

The **WAR**
& **MYTH**

UNKNOWN WWII



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Authors of this work:

Igor Bigun, Sergii Butko, Volodymyr Viatrovykh, Kyrylo Halushko, Serhii Horobets, Sergii Gromenko, Oleksandr Zinchenko, Olesia Isaiuk, Bogdan Korolenko, Maksym Maiorov, Vasyl Pavlov, Rostyslav Pyliavets, Yana Prymachenko, Sergii Riabenko, Viktoria Iaremenko.

Under the editorship of:

Oleksandr Zinchenko, Volodymyr Viatrovykh, Maksym Maiorov

Ukrainian Institute of National Memory

www.memory.gov.ua

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Translation: *Larysa Zariczniak, Oleg Prots*

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The War Myths

How are myths created? And more importantly, why are myths created? And what can be done with these myths? Is it even necessary to do something?

If you are holding this book in your hands than it means you also want an answer to some of these questions. This means we know the answer to the last question: it is important to talk about historical myths. Because they are interesting and concern the question: what is our actual history?

The answer to the rest of these questions is not as short.

How are myths formed?

It is simpler to explain using any one example. It so happens that I have such a story at hand. I, at one point, even wrote a book about it. We are talking about Katyn.

Already, at the beginning of the 1990s, in my native Kharkiv, the study of one of the mass graves of Polish prisoners of war, which became known as the Katyn crime, began. All the graves were damaged by huge building drills. Human remains were milled and mixed with the ground, as if by a huge meat grinder. These traces – 60–80 cm in diameter – clearly come up as bright circles in aerial geometry studies. No one at that time could explain why the NKVD secret cemetery needed building drills for their graves.

In brief: The Katyn crime – the mass executions of Polish prisoners of war in Katyn, Kharkiv, Kalinin and several other places in the spring of 1940 – is today one of the most thoroughly investigated crimes of the communist regime. But even after half a century, this topic was still taboo in the Soviet Union. Only the official version of Katyn could be remembered: the Poles were killed not by communists but by the Nazis and not in the spring of 1940 but in 1941.

It was in the spring of 1943, that the whole world first heard of this small village near Smolensk. German radio announced the discovery in the Katyn forest of thousands of Polish prisoners of war that the communists had executed.

The Germans knew that the Polish government in London and the families in the occupied Third Reich were searching for at least 10 thousand missing compatriots. Berlin fully understood the consequences of their message.

The partnership of the USSR and the Polish government in exile under General Władysław Sikorski was under strain after the Soviet aggression against Poland on 17 September 1939. In fact, if it were not for the additional efforts of the British Prime Minister it is not known if there would have been any partnership. The relations between Britain and the Soviet Union were not simple, even as allies in the anti-Hitler coalition. This was perfectly understood in Berlin. The Katyn news pursued a very cynical purpose: to drive a wedge between the Allies and provoke a conflict which would lead to the collapse or weakening of the anti-Hitler coalition.

It almost succeeded: despite the harassment by the British government, the Polish government refused to recognize the Soviet version of the Katyn tragedy. The USSR, a few days after the German message, announced that the Polish prisoners of war were shot by the Nazis during their attack on Smolensk in 1941, and after a week broke all relations with the Sikorski government. More on this can be read in Myth 8. Here, it is important to note one important thing: from April 1943, the story of the Katyn massacre began to live its life as a myth – telling the truth about Katyn was forbidden. The truth was contained in Special Folder No. 1 – a package of secret documents. It contained the order from the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Soviet Communist (Bolshevik) Party (from hereon in the Politburo) about the "destruction" of 25,700 Polish prisoners of war, signed by Stalin, Voroshilov, Molotov and other members of the Central Committee and other papers that were tangent to this crime. Only the General Secretary of the Communist Party had the right to open this package. This was the biggest secret of the USSR.

In the summer of 1969, in a forest near Kharkiv, three students from the surrounding area accidentally uncovered this secret. That, which only the General Secretary of the Communist Party knew of, was suddenly unearthed by several fifth graders!

Summer vacation had just begun. The boys set out to look for treasure in the forest. Among the bones and skulls in the dug-up graves, they found gold wedding rings, gold teeth and buttons with Polish eagles on them.

The local KGB learned about it almost immediately. The boys' "treasure" was taken away. It was seemingly a small incident inspired by the books of Robert Louis Stevenson and Mark Twain. But this small incident already prompted

urgent reports between the Soviet authorities in Ukraine and the head office in Moscow: from Kyiv – the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party, Petro Shelest and from Moscow – by the head of the KGB of the USSR, Yuri Andropov.

A few excerpts:

“It has been determined that in 1940 the NKVD of the Kharkiv oblast buried here several (thousand) executed officers and generals of bourgeois Poland, whose remnants have now been accidentally discovered by children.”

“Retired KGB employee, N.A. Halitsyