALIZIEN DIVISION	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER THREE: UKRAINIAN NATIONALISM'S FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL, 1944-1945.....	41
THE BATTLE FOR WESTERN UKRAINE – KAMENETS-PODOLSK, TARNOPOL, KOVEL, BRODY	41
FINAL BATTLES AND SURRENDER OF THE SS-GALIZIEN	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER FOUR: SOVIET SUPPRESSION AND UKRAINIAN NATIONALIST REVIVAL, 1944-2013	Error! Bookmark not defined.
INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY, 1944-1956.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
TODAY'S LEGACY OF THE UKRAINIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CONCLUSION	Error! Bookmark not defined.
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

This thesis is dedicated to my mother Chrysi Vasiou-Kassara

INTRODUCTION

The 2013-2014 crisis brought Ukraine on the spotlight. On November 2013, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych's refusal to sign the *Association Agreement* with the European Union triggered a national revolution – the *Euromaidan* – leading to a veritable *coup d' etat*, bringing his overthrow. Riots and clashes between pro-Western and pro-Russian protesters raged throughout Ukraine claiming lives on either side. Later on, we had the controversial Crimean referendum of 16th March 2014 and the outbreak of a localized civil war in the Donbass that is still being waged with fluctuating intensity, despite undertaken efforts to maintain a ceasefire.

This typical proxy-war case is surfacing again the age-old question in Ukrainian history: which direction this country will follow. Most of Ukraine's past is a tug-of-war between East and West.

Ukraine, Russia, and Belorussia share common origins through their *Rus'* ancestry.

One of the first *Rus'* rulers, Oleg, captured Kiev in 880 AD, proclaiming it "mother of the *Rus'* cities".¹ It was the birth of *Kievan Rus'*, the medieval state that Ukraine, Russia, and Belorussia claim as their ethnic/historical/cultural ancestor. A towering event in *Rus'* history was the adoption of Greek Christianity by Grand-Prince Vladimir the Great, in 989, and the close ties he developed with Byzantium.

By the 14th century, *Kievan Rus'* experienced political fragmentation and was swept by the Mongol invasions. The Mongols – or *Tatars* (Golden Horde khanate) – and the Poles-Lithuanians (Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) subdued or incorporated the *Rus'* principalities.

The *Rus'* principality of Galicia-Volhynia was divided between Poland and Lithuania. From 1375, the Poles sought to assimilate the *Ruthenian* population and spread Roman-Catholicism. Additionally, Poles, Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, and Jews came and settled. By the 17th century Galicia-Volhynia had profoundly changed in cultural and religious terms.²

In late 18th century, the Three Partitions of Poland, led to the division of Western Ukraine, with Austria annexing Galicia, and Russia Volhynia.³

Throughout the 19th century Austria and Russia tried manipulating the emerging "Ruthenianism". Although the lines within this movement were blurred, there were

¹ Dimitri, Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500-1453*, (New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1971), p.181

² Linguistic and cultural influences from Poland and Central Europe were strong. Additionally, the areal Eastern Orthodox metropolises endorsed the so-called *Unia*, accepting the Pope as their head, and being in full communion with the Roman-Catholic Church. These metropolises are collectively described as *Hreko-Katolytska Tserkva* ("Greek-Catholic Church").

³ The Habsburgs renamed their new dominions as *Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria* in 1772, with Lvov (*Lemberg* in German) remaining the capital. In 1774, Austria annexed Bukovina from the Ottoman Empire. Russia formed the *Volhynian Governorate* in 1796, with Zhitomir as its capital.

three main currents: The *Old Ruthenianists*, an elitist circle of non-Polonized nobles and Greek-Catholic clergymen. The *Russophiles*, propagating Russian unity "from the Carpathians to Kamchatka."⁴ The *Ukrainophiles*, that from the Kharkov University and the *Saints Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood* in Kiev, envisioned to liberalize/federalize the Russian Empire or created a separate Ukrainian state. Prominent Russophiles were Denis Zubrytsky, Nikolay Kmicykevich, Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Naumovich, and Yakov Holovatsky. Influential Ukrainophile figures were Taras Shevchenko, Nikolay Kostomarov, Mykhailo Drahomanov, Ivan Franko, and Mykhailo Hrushevsky.

The Habsburgs initially tolerated both movements to undermine Polish dominance in Galicia-Lodomeria. By the 1870s, the Tsar persecuted the Ukrainophile intelligentsia, prohibiting the print and use of the "Little Russian" language with the *Ems Ukaz* decree (1876). Eventually, Austria provided a haven for the purged Ukrainophiles in Galicia, considering them useful against the Poles and Russia's increasing influence.

By early 20th century, two pivotal events marked the development of Ukrainian nationalism. The first, was the publishing of an article by the historian Mykhailo Hrushevsky, in 1904, titled *The Traditional Scheme of "Russian" History and the Problem of a Rational Organization of the History of the East Slavs'*, proclaiming the Ukrainian nation-building, while dismantling the traditional Russian historiography. The second was the enthronement of Andrey Sheptytsky – a Polish-Ruthenian aristocrat – as Metropolitan Archbishop of Lvov. Thus far, the Uniate Church was suspicious to any new movement, fearing the spread of subversive ideas. However, the new ecclesiastical leader would endorse the nationalist cause, transforming the Greek-Catholic Church to its spiritual pillar.

On 3 August 1914, in Lemberg, several Galician political leaders formed the *General Ukrainian Council*, calling their countrymen to fight for Austria-Hungary in World War One. Subsequently, the *Ukrayinski Sichovi Striltsi* ("Ukrainian Sich Riflemen") were formed, consisted of 2,500 volunteers.

The multi-ethnic Austria-Hungary was plagued by centrifugal tendencies; Slavic soldiers deserted their posts or even joined the Russians. Amidst the chaos, Hungarian soldiers committed atrocities against the Ruthenians, while Russophiles in Galicia-Lodomeria were executed or deported to concentration camps.

In September 1914-May 1915, the Russians occupied Galicia. Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich, the Tsar's uncle, hailed the Galicians as brothers who had "languished for centuries under a foreign yoke."⁵ Despite propaganda, however, Russian rule was harsh, while the mutual hatred between Russophiles and Ukrainophiles became abysmal.

Nevertheless, by September 1915, a German counteroffensive saved Austro-

⁴ Stepan, Rudnitsky, *Ukraine: The Land and its People*, (New York: Rand & McNally Co., 1918), p.155

⁵ *Ukraine on the Road to Freedom*, published by the Ukrainian National Committee of the United States, 1919, pp.41-2

Hungary from collapse, pushing back the frontline.

The Russophiles fled with the retreating Russians. In 1916, Ukrainian parliamentarians under the prominent lawyer Yevhen Petrushevych (1863-1940) declared to Vienna their will for greater autonomy.

By early 1917, Russia and Austria-Hungary were totally exhausted by the war, and have suffered huge losses.

On 8 March, a huge demonstration took place in Petrograd, forcing Tsar Nikolai II to abdicate. Prince Georgy Lvov and Alexander Kerensky formed a provisional government, while the far-leftist *Bolshevik* political group, under Vladimir Lenin and Lev Trotsky, gathered momentum. On 7 November 1917, 40,000 Bolsheviks stormed Petrograd Winter Palace in a historical takeover, plunging Russia to chaos and civil war.

Meanwhile in Kiev, political activists had established, by March, the *Ukrayinska Tsentralna Rada* ("Ukrainian Central Council"). Mykhailo Hrushevsky became its head, and his Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionary Party (USRP) was dominant. Their appeal for greater autonomy and a unilateral declaration of independence were rejected by the Provisional Government and the Bolsheviks respectively.

Following earlier contacts, in February 1918, Germany and Austria-Hungary recognized Ukrainian independence. In return, Ukraine would provide its surplus of foodstuff and agricultural production.⁶ Additionally, the Bolsheviks, striving to consolidate their internal rule, signed the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Central Powers, on 3 March, under heavy terms.

The Rada's inability to provide the supplies infuriated the Germans who installed a new regime, on 29 April 1918, under "Hetman" Pavlo Skoropadsky (1873-1945) a Russian-speaking Cossack General. Nevertheless, on 11 November, the Central powers signed an armistice, and their Ukrainian puppet-state fell apart.

The *Directory* – a coalition of Skoropadsky's enemies – under Symon Petlyura (1879-1926), entered Kiev.

Galician parliamentarians and Uniate clergymen formed in Lvov, on 1 November 1918, the *Western Ukrainian People's Republic* (WUPR).⁷ Polish reaction was immediate and by 22 November they controlled Lvov. A resurrected *Second Polish Republic*, under her warlord Jozef Pilsudski (1867-1935), strove to reconquer her old dominions.

The Galicians formed a new national council, while Petrushevych was elected *dictator* of the republic in June 1919. However, his poor relations with Petlyura forced him to flee to Vienna.

Polish troops invaded Volhynia in December, fighting against all Ukrainian factions. By July 1919, the Galicians withdrew beyond River Zbruch, ending the eight-month Polish-Galician War.

⁶ Sir John, Wheeler-Bennett, *Brest-Litovsk the Forgotten Peace, March 1918*, (St. Martin's Street London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1938), p.220

⁷ Paul, Kubicek, *The history of Ukraine*, (Westport, Connecticut.: Greenwood Press, 2008), p.86

Although the 1919-1920 peace treaties probated Germany's defeat and Austria-Hungary's dissolution, the war in Eastern Europe continued unabated. The Bolsheviks were defeating the Whites-Counterrevolutionaries, and repelled the Entente's intervention. Now, they turned their attention to Poland.

The first Polish-Soviet skirmishes occurred in Volhynia on February 1919. In April 1920, Petlyura and Pilsudski joined forces against the Bolsheviks. However, the Soviet counteroffensive swept them, and, by August, Trotsky's *Red Army* stood at the gates of Warsaw.

Nonetheless, an all-out Polish counterattack repelled them. The Poles advanced until the line Tarnopol-Dubno-Minsk-Drissa in late September.⁸ The Treaty of Riga, on 18 March 1921 ended the war. Galicia and Volhynia were incorporated to Poland.

Although defeated, the Ukrainian nationalist movement has matured. Hrushevsky's nation-building narrative had found native and foreign disciples. The Ukrainian diaspora in North America was actively involved in promoting the cause. Already by September 1893, Father Hryhorii Hrushka, established the '*Svoboda*' ("Freedom") newspaper in New Jersey. Increasing numbers of published material were available in English and German.

Intellectuals like Bedwin Sands and Stepan Rudnitsky propagated with an increased anti-Russian rhetoric, claiming that the Ukrainians were not just a separate ethnos from the Russians, but the true heirs of the Rus' since the "Russians or Muscovites", are "a mixed Mongolo-Finno-Slav race",⁹ while Kievan Rus' was "the old Ukrainian empire of Kiev."¹⁰

Dmytro Dontsov (1883-1973) an ex-socialist journalist, turned ardent nationalist with fascist inclinations, became the movement's ideological mentor. His ideas combined traditional nationalism with racism and anti-Semitism. Dontsov propagated the use of all means to achieve the Ukrainian independence, and infused a fervently anti-Russian and anti-Polish sentiment. His works were the foundation of modern Ukrainian nationalist ideology.

In Prague, on July-August 1920, veterans of the Sich Riflemen, and their former commander, Colonel Yevhen Konovalts (1891-1938), founded the *Ukrayinska Viyskova Orhanizatsiya* ("Ukrainian Military Organization" – UVO).¹¹ UVO's aim was to achieve independence by force.

Throughout the 1920s, UVO committed terrorist acts against local Poles and Galician collaborators, torched farms of Polish colonists, and sabotaged the transportation and communication lines.¹² In 25 September 1921, an unsuccessful

⁸ Michael S. Neiberg & David Jordan, *The History of World War I: The Eastern Front 1914-1920: From Tannenberg to the Russo-Polish War*, (London: Amber Books, 2008), p.219

⁹ Sands, Bedwin, *The Ukraine: Reprint of a Lecture Delivered on Ukrainian History and present-day Political Problems*, (London: Francis Griffiths, 1914), p.9

¹⁰ Rudnitsky, *op. cit.*, p.150

¹¹ Anatoly V., Kentii, *Ukrayinska Viyskova Orhanizatsiya (UVO) ve 1920-1928 rr.: Korotkyi Narys*, (Kyiv: Institut Istorii Ukrayin NAN Ukrayin, 1998), p.14

¹² *Ibid.*, p.32

attempt was made against Pilsudski whilst he visited Lvov. Passive resistance included boycotting the whole spectrum of occupational policies.

Warsaw's response was the "*pacification*" campaign, in 1930. Police and cavalry units combed the countryside, mistreating and incarcerating thousands. In Volhynia, armed bands of Polish colonists destroyed Orthodox temples, while terrorizing the Ukrainians to embrace Catholicism.

The historical moment for the movement came when the *First Congress*, held in Vienna from 28 January-3 February 1929, merged the militant youths and UVO veterans to the *Orhanizatsiya Ukrayinskykh Natsionalistiv* ("Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists" – OUN).¹³ Konovalets was elected its first leader, and OUN's goals were to continue the struggle against the "oppressors of the Ukrainian nation".

In July 1935, Warsaw struck the "*normalization*" agreement, making considerable political and economic concessions in Galicia-Volhynia. This political maneuver achieved the political neutralization of Galicia's moderate right-wing elements, while the OUN accused the compromisers as turncoats.

Nevertheless, the coming cataclysmic conflict will unleash the suppressed hatred and violence would reach nightmarish dimensions.

¹³ D. V., Vedeneyev & H. S., Bystrukhin, *Mech i Tryzub: Rozvidka I Korntrrozvidka ruhu Ukrayinskikh Natsionalistiv ta UPA*, (Kyiv: Heneza, 2006), p.108

CHAPTER ONE: POLAND'S DISINTEGRATION AND THE RESURGENCE OF UKRAINIAN NATIONALISM, 1939-1941

THE MOLOTOV-RIBBENTROP PACT AND THE POLISH CAMPAIGN

The bloodless triumphs of Austria's *Anschluss* ("Annexation"), in March, and the takeover of Sudetenland, in September 1938 – following the infamous *Munich Agreement* –¹⁴ furtherly emboldened the German dictator Adolf Hitler (1889-1945). His next targets were Danzig, and the Polish Corridor. However, their annexation meant certain war with Poland.¹⁵ France had signed military pacts with Poland (1921) and Czechoslovakia (1924).¹⁶ Although Czechoslovakia was betrayed in Munich, a German attack on Poland equaled with toppling the post-1918 European order, something intolerable for the Franco-British.

Hitler's main concern was to avoid a repetition of a two-front war. Only with Iosif Stalin's (1879-1953) Soviet Union could Berlin reach a compromise; but it was a complicated issue.

From its origins, *National-Socialism* placed itself as diametrically opposed to Communism. USSR was a mass of Slavic *untermenschen* ("sub-humans") ruled by "Jewish-Bolshevik" masters. Additionally, there was the concept of *Lebensraum*,¹⁷ and the *Anti-Comintern Pact*.¹⁸ Yet German-Soviet relations were not immune to *Realpolitik*.

The Weimar Republic and the Bolsheviks had renounced their mutual territorial and financial claims with the Treaty of Rapallo (April 1922), and, under a secret agreement, officers of the *Reichswehr* could conduct banned military drills in Soviet Russia.¹⁹ Bilateral economic relations rose steadily throughout the 1920s, peaking at 1,431 billion Rubles in 1932 – with the initiation of Stalin's *Five-Year Plan* – representing 46.5% of total Soviet imports.²⁰

¹⁴ The Munich Agreement, held on 30 September 1938, was a settlement reached between Germany, Britain, France, and Italy, allowing Germany to annex Sudetenland – parts of western Czechoslovakia populated by ethnic Germans.

¹⁵ On 26 January 1934, Germany and Poland have signed a 10-year pact of non-aggression. Hitler unilaterally abrogated it on 28 April 1939.

¹⁶ USSR had joined the Franco-Czechoslovak alliance in 1935. However, a special protocol preconditioned France to take first action in assisting Czechoslovakia before the Soviet Union could intervene.

¹⁷ Since the 1920s, Hitler in his book *Mein Kampf* ("My Struggle") had stressed the need for expansion in European Russia so that Germany could acquire the necessary living-space and resources to attain world-power status.

¹⁸ This was an anti-Communist pact signed by Germany and Japan, on 25 November 1936, directed against the *Third Internationale*.

¹⁹ John, Erickson, *The Soviet High Command: A Military-political History, 1918-1941, Third Edition* (London: Routledge, 2001) p.155

²⁰ Edward E., Ericson, *Feeding the German Eagle: Soviet Economic Aid to Nazi Germany, 1933-1941*, (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999), p.14

German-Soviet economic interaction plummeted after the Nazis assumed power. However, Hitler's enormous rearmament programs of 1935 – openly violating the Versailles' treaty – required an abundant supply of resources that only the USSR could provide.

The course to war became inevitable when the *Wehrmacht* occupied Prague and Memel on 16 and 23 March 1939 respectively. Czechoslovakia was rendered to a *protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia*, and an "independent" pro-Nazi Slovakia. London responded by summoning the Polish Foreign Minister and declaring British guarantee on Poland's territorial integrity.

Despite pompous rhetoric, all German military and economic studies revealed that the Reich was doomed without a secured supply of resources and USSR's neutrality.

On March 10 1939, Stalin, in his speech celebrating the 18th *Party Congress* in Moscow, stressed that the Soviet Union did not propose "to pull others' chestnuts of the fire for them."²¹ Vyacheslav Molotov's (1890-1986) appointment, on May, as the new Soviet Foreign Minister, indicated that Moscow was ready to do serious business with Berlin.

Nevertheless, up to July, Stalin had both the Germans and the Franco-British competing on which will make the highest bidder for USSR's participation or neutrality in the coming war. At the end Franco-British rejection on Moscow's demand of returning the Baltic States into her orbit, and Poland's refusal to allow the Red Army entering her territory, decided the outcome. Hitler conceded in all Stalin's geopolitical demands. On 23 August, the Reich's Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop (1893-1946) flew to Moscow.

After 24 hours of hectic negotiations, the *German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact* was signed, coming as a complete surprise to a shocked world. Both dictators boasted to their associates for outsmarting the other side.

Besides the formal commitment of mutual non-belligerence and neutrality in the event of a conflict with a third party, there was a secret protocol detailing the respective spheres of influences in Eastern Europe. Anticipating wider "territorial and political re-arrangements", the boundaries of German-Soviet influences begun from the northern borders of Lithuania, running through the Narew, Vistula, and San rivers in Poland, ending at the Polish-Slovak border. Berlin declared "its complete political disinterestedness" to the Soviet "interest" in Bessarabia.²²

Poland, due to Franco-British hesitations mobilized 700,000 soldiers, literally, at the last moment. Already from late August, German agents and cadres of the *Brandenburg* unit, conducted subversive operations in western and southern Poland.²³ The pre-planned provocations, providing Berlin the pretext, took place on 31 August, when *SS (Schutzstaffel* – "protection-squadron") troops in Polish uniforms, attacked

²¹ Joachim, Remak, *The Origins of the Second World War*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p.107

²² *Ibid.*, pp.115-6

²³ Steve, Zaloga; Howard, Gerrard, *Poland 1939: The Birth of Blitzkrieg*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), p.36

the Gleiwitz radio station and broadcasted inflammatory propaganda, urging Upper Silesia's Polish minority, to revolt against Hitler. The invasion commenced at around 04:00 hours, in 1 September 1939, with the shelling of Danzig's Polish military depot of Westerplatte, by a German battleship. Meanwhile, within the city, SS and paramilitary units attacked the local Polish militia; after the takeover, most of the captured Poles were shot.

On 3 September, Britain and France declared war on Germany, World War Two had just begun.

The main axis of the German attack was from the west; the armies of East Prussia and the south would have complementary role. The ultimate goal was all major thrusts to converge in Warsaw.

Despite spirited Polish resistance, German numerical/technical/tactical superiority quickly overwhelmed the defensive deployment. By 3 September, the Germans had crossed the Warta, and reached the Vistula and Narew rivers. On 6 September, the Polish High-Command was transferred to Brest-Litovsk causing panic to Warsaw's citizens. Two days later, elements of the 4th Panzer Division probed into Warsaw's Ochota suburb, but they were rebuked.²⁴ Nevertheless, the siege of Warsaw began on 15 September, and, nine days later, 1,150 German airplanes bombed the city.

After the battles of Bzura and Lodz, Polish resistance was essentially neutralized, and the Wehrmacht surrounded Warsaw. On 25, September, the city was mercilessly bombarded by artillery and airplanes. Hitler refused to permit a civilian evacuation to put additional pressure on the defenders.²⁵

On the evening of 26 September 1939, General Juliusz Rommel, Warsaw's commander, sent envoys to discuss surrender terms. The siege ended formally on the next day. 40,000 civilians were killed, and 140,000 Polish soldiers became prisoners.

The Poles had hoped to withdraw into a final stronghold called *Romanian Bridgehead*,²⁶ anticipating help from the West. However, Franco-British inaction – leading to the so-called *Phony War* – and the Soviet invasion shattered all hopes.

THE SOVIET OCCUPATION OF WESTERN UKRAINE

Moscow watched in awe while the Germans crushed Poland, by employing an innovative kind of warfare, dubbed *Blitzkrieg* ("lightning-war") by an American journalist. Until mid-September the Soviets were pre-occupied, defeating the Japanese incursion in Khalkin-Gol in Soviet Far East. After deliberations, Molotov devised a plausible scheme: Poland ceased to exist as a state; thus, previous bilateral treaties were nullified. The Red Army would intervene to save the lives and properties of

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.70

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.78

²⁶ The *Przedmoscie rumunskie* was a last-stand defensive area, roughly encompassing Galicia, next to the Romanian borders, being supplied through Romania's Black Sea ports. The Polish leadership planned to hold the German onslaught until a major Franco-British offensive was launched in the West.

Western Belorussians and Ukrainians.

On 17 September 1939, the Red Army crossed the border. After some skirmishes with weak, underequipped Polish units, they advanced unhindered. There was great confusion due to Warsaw's ambiguous stance towards the Soviets; some Polish units received orders not to fight. In Rovno and Tarnopol, local Poles even greeted them as allies.²⁷ In Lvov, two *Gebirgsjäger* (German mountain troops) divisions were halted by dogged Polish resistance. The intervention of Soviet tanks from the east prompted the Poles to surrender on 22 September.

Moscow tried to present her actions as a liberation campaign. The deployed forces were named as *Ukrainian Front*, under Red Army's Ukrainian Marshal Semyon Tymoshenko. Although Soviet agents have infiltrated the area before 17 September to organize the reception, many of the population were truly cheered by their advance.²⁸ In fact, most Galicians were glad to see Poland collapsing. The OUN saw two opportunities: the unification of Ukraine, and a chance to strike Poles and Jews. The latter had a mixed stance towards the Soviets: some – mostly the youth – were sympathetic, while other – especially property-owners in urban centers – showed apprehension. Metropolitan Sheptytsky was reported saying, "We occupied only a few rooms on the ground floor until recently, and now we have it all to ourselves. There is still a tenant on the first floor, but when we push him out the entire house will finally be ours."²⁹

A wave of violence spread in Eastern Poland by the vacuum of authority. Retreating Polish troops retaliated to subversive actions by Ukrainians, Belorussians, and Jews.³⁰ Additionally, in Rovno, Ukrainian and Jewish militias clashed briefly before the Soviets occupied it. Furthermore, in Tarnopol, groups of Polish soldiers who resisted the Red Army were summarily executed, after being captured.

An event epitomizing the Nazi-Soviet cooperation occurred when the Wehrmacht handed over Brest-Litovsk to the Red Army.³¹ However, there were re-arrangements in the occupation zones. Stalin proposed the extension of German rule to the entire Warsaw and Lublin voivodeships, in exchange of Lithuania. It was ratified with the German-Soviet *Boundary and Friendship Treaty*, signed on 28 September 1939 in Moscow.³²

Meanwhile, the *NKVD* (*Narodny Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del* – "People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs") secret police was rounding up Polish officers, intellectuals, officials, and clergymen that in next year would be executed in the

²⁷ Jan T., Gross, *Revolution from abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), p.23

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.29-30

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.31

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.19-20

³¹ Brest-Litovsk was captured by the Germans on 17 September 1939. After a ceremonial joint parade, inspected by General Heinz Guderian and Colonel Semyon Krivoshein, the city formally passed under Soviet control.

³² Gross, *op. cit.*, p.85

Katyn forest, near Smolensk and other locations.³³ An even greater wave of violence ensued, representing a mixture of personal and ethno-religious enmities engulfing entire communities. Thousands of Poles were killed – often in brutal and primitive ways – and their properties were looted or destroyed. Even Soviet officers and political commissars encouraged the peasants – especially the local Communists – to avenge the long years of Polish oppression.³⁴ It seems that, for a while, the Galicians would be allowed to make their own "revolution" against the hated Polish '*pany*' ("masters"). Many Poles fled to the wilderness to save themselves.

When the dust of conquest settled, "provisional administrations" and "peasant committees" were set up in cities and villages respectively, for holding elections. Of course, ex-officials in the Polish administration or well-to-do peasants were excluded from participating. In fact, the lists were already prepared, and most of the candidates came from Soviet Ukraine.

The elections, held on 22 October 1939, resulted in the formation of a People's Assembly under Kyryl Studynsky (1868-1941), a prominent academician and leading figure of the *Christian Social Party in Ukraine*. A delegate went to Moscow, under Studynsky, asking the unification of Western Ukraine with the Soviet Ukraine. On November 15 1939, Galicia and Volhynia were officially incorporated to the USSR.

All state and economic infrastructures (industry, banks) were nationalized. As for the Greek-Catholic Church, though not formally persecuted, there was an effort to limit its great influence upon the populace. Church publications were banned, religion teaching and religious symbols were removed from schools, and church incomes from land or real estate were cut-off.³⁵ The Volhynian Orthodox Church faced similar restrictions and was forced to subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate. Nevertheless, the church survived.

There was also a policy of "Ukrainization" and "de-Polonization", implemented in elementary and high schools, as well as in the University of Lvov – an age-old bastion of Polish culture – that was renamed to *Ivan Franko University*.

Moscow decided to eliminate the – largely Polish – landowning peasantry. By February 1940, the collectivization campaign was in full swing. All over Western Ukraine and Belorussia, landowners, wealthy peasants, and Polish colonists were chased out of their properties. Much of the vacated land was redistributed to neighboring villages. Official Soviet statistics shows that in October-November 1939, 2,564 landowners in Nowogrod voivodeship had their property confiscated. In Lvov, Tarnopol, and Stanislawow voivodeships, 717,000, 213,000, and 67,718 hectares of land were redistributed.³⁶

Additionally, there were imposed regulations and ordinances. It was forbidden to travel without official authorization. There was a dusk-to-dawn curfew, and all civilian-held weapons should be surrendered. Shopkeepers were obliged to sell in prewar prices, and radios were confiscated. Books or periodicals with "unwanted"

³³ Zaloga & Howard, *op. cit.*, p.85

³⁴ Gross, *op. cit.*, p.36

³⁵ Paul-Robert, Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, (University of Toronto Press, 1996), p.619

³⁶ Gross, *op. cit.*, p.85

content should be disposed, and all symbols of Polish statehood were to be forthwith removed.

A notable curiosity was the shopping-spree by Red Army servicemen and officials in urban centers like Lvov, Tarnopol, and Rovno, purchasing goods and items, otherwise unattainable in the closed Soviet system.

THE UKRAINIAN-GERMAN CONNECTION AND THE SPLIT OF OUN

The recognition of Polish rule in Galicia-Volhynia by the Entente, in 1923, was a heavy blow for the UVO. Many of its members left disillusioned turning moderate, while Konovalets and his hardliners fled abroad.

The self-exiled faction – named *Provid* – resided mostly in Germany, and was primarily comprised of veteran officers providing guidance to the younger adherents in Galicia.

Contacts between Germany and the UVO can be traced back to September 1920, when Yevhen Levitsky, representative of the WUPR in Berlin, came in contact with circles showing sympathy to the Ukrainian cause.³⁷ Konovalets in 1921-22 stressed that Germany was primarily concerned with revising the Versailles' treaty, and undermining Poland's sovereignty. Thus, the two sides shared common interests. Moreover, Konovalets met with Walther Nicolai, head of the *Abwehr* (German military intelligence), and, in 1932, he received 200,000 Reichsmarks as aid for the movement.³⁸

Besides an increasing dependency on Germany – especially after the Nazis came in power – the *Provid* tried maintaining a network throughout Central and Western Europe. But a constant channel of communication existed with the *Abwehr* and its head Admiral Wilhelm Canaris (1887-1945).

A first test for the German-Ukrainian relations came with Czechoslovakia's takeover. The Rusyns of Carpatho-Ukraine, unlike their brethren in Galicia, did not experienced oppression throughout the *Interbellum* period, and even enjoyed a degree of self-autonomy conceded by the Czechoslovak government. However, in October 1938, under German encouragement, the local nationalists – most of them members or sympathizers of the OUN – declared Carpatho-Ukraine, a "free, federated state",³⁹ forming a military unit called the *Carpathian Sich*, with an effective strength of 2,000 men. The Rusyns skirmished with the Czechoslovak troops and managed to repel them.

Nevertheless, in March 1939, Hungary claimed Carpatho-Ukraine as an old region of hers. Magyar troops invaded, and the Rusyns, after offering brief resistance, were overwhelmed.

³⁷ Kentii, *Ukrayinsk Vyiskova Orhanizatsiya (UVO) ve 1920-1928 rr.: Korotkyi Narys*, p.32

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.50-1

³⁹ John Alexander Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism*, (Columbia University Press, 1963), p.24

The OUN suffered a critical blow when Konovalets was assassinated in Rotterdam, on 23 May 1938, by Pavel Sudoplatov, a Soviet agent under Stalin's direct order. This disaster exposed the widening drift between the self-exiled leadership and the home factions. Already before Konovalets' death, there were visible cracks, but his authority managed to handle the situation.

The Provid held its *Second Congress* in Rome, on August 1939, denouncing the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and formally choosing Andriy Melnyk (1890-1964) as the new head of the OUN. Called "Lord Melnyk" because of his chivalrous and composure temperament, he was a veteran officer of the Sich Riflemen, founding member of the OUN, and close associate of Konovalets. His appointment, was a turn to moderation and reconciliation with the Greek-Catholic Church – still the most influential organization of the Galician society – disregarding the strong anti-clerical – if not anti-Christian – sentiments within the OUN. The new head of the OUN was hailed by Bishop Avgustyn Voloshyn, Catholic leader of Carpatho-Ukraine.⁴⁰

However, the radical faction in Galicia, and especially the youth, preferred Stepan Bandera (1909-1959) and his supporters to lead. This drift had profound causes. All but two members of the Provid were career officers having served in the Russian and Austro-Hungarian armies, conducting themselves in a strict code of military honor; thus, unwilling to fully endorse extremism. Moreover, the older generation had established a short-lived Ukrainian state and army, having fought in a recognized manner. The younger generation had experienced only the ambiguous resistance against the Poles. Being prone to radicalism and violence they harbored an inferiority complex towards the Provid.⁴¹

There was also an ideological differentiation: the moderates preferred Benito Mussolini's Fascism, while the hardliners Hitler's National-Socialism. In August 1940, the formation of two subgroups, the OUN-M ("Melnykites") and the OUN-B ("Banderites") signaled the breakup. Factional strife did not take long to occur.

The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and the concession of Galicia-Volhynia to Stalin were major blows for Germany's sympathizers. However, OUN's leadership believed that it was a situational compromise, and the war between the two powers inevitable. Most importantly, the Ukrainian nationalist shared the same enemies with Hitler's Germany: Poland and the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Germany was the only major power that had offered them tangible assistance, thus far.

Inside the German leadership there were different perspectives about the Ukrainian issue. Hitler coveted Ukraine's natural resources and her land for future Germanic colonization, while Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi "philosopher", advocated the utilization of any potential collaborators in the coming showdown with the Soviet Union. Most of the military leadership agreed with Rosenberg's views, arguing that sympathetic elements should not be disheartened.

By the summer of 1939, under Canaris encouragement, Colonel Roman Sushko (1894-1944), a veteran of Sich Riflemen, and Melnyk's associate, prepared a

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.37-8

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp.39-40

cadre of 250 men, trained in Wiener-Neustadt,⁴² and in the mountainous terrain near Salzburg,⁴³ to act as a Wehrmacht's auxiliary shock unit, and as the nucleus for a future Ukrainian uprising. When the Polish campaign began, Sushko's unit – based in Slovakia – was allowed to cross the border and enter the ethnic Ukrainian territory next to the San River, escorting a delegate of the Provid to the local OUN groups.⁴⁴ But they were soon ordered back because of the Soviet advance.

Following Poland's defeat, Melnyk was pressured by Berlin to order all his functionaries to relocate into *Generalgouvernement*⁴⁵ territory, in order to avoid complications with the Soviets. Colonel Sushko continued to collaborate with the Germans forming auxiliary police units.

A variety of collaborationist community organizations were functioning under the direction of the *Ukrainian National Committee* in Krakow, having Volodymyr Kubyovych (1900-1985), a prominent geographer and ardent nationalist, as its head.⁴⁶ Additionally, the Ukrainian church life flourished in German-occupied Poland. In Chelm and Podlasia regions, under Bishop Ilarion Ohienko, the Orthodox parishes increased to 140, while the Greek-Catholic Church west of the River San, tried to reverse the Russophile cultural orientation of the area.⁴⁷

On 8 May 1941, Rosenberg presented a memorandum assuring that "Ukraine will become an independent state in union with Germany".⁴⁸ However, it was an empty promise, since Berlin made no formal commitment regarding the creation of a sovereign Ukrainian state. Nevertheless, many from both OUN factions believed that it was something attainable, encouraged by the examples of Slovakia and Croatia.⁴⁹

Two Ukrainian units were formed just before the invasion of USSR, under the aegis of the Abwehr, the battalions "*Nachtigall*" and "*Roland*". Officially "Nachtigall's" enlisted men were Ukrainians while the officers Germans. However, there was a whole "unofficial" staff of Ukrainian officers – members of the OUN-B under Roman Shukhevych (1907-1950). "Roland" was formed in Austria by workers and students of the large Ukrainian community. Here Ukrainians had greater formal authority, and the OUN-B tried to have tighter control, although only half of "Roland's" personnel belonged to the Banderite faction.⁵⁰

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.42

⁴³ Anatoly V., Kentii, *Zbroynny chyn Ukrayinskykh Natsionalistiv 1920-1956: Istoryko-arkhivni narysy, T.1: Vyd Ukrayinskoyi Viyskovoyi Orhanizatsiyi Ukrayinskykh Natsionalistiv 1920-1942*, (Kyiv: Derzhavniy Komitet Arkhiviv Ukrainy, 2005), pp.153-4

⁴⁴ Armstrong, *op. cit.*, p.44

⁴⁵ *Generalgouvernement* was the name given to an occupied "semi-autonomous" territory in central and southern Poland having Lodz and later Krakow, as its capital.

⁴⁶ Armstrong, *op. cit.*, p.50

⁴⁷ Magocsi, *op. cit.*, p.620

⁴⁸ Maslovsky, Martinyuk, Piskorsky, *Obvinyat zemlya. Organizatsiya ukrainskikh natsionalistov, dokumenti i materialy*, (Moskva: Izdatelstvo "Universum", 1991), p.7

⁴⁹ On 14 March 1939, the Germans have created a Slovakian satellite state under Archbishop Josef Tiso (1887-1947), while Croatia was established with the consent of both Germany and Italy on 10 April 1941, under the *Ustase* fascist leader Ante Pavelic (1889-1959).

⁵⁰ Armstrong, *op. cit.*, p.74

Planned division of Central Europe according to Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact



- Soviet Union
- Germany
- Other countries and territories
- EP East Prussia

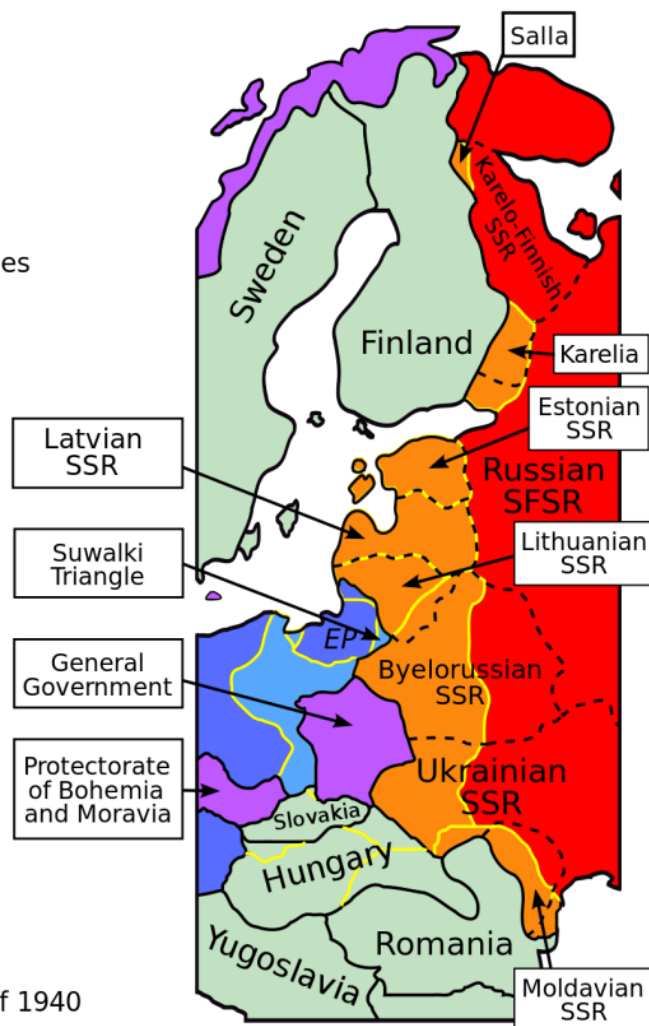
1939 ◀◀

- Soviet sphere of influence
- German sphere of influence
- National borders as of 1939
- Planned Borders
- Soviet republic borders as of 1939

1940 ▶▶

- Annexed by the Soviet Union
- Annexed by Germany
- Occupied by Germany
- National borders as of 1940
- National borders as of 1938
- Soviet republic borders as of 1940

Actual territorial changes 1939-1940



Map showing the planned and actual territorial changes in Eastern Europe in 1939-1940. Retrieved from:

<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/4/4c/Ribbentrop-Molotov.svg/2000px-Ribbentrop-Molotov.svg.png>, date of retrieval: 14/10/2015

CHAPTER TWO: WESTERN UKRAINE UNDER AXIS OCCUPATION, 1941-1944

OPERATION BARBAROSSA

After partitioning Poland, and securing their flank, USSR and Germany forcefully pursued their respecting geopolitical goals.

On 30 November 1939, the Red Army invaded Finland, after Helsinki's refusal to make strategic territorial concessions to Moscow. However, the Arctic terrain, skillful Finnish resistance, and Soviet clumsy operational conduct, led to a debacle. Nevertheless, Soviet reinforces and regrouping, prompted Finland to sue for peace, on 12 March 1940.

Then, USSR demanded from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to sign pacts of mutual military assistance with the USSR, so the latter could acquire bases in these countries. By late June 1940, the Baltic States were governed by pro-Soviet regimes, installed through rigged elections. In August, they joined the Soviet Union. Thousands of dissidents were deported, while others fled to the forests starting an insurgency.⁵¹

Meanwhile, Stalin demanded the return of Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia, annexed by Romania in 1918. Bucharest conceded, and, on 28 June, the Red Army entered Bukovina. The Bukovinian Ukrainians were harshly suppressed by Romania throughout the Interwar years, and the OUN had a sizeable underground. The Soviet takeover triggered the flight of local nationalists to German-occupied areas.

In the West, the Blitzkrieg was unleashed with the double German invasion of Denmark and Norway, on 9 April 1940. Within six hours Denmark was fully occupied, while Norway was conquered by 9 June.

In 10 May it was the turn of the Low Countries and France. Within four days Belgium and Holland were overrun, while the Battle of France ended with the French capitulation, on 22 June. The collaborationist regime of *Vichy* was established under Marshal Phillip Petain.

In July, the Germans launched an air campaign against Britain as a preliminary step before the amphibious invasion. However, the British *RAF* successfully protected the metropolis winning the battle of attrition against the *Luftwaffe*.

The last diversion before the attack on USSR was the Balkans' campaign. By 28 October 1940, Mussolini attacked Greece but, by March 1941, his forces were repelled and driven into Albania.

⁵¹ They were the *Forest Brothers*, an insurgent movement operating in the forests of the Baltic States with wide popular support. They fought the Soviets until 1956, while receiving support by the Germans and later by the Anglo-Americans.

Furthermore, while Yugoslavia seemed aligning with the *Axis*,⁵² a pro-British coup, on 27 March 1941, frustrated this prospect. An overpowering German operation against both countries was unleashed on 6 April. By late May, Greece and Yugoslavia were under Axis occupation.

Meanwhile, the Nazis launched a multi-directional diplomatic campaign. After the British rejected a peace proposal on July 1940, Hitler, tried unsuccessfully, to persuade Spain and Vichy France to ally with Germany.

Berlin knew that America was increasingly supplying Britain. A protracted war with Britain and – sooner or later – with the USA, would require huge deliveries of supplies, resulting to absolute dependency on Stalin.

Moreover, Moscow's assertiveness and recent geopolitical acquisitions have brought the Soviet Air Force within striking distance to critical targets for German interests – Berlin, German industrial zones, Ploesti's oilfields. Both America and the USSR underwent massive military buildups – and it was obvious against whom these armadas would be unleashed – making the two-front war scenario ominously realistic.

Nevertheless, Molotov visited Berlin on 16 November 1940, to discuss the future of bilateral relations. In Hitler's utopian proposals for a German-Soviet alliance, Molotov asked in return the evacuation of Finland by German troops, the acquirement of bases in Bulgaria and Turkey, an extensive sphere of influence in the Middle East, and Japan's renouncement in exploiting Northern Sakhalin's natural resources.

Hitler responded with the *Führer Directive No. 21*, on 18 December, ordering his Wehrmacht to prepare "to crush Soviet Russia in a quick campaign" before concluding the war against England.⁵³ The operation's codename was *Barbarossa* after the medieval German Emperor Friedrich Barbarossa.⁵⁴

Hitler believed that the Red Army would stand and fight near the line of rivers Prut-Dniester-Dnieper-Dvina, protecting the main economic/industrial areas, and key cities of Western USSR. Mauled by Stalin's purges, the Red Army could be knocked-out through a quick, crushing blow. Thus, Eurasian resources would make Germany invulnerable in a protracted war against the Anglo-Americans.

On 30 March 1941, Hitler addressed a gathering of 200 officers, stressing that the coming conflict is a "clash of two ideologies", a "war of extermination". Additionally, on 13 May, Wilhelm Keitel, Wehrmacht's Chief-of-Staff, signed an order, explicitly granting German troops the right to use all measures against Soviet citizens, stressing the need for "ruthless and energetic actions against Bolshevik agitators, guerillas, saboteurs, and Jews."⁵⁵ Keitel signed the final version of the notorious *Commissar Order* on 6 June 1941.

⁵² The *Tripartite Pact* or *Axis* was a military alliance signed by Germany, Italy, and Japan on 27 September 1940.

⁵³ Remak, *op. cit.*, p.147

⁵⁴ After the fall of France, the *Oberkommando des Heeres* ("Supreme High Command" – OKH) draw plans for an invasion in Russia. Berlin was overconfident by the swift stunning triumphs of its war-machine implementing a revolutionary new warfare, achieving victories with – relatively – small cost. Another encouraging factor was Red Army's dismal performance against Finland.

⁵⁵ Stephen G., Fritz, *Ostkrieg: Hitler's War of Extermination in the East*, (University Press of Kentucky, 2011), p.67

Besides the *Heer* ("Army"), also the SS were preparing for the racial/ideological "crusade". Reinhard Heydrich (1904-1942), second in command of the SS, organized four *Einsatzgruppen* composed of 600-1,000 men each, further subdivided into *Einsatzkommandos*, to accompany the army into USSR.

Besides the *Einsatzgruppen*, there were also 20,000 men in numerous *Ordnungspolizei* ("Order Police") and *Reserve Polizei* ("Reserve Police") battalions, as well as another 11,000 in the 1st SS Infantry and SS Cavalry brigades.⁵⁶

Prioritizing objectives became a nightmare for the German leadership. Hitler wanted to destroy the Red Army and capture strategic/economic targets. The OKH advocated an all-out advance to Moscow to sever the nerve-center of the Soviet system. But USSR's sheer enormity brought second thoughts. From a one-pronged attack, it was decided to divide the Wehrmacht into three army groups, with a finishing line of advance stretching from Archangelsk to Astrakhan.⁵⁷

Although detailed informed by his intelligence networks, for a massive German build-up next to his western borders, Stalin dismissed these reports, considering unlikely that Germany would break the non-aggression pact so soon, insisting that Britain remained Hitler's current priority.

History's greatest land invasion began on 03:15 a.m., on Sunday, 22 June 1941, with an enormous Axis force of 3,800,000 soldiers, 3,800 tanks and 2,700 airplanes. The Soviets were caught largely – but not completely – by surprise.

In all, 153 German (120 infantry, 19 panzer, and 14 motorized), 14 Finnish, 14 Romanian, 4 Italian, 2 Slovakian divisions, and 3 Hungarian brigades,⁵⁸ crossed the border. The Red Army fielded 4,750,000 men, 20 mechanized corps – with six times more vehicles than the invaders – and 12,000 airplanes.⁵⁹ This impressive armada was plagued by the lack of purged experienced officers, unfamiliarity with modern warfare, and largely obsolete or unserviceable hardware.

Field-Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt's Army Group South deployed 972,000 men in Generalgouvernement and Romania. Although Germans and Romanians constituted the main bulk, there were also Italian, Hungarian and Slovak troops.

Opposing them were the Southwestern and Southern fronts, commanded by the generals Mikhail Kirponos (1892-1941) and Ivan Tyulenev (1892-1978) respectively. Kirponos had 907,000 soldiers, 5,465 tanks and 16,997 guns. Three of his four armies, and four of his eight mechanized corps defended the Lvov salient.⁶⁰

The invasion began after 03:00 a.m., when reconnaissance elements and Brandenburg commandos attempted, unsuccessfully, to storm Przemysl's bridge.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.70

⁵⁷ The three army groups – North, Center, South – had three respective targets: Leningrad, Moscow, Kiev/Ukraine.

⁵⁸ Charles, Winchester, *Ostfront: Hitler's War on Russia 1941-1945*, (Oxford: Osprey, 1998), p.22

⁵⁹ Geoffrey, Jukes, *The Second World War, Vol. 5*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), p.19

⁶⁰ Robert, Kirchubel & Howard, Gerrard, *Operation Barbarossa 1941*, (Oxford: Osprey, 2003), pp.28-9

Following an artillery prelude, the 1st Gebirgsjäger Division attacked Lvov. Poor Soviet deployment hindered an effective counterstrike. Stalin dispatched his Chief-of-general-staff Georgy Zhukov (1896-1974) to Tarnopol.

On 23 June, the Germans breached the Lutsk-Rovno line, but an immediate breakthrough was denied by Soviet anti-tank units. The next day, the Soviet 4th Mechanized Corps launched an ill-coordinated counterattack northwest of Lvov and was decimated. On 25, the 3rd Panzer Division established a bridgehead on the Stryk River, while the Luftwaffe destroyed hundreds of enemy airplanes – most of them while stationed on the airfields – and strafed countless convoys. Soviet counterattacks in Rovno and Dubno failed due to incoordination. A political commissar shot himself, after leading the 8th Mechanized Corps into a swamp.⁶¹ Kirponos decided to withdraw. On 29 June, the Germans took Lvov without a fight, but on 30, the 4th Mechanized Corps counterattacked to cover Kirponos' retreat.

In 2 July, von Rundstedt pushed his troops to storm the *Stalin Line*⁶² before the Soviets assume defensive positions. However, Kirponos' men got there first. To the north, General Ewald von Kleist's (1881-1954) Panzergruppe I destroyed 1,200 enemy vehicles in 10 days.⁶³

The Stalin Line was incoherent with some of its points being immediately penetrated, while others offered resistance. By 9 July 1941, the 13th and 14th panzer divisions have reached Berdichev and captured Zhitomir respectively. The STAVKA (Soviet high-command) ordered Kirponos to attack Berdichev, and created a new command echelon, the "Strategic Direction", appointing Marshall Semyon Budyonny to oversee the actions in Ukraine, along with his Political Commissar Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971).

Hitler and his generals quarreled about the next targeted. The Führer wanted to split the panzer spearheads, to simultaneously race and capture Kiev as well as encircling the enemy in Dnieper's bend. Von Rundstedt preferred Kiev to be captured by the infantry.

With the Germans closing to Zhitomir and converging to Kiev, Budyonny ordered a counterattack. Human-wave assaults resulted in extreme losses. But the Germans were hard-pressed too; the 11th Panzer Division suffered 2,000 casualties in these battles alone. Von Kleist's panzers turned south to trap the enemy at Uman. Kirponos realized the maneuver, and withdrew from Vinnitsa. On 18 July, Gebirgsjäger troops with *Sturmgeschütz* ("assault gun") support captured an intact bridge over the Bug near Vinnitsa.⁶⁴ The Germans tried to close the pocket, but the Soviet 6th and 12th armies slipped southeastwards. Hitler, obsessed with annihilating the enemy, steeled the advance towards Kiev ordering a new encirclement at Uman.

Kirponos had mistakenly assumed that the German onslaught was blunted,

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.36

⁶² A Soviet defensive line stretching from the Gulf of Finland to the Black Sea; its construction had begun by the 1920s. Even by 1941, it was discontinuous in several points, but it delayed somewhat the Axis advance. By autumn it was completely overrun.

⁶³ Kirchubel & Howard, *op. cit.*, pp.37-8

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.40

while STAVKA realized belatedly the actual enemy intentions. By 21 July, panzer forces reached Monastyrishche and pocketed the Soviet 6th and 12th armies. Further attempts to punch an escape route resulted in the partial encirclement of the Soviet 18th Army. On 3 August, the Germans link-up on a bridge at Pervomaysk, and started reducing the pocket mercilessly. On 9 August, 103,000 Soviet soldiers were captured, while 317 tanks and 1,095 guns were destroyed or taken.⁶⁵ After Uman's debacle the Soviets evacuated Western Ukraine and Bessarabia.

A large salient was forming around Kiev as the panzers rolled across the Ukrainian plains. On 16 September, two panzer groups met at Kremenchug, sealing the pocket containing almost 50 Soviet divisions. 527,000 were captured and 150,000 managed to escape.⁶⁶ Kirponos was killed after stepping onto a mine, during a breakout attempt. Kiev was taken on 19 September.

By mid-October 1941, the Germans controlled the Donbass, and, on 25, they took Kharkov. On 21 November, the *LSSAH* Division⁶⁷ entered in Rostov-on-Don, but was driven by a Soviet counterattack. On 16 October, the Romanians captured Odessa, and by December all Crimea – except Sevastopol – was in Axis hands.

In the other sectors, Field-Marshal von Bock's Army Group Centre – from late June-early October 1941 – managed to capture the astonishing number of 1,300,000 enemy prisoners along with thousands of tanks, and artillery pieces, in three spectacular encirclement battles: Minsk, Smolensk, and Vyazma-Bryansk.

Nevertheless, when *Operation Typhoon* – the final drive to Moscow – began, on October 2, the Wehrmacht had reached its limit. Many vehicles were lost, logistic lines were overstretched, and the coming of *rasputitsa*⁶⁸ deteriorated the already primitive road network.

Despite the horrific losses, USSR's enormous manpower pool, and an excellent mobilization system, enabled the creation of a whole new Red Army. Moreover, Stalin was informed by his spy-network about Japanese intentions to attack the Americans, so he could utilize the 750,000 troops stationed in the Far East.

On 7 November, a preterm coming of the winter froze the ground, allowing mechanized movement. Stalin, undoubtedly to boost the morale, held the annual parade on the Red Square, to commemorate the Bolshevik Revolution. Afterwards, the parading troops went immediately to battle.

On 28 November 1941, elements of the 7th Panzer Division crossed the Moscow-Volga canal and observed the Kremlin's spirals. It was the closest the Wehrmacht ever got to Moscow. On early December, the exhausted Nazi juggernaut stopped short of its target. Woefully unprepared for winter warfare, the Germans literally froze to a standstill. On 5 December, General Zhukov unleashed a powerful

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.49

⁶⁶ Winchester, *op. cit.*, p.37

⁶⁷ The *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler* was a motorized infantry division comprised of Hitler's personal bodyguard and part of the *Waffen-SS*. The latter were a paramilitary organization, branch of the SS that developed into a veritable second army.

⁶⁸ *Rasputitsa* in Russian means the coming of the autumn and spring rains, were the unpaved roads become unpassable quagmires.

counteroffensive. By January 1942, the Soviets succeeded in pushing back the enemy 250 kilometers from Moscow, but Army Group Center withstood.

Army Group North had – comparatively – the easier task. The road network was more extensive northern than southern of the Pripyat Marshes. By 26 June, General Erich von Manstein's (1887-1973) panzers established a bridgehead on River Dvina. On 8 July, the Stalin Line was breached and the Germans were approaching Leningrad. The Baltic populations greeted the invaders as liberators, and local insurgents created havoc in Red Army's rear. Leningrad was first attacked in August. By early September, stiffening resistance and mounting losses, made Hitler to order the city's besiegement and blockading. It was the beginning of an 872 days purgatory for Leningrad's citizens that would claim 1,000,000 lives.

By February 1942, both sides were totally exhausted and major operations would resume on May. Thus far, the Germans suffered almost 900,000 casualties. Soviet losses were astronomical, all the mechanized forces and 177 rifle divisions deployed in June 1941 were lost, plus 1,000,000 casualties in the battle for Moscow.⁶⁹

Hitler's gamble to conquer USSR with one crushing blow has failed. But the war in Russia has just started and was about to reveal its horrendous face.

THE "NEW ORDER" IN WESTERN UKRAINE

When Operation Barbarossa got underway, the OUN-B initiated subversive actions against the Soviets. In remote areas, guerillas attacked the Soviet troops or took control of the police functions and dissolve the kolkhozes. However, in urban centers, Soviet retaliation was brutal. In Lvov, the NKVD executed 4,000 Ukrainian and *Volksdeutsche*⁷⁰ political prisoners, while many more were deported eastward.⁷¹ All the administrative/party apparatus and a considerable number of Galician Jews fled to escape the Nazi onslaught. Throughout Western Ukraine, cheering crowds greeted the Germans as liberators, while destroying all symbols of Soviet statehood.

The Wehrmacht entered Lvov, on 30 June 1941, accompanied by the "Nachtigall" Battalion, and OUN-B cadres under Yaroslav Stetsko (1912-1986), a leading factional member and close associate of Bandera.

The Banderites decided to present the Germans with a *fait accompli* by unilaterally declaring the establishment of the Ukrainian state. Apart from informal assurances by individual Nazi officials, there was no formal commitment on the issue.

In the "National Assembly" held on the meeting room of the *Prosvita* ("enlightenment) society, on 30 June, at 20:00 p.m., Stetsko issued the *Akt*

⁶⁹ Winchester, *op. cit.*, p.37

⁷⁰ *Volksdeutsche* was the term used to describe all ethnic Germans living outside Germany and Austria throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

⁷¹ Per Anders Rudling, "The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of Historical Myths", *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian & East European Studies*, No. 2107, November 2011, p.9

vidnovlennia Ukrayinskoï Derzhany ("Act of Renewal of Ukrainian Statehood"), declaring the Ukrainian state. It was hoped that Ukraine would attain a status similar to that of Slovakia or Croatia.⁷²

This unilateral act needed further backing; although the relations of Metropolitan Sheptytsky with the OUN were stressed, his support was critically important. The "Nachigall's" chaplain, managed to meet the bedridden metropolitan, and asked his blessing for the endeavor. Of course, he withheld the split inside the OUN, and that they acted without German consent. Apparently convinced, Sheptytsky wrote a pastoral letter, exhorting the people to support the new government, "We greet the victorious German Army as deliverer from the enemy. We render our obedient homage to the government has been erected. We recognize Mr. Yaroslav Stetsko as Head of the State Administration of the Ukraine;"⁷³ Sheptytsky's letter was read over the radio. The aged Kost Levytsky was appointed president of the parliament (Council of Seniors). Although the wider Galician political spectrum was represented in the government, the OUN-B kept the key offices; Shukhevych became deputy war minister, Mykola Lebed (1909-1998) minister of security, and Ivan Klymiv minister of political coordination.

Berlin was deeply disturbed. Three days after the proclamation, an Einsatzgruppe arrived in Lvov along with Ukrainian auxiliaries. On 9 July, Stetsko was placed under house arrest; Stepan Bandera – residing in Generalgouvernement territory – and his associates were arrested too, and assembled in Berlin for questioning. They were pressured to accept a status in Galicia similar to that of the Ukrainian Central Committee in Krakow. The OUN-B's leadership refused, but they were not imprisoned. Nominally under house arrest, they continued their activities.

In late June – undoubtedly with German consent – the *pokhidny hrupy* ("march groups") were formed, comprised of young men and some women, in eastern Generalgouvernement, to spread the Banderite network to East and South Ukraine.

On 6 July 1941, Melnyk and a number of veteran officers addressed an appeal to Hitler, asking permission to establish a Ukrainian military formation that would participate in "the crusade against Bolshevik barbarism", "shoulder to shoulder with the legions of Europe" and with their "liberator, the German Wehrmacht".⁷⁴

Although unimpressed, the Germans allowed Ukrainians – of former Soviet citizenship – to be recruited in OUN-M police units. Melnyk called all "nationalists" for unity, an end to factionalism, declaring his readiness to forget past enmities if all would return to his fold.

After it became clear that Berlin did not support Stetsko, OUN-B's power in Lvov collapsed. In late July, the Council of Seniors was expanded and renamed to *National Council*. The Germans lobbied the replacement of Banderites with Melnykites. The long association of OUN-M with the Germans, had secured them a large number of

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.9

⁷³ Armstrong, *op. cit.*, pp.80-1

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.87

posts as interpreters, advisers etc. in Wehrmacht units,⁷⁵ something that accommodated their propaganda in East Ukraine. They were also reinforced with the arrival of 500 young Ukrainians, driven from Southern Bukovina after skirmishing with the Romanian gendarmerie. Ukrainians from Bukovina manned the OUN-M's auxiliary police in Galicia, Vinnitsa, Zhitomir and Kiev.

By late summer 1941, the OUN-M set up a quasi-administration in Zhitomir, their center outside Galicia. The Germans allowed the functioning of a variety of nationalist organizations – a pedagogical institute, high-schools, a theater, an orchestra, and a youth organization –⁷⁶ as well as the reinstatement of private economy. Additionally, throughout occupied Ukraine, during the first few months of German rule, there were signs of a Ukrainian national(ist) rebirth in all aspects of life.⁷⁷

In late August, Omelyan Senyk, Mykola Stsiborsky, and Oleh Kandyba "Olzych", leading members of the OUN-M, arrived in Zhitomir. On the evening of 30 August, Senyk and Stsiborsky were shot by a young man. Senyk died instantly, while Stsiborsky passed out a few hours later.⁷⁸ The German-Ukrainian police shot down the assassin as he tried to escape. All indications pointed out the OUN-B as the perpetrators. Although Melnyk publicly refused to countenance on reprisals, retaliation did occur. OUN-B members were arrested in Zhitomir, and, in early September, the SS Einsatzgruppen arrested and executed most of the OUN-B task force in southern Ukraine and Crimea. In some cases, the Banderites were denounced by the OUN-M.

In 22 September 1941, OUN-M cadres arrived from Zhitomir in Kiev, to organize the administration. In early October, they formed a Ukrainian National Council in Kiev, headed by Professor Mykola Velychkyvsky, intending to be the basis for a future Ukrainian government.⁷⁹ However, the Germans included the OUN-M in the crackdown, probably aiming to remove the radical elements, before establishing a civil administration.

Eventually, the Germans divided occupied Ukraine into three administrative regions: the Generalgouvernement, the *Reichskommissariat Ukraine*, and the military zone. Galicia east of the San River, was incorporated to the Generalgouvernement on 1 August 1941 as *Distrikt Galizien* governed by the German General-Governor Karl Lasch (1904-1942). The *Reichskommissariat Ukraine* was formed on 20 August 1941, and governed by *Reichskommissar* Erich Koch,⁸⁰ having his seat in Rovno.

As German occupation in Ukraine was consolidating, the Nazis began implementing their empire-building in the East. An orgy of violence begun, soon to reach

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.90

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.92-3

⁷⁷ This revival saw the establishment of publishing houses, non-Communist newspapers, and theaters, while peasantry started allotting among them the kolkhozes.

⁷⁸ Armstrong, *op. cit.*, p.93

⁷⁹ Magocsi, *op. cit.*, p.629

⁸⁰ Erich Koch (1896-1986) was a Nazi Gauleiter of East Prussia that served as Reichskommissar of Ukraine in 1941-1943. He was notoriously known for his racial contempt towards the Slavs.

uncontrollable dimensions consuming millions of people in occupied territories, coming to be known as the *Holocaust*.

Already by January 1941, the *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945) and his staff were drawing grotesque plans of demographic engineering for the East. The *Generalplan Ost* ("General plan for the East"), developed by Conrad Meyer, a university professor and Himmler's close associate, called for an area behind the line Leningrad-Lake Ladoga-Valdai Hills-Bryansk-Dnieper's bend, to be completely repopulated. 30,000,000 Slavs were to be exterminated, 14,000,000 to be deported, and 14,000,000 deemed racially "fit" to be Germanized.⁸¹ Additionally, huge numbers of slave laborers would be set to work on enormous construction projects. For the Generalgouvernement and Western Ukraine, 85% of the Poles, and 65% of the Ukrainians were to be deported to Siberia, to make room for German colonists.⁸²

The first incident of anti-Jewish violence in USSR occurred in Lvov. When the SS Wiking Division⁸³ entered the city, on 30 June, it was engaged heavily with Soviet rearguards, losing one regimental commander. As a reprisal, the Waffen-SS troops, along with the 1st Gebirgsjäger Division, shoot 60 Jews and committed other massacres during sweeping operations.⁸⁴

Before fleeing, the Soviets have torched the prisons and the stench emanated from the corpses of those executed by the NKVD. The Germans ordered the Jews to retrieve the corpses and laid them out for public display.⁸⁵

By May 1941, the OUN-B had its own plans of ethnic cleansing. On 30 June the Ukrainian militia was formed comprised of OUN members from Krakow and Lvov, and former Soviet Ukrainian militiamen; they immediately began arresting Jews. Lvov's mob took out their anger on them, allegedly, because Jews "had always collaborated with the Bolsheviks".⁸⁶ In an orgy of violence, Jewish women and girls faced beating, humiliation and rape. Also Jews were drafted for labor, primarily including humiliating chores. On 1 July, the SS, Gestapo, and Ukrainian auxiliaries executed about 2,000.

After being subordinated to the SS on 2 July, the militia was disbanded on 13 August, and replaced by the Ukrainian Auxiliary Police under direct German control. In all, the Lvov's pogrom of 30 June-3 July 1941, claimed 4,000 Jewish lives. Another 13,000-35,000 were murdered throughout Western Ukraine.⁸⁷

Metropolitan Sheptytsky downplayed anti-Jewish violence, emphasizing the

⁸¹ Heinz, Höhne, *The Order of the Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's SS*, (London: Penguin Press, 1969) p.315

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.315

⁸³ This was an elite Waffen-SS formation, comprised of Dutch, Belgian, Scandinavian, and Baltic volunteers under German command.

⁸⁴ Tim, Ripley, *Hitler's Praetorians: The History of the Waffen-SS 1925-1945*, (Staplehurst, Kent: Spellmount, 2004) p.72

⁸⁵ John-Paul, Himka (2011), "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Carnival Crowd", *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 53 (2-4): 209-243, pp.210-1

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.212

⁸⁷ Rudling, "The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of Historical Myths", p.9

NKVD executions. He considered the pogroms a product of the wartime anomaly, perpetrated by social dregs. The pogrom of Rohatyn, on late March 1942, might have changed his viewpoint. Afterwards, Sheptytsky addressed sermons and pastoral letters to his clergymen and flock; he also sent letters to Pope Pius XII, two cardinals, and a written protest to Himmler.⁸⁸ Additionally, he was engaged in saving Jews. Altogether, Sheptytsky saved 150 Jews, mostly children.⁸⁹ Furthermore, he also helped them to obtain false papers to escape.

By early July 1941, the Einsatzgruppen in Belorussia and Lithuania were executing Jews by the thousands. In Ukraine, apart from killing them, the Nazis intended to work Jews to the death in labor projects. Himmler and Heydrich paid visits to the field urging their subordinates to intensify the extermination of the "unfit". Field-Marshal von Reichenau, commander of the German 6th Army, praised Otto Rasch, head of Einsatzgruppe C, for his valuable services and harmonious cooperation.

The best known mass execution carried by this Einsatzgruppe, took place on 29-30 September at Babi Yar near Kiev, where 33,000 Jews of all ages were murdered.

In late May 1942, the gassings began at the concentrations camps of Chelmno, Belzec, and Sobibor, while they were about to begin in Auschwitz, and Treblinka. The Jews of Volhynia, instead of being gassed, they were executed near their homes. The liquidation of ghettos in 1942 was implemented by 1,400 Germans and about 12,000 Ukrainian policemen. In all 150,000 Volhynian Jews were murdered. By late 1942, from a pre-war population of 3,250,000, only 300,000 Jews were alive in Generalgouvernement.

Colonization was a critical aspect of Nazi empire-building in the East. The most important experiment of colonization took place near Zhitomir.

In early October 1941, Himmler had pinpointed an area around a former Soviet airbase and built an elaborate SS-police compound. He named this place *Hegewald* ("game reserve"). On 16 September 1942, he announced to his subordinates, the establishment of a colony for 10,000 Volhynian Volksdeutsche, south of Zhitomir. After some "preparatory work" – the extermination of nearby Jewish and Roma communities, and the deportation of thousands of Ukrainians – a sufficient number of ethnic Germans arrived, and Hegewald was declared a Volksdeutsche district under the SS jurisdiction.⁹⁰ SS specialists instructed the settlers on farming and various issues. The increasing partisan activity caused the creation of *Selbstschutz* ("self-protection") units.

In March 1943 Hegewald's population peaked at 10,178 settlers, living in an area of 500 square kilometers.⁹¹ However, by November 1943 the Red Army reached

⁸⁸ John-Paul, Himka (2014), "Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky and the Holocaust" *Polin Studies in Soviet Jewry*, vol. 26, *Jews and Ukrainians*: 337-359, pp.344-5

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.353

⁹⁰ Wendy, Lower, *Nazi empire-building and the Holocaust in Ukraine*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), pp.172-3

⁹¹ Fritz, *op. cit.*, p.280

the area, prompting the evacuation of the colony.

In Poland, Volksdeutsche settled in pre-arranged areas after deporting or murdering the original inhabitants. In November 1942, the area of Zamosc, in southeast Poland, was deemed ready. Over 100,000 Poles were to be uprooted and sent to concentration camps for "selection". Those considered "racially fit" – mainly children – would be Germanized; the rest would either work as slave laborers or starved to death in "retirement villages".⁹² However, the Poles revolted and killed some of the Volksdeutsche settlers, while others joined the partisans. German reprisals were brutal but failed to quell the rebellion that continued until spring 1943.

Local assistance was catalytic to the implementation of the Nazi new order. German manpower shortages necessitated an increased reliance on collaborators.

The *Schutzmannschaften* ("protection teams") – or *Schuma* – battalions were auxiliary police forces, designated to operate under the German military police (*Gendarmerie*) in cleansing operations. By December 1942 they numbered 200,000, reflecting the growing partisan activity. The personnel of *Schutzmannschaften* were local volunteers and Soviet POWs. Adherents from both OUN factions served in these battalions; namely the 115, 118, and 201.

Nine-hundred Melnykites from Bukovina formed the "Bukovinian Battalion", a paramilitary formation that, in 18 August 1941, was merged with kindred elements from Carpatho-Ukraine into one unit of about 1,700 men. They have participated in the massacres at Babi Yar on late September. However, in the wider German crackdown against both OUN factions, the "Bukovinian Battalion" was dissolved. Nonetheless, many of its personnel were reorganized as *Schutzmannschaft* battalions 115 and 118.⁹³

The *Schuma* Battalion 115 was formed on the basis of the "Bukovinian Battalion" having 350 men by July 1942. Later on, Eastern Ukrainians, defectors and common criminals joined its ranks. The Battalion participated along various collaborationist and German formations in large-scale anti-partisan operation throughout Belorussian from December 1942-February 1944.⁹⁴ It remained in Belorussia until July 1944, when it followed the retreating Germans into Poland. In East Prussia the battalions 115 and 118 were merged into the *Ukrainian Schutzmannschaft Battalion 63*, numbering 500-600 men. In August, it was reorganized as the *30. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (weißruthenische Nr. 1)*.

The *Schuma* Battalion 118 was formed in spring of 1942 based upon Battalion 115, numbering 500 men. The Battalion arrived in Minsk, in November 1942. At this point Russians and Belorussians have joined the ranks, and it was commanded by General-Major Erich Körner and his staff. The *Schuma* Battalion 118, during March-August 1943, participated in brutal "pacification" operations in Belorussia, collaborating with battalions 115, 102, the Ukrainian-Belorussian Battalion 101, the

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.282

⁹³ Per Anders Rudling, "Terror and Local Collaboration in Occupied Belarus: The Case of *Schutzmannschaft* Battalion 118. Part I: Background," *Nicolae Iorga Historical Yearbook*, Romanian Academy, Bucharest, Vol. VIII (2011): 195-214, pp.200-1

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.204

Kaminsky Brigade,⁹⁵ Hungarian and Belorussian formations, as well as the infamous SS-Sonderkommando *Dirlewanger*.⁹⁶ It also fought against the *Armia Krajowa* (Polish Home Army).

The "Nachtigall" Battalion, under Roman Shukhevych, murdered Jews around Vinnitsa on July 1941.⁹⁷ However, Stetsko's abortive effort to establish a Ukrainian state caused the dissolution of "Nachtigall" on 13 August. Similarly, in 10 September, the "Roland" Battalion, attached to the 11th German Army in Bessarabia, was excluded from continuing the campaign for "political reasons". The personnel from both units were transported to Neuhammer, Silesia.

There they were reorganized as *201 Scutzmannschaft Battalion*, under Major Yevhen Pobihushchy and a German supervising officer. The battalion moved to Frankfurt-an-der-Oder on early October. Another 60 Soviet POWs from central Ukraine, handpicked by Shukhevych, were added to the battalion's strength. After training in Germany, the Schuma Battalion 201 was sent to northeastern Belorussia, on 16 March 1942 to "fight partisans and kill Jews".⁹⁸

During the winter of 1941-1942, the Soviets have supplied and reinforced the local partisans behind Axis lines. Moreover, in August-October 1942, the partisans have repeatedly attacked the railways. However, the relations between the battalion and the German command were strained, following a decision to extend their term of service for an indefinite period, and due to mistreatment of the Ukrainians by German officers.

Around Christmas 1942, the SS General Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski disbanded the battalion. On 6 January 1943, its personnel were sent to Lvov, and the officers were imprisoned. Some, including Shukhevych, managed to escape and went underground. In its 10-month tenure in Belorussia, the Schuma Battalion 201 suffered 89 casualties of whom 49 killed, while it eliminated 2,000 "partisans". A 1:40 ratio of killed "bandits" clearly indicates mass murder of civilians, rather than conventional counterinsurgency.⁹⁹

THE UKRAINIAN INSURGENT ARMY

While the two OUN factions clashed, the UNR was largely shunned. Nevertheless the Petlyurists have formed an underground group before the war – the *Ukrayinska Natsionalna Vidrozhennia* ("Ukrainian National Rebirth") – that went underground after the Soviet takeover. Taras "Bulba"-Borovets (1908-1981) a Ukrainian former

⁹⁵ A collaborationist formation comprised of Soviet POWs and conscripts from the Bryansk oblast. It committed numerous atrocities in anti-partisan operations.

⁹⁶ An SS penal unit commanded by Oskar Dirlewanger (1895-1945) a convicted pedophile. Its personnel included common criminals, former Soviet POWs, and mentally handicapped. Dirlewanger's men committed hideous atrocities in Belorussia and Poland, and it is considered the worst German unit of World War Two.

⁹⁷ Per Anders Rudling, 2013, "Schooling in Murder: Schutzmannschaft Battalion 201"

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

NCO in the Polish Army, and member of the UNR, consulted with Andrey Levytsky in Warsaw, for creating an insurgent organization.

Thus, the *Poliska Sich* ("Polesian Sich") came to being, based on Sarny, in Rovno oblast. In late June 1941, the Germans permitted the development of the Polesian Sich as a force to fight Volhynia's embryonic partisan formations.

In mid-August, after a meeting with Senyk and Stsiborsky in Lvov, Bulba-Borovets obtained support and a cadre of officers from the OUN-M. Having its headquarters at Olevsk, and being equipped by the Germans, the Polesian Sich grew to a force of several thousand. After clearing the forests of Polesia and northern Volhynia from Soviet partisans, Bulba-Borovets' guerillas established an insurgent "state", known as the *Olevsk Republic*.¹⁰⁰

However, on 15 November, the Germans ordered the dissolution of the Olevsk Republic and the Polesian Sich, to organize a civil administration. Bulba-Borovets' group was unable to resist, and was forced to demobilize. Nevertheless, Bulba-Borovets and 100 of his men withdrew in the forests northeast of Rovno. For the most of 1942, they continued skirmishing with scattered partisans and collecting abandoned Soviet weapons. The Germans knew about it, but seemed indifferent, due to their insignificant size.

By summer 1942, some Melnykites wishing to avoid German punishment, seek the protection of the Polesian Sich. The Banderites, on the other, won the support of Leonidas Shcherbatiuk an assistant of Bulba-Borovets and of some local peasants. They established the socialist *Ukrayinska Narodna Demokratychna Partiya* ("Ukrainian Popular Democratic Party" – UNDP).

Ideological orientation was rather uncertain. Although nominally loyal to the UNR, Bulba-Borovets had a discontinuous line of communication with Levytsky, and the latter could provide minimal assistance. Surprisingly, nonetheless, this tiny force was the only Ukrainian nationalist organization – for now – close to resemble a guerilla group.

Interestingly, in late summer, the re-emerging Soviet partisans of Polesia contacted the Polesian Sich to unite their efforts against the Germans, demanding its formal submission to Soviet control. Bulba-Borovets agreed only for a limited-scale common action. The local Red partisans were still weak and confined at Volhynia's northernmost edge, receiving support from the powerful Belorussian groups.¹⁰¹ Eventually, the Soviet partisans lost their patience with Bulba-Borovets and moved against him. By autumn 1942, large numbers of partisans were parachuted to northern Volhynia or crossed the Pripyat marshes from, making the entire forest area west of the Dnieper their area of operations. Additionally, the prominent partisan leader, Sidor Kovpak (1887-1967), had come to the area following Stalin's personal order. The Soviet dictator wanted to rally the scattered regional partisan forces to conduct a powerful raid west of the Dnieper, demonstrating to his former subjects USSR's power and German weakness.

¹⁰⁰ Armstrong, *op. cit.*, p.100

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.145

By 10 November 1942, Kovpak's force entered the territory of Reichskommissariat Ukraine, passing above the confluence of the rivers Pripyat and Dnieper.¹⁰² However, the Germans unleashed vicious counterattacks and the Soviet partisans spent two months evading them in frozen swamps along the middle course of the Pripyat.

Meanwhile the Ukrainian nationalists gathered strength, although they yielded some ground to northeastern Volhynia. The German harsh countermeasures, generated fears in the OUN-B that the police units it dominated – and were breaking up – might join the Communists. Thus, they decided to begin their own insurgency in November 1942. The two major centers of OUN-B activity were an area around Kovel-Volodymyrets-Kostopol-Lutsk in western Volhynia, and a place southwest of Rovno. However, the activity here was limited due to unfavorable terrain.

The OUN-B insurgency's nucleus was a group of 100 men under a leader with the pseudonym "Kruk". Nearby there was an OUN-M group under the command of an officer known as "Khrin".¹⁰³ Nevertheless, both were in fact undergrounds rather than partisan bands. It appears that they strove to maintain a semblance of subordination to German orders, and avoid their hostility. The surrounding peasant population was largely sympathetic to the nationalist cause enabling the insurgents to establish a natural link between Galicia's headquarters and the battle-zones to the north.

There were also, small pro-Melnykite bands cooperating with a group of OUN-B dissidents known as the *Front Ukrayinskykh Revolutsionistiv* ("Front of Ukrainian Revolutionaries") operating in the woods near Dubno, Lutsk, and Volodymyr-Volynsky; and a group of Free Cossacks under "hetman" Voloshyn-Berchak in the Kremenets region. The Polesian Sich continued to grow as fugitives and policemen unaffiliated with OUN-B were seeking a haven.

To gather the dispersed insurgents, Bulba-Borovets proposed a single command, and the OUN-B sent negotiators. Both sides agreed for a unified command, but Bulba-Borovets wanted to form an all-party front (UNDP, UNR, OUN-M, and OUN-B). The OUN-B agreed to recognize Bulba-Borovets as overall commander, but demanded to have the political direction. They argued that the UNR leadership in Warsaw was unable to command effectively a shifting insurgent force like.

Further differences regarding ideology brought the collapse of negotiations on May 1943.¹⁰⁴ By that time, large Soviet partisan groups arrived in western Volhynia. The whole area north of the Zhitomir-Kiev line would never return under effective German control.

Moscow ordered Kovpak to conduct an extensive operation deep into Galicia. The shortest route lied directly across western Polesia and Volhynia. Passing through the heart of Bulba-Borovets' territory in Liudvipol and then traversing the Tsuman area dominated by the Banderites; Kovpak's force entered Galicia from south of Tarnopol. The entire march – over 402 kilometers – took about three weeks.

However, the partisan offensive in Galicia, in July 1943, was only partially

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p.146

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp.148-9

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.150-1

successful in its primary objective: to disrupt the oil production in Drohobych. The Communist guerillas and the OUN-B insurgents fought savagely; then, the Germans joined the fray. The partisan forces quickly disintegrated in the unfavorable environment. After the abortive raid on Drohobych, the partisans headed for the Caprathians. In late August, Kovpak himself, with a part of his band, headed north reaching the swamps of Polesia on 1 September with about 300 men. His deputy, Semyon Rudnev, stayed behind and was killed along the majority of his group. A decisive factor in the routing of the Red partisans was the Galician population's hostility.¹⁰⁵

Meanwhile, the Banderites began seizing control of the nationalist insurgency. After the collapse of negotiations with Bulba-Borovets, Dmytro Kliachkevsky (1911-1952) was induced to adopt the title *Ukrayinska Povstanska Armiya* ("Ukrainian Insurgent Army" – UPA). Additionally, the *Third Extraordinary Congress* of the OUN – held in August 1943 - appointed Roman Shukhevych, who has escaped from the German prison in Lvov, Commander-in-Chief of the UPA. Moreover, the OUN-B leadership decided to settle its scores with Bulba-Borovets and the Melnykites.

Subsequently, "Kruk's" force suddenly appeared fully armed before the "Khrin" detachment, demanding their submission to OUN-B command.¹⁰⁶ The majority of the OUN-M group accepted the ultimatum and was incorporated to the UPA. Similarly, other Melnykite groups were compelled to join them. Anything that remained outside this framework was destroyed either by the OUN-B or the Soviet partisans.

In mid-August 1943, the Polesian Sich – already seriously weakened by the fight with the Soviet partisans – was attacked by the Banderites. Two of his chief advisers were captured and forced to join the UPA; also his wife was taken prisoner and later murdered. Bulba-Borovets along with a handful of stragglers were driven eastwards. In November they engaged with a stronger partisan band, and two of Bulba-Borovets' associates were killed; nonetheless, he managed to escape. After leaving a small cadre in Volhynia – renamed to *Ukrayinska Narodna Revoliutsiina Armiya* ("Ukrainian People's Revolutionary Army" – UNRA) to distinct itself from the UPA – Bulba-Borovets went to Warsaw, seeking German assistance to rebuild their scattered force.¹⁰⁷

By autumn 1943, UPA's ruthlessness and its rivals' hesitation brought Volhynia and southwestern Polesia under the OUN-B control. In fact, they controlled such large an area east of Rovno, that they established a "state" apparatus, including military training camps, hospitals and a school system.¹⁰⁸

The UPA was expanded through forced draft and the terror of the dreaded underground intelligence service *Sluzhba Bezpeki OUN* (SB-OUN), headed by Mykola Lebed. According to a Soviet report, 40% of the UPA's fighters are volunteers, while the rest were forcibly drafted. In reality, in Rovno oblast the

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.153

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.154

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.154

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.156

personnel were recruited under threats of physical extermination.¹⁰⁹

A German estimate of late 1943 mentions 40,000 people as involved to the endeavor. Apart from Ukrainians, there were deserters from German police units, POWs from various Soviet ethnicities, and a handful of Jews.

There were cases of individuals Jews who were recruited by the UPA and, thus, survived the Holocaust. However this favor was done by necessity. The extermination of Jews removed from the region a variety of professions: doctors, cobblers, tanners, smiths etc., in which they were prominent. The UPA needed desperate physicians and nurses. There were even cases where the Banderites stole Jewish doctors and their families out of the ghettos.¹¹⁰ By the spring of 1943, the insurgency began to single-out skilled Jewish professionals to work their trades in UPA's special concentration camps. For example, in April 1943, such a camp was established near Poryck, of Volhynia, containing more than 100 Jews.¹¹¹ However, there were also cases where UPA guerillas lured Jews from their hideouts, supposedly to recruit them, but eventually killed them.

It is estimated that from a pre-war population of 200,000 Volhynian Jews, 150,000 perished during the ghettos' liquidation, 46,000 were murdered by the Ukrainians or died from hardships, and just 3,500 survived the war.¹¹²

The UPA leadership – consisted of ruthless OUN-B activists – was deeply involved in the Holocaust. Although Bulba-Borovets and his group had carried out pogroms against the local Jews, they rejected the Banderite fanaticism.

Many members of the UPA were former policemen, *Hilfsfreiwillige*,¹¹³ and have manned the Schuma battalions, who had been instrumental in implementing the Holocaust in Ukraine and Belorussia.

By the winter 1942-1943 the various nationalist guerilla groups began a murderous campaign against all non-Ukrainians. Jews who escaped from the ghettos were seized on highways, in villages, or in the woods, and were killed.

In March-April 1943, Lebed imposed a collective death sentence on the Poles of Western Ukraine, sending to a horrified Bulba-Borovets a list of demands including wide cleansing operations. The "mass extermination" was organized by Kliachkevsky.

Bands of the UPA roamed the Polish settlements in Volhynia starting an orgy of violence. The murderers used primarily farm tools – pitchforks, scythes, and knives. The victims' corpses were often brutally mutilated. Dismembered, crucified, or disemboweled bodies were displayed in order to instill terror and force the

¹⁰⁹ Rudling, "The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of Historical Myths", pp.10-1

¹¹⁰ John-Paul, Himka (2009 November). *The Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the Holocaust*. Paper prepared for the forty-first national convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Boston, p.24

¹¹¹ Rudling, "The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of Historical Myths", p.13

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.26

¹¹³ The *Hilfsfreiwilligen* or *Hiwis*, were former Soviet citizens or POWs who volunteered in German service.

Volhynian Poles to flee. Eyewitness testimonies describe the UPA guerillas passing through a Polish settlement in the vicinity of Volodymyr-Volynsky singing: "We slaughtered the Jews, we'll slaughter the Poles, old and young, everyone; we'll slaughter the Poles, we'll build Ukraine". Also, bodies of Poles were floating down the River Bug.¹¹⁴

It is estimated that during UPA's genocidal campaign from March 1943-late 1944, around 88,700 Poles were murdered.¹¹⁵

By 1943, German defeats prompted the OUN-B to re-orientate itself towards the West. In the *Third Extraordinary Congress* of August, the extreme racism was toned down and official OUN-UPA statements were tempered with democratic and inclusive rhetoric. Nevertheless, Volhynia's genocidal campaign continued unabated.

Red Army's advance into Volhynia, by February 1944, highlighted UPA's weaknesses – especially its lack of trained military personnel of all ranks that reduced its fighting value. Since the erstwhile mighty Wehrmacht was being crushed and driven, the UPA was hopelessly unable to stand against the Soviet juggernaut. However, on 28 February, the guerillas succeeded in ambushing and mortally wounding Soviet Marshall Nikolai Vatutin – commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front – in Khmelnytsky oblast. He died from his wounds 6 weeks later in a hospital in Kiev.

Nevertheless, Vatutin's death was a purely symbolic victory for the UPA. In all engagements with the Red Army or the NKVD, the insurgents were crushed; thus, they went underground. On OUN's initiative, by 5 March 1944, the Ukrainian insurgents resumed negotiations with the Germans for combined actions against their common enemies. Cooperation was formally re-established in May.

THE SS-GALIZIEN DIVISION

By 1943, the tide of the war has turned against Nazi Germany. In February, 91,000 pitiful survivors of the German 6th Army surrendered to the Soviets in Stalingrad. In May, the North African campaign was over and 250,000 German-Italian troops surrendered to the Allies in Tunisia. German irrecoverable losses from September 1939-May 1943 amounted to 1,300,000 men.

The fading prospect of victory coupled with ominous shortages in manpower, prompted Berlin to reconsider a more concrete commitment by its foreign collaborators. From Hitler's principle that "only Germans may bear arms" early in the war, the Wehrmacht authorized a massive influx of non-German recruits. By early 1944, there were Indian, Arabian, Turkic and Caucasian legions serving in the Heer.

In the Waffen-SS, besides the racially "desirable" Western European and Scandinavian volunteers, Himmler started recruiting Slavs, Baltics, Muslim-Bosnians, Albanians and other "untermenschen" to his "Aryan" fighting elite. The strict

¹¹⁴ Rudling, "The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of Historical Myths", p.12

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.12

enlistment criteria of the 1930s – certain physical features, verified "unstained" Germanic ancestry, and political reliability – were lowered to just being able to fire a rifle. By 1945, 38 Waffen-SS divisions were created, with 60% of their personnel being non-German. Hitler's Wehrmacht became one of the most multi-ethnic armies in history.

In Berlin, on early March 1943, Galicia's new General-Governor, Otto Wächter (1901-1949), proposed to Himmler the establishment of a Ukrainian Waffen-SS division. After discussing with Hitler, Himmler responded to Wächter on 28 March, approving the plan. He preconditioned, that the division would be recruited, financed, and – to a degree – equipped by the Galicians themselves. For obvious political reasons, it would be titled "Galician" rather than "Ukrainian".¹¹⁶

The Ukrainian Central Committee and the Greek-Catholic Church were instrumental in the Division's formation. Support also came from the UNR in Warsaw.

Metropolitan Sheptytsky had lobbied the Germans early on to form a Ukrainian unit to fight the Soviets. Seeing the probability of Germany's defeat, he feared that the Bolsheviks would re-occupy Galicia. Wächter wrote that the metropolitan and his clergy were very helpful, had supported the Waffen-SS division, and prayed for the Führer in the liturgy.¹¹⁷ Keeping the young Galicians out of the UPA appears to have been one of the reasons why Sheptytsky supported the endeavor. Volodymyr Kubyovych, on his part, stated that he was ready to take up arms for the Waffen-SS.¹¹⁸

However, both the Ukrainian Central Committee and the Greek-Catholic Church set two prerequisites: that the Division would fight only against Communist forces on the Eastern Front, and would receive its own Greek-Catholic chaplains, something unprecedented for a Waffen-SS unit.

On Wednesday, 28 April 1943, in Lvov, Wächter made the official proclamation, appealing the Galician youth to enlist into the Division to fight Communism and defend their families, their homeland, and Europe. On 6 May, Kubyovych addressed the Galician youth stressing that the "historic opportunity" had come for the Ukrainian people to "do battle against its most grievous foe – Bolshevism", and they should stand "shoulder to shoulder with the invincible German army and destroy, once and for all, the Bolshevik beast." He emphasized the dilemma "Now or never!" urging them to join the ranks of the SS-Riflemen Division "*Halychyna*".¹¹⁹

The OUN-B had an ambiguous stance; although it initially denounced the venture calling it "a typical colonial involvement" and that Ukrainians would be used as "a

¹¹⁶ Michael O., Logusz, *Galicia Division: The Waffen-SS 14th Grenadier Division 1943-1945*, (Atglen PA: Schiffer Publishing, 1997) p.52

¹¹⁷ Himka, "Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky and the Holocaust", pp.356-7

¹¹⁸ Rudling, "'They Defended Ukraine': The 14. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (Galizische Nr. 1) Revisited", p.340

¹¹⁹ Logusz, *op. cit.*, pp.67-8

cannon fodder",¹²⁰ many Banderites served or cooperated with the SS-Galizien.

The OUN-M expressed its support considering it as the potential nucleus of a future Ukrainian national army. Roman Shukhevych and his UPA initially discouraged Galicia's youth from entering the Division calling them to "flee into the forests!" and join UPA's ranks. Nonetheless, Shukhevych, after contacting with Roman Krokhmaliuk, a member of the Galician Military Board, he calculated that he could send to the Division his own men as volunteers to receive a first-rate military training, and then desert back to the ranks of the UPA as organized cadres.¹²¹ Eventually, the UPA and the Waffen-SS would work together in cleansing operations.

Wächter's fears of a fiasco regarding the number of volunteers were disproved, and there was a variety of reasons. The need for a Galician division confirmed to the Ukrainians that Germany was losing the war, and the hated Soviets were advancing. German defeat meant Soviet reoccupation; thus, neutrality was not an option. The alternative of UPA was unappealing due to the subsequent hardships, and also because the insurgency was hopelessly impotent against Stalin's armada. Some joined viewing the Division as a herald of Ukrainian independence, some for adventure, while others because they were German sympathizers.

During the first month of recruitment over 80,000 Ukrainians volunteered for duty. 30,000 were rejected for political unreliability, and 20,000 as physically unfit. Ultimately 13-14,000 were accepted. Many volunteers were recruited from collaborationist formations.¹²²

Propaganda was crucial in attracting volunteers. They were part of an elite that would fight a "deadly danger" which threaten them "from the Asiatic steppes". They defended the "traditions of Galician Ukrainianhood" and the "honorable and beautiful part of the world" called Europe.¹²³

Despite the heavy indoctrination of Ukrainian nationalists to the literature of Hrushevsky and Dontsov that they were "pure" Slavs destined to fight against the "Muscovite-Tatar" hordes and their "Jewish-Bolshevik" masters, the majority of the SS leadership lumped together the Ukrainians with the rest of the Slavic "sub-humans". Many high-ranking Nazis found unacceptable the fact that a Waffen-SS formation would be comprised by racially "inferior" troops. SS General Kurt Daluge, voiced his fears that the weapons given by the Germans will eventually be used against them, citing the Ukrainian treachery of 1917-1918.

Reichskommissar Koch madly opposed the endeavor, fearing that this may herald a new German policy towards Ukraine.¹²⁴

The official establishment of the Division on 18 July 1943 saw much jubilation. An outdoor mass was held, attended by 50,000 people to bid farewell to the first group of

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.62

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp.64-5

¹²² Per Anders Rudling (2012): "'They Defended Ukraine': The 14.Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (Galizische Nr. 1) Revisited", p.338

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p.339

¹²⁴ Logusz, *op. cit.*, p.78

departing volunteers. Kost Pankivsky joined Wächter and Alfred Bisanz – liaison of Ukrainian question in the Generalgouvernement – in addressing the local SS leadership, the SS volunteers and enthusiastic young men in the blue uniforms of the nationalist scout organization *Plast*, which provided many of the volunteers to become officers of the division.¹²⁵ On 20 July, the first transports set out to Heidelager, a military training ground in Generalgouvernement.

The training was the typical of German infantry divisions. As an integral part of the training, the Galicians received two hours of education in National Socialist *Weltanschauung* every week. The units were trained in facilities linked to concentration camps. Like the *Verwaltungsschule* in Dachau, both the Heidelager and Hradischko training grounds were constructed as adjacent to forced labor camps. The Galicians occasionally interfered in the running of the Heidelager camp.¹²⁶

On 29 August, at Heidelager, after the completion of the military and ideological training, the recruits were sworn the oath to Hitler in the presence of Otto Wächter and representatives of the Ukrainian Central Committee. By late September 1943, the Division's headquarters staff was established commanded by SS General-Major Walter Schimana. In October, the division was re-designated as the *14.Galizische SS-Freiwilligen Division*. On 31 December 1943, the strength of the Division consisted of 256 officers, 449 NCOs, and 11,929 enlisted men.¹²⁷

The divisional leadership could not be provided by the Ukrainians, for most of the volunteers had no prior military experience. Those drafted by the Red Army in 1939-41 served mostly as labor troops, while those who had served in the Polish army before 1939 were of questionable quality because of Poland's outdated military system.

Thus, Germans would provide the necessary personnel. On 20 November 1943, SS Brigadier-General Fritz Freitag (1894-1945) became the new divisional commander. Among the commanding officers was also SS-Captain Heinrich Wiens, a Ukrainian Volksdeutsche, who had served with Einsatzgruppe D, and participated in mass executions. On 2 March 1944, SS Lieutenant-Colonel, Franz Magall was appointed chief supply officer of the SS-Galizien Divisionl. He had been involved in atrocities in Belorussia at the beginning of the war and also served with the dreaded SS-Sonderkommando Dirlwanger. Both formations exchanged officers.¹²⁸

There were also 10 officers and NCOs from "Nachtigall" and 4 from "Roland" battalions. Furthermore, some had served in the infamous Schutzmannschaften battalions; namely the 201, 204, and 206. The three battalions were involved either in atrocities against "Jews and Communists", or provided guards for the Pustkow concentration camp.¹²⁹ Himmler had ordered the establishment of 5 *Polizei Schützen*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.78

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.78

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.142

¹²⁸ Rudling, "They Defended Ukraine": The 14.Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (Galizische Nr. 1) Revisited", p.344

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.345-6

regiments, consisted of volunteers that had not made the first cut. They were integrated into the Division later.

During the mass murder of the Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia by the UPA, the Polish village of Huta Pienacka became a refuge for Polish and Jewish survivors from surrounding settlements. The cooperation of Huta Pienacka with Communist partisans sealed its fate.

Early in the morning of 28 February 1944, white-clad Waffen-SS soldiers surrounded the village and shelled it with artillery. Some of the Galicians entered the village and murdered the civilians – mostly women and children – either simply shooting them or locking them in barns that were torched.¹³⁰ In 4 March 1944, after the killing of 15 Ukrainians in the village of Zhukiv by Polish insurgents, detachments of German gendarmerie, the UPA and men from the SS-Galizien Division conducted "pacification" assaults on nearby Polish villages.¹³¹ On 7 April, SS Ukrainians or "deserters from the unit" murdered 22 people in the Polish village of Chatki. On 17 May 1944, Armia Krajowa reported to the Polish government-in-exile in London that "units of the SS *Halychyna* Division appeared recently in the country of Hrubieszow where they stepped up terrorist attacks on the civilian population. Six Polish villages were burned down." Furthermore, according to Dieter Pohl (*Holocaust in Galicia*), there is a "high probability" that Ukrainian Waffen-SS soldiers participated in the round-up of Jews in Brody on February 1944.¹³²

The Division participated in anti-partisan operations. In mid-February 1944, as a result of intense partisan activity, the division received orders to form a *kampfgruppe* ("battlegroup") and be subordinated to the SS police of Generalgouvernement. On 15 February, SS Colonel Friedrich Beyersdorff led a 2,000 strong battlegroup.

Kampfgruppe "Beyersdorff" operated in the regions of Podlachia, Polesia, and Volhynia. The battlegroup was divided into two subgroups – "A" and "B", and the planned assembly area was near Lubaczow, a Polish border town between Przemysl and Zamosc. However, sizeable elements of the *kampfgruppe* were sent to Lvov. After a brief stay, they rejoined the main bulk.

The stance of local population towards the Galician Waffen-SS was mixed. Ukrainians looked upon them as saviors, while the Poles viewed them with suspicion. The first encounter with Soviet partisans took place in a forest near the town of Frampol. After an initial surprise, the *kampfgruppe* counterattacked with artillery and cleared the area. 25 Galicians were lying dead. Some desertions were recorded, and most of them joined the UPA.

On 27 March 1944, Kampfgruppe "Beyersdorff" ceased its operations, and several days later, it rejoined the rest of Division in Neuhammer, Silesia. By this time the SS-Galizien boasted 12,901 soldiers.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.346-8

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p.354

¹³² *Ibid.*, p.356



German administration of Eastern Europe 1942. Retrieved from: <http://www.ushmm.org/lcmedia/map/lc/image/eeu76030.gif>, date of retrieval: 14/10/2015

CHAPTER THREE: UKRAINIAN NATIONALISM FIGHTS TO SURVIVE, 1944-1945

THE BATTLE FOR WESTERN UKRAINE – KAMENETS-PODOLSK, TARNOPOL, KOVEL, BRODY

After the battle of Kursk in July 1943, the Red Army held its momentum until the end of the war. Army Group South withdrew to the Dnieper and Hitler ordered its transformation into an impenetrable barrier.

While retreating, the Germans applied a scorched-earth policy. All kind of infrastructure was blown up; villages were burned down and their inhabitants executed or deported. In August, the SS-Sonderkommando 1005 returned to Babi Yar to destroy evidence of the mass murder before the Soviets arrive.

By November 1943, the Red Army overcame German resistance, liberating Kiev on 6 November, while Dnieper's defensive line was largely overran.

General Nikolai Vatutin's (1901-1944) *1st Ukrainian Front* advanced and took Zhitomir and Korosten; however, Field-Marshal Erich von Manstein's 48th Panzerkorps counterattacked in mid-November, temporarily recapturing them. In early December, General Ivan Konev's (1897-1973) *2nd Ukrainian Front*, breached the enemy line and liberated Cherkassy. On the same area, in February 1944, around 60,000 German troops – among them foreign Waffen-SS volunteers and Hiwis – were encircled.

On 17 February, the encircled forces formed two columns, attempting to cross the River Gnilyy Tikich, and reach an approaching panzer relief force. Meanwhile, the Soviets were ruthlessly hammering them. Less than half managed to escape. Among the fallen, was their commander General Wilhelm Stemmermann. Konev was promoted to *Marshall of the Soviet Union*.¹³³

By the beginning of 1944, the Axis fielded in the East, 2,500,000 troops, 1,500 armored vehicles, and 2,000 airplanes against Red Army's 6,000,000 troops, 5,600 armored vehicles, and 13,000 airplanes. Weakened by heavy losses in men and materiel the Axis was gradually driven westwards. Soviet losses were atrocious but USSR's reserves, resources, and infrastructure enabled her to outnumber, and out-produce the Third Reich.

Konev celebrated his promotion by resuming the offensive. The appalling weather conditions were an interchange of freeze and thaw, in what the Soviet soldiers described as the "mud offensive". The roads were rendered to knee-deep quagmires, limiting mechanized movement to a crawl.

The 2nd Ukrainian Front pushed back the German 8th Army continuing its advance to the Bug. By March, Konev's troops had entered Romania.

¹³³ Winchester, *op. cit.*, pp.120-1

After Vatutin's death, Marshall Georgy Zhukov assumed command of the 1st Ukrainian Front. He unleashed an attack on 4-5 March, and his tanks covered more than 160 kilometers, in a few days, trapping 22 understrength German divisions – about 200,000 men belonging to the 1st Panzer Army – in a huge *kessel* ("cauldron" in German) near Kamenets-Podolsk. The pocket included elite German units like the SS-Panzer divisions Leibstandarte and Das Reich. However, the panzer forces were shadows of their old selves, able to muster some dozens of operational vehicles. The commander of the 1st Panzer Army, Colonel-General Hans Hube – a survivor of Stalingrad – assumed the *kessel*'s leadership. Hube and von Manstein were determined to save their troops. They refused to obey Hitler's orders of declaring the pocket a "fortress" that had to be defended to the last. Hube's *kessel* would be a "mobile pocket", to prevent the Soviets from cornering it and concentrating their forces to reduce it.

For more than two weeks, Hube maneuvered his troops moving southwards and then westwards, keeping the enemy guessing about their exact location.¹³⁴ The Luftwaffe concentrated its remaining strength in the East, and did its best to support the operation. It managed to deliver 200-250 tons of supplies per day.¹³⁵

The obvious escape route was to the south, where a number of bridges over the Dniester into Romania, remained open. Hence, Zhukov concentrated the bulk of his armor against these crossings. Von Manstein drew a plan for Hube's troops to attack directly westwards, breaking through the enemy lines and link up with a relief force moving east.

Hitler despised the plan because it gave up too much territory, and for days he lingered refusing to take a decision. On 24 March, after von Manstein's threat to issue orders himself, the Führer authorized the breakout. German reinforcements had arrived from France, in the form of the II SS-Panzerkorps, under SS Colonel-General Wilhelm Bittrich with the well-equipped – but untried – SS-Panzer divisions *Hohenstaufen* and *Fruntsberg*. This formation would play decisive role in punching a corridor through from the west and take pressure off Hube's troops.

On 2 April, Zhukov issued two succinct ultimatums to the encircled Germans: if they did not immediately surrender 1/3 of those eventually captured will be shot, and, all officers who will not immediately surrender will be executed on capture.

By 3 April, Bittrich's forces had been assembled in Lvov, and the following day they went to action. The *Schwere Panzer Abteilung 506* with its Tiger tanks became the spearhead, battering its way through a large Soviet anti-tank front. Then, the Fruntsberg Division took over the advance for the final 32 kilometers to the pocket. However, it immediately ran into a concealed enemy anti-tank front. The panzer went on to blast the Soviet defenses. Soon the vehicles were again rolling eastward. The Waffen-SS managed to link with the depleted 6th Panzer Division, but they were soon cut-off by massive Soviet infantry attacks. Fierce fighting ensued in the snowy Galician woods along the columns' retreat route.

¹³⁴ Ripley, *op. cit.*, p.181

¹³⁵ Winchester, *op. cit.*, p.123

On 6 April, Bittrich's men had flashed out the enemy infantry from the forest around Buchach, which was the objective of Hube's columns.

By 9 April 1944, all the trapped forces were safely out. Given the desperate German situation in USSR, it was a major success. Nevertheless, Hitler saw it differently. Field-Marshal von Manstein, "the savior of the Eastern Front", was relieved and replaced by Field-Marshal Walther Model – an ardent Nazi and fanatical supporter of Hitler – known for his "fight to the last bullet" attitude.

On 4 March 1944, the 1st Ukrainian Front advanced west of Shepetovka, breaching the 4th Panzer Army's front. Near Yampol, the Soviet advance created a 40-kilometer-wide breakthrough, threatening to cut-off the last major railroad east of the Carpathians close to Tarnopol. That would force the Germans to supply army groups Center and South via a long route through Romania.¹³⁶

Tarnopol was designated a garrison-city, yet it lacked any actual fortifications. By 8 March 1944, Hitler ordered Tarnopol to be held to the last man, issuing the *Führer Directive No. 11*, in which he coined the term *Fester-Platz* ("fortified-place"). "Fortified-places" would be established in critical points of the front, allowing to be encircled, and hamper the Soviet advance.

After encircling Tarnopol from the east, the Soviets broke into the city at dawn of 9 March. Many rear-echelon units and civilians fled disorderly westwards to escape. The garrison defended doggedly, and, by 11 March, the first Soviet probe was eliminated.

The understrength garrison – about 4,600 men – consisted of local Galician militiamen, troops of the 8th Panzer Division, and the 4th SS-Freiwilligen Regiment from the SS-Galizien Division. There were also a few armored vehicles and some dozens of various artillery pieces.

By 23 March, Tarnopol was completely cut-off. The garrison's commander, General-Major Egon von Neindorff, knew that his forces were inadequate for a protracted siege. They prepared the defenses, distributed rations and ammunitions, and set assembly points for the wounded. Contact with the "outside" was possible only through radio.

On 24 March, the Soviets launched repeated attacks in the west against the Kutkowce and Zagrobela suburbs. The former was lost, while the latter changed hands several times. By nightfall it remained in German hands.

For the first time, a Soviet emissary proposed surrender terms for the garrison, but the offer was rejected.

On early morning 25 March, a convoy carrying 40 tons set off from Lvov to resupply the garrison. A *kampfgruppe* from the 8th Panzer Division would accompany it, tasked with penetrating the enemy line, to create a safe passage.

The muddy road and Soviet resistance claimed many vehicles. When the *kampfgruppe* reached the final – and strongest – enemy positions, Soviet soldiers emerged from the woods, while tanks and anti-tank guns fired from concealed

¹³⁶ Alex, Buchner, *Ostfront 1944: The German Defensive Battles on the Russian Front, 1944*, (West Chester, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 1991), p.76

positions. Soviet airplanes strafed the Germans killing nearly all the commanders of a panzergrenadier regiment, while destroying their radio station. The *kampfgruppe's* commander, Colonel Friebe ordered a withdrawal. German command promised to supply Tarnopol by air. Since there was no available airfield, the Luftwaffe could only drop supplies; however, due to enemy air defenses most airdrops landed on enemy-held territory, lakes or swamps.

On the evening of 25 March, an overwhelming Soviet offensive crushed the German positions at Zagrobela suburb. The besiegers also employed psychological warfare on the enemy: a group of 32 German prisoners were sent back with flyers exhorting the defenders to desert, while new ultimatums were delivered.¹³⁷

On 28, after a two-hour artillery preparation, a Soviet rifle division, with tank and air support, stormed the southeast defenses. After bitter fighting, the Soviets decimated the defenders.

Hitler rejected von Neindorff's desperate requests for a breakout attempt, insisting that Tarnopol should be held until contact with German forces was restored.

After pushing back the front to the city limits from all sides, the Soviets tried splitting the defensive zone within Tarnopol. The east and southeast defensive wings were driven, forcing the Germans withdrawing to a new line. A Soviet thrust to the city center was repulsed using the last German reserves.

On 5 April, Tarnopol was showered with artillery fire and airplane bombs; then, the Soviet infantry advanced. The Germans barricaded themselves in every standing building, setting anti-tank and machine-gun nests. Red Army soldiers charged shouting, moving through the debris; many of them were mowed by enemy fire. Yet they kept coming, trying to flush out the defenders with incendiary grenades and flamethrowers.¹³⁸ Eventually, the Germans withstood suffering heavy losses.

In 10 April, von Neindorff informed his superiors that he lost 1,487 casualties and the garrison was about to collapse. They replied that a relief attack will begin on 11 April, and the garrison should prepare for a breakout. The 48th Panzerkorps would advance on 11 April through the main line of resistance in the Horosdyczcze-Kozlov sector. The 10th SS-Panzer Division Hohensfaufen and the *Panzerverband Friebe*, would force crossings on the Stypa and Wosuszka rivers, and drive through Tarnopol by the shortest route while protecting the flanks.

Meanwhile, in Tarnopol, the final battle had begun. The Soviets determined to take the city, attacked ferociously on 11-12 April, achieving several penetrations into the enemy defenses; on 13 April, the pocket was split in two.

On 14 April, after three days of struggle against poor weather and stiff enemy resistance to establish the necessary bridgeheads, the relief attack advanced after a considerable improve in the weather. In the afternoon the panzer spearhead reached the Chodackow Wielki area, where it was halted by determined enemy resistance. Resuming the attack next morning, the relief force reached 11 kilometers from Tarnopol. They would advance no further; powerful Soviet defenses halted them for

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.81-2

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.86

good.

Then something unexpected happened: numbers of shabby men, barely recognizable as German soldiers, appeared before the panzers. They were the first men from Tarnopol. Thirty-three more reached them – then no other came.

At noon on 15 April, the last radio message from Zagrobela pocket reported that General-Major von Neindorff was killed in close-quarter fighting. Only 55 men from the 4,600 reached the German lines.

German attention now, focused on the city of Kovel in Volhynia. A key rail and road junction, situated some 250 kilometers from Warsaw, east of Bug River. As a result of the heavy fighting in central and north Ukraine during the winter 1943-1944, a gap has been created between army groups Center and South.

In this gap, only Kovel remained in German hands, nominally under the command of SS General Otto Gille and his 5th SS-Panzer Division Wiking. The Division itself was not in the city, however. There were some German replacement units and the weak 7th Hungarian Infantry Division, which were to protect the Smolensk-Kovel railroad.¹³⁹

Elements of the Hungarian Division were on both sides of the railroad Chelm-Kovel. As the Soviets pushed forward, these units withdrew westward and lost much ground. A considerably weakened German 131st Infantry Division arrived through train from Vitebsk to Lyobml, west of Kovel. To make things worse, neither the Wiking Division was in better shape. After its mauling in Cherkassy, it was posted in Poland to recuperate. Gille reported that his formation could only muster small arms and was without heavy weapons or vehicles. Light machine-guns and ammunition were rushed from Warsaw, while trains were requisitioned to carry reinforcements to Kovel. On arrival, Gille was greeted with alarming news: east of Kovel, the Germans met strong opposition and made a tactical withdrawal.¹⁴⁰ The trains were attacked by the Soviets; some were abandoned, while in others their occupants were pinned down. Two Wiking Division's regiments tried to advance into Kovel, but 4 Soviet rifle divisions and anti-tank obstructions denied any further progress. Thus, Kovel should be turned into a "fester-platz".

Just as Tarnopol, Kovel should force the Soviets to besiege it, until a relief counterattack could be launched. Kovel's garrison consisted of German replacement units, engineer troops, men of the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* ("Reich's Labor Service") and some SS soldiers. Opposing them were at least 2 Soviet Cavalry corps supported by local partisan groups and airplanes.¹⁴¹

The German 42nd Corps was assigned to launch a relief attack and punch through the enemy lines to reach Kovel; the 131st Infantry Division would advance along the railroad. The Wiking Division would provide flank protection, and later would be relieved by the Hungarian 7th Infantry Division.

¹³⁹ Steven H., Newton, *German battle tactics on the Russian front, 1941-1945*, (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 1994), p.195

¹⁴⁰ Rupert, Butler, *SS-Wiking: The History of the Fifth SS Division 1941-45*, (Havertown, PA: Casemate, 2002), p.129

¹⁴¹ Newton, *op. cit.*, p.197

On 20 March, the 131st Infantry Division commenced with the advance, and successfully overcame the enemy resistance. By the evening of 22 March it was only 10 kilometers from Kovel. However, Soviet resistance became stiffer, and the snow-covered and swampy terrain made the German breakthrough costly and time-consuming. Additionally, the partisans increased their attacks against the railroad west of the front, but the Germans could repair the damage and remove the obstacles. Reports from inside Kovel indicated that the Soviets were gradually subduing the defenders.

On 26 March, the German 42nd Corps was placed under the command of the 2nd Army – part of Army Group Center. The 56th Panzerkorps – comprised of the 4th and 5th panzer divisions and a light infantry division – launched an attack west of the Brest-Litovsk highway to relieve the encircled forces.¹⁴² Reinforcements arrived in the form of Panther tanks for the Wiking Division and assault guns for the 131st Infantry Division.

On 30 March 1944, after 18 hours of fighting and with cover provided by a snow-blizzard, tanks and troops of the Wiking Division, successfully infiltrated Kovel, early in the morning, and temporarily established a direct contact with the garrison. The Soviets unleashed repeated counterattacks; nevertheless, the Germans held, while the Luftwaffe managed supplying adequately the relief forces.

By 5 April, the 56th Panzerkorps attacked and penetrated the city from the north and northwest. Eventually the city of Kovel had been relieved. Although firefights in the vicinity went on, the area remained relatively quiet until June 1944.

Hitler and his OKH expected a major Soviet offensive in Western Ukraine. However, in 22 June 1944, the Soviets unleashed Operation *Bagration* against Army Group Center, and the Germans moved reinforcements from Ukraine to stem the Red tide in Belorussia.

Nevertheless, Marshall Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front – comprised of 72 rifle divisions (1,000,000 troops) 1,614 armored vehicles, 14,000 artillery pieces, and 2,086 aircraft – was powerful enough to unleash its own attack.

Against this juggernaut, General Josef Harpe's Army Group North Ukraine deployed 5 panzer divisions, 1 motorized division and 34 infantry divisions with 900,000 troops, 900 armored vehicles, 6,000 artillery pieces, and 700 aircraft.¹⁴³ During the winter lull, the Germans had created three defensive lines – the third being the "*Prinz Eugen Stellung*"¹⁴⁴ – while the towns of Volodymyr-Volynsky, Brody, Zolochiv, Rava Russkaya, and Stanislav became defensive strongpoints. Although imposing, these defenses were thinly manned.

The initial Soviet objective was to capture the major road to Lvov, necessary for rapid advance, and isolate the General Artur Hauffe's German 13rd Army Corps, which barred the way. The strongest German force concentration was the 3rd

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p.201

¹⁴³ Steve, Zaloga (1996), *Bagration 1944: The Destruction of Army Group Centre*, Osprey Publishing, pp.73-4

¹⁴⁴ An unmanned defensive line hastily built in June 1944, running partly along the Strypa River, around 35 kilometers west of Tarnopol.

Panzerkorps, deployed from Lvov to Brody, and was expected to bore the brunt of the offensive.

Konev's forces did not employ any *maskirovka*,¹⁴⁵ by 13 July, the Germans could hear the rumble of enemy tanks moving, heralding the imminent offensive. Against Brody, Konev assembled two groups (northern, southern) with a combined strength of 45 rifle divisions, 7 Cavalry/Mechanized corps, 53 tank brigades, and overwhelming air support.

The offensive began with an enormous six-hour artillery bombardment followed by an unprecedented concentration of materiel and masses of infantry. The Soviets achieved breakthroughs in Horochow and Koltov, north and south of Brody respectively. By 14 July, the 13rd Corps had been isolated from its two neighboring corps, while local German counterattacks achieved nothing.¹⁴⁶

In 15 July the understrength 1st, 8th, 16th, and 17th panzer divisions were thrown into battle to close the two gaps. Soviet close-support airplanes hammered them at low altitude, while the Luftwaffe's response was insignificant.

The 8th Panzer Division clashed with superior enemy forces, and was bloodily halted. The 1st Panzer Division, after temporarily containing the enemy, withdrew towards the Prinz Eugen Position. However, in some places the Soviet forces came there first.

Following an enormous artillery preparation and air attacks, masses of T-34 tanks and infantry were launched throughout 15-17 July. Then, the Soviets took Zloczow and reached the Bug.

On 18 July, the Soviet forces linked up. After 6 days of desperate fighting the 13th Corps – comprised of Korpsabteilung C, 361st Infantry Division, 454th Security Division and the 14th SS-Galizien Division – was encircled. The Brody pocket contained 65,000 troops; the same day they received orders to break out

The Soviets exerted heavy pressure from the north and east, swampy and forested terrain laid to the west; only the south offered a possible escape route. The breakout commenced, early on 20 July; rearguards of the attack were the SS-Galizien, 361st, and 454th divisions.

The Soviets repulsed another relief attack, and with all radio communications were out, many units were already attempting to escape on their own.

On 20 July, elements from within the pocket managed to reach the 1st Panzer Division in the Zukow area. In the same day, a *kampfgruppe* from the same division made a last attempt to relieve the trapped forces. It managed to create an opening into the pocket about 10 kilometers west of Zalesia, through which about 3,000 soldiers of various units - including 400 Waffen-SS Galicians – managed to escape. Panic and confusion reigned supreme: thousands, of wounded, sick, and physically/mentally wrecked men, struggled to escape.¹⁴⁷

During the following days, the 1st and 8th panzer divisions withdrew, leaving

¹⁴⁵ *Maskirovka* was a Soviet military doctrine containing a variety of concealment measures to deceive the enemy.

¹⁴⁶ Buchner, *op. cit.*, p.223

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.231

the 13th Corps to its fate.

On 21 July the Red Army started relentlessly reducing the pocket. Groups of German soldiers stormed desperately the enemy blocking positions. Some fortunate managed to escape; most, however, were massacred.

By late afternoon, 22 July 1944, Brody's pocket was finally reduced. The Soviets reported 30,000 enemy soldiers killed and 17,000 captured; 12,000 might have escaped.

FINAL BATTLES AND SURRENDER OF THE SS-GALIZIEN

The Ukrainian Military Board from Lvov reported that 10,000 soldiers of the SS-Galizien Division were killed in the Brody pocket; although the most probable figure is of 7,000 killed and 3,000 managing to escape from the cauldron.

On 27 July 1944, the troops of the Soviet 1st Ukrainian Front took Lvov clearing Western Ukraine from German forces.

The Galician SS survivors crossed the Dniester River and headed southwest to the Carpathians at a fast pace to avoid the Soviet advance. Occasionally, there were some air attacks, and skirmishes with Soviet spearheads. Eventually the Division stopped at Seredne in Carpatho-Ukraine for rest and recuperation.

On 24 July, the Division reached the Uzhotsky Pass. By now thousands of civilians had joined them. Once in Slovak territory the soldiers and civilians had passed into safe territory since the Tiso's regime had offered asylum to Galician refugees. Around 500 men continued marching until they reached a temporary assembly area in the village of Spas on the northern slopes of the Carpathians. So far, they had marched around 241 kilometers. While passing from UPA-controlled, the insurgents urged the Waffen-SS soldiers to defect. Few actually did.

Otto Wächter joined the Division and personally inspected its remnants to boost their morale. Throughout August, the Division reorganized itself. Its field replacement battalion linked up, other survivors appeared and regrouped, while damaged weapons and equipment were repaired. By late August, the strength of the SS-Galizien stood at 3,000 men. The Division's 8,000 strong Training and Replacement Regiment was at Neuhammer, while other remained in officer, NCO, and specialist schools in Germany.¹⁴⁸

In a meeting with Freitag in Berlin, Himmler praised the Division's efforts in the Brody pocket, maintaining that it could be utilized in the future. On 7 August, Himmler ordered the Division's reforming around those assembled at Seredne. Freitag and his staff went to Neuhammer to assist in the regrouping. Afterwards, they flew to Carpatho-Ukraine where they found their men confident, well-rested and organized into a brigade-sized element.

The Division concluded its reformation in Neuhammer, on 20 September 1944, boasting 261 officers, 673 NCOs, and 11,976 enlisted men.¹⁴⁹

On 22 September, the Division was ordered to dispatch a *kampfgruppe* to Slovakia. An anti-German uprising – later called the *Slovak National Uprising* – had erupted and the Germans decided to send in the Ukrainian Waffen-SS. Most of the Galicians volunteered into the *kampfgruppe* for they knew their relatives and families

¹⁴⁸ Logusz, *op. cit.*, p.274

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.278

were there. On 26 September, a battlegroup of 900 soldiers was formed under SS Lieutenant-Colonel Karl Wildner – a Slovak-German. Kampfgruppe "Wildner's" mission was to advance into Slovakia and clear the vicinity of the cities Bansk Bystrica and Zvolen from pro-Communist insurgency. Two days later, another directive from Berlin, ordered the entire Division into Slovakia.

Passing through Bratislava by train, in the afternoon of 29 September, the Kampfgruppe disembarked in Zemianske-Kostolany's railway station, and immediately commenced with the operation.¹⁵⁰ The stance of the locals was mixed towards this Slavic Waffen-SS formation; some were terrified, some were sympathetic, and others indifferent. On 30 September, Kampfgruppe "Wildner" was subordinated to SS-Kampfgruppe "Schill" a German unit fighting its way through Pohronie. During the next days they attacked the 3rd Tactical Group "Gerlach" of the 1st Czechoslovak Army through the valley of River Hron in southwest Slovakia. Moving through central Slovakia, the Galicians cleared the region of any insurgent, thus, secured the uninterrupted movement through the critical road and railway system.

Meanwhile, the rest of the Division prepared to depart for Slovakia. Before leaving, on 15 October, General Freitag and his staff, reported to General Hermann Höfle, commander of the German forces in Slovakia. Höfle informed them that the uprising was backed by Moscow, but it was also supported by anti-German Slovaks. The insurgents were entrenched in the districts of Bansk Bystrica and Zvolen, and once these areas were cleared, the revolt would be essentially quelled, except some final mopping-up actions.¹⁵¹ Furthermore Freitag was promised additional supplies and material, while the SS-Galizien would be posted into Zilina's district.

On 8 October 1944, the German commander in Slovakia reported that the SS-Galizien Division entered Slovakia with 286 officers and 13,999 NCOs and soldiers. On 9 October, some units of the SS-Galizien invaded the area controlled by the 2nd Partisan Brigade on the mountain sides of Mala Tatra; the Slovak guerillas mistakenly identified the Ukrainians as "soldiers of the *Vlasov Army*".¹⁵² On 15 October, the Division's first echelons left Neuhammer. The German occupation command decided that the SS-Galizien Division would take control of northwestern Slovakia replacing the 178th Panzergrenadier Division "*Tatra*", in order to be used against the Slovak resistance in the area of Mala and Velka Fatra. Later it covered the rear of SS-Sonderregiment "Dirlewanger", which also joined the counterinsurgent operations in 14-18 October 1944. The deployment of the SS-Galizien allowed the withdrawal of German troops from northwestern Slovakia before the general offensive. Kampfgruppe "Schäfer" was redeployed to Komarno where it joined the core of the 18th SS-Panzergrenadier Division *Horst Wessel* tasked to strike the insurgents from the Hungarian border.¹⁵³

The units of the Galician Waffen-SS Division started operations against the resistance in northwestern Slovakia. According to German reports "the division was successful in several punitive actions" resulting in the "retreat of strong groups of the

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.291

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.292

¹⁵² Andrey Vlasov (1901-1946) was a Russian Red Army General who had defected to the Germans in July 1942. He had formed the collaborationist *Russian Liberation Army* comprised of former Soviet POWs and Red Army deserters.

¹⁵³ *Michal Šmigel' & Aleksandr Cherkasov, "The 14th Waffen-Grenadier-Division of the SS «Galizien No. 1» in Slovakia (1944–1945): Battles and Repressions", Bylye Gody. 2013, № 28 (2), 61-72, p.63*

gangs towards the border of the protectorate".¹⁵⁴ On 15 October, General Höfle, ordered the creation of a second Kampfgruppe "Wittenmayer" – boasting 3,000 soldiers – from the SS-Galizien Division, tasked with attacking the guerillas in central Slovakia.

The Slovak insurgents spotted and were heavily engaged with Kampfgruppe "Wittenmayer" and a German armored train in the position "Kosatec" during 22-25 October.

On 18 October battlegroup "Schill" and Sturmgeschütz elements from the battlegroup "Wildner" captured Krupina and then turned northwards. The Galician soldiers fought ferociously, especially after hearing that "Bolshevik partisans" have captured many families of Ukrainian refugees.

After breaching the last defensive line in Bardin-Vlkanova, the Ukrainians marched into the heart of the uprising, Banská Bystrica, on 27 October. For their actions, they were decorated by the pro-Nazi Slovak leader, Jozef Tiso, on 30 October 1944.¹⁵⁵

Until late January 1945, the Division performed occupation duties in Slovakia. Additional direct occupation was performed by the Einsatzgruppe H, Sicherheitspolizei, Sicherheitsdienst, Gestapo, *Hlinka's* Guardsmen, and Volksdeutsche "home-defense" units. All the aforementioned forces persecuted, pacified and killed insurgents, anti-fascists, illegal workers, racially "undesirable", and resistance sympathizers.¹⁵⁶

In the areas of Smeryčany and Maluzina of central Slovakia, the Galicians attacked the civilian population. In Smeryčany, Kampfgruppe "Wittenmayer" razed a village using artillery and mortars. The civilians were driven out, 80% of their 120 houses were burned down and 4 people died. In the raid of Nizná Boca, another 5 people were killed.¹⁵⁷ Also the Galicians used their Russian (Ukrainian) language to deceive the local population by creating pseudo-insurgent units, and gather information about the resistance.¹⁵⁸

On 25 January 1945, the – re-designated – 14.Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (ukrainische Nr.1) was ordered to move from Slovakia to Lower Steiermark region, Austria. Berlin wanted to use the Ukrainians against Mashall Tito's Yugoslav partisans in Maribor, Slovenia.

At the start of redeployment, the Division was divided into three marching groups – "A", "B", "C". The lack of sufficient railway transport and the exposure of main roads to Allied air attacks meant that they would have to march more than 480 kilometers over high terrain in mid-winter.

After entering Austria on 6 February, by 28, the Division had arrived in Lower Steiermark.

In this mountainous area there were 5 partisan brigades in the 4th *Partisan Operational Zone*.¹⁵⁹ The Galicians, along with SS and SD units, fought a bitter guerilla war, crueller from what they have experienced in Slovakia. The two anti-partisan operations conducted by the SS-Galizien were a complete failure. Tito's

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.63

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.64

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.65

¹⁵⁷ Rudling, "They Defended Ukraine!: The 14.Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (Galizische Nr. 1) Revisited", p.358

¹⁵⁸ Smigel & Cherkasov, *op. cit.*, p.67

¹⁵⁹ Logusz, *op. cit.*, p.319

partisans were a large, capable force with many of their leaders being former army officers, as well as Anglo-American advisers.

On 1 March 1945, divisional strength stood at 14,000 but would increase several days later when in the vicinity of Graz, a "Ukrainian Self-Defense" unit of Volhynian pro-Melnykite refugees joined them. Additionally, there were other Ukrainians from Hilfswilliger and Schuma units, concentration camps personnel, *Ostarbeiter*, POWs, and refugees that looked upon the Division as a haven while Germany was collapsing.¹⁶⁰

On late March, there was a confusion regarding the deployment of units. Some believed that the SS-Galizien was to be absorbed by the 10th Fallschirmjäger Division or be disarmed as "unreliable", for by that time many collaborationist formations began to self-disintegrate. Eventually, on 31 March, the Division was posted to Army Group South's 2nd Panzer Army.

Meanwhile, elements of Marshall Fyodor Tolbukhin's 3rd Ukrainian Front, and the newly created 1st Bulgarian Front moved towards Maribor, whilst the Yugoslav partisans were re-organizing themselves as a regular army. The Soviet 57th Army broke the German lines, and the SS-Galizien was ordered to advance northwards to the vicinity of Gleichenberg and Feldbach, into Austria.¹⁶¹ By nightfall of 1 April, all Ukrainian units have crossed the border, and in many sectors, the Division engaged with Soviet vanguards.

In the village of Gleichenberg the Galicians fought fiercely with Soviet elements located in west and southwest, while they successfully secured the medieval Gleichenberg castle after close-quarter combat with Soviet troops from the elite 3rd Guards Airborne Division. Meanwhile, General Freitag became unnerved and announced to his subordinates his resignation. He was bitterly reprimanded and ordered to remain at his post.¹⁶²

In mid-April, the Division was transferred to General Hermann Balck's 6th Army. Balck assigned in turn the Galicians to the 4th SS-Panzerkorps of SS General Herbert Gille. An element of 1,000 Galician Waffen-SS soldiers, have fought under Gille's command with the Wiking Division at Modlin, near Warsaw, in autumn 1944.¹⁶³

A notable event took place on 19 April, when the Ukrainian General Pavlo Shandruk (1889-1979) – who had served as a general in Petlyura's army – paid a visit to all units including those on the frontline. He was the new head of the Ukrainian National Committee and, by recent order of Andrey Levytsky, was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the *Ukrayinska Natsionalna Armiya* ("Ukrainian National Army" – UNA).

Before his visit, Shandruk intended to rename the Division into the 1st Ukrainian Division, and use it as base for the formation of the UNA. Although on 12 November 1944, the Division was officially re-designated as "Ukrainian" many of its members were unaware of the fact. Following Himmler's approval, on 27 April, Shandruk issued the Divisional Order 71, to officially retitling the Division. Now the Ukrainians swore their allegiance to the Ukrainian nation.¹⁶⁴ At the time Shandruk was organizing the UNA, approximately 220,000 Ukrainians were within various German services. Shandruk sought to assemble them to create an army. However, the

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.326

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.340

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p.348

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.348

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.351

chaotic situation in the closing weeks of the war, made this work impossible.

By May 1945 Germany's fate was sealed; Hitler had already committed suicide, on 30 April, while the Red Army stormed the last defenses in Berlin. General Balck summoned his subordinate commanders and informed them about the imminent German surrender. To avoid being captured by the Soviets, the 6th Army's front would disengage from them on 7 May and quickly retreat westwards to surrender to the Anglo-Americans.¹⁶⁵

In 8 May, the Division received its last order to withdraw immediately to the vicinity of Volkermarkt. However, the Soviets noted this and began chasing them. There were some skirmishes and Soviet airplanes attacked the Ukrainian columns. While retreating, the Galicians abandoned their heavy equipment, and crayoned upon evacuated bunker walls inscriptions writing "Death to Stalin!", "Slava Ukraini [Glory to Ukraine]!", and "We'll be Back!"¹⁶⁶ On 10 May, Wächter visited for the last time his brainchild and the Division made a last tactical displacement relocating its headquarters to Sankt Andrä

The Divisional command learned that the Allies were interning various foreign and Waffen-SS units near Tamsweg. Wächter and his associates disappeared in the mountains, Fritz Freitag committed suicide, and his chief-of-staff Captain Wolf Dietrich-Heike assumed divisional command. Dietrich-Heike contacted with the British 5th Army Corps in Klagenfurt, arranging the surrender of 9,000 Ukrainians and 1,000 Germans from the SS-Galizien. Some 500 crossed into Germany and surrendered to the Americans, requesting to join the rest of their unit. Undoubtedly, some individuals blended with other prisoners, and some unlucky were handed-over to the Soviets; if not forthwith executed, they were deported to gulags experiencing a slow, painful death. Small groups of hardliners unwilling to surrender tried to cross into Germany, Switzerland, and France. Others stayed hidden in the Austrian mountains, re-emerging after months or even years.¹⁶⁷

The British allowed the Division to retain its small arms and instructed them to cross over to Italy. They set off on 28 May 1945, ending up to Rimini. There they were not placed in a POW cage, but in a Camp 374 for "Separated Enemy Personnel".

On 5 July 1945, the Personal Representative of the US President to the Pope received a diplomatic note from the Vatican Secretariat of State, requesting for the "several thousand Ukrainians" in Germany to be allowed to take refuge in "France, Belgium, the Netherlands, or any other country" and not being extradited to USSR.¹⁶⁸

On 11 August the Vatican Secretariat of State delivered another diplomatic note on behalf of the displaced persons of Ruthenian Catholic Rite in Germany. The Vatican's lawyers tried to arrange an amnesty from the Oriental Congregation claiming that these Ukrainians were not Red Army deserters, but actually Greek-Catholic Galicians, of Polish citizenship before 1939. Thus, the *Yalta agreements*¹⁶⁹ can only apply to Soviet citizens who were formerly Red Army's servicemen.

Pressure increased when Bishop Bohachevsky of Pittsburgh sent a letter on 25

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.355

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.358

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.360-1

¹⁶⁸ Mark Aarons & John Loftus, *Unholy Trinity: The Vatican, The Nazis, and the Swiss Banks*, (New York: St. Martin 's Griffin, 1998) p.190

¹⁶⁹ In the Yalta Conference, held from 4-11 February 1945, Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt decided the shape of the post-war world, as well as various issues including: Germany's post-war division, the repatriation of Soviet POWs, and other.

August to General George Marshall (1880-1959) who was Chief-of-Staff of the US Army, insisting that all Ukrainians within American occupation zone should be given asylum.¹⁷⁰

After additional diplomatic notes, the US State Department issued, on 23 January 1946, a "new directive"; from now on, only Ukrainians who were both residents and citizens of USSR after 1939 were liable to forcible extradition.

Eventually, by the summer of 1947, the British government – under Cold War geopolitical calculations, and the increasing pressure of Ukrainian émigrés – decided the wholesale transfer of the SS-Galizien Division to Britain "until the matter could be resolved."

¹⁷⁰ Aaron & Loftus, *op. cit.*, pp.191-2

CHAPTER FOUR: SOVIET SUPPRESSION AND UKRAINIAN NATIONALIST REVIVAL, 1944-2013

INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY, 1944-1956

By August 1944, the Red Army had recaptured all Galicia. Antipathy to the Soviet re-occupation was such that entire villages fled to the woods.

Until early 1945, the Germans kept supplying the UPA by air to continue harassing the Soviet rear. At the peak of its strength, the nationalist insurgency fielded between 25,000-40,000 guerillas. The total number of those engaged in any way with the insurgency in 1944-1950, was about 400,000 people.¹⁷¹ The guerillas secured weapons by abandoned German small arms, raids on Soviet units, or brought by Red Army deserters.

Already by spring 1944, almost every Western Ukrainian peasant household had prepared dugouts in which they concealed weapons, ammunitions, food stocks, and clothing, and could also be used as hideouts. The Soviet forces discovered 28,969 such hideouts in Western Ukraine.¹⁷²

The re-occupation was definitely not an easy task. The population was almost totally antipathetic, and adept at undermining state authority. The best Soviet military units were at the front until late 1945; thus, Moscow had to rely on the local party and administrative apparatus that had no military experience and little support from the locals.

However, during the winter 1944-1945 extensive Soviet security operations reduced the insurgency. Additionally, Moscow offered amnesty to those surrendered, repeating the offer several times. On 28 May 1946, in a top-secret communique to Nikita Khrushchev, the Ukrainian Minister of Internal Affairs, Timofey Strokach (1903-1963), summarized the blow dealt – so far – to the nationalist underground in Western Ukraine, with 85,571 military/paramilitary operations, and ambushes killing 110,825 "nationalist bandits", and other illegals, while arresting 250,676 persons.¹⁷³

Although decimated, the Ukrainian insurgency managed to assassinate 11,725 Soviet functionaries and collaborators, injure 3,914, and presumably kidnap another 2,401.¹⁷⁴ As late as 1948, in Lvov oblast, there were 635 reports of underground activity, and 835 assassinations of Soviet agents and local collaborators. Nevertheless, the guerillas could never hope to keep controlling extensive areas as they did during the war. Soviet numerical/technical/organizational superiority meant that only remote mountainous villages could be maintained as secure bases. The insurgents relied on

¹⁷¹ Alexander, Statiev, *The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) p.106

¹⁷² Jeffrey Burds (1997), "AGENTURA: Soviet Informants' Networks & the Ukrainian Underground in Galicia, 1944-48", pp.93-5

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.110

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.113

stealth to visit villages for provisions and information. To avoid reprisals, guerillas' families concealed their ties with them.

The first two years after the war ended, were marked by severe hardships. The famine of 1946-47, followed by tighter agricultural control was met by the passive peasant resistance to collectivization, while the OUN-UPA targeted the kolkhoz's chairmen.¹⁷⁵

The nationalist underground also boycotted the mobilization of locals to the Red Army in August 1944, by means of false lists, mass failure to appear at the recruitment center, and distributing leaflets urging the population to avoid service.¹⁷⁶ The insurgency's ranks received an influx of youths seeking to escape Red Army's draft.

Not all the deserters joined the insurgency, however. Some formed bandit groups that robbed and terrorized the region, as well as fighting both the OUN-UPA and the Soviet authorities.

The Soviet security forces were far more capable than the Germans in dealing with insurgents. A network of informers has been created that infiltrated the nationalist underground. Already by summer 1944, the OUN issued orders of eliminating Soviet undercover agents by any methods; shooting, hanging, and even quartering with a note on their chests: "For collaborating with the NKVD." Other instructions included violent reprisals against individual collaborators and their entire families.¹⁷⁷ For example, in Lvov oblast, in August 1944, two whole families of suspected Soviet sympathizers had their eyes gouged out, one by one, and, afterwards, their bodies were hacked to pieces in front of their horrified fellow-villagers.¹⁷⁸

Moscow responded with propaganda and false-flag operations. Special Soviet units disguised as nationalist insurgents committed atrocities, employing the mutilation of dead guerillas' corpses to terrorize the insurgents and the local population. Moreover, Soviet propaganda tried depicting the insurgents as gangs of Nazi butchers who terrorized Galicia-Volhynia. In one such case in mid-March 1946, the peasants lynched a captured insurgent forced by the Soviet authorities to confess the details of his guilt. Then, the villagers denounced the insurgency and its supporters living among them.¹⁷⁹ There were many Ukrainians who either influenced by Soviet propaganda or by pure pragmatism collaborated with the state. The number of Communists in Western Ukraine grew to 33,165 by 1945, and to 74,993 by 1949; in 1946, the local pro-Soviet militia boasted 63,712 fighters.¹⁸⁰

The Greek-Catholic Church was also subjected to Soviet repression. Though the relations of OUN-UPA with the clergy were fluctuated, the Uniate Church's persecution was perceived as suppression of the Ukrainian national identity.

¹⁷⁵ Armstrong, *op. cit.*, p.299

¹⁷⁶ Burds, "AGENTURA: Soviet Informants' Networks & the Ukrainian Underground in Galicia, 1944-1948", p.95

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.104-5

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.106

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.106

¹⁸⁰ Statiev, *op. cit.*, p.127

Initially, however, Stalin was ready to tolerate the Greek-Catholic Church, because he tried to establish relations with the Vatican. Metropolitan Sheptytsky, realized that, and demonstrated a remarkable political flexibility condemning the nationalist underground.

When Sheptytsky died in November 1944, Bishop Iosif Slipyi succeeded him. In December, he sent a delegation to Moscow to assure the Soviet government for the Greek-Catholic Church's loyalty. Stalin wanted to utilize her influence to undermine the nationalist insurgents and convince them accepting the amnesty.¹⁸¹

Nevertheless, by spring 1945, Moscow's attitude changed drastically due to the deterioration in Soviet-Vatican relations, Uniate hierarchy's failure to strongly denounce the OUN-UPA, and because many priests remained sympathetic towards the insurgency.

Stalin understood the need to tolerate Catholicism in the Baltics, but he preferred to get rid of the Greek-Catholic Church – a hybrid of Orthodoxy and Catholicism – and extend the authority of his obedient Russian Orthodox Church over the troublesome Western Ukraine.¹⁸² In March 1945, Stalin issued a directive for the incorporation of the Greek-Catholic Church to Russian Orthodoxy. In April-May 1945, Metropolitan Slipyi, 5 bishops and several prominent clergymen were arrested for refusing to consider conversion.¹⁸³ Havryil Kostelnyk (1886-1948) was appointed head of an "initiative group" seeking to incorporate the Uniate Church into the Russian Orthodoxy. Kostelnyk was the pastor of Lvov's largest cathedral, and head of the "Easternizer" faction wanting to purge the Greek-Catholic Church of Catholic-rite borrowings. Kostelnyk hated the nationalist insurgency since his three sons were killed while serving in the SS-Galizien and the UPA.

After the hierarchy's decapitation, conversion to Orthodoxy proceeded rapidly, with 800 of the 1,997 Greek-Catholic priests joining the "initiative group", by October 1945.¹⁸⁴

The final blow to the Greek-Catholic Church came on 8 March 1946, when a *sobor* ("council") of the hierarchy gathered in Lvov, accusing the Vatican of protecting Germany from war crimes' responsibility. They decided to "abrogate the Unia, separate from the Vatican, and turn to the Holy Orthodox faith of our forefathers."¹⁸⁵ In 1945-1950, hundreds of Greek-Catholic priests were imprisoned, and several died during the investigation.

Moreover, Khrushchev secured Stalin's approval to murder Teodor Romzha, Archbishop of Uzhgorod, after baselessly claiming that he supported the OUN-UPA. In October 1947, the *MGB* (Soviet Ministry of State Security) arranged a "car accident" that injured Romzha. While in hospital, a nurse-agent killed him by injecting him curare.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.266

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p.266

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.266-7

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.266-7

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.268

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.268

The insurgency responded by recruiting or even forcing priests to become its informers. In July 1946, the OUN issued an ultimatum to the converted priests to repudiate publicly their defection or suffer "executive measures"; the OUN murdered dozens of priests. Havryil Kostelnyk was assassinated, in 20 September 1948, for his pro-Soviet activity.

Already by mid-1943, nationalist anti-Soviet guerilla movements in USSR sought realigning themselves in the coming Cold War era. Additionally, American state functionaries, accompanying the army in Europe, began covertly recruiting German officers and their non-German counterparts throughout Soviet-occupied Central and Eastern Europe.

Months before May 1945, POWs captured by the Anglo-Americans were reviewed as potential assets against Moscow. This practice became so widespread that German officers and their collaborators stockpiled intelligence before surrendering, hoping to use it as bargain with the Allies.¹⁸⁷ A notorious case was that of Reinhard Gehlen (1902-1979) – leading member of the Abwehr – who along with some of his associates were removed from the POWs' list in American custody. In 1946, Gehlen set up an intelligence network named *Gehlen Organization* or "*Org*", and, in 1956, became the first head of the German *Bundesnachrichtendienst* ("Federal Intelligence Service" – BND).

Gehlen relied on the OUN's *Foreign Center* in Munich, headed by Stepan Bandera, for getting information about Ukraine. Bandera was released by the desperate Germans, in September 1944, in a vain attempt to raise a Ukrainian army. Nevertheless, he managed to form a German-Ukrainian intelligence network before the war ended. After Germany's defeat, Bandera was secreted away by officers of the US Army's *Counterintelligence Corps* (CIC) in Munich, and, in July 1945, he had established the *Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations*, a coalition of anti-Soviet émigrés.¹⁸⁸ In June 1946, an MGB special team was tasked with locating and kidnapping Bandera. However, they realized that he was relocated to the Munich's Gotha region; there Bandera was guarded by his own men, American agents, as well as from members of a Bavarian underground comprised of former leading *Hitler-Youth*, SS, and Nazi Party members. All were closely connected with Bandera's informants-network spread throughout Central and Eastern Europe.¹⁸⁹

Despite repeated American assurances, Bandera was never extradited to USSR. Nevertheless, in 15 October 1959, Bandera died after being poisoned by a KGB agent.

Another recruited asset was Mykola Lebed, head of UHVR and the SB-OUN. By 14 February 1947, in exchange for American support, Lebed's insurgents would perform espionage, terrorist and covert operations for Washington. This secret offer led to a breakdown in his relations with Bandera. Lebed sought sanctuary at the

¹⁸⁷ Jeffrey Burds, "The Early Cold War in Soviet West Ukraine, 1944-1948," Number 1505 in The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2001), p.12

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.13

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.13

Ukrainian Catholic theological seminar in the Vatican, offering his full cooperation to the US authorities. By December, the CIC safely smuggled Lebed's family from Rome to Germany. From that time, Lebed and his associates became a key component in the CIA's covert operations on USSR. Washington supplied with airdrops the Galician insurgents.

Soviet intelligence had captured German reports regarding British support to Polish and Ukrainians anti-Soviet guerillas. An intelligence report from Army Group North Ukraine, dated 21 September 1944, claimed that "in April 1944 the UPA contacted the British through its leader, Mykola Lebed." Another report by the Abwehr, dated 9 November 1944, noted that the British were supplying the UPA with captured German weapons; one UPA unit was described as having 18 British airplanes at its disposal and was regularly supplied by air.¹⁹⁰

Initially, the Soviet intelligence leadership downgraded these reports as rumors deliberately spread by the OUN

However, Moscow's stance on the issue changed after Winston Churchill's (1874-1965) famous 5 March 1946 "*Iron Curtain*" speech.

Considering Churchill's speech as a herald of the Third World War, the OUN leadership assured its insurgents that a "war between the Soviet Union and the Anglo-Americans is inevitable. The start of the war is planned for the spring or autumn 1946."¹⁹¹ In the 12 following months, there was a dramatic upsurge in guerilla activity in Western Ukraine. Besides a flood of reports regarding detected foreign espionage in western areas of Ukraine and Belorussia, Khrushchev received a report, dated 14 September 1946, by his deputy, describing OUN's expanded propaganda efforts and the entry from abroad to Drohobych oblast, of 80 armed "rebels", "equipped with new English uniforms."¹⁹²

This climax utterly contradicted Khrushchev's claims of the region's pacification. Stalin temporarily replaced him with Lazar Kaganovich in April 1947.

By 1949 the movement was essentially reduced to an underground organization. In late that year, the UPA issued an order to terminate guerilla actions, and on 5 March 1950, a Soviet commando unit led by Pavel Sudoplatov – the assassin of Yevhen Konovalets – ambushed and killed Roman Shukhevych, in a village near Lvov. However, UPA's activities did not cease immediately.

In 1952, only two members of the central Provid remained in Western Ukraine: Vasyl Kuk who became the new UPA's commander, and Vasyl Halasa. On 11 July 1953, the police caught Halasa and on 23 May 1954, Kuk.¹⁹³ Isolated guerilla remnants continued operating until 1956, when they were finally eliminated by Soviet security forces.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.22

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.27

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p.31

¹⁹³ Statiev, *op. cit.*, p.265

TODAY'S LEGACY OF THE UKRAINIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

The insurgency's liquidation and the consolidation of Soviet rule suppressed the Galician separatism. The diaspora circles continued undeterred their work, while the development of the nationalist movement during the post-war period included further internal disaffiliations.

The OUN maintained its dominance among the Ukrainian diaspora in the West after the war. However, it went through another split in 1948; a smaller group was formed by Mykola Lebed, the *OUN-zakordonnyi* ("OUN-abroad" – OUN-Z), declaring its readiness to accept democratic principles.¹⁹⁴ Throughout the Cold War, American, West-German, and British intelligence utilized the various Ukrainian nationalist factions in ideological warfare and covert actions against USSR. The CIA sponsored Lebed's immigration to America, protected him from prosecution for war crimes, and funded OUN-Z activists to form the core of the *Proloh Research and Publishing Association*, a pro-nationalist semi-academic publisher.¹⁹⁵

As ardent totalitarians, the OUN-B cooperated with Franco's Spain, Chiang Kai-Shek's Taiwan, and various Eastern European far-right émigré groups, including former officials of the Tiso's regime, members of the Ustasha, the Romanian Legionnaires, and ex-Nazis.

As for the SS-Galizien veterans, the *Ukrainian Canadian Congress* – a lobby-group founded on November 1940 – achieved the admission of around 2,000 Waffen-SS veterans into Canada. They argued to the Canadian government that the SS-Galizien had been "forcibly conscripted."¹⁹⁶

Additionally, the Division's renaming and re-organization in the last days of the war has heavily emphasized. In Canada the veterans were organized as *Bratstvo hol. Voiakiv 1-oi Ukrainskoi Dyvizii UNA* ("Brotherhood of former soldiers of the 1st Division of the Ukrainian National Army") becoming a constituent member of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress.

While building their new lives in the West, most of them hoped for a showdown with the USSR; some were even training soldiers anticipating World War Three. Yevhen Pobihushchy, veteran of the "Roland Battalion" and the Waffen-SS Galizien, continued his fascist political activities for the rest of his life. As regional leader of the OUN-B in Baden-Württemberg and military adviser of the central OUN-B Provid, he organized a military training camp outside Regensburg in August-September 1948.¹⁹⁷ Others, after 1945, turned democrat making political and academic careers. Indicatively, Volodymyr Kubiyovych edited the *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*; Petro Savaryn became chancellor of the University of Alberta; philologist Oleksa Horbatsch taught at the University of Frankfurt; Vasyl Veryha was the

¹⁹⁴ Per Anders Rudling, "The Return of the Ukrainian Far Right: The Case of VO Svoboda," in Ruth Wodak and John E. Richardson (eds.) *Analyzing Fascist Discourse: European Fascism in Talk and Text* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013) 228-255, p.229

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.230

¹⁹⁶ Rudling, "They Defended Ukraine": The 14.Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (Galizische Nr. 1) Revisited", p.360

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.363

chronicler of the SS-Galizien Division and co-editor of the veteran's journal *Visti Kombatanta*, as well as director of the Slavic collection at the University of Toronto Library; and Roman Drazhnovsky became rector of the Ukrainian Free University in Munich.¹⁹⁸

When contacting with the wider society, the veterans generally omitted their Waffen-SS background; within their community, however, it was regarded as something prestigious.

The Waffen-SS were designated a criminal organization at the Nuremberg Trial in 1946. It was something that complicated the nationalist myth-making around the unit by its veterans and their admirers. After the war the SS-Galizien veterans denied any association with Nazi Germany and responsibility for war crimes. In 1987, Vasil Veryha, while being interviewed by the CBC radio, insisted that "I have never felt to be a Nazi.", "I am and I always was a Ukrainian patriot", "If you would ask me another question, if I would do the same thing all over, I would."¹⁹⁹

The Division's apologists argue that its actions were justified as defense against Soviet oppression. While it is true that the Red Army committed war crimes in 1944 as it moved through Western Ukraine, Poland and Germany, nevertheless, the SS-Galizien and the OUN-UPA were actively involved in the Holocaust and fought for the Nazis.

Diaspora circles developed a literature that denied OUN's totalitarianism, its collaboration with the Germans, and its involvement in atrocities. Instead, they present the organization as democratic and pluralistic that rescued Jews during the Holocaust. A remarkable contradiction, is the combined celebration of the supposedly OUN-UPA's anti-Nazi resistance with that of the SS-Galizien Division. Hence, Waffen-SS veterans could celebrate the insurgency's anti-Nazi resistance while belonging to the same veterans' organization.

This nationalist historical narrative was gradually imported to Ukraine after the country became independent on 24 August 1991. It was received well in Western Ukraine, but coldly or hostile in the eastern and southern regions.²⁰⁰

The Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko undertook substantial propaganda initiatives. In July 2005, he established an Institute of National Memory assigning it with researching the archives of the former KGB.

After 1991, the OUN faced considerable difficulties re-establishing itself in independent Ukraine. It split between the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (KUN) in Ukraine and the émigré OUN-B, led by second-generation émigrés in Germany and Australia. Today, four organizations claim Bandera's heritage – KUN, OUN-B, the Tryzub imeni Bandery, and VO Svoboda.

VO Svoboda was originally founded in Lvov, in 1991, as the Social-National Party of Ukraine after the merge of various ultra-nationalist organizations and student

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.364-5

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.366

²⁰⁰ Rudling, "The Return of the Ukrainian Far Right: The Case of VO Svoboda", p.230

fraternities.

The party's symbol was the Wolfsangel ("wolf's hook") that was used by Waffen-SS divisions, and, after the war, by neo-Nazi organizations. The movement had a paramilitary guard, recruiting skinheads and football hooligans.²⁰¹

After some years of decline, in 2004, the movement chose Oleh Tiahnybok (born 1968) as its leader. Modelling itself largely to Austrian and German mainstream far-right movements, he significantly improved the party's image. It was renamed to *All-Ukrainian Association 'Svoboda'* ("Freedom"), replacing the Wolfsangel with an image of three raised fingers in the national colors. By integrating Tiahnybok into the Nasha Ukraina ("Our Ukraine") faction of the Verkhovna Rada, Yushchenko provided legitimacy to Svoboda. A few months later, Tiahnybok delivered an inflammatory speech in which he celebrated the OUN-UPA for having "fought against the Moskali ["Muscovites"], Germans, Jews and other scum who wanted to take away our Ukrainian state!" and claimed that Ukraine was ruled by a "Muscovite-Jewish mafia." Tiahnybok's caused his expulsion from Yushchenko's parliamentary faction.²⁰²

Svoboda presents itself as the successor of the OUN. Tiahnybok regards it as "an Order-party which constitutes the true elite of the nation." They also demanded the re-introduction of the Soviet "nationality" category into Ukrainian passports, subscribing to OUN's traditional national segregation. Thus, Svoboda's ultra-nationalism is supplemented with traditional "white racism".²⁰³

During Yushchenko's last year in power, Ukrainian mainstream media gave disproportionate attention to Svoboda, especially after its impressive performance in the elections of March 2009 for the Tarnopol regional Rada, where it received 34.69% of the votes. Yushchenko suffered a disastrous defeat in 2010 receiving a historical 5.5%. However, he left a legacy that legitimized Svoboda's ideology.

On 28 April 2011, Svoboda celebrated the 68th anniversary of the establishment of the SS-Galizien Division. Octogenarian Waffen-SS veterans were honored as heroes, in a mass rally organized by Svoboda and the "autonomous nationalists." Nearly 700 participants marched through the streets of Lvov, shouting "One race, one nation, one fatherland!", and "Galizien-Division of Heroes!", "Shukhevych, Bandera – Heroes of Ukraine!" The demonstration was also organized by Svoboda – since October 2010 the largest party in Lvov's city council – which had decorated the city with posters praising the SS-Galizien as "the pride of the nation" and "they defended Ukraine."²⁰⁴ On 30 June 2011, the 70th anniversary of the German invasion and Stetsko's proclamation of the Ukrainian state were re-enacted in Lvov with great festivities, where re-enactors paraded dressed in Waffen-SS uniforms.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.235

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p.237

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.237

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.245

Extremist football supporters designated Lvov as Banderstadt ("Bandera-city") at football games and other events.²⁰⁵

The great moment for Svoboda came on November 2013. Viktor Yanukovich was the elected President of Ukraine since February 2010. Although supported by Russia, he maintained a policy of balance between Russia and the West. However, in 21 November 2013 Yanukovich refused to sign the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement, choosing to strengthen political-economic ties with Moscow. This triggered a massive wave of demonstrations by pro-Western Ukrainians demanding closer integration with Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Soon, a veritable revolution erupted and Ukraine's age-old dilemma came once again to the surface. Pro-Russian and pro-Western protesters clashed throughout the country. Svoboda, and other various ultra-nationalist groups, including the Pravyi Sektor ("Right Sector") paramilitary extremist organization, were instrumental in organizing and leading the Euromaidan ("Euro-square") revolution, resulting in Yanukovich's overthrow. The deposed President fled to Russia.

A new provisional government came to power, comprised by a wider coalition of pro-Western parties with Svoboda being its main component. Along with Tiahynbok, several new political leaders emerged: Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Oleskandr Turchynov, and the famous boxer Vitali Klitschko. Yatsenyuk became interim Prime Minister and Turchynov acting President.

The Ukrainian nationalist coup was met by the secession of Crimea through a controversial referendum – held on 16 March 2014 – and the eruption of a localized civil war in the Donbass region, where pro-Russian separatists seek to form an independent "people's republic". Since then, Ukraine remains in turmoil.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.235

CONCLUSION

Ukrainian nationalism is essentially the "Galician" nationalism, since Galicia became the movement's historical cradle. Undoubtedly, the larger part of her population strongly identifies itself as an *ethnos* with its eyes turned to the West and its back to the East. What has started as nebulous concepts born from the minds of intellectuals, it evolved into a fully-fledged armed insurgency determined to achieve independence by any means.

Although ideologically it shared basic common characteristics with other European nationalist movements, Ukrainian nationalism was fundamentally influenced and depended on exogenous factors. Various major powers contributed decisively to its historical development as a force to be reckoned with, either supporting or suppressing it.

Western Ukraine, like the other regions comprising the so-called *Eastern European Borderlands*, has experienced much turbulence in its history, and the Second World War brought untold ruin, as well as a legacy of ethnic hatred. The proponents of Galician self-determination and their adherents, have made clear historical choices; choices that had catalytic repercussions both for themselves and those around them. Regardless of every nation's inalienable right on self-determination, the shadow of extremism falls heavily upon Ukrainian nationalism. No effort of revisionism can whitewash this fact.

The current Ukrainian crisis has awoken the ghosts of the past in a country seemingly doomed to never enjoy peace.

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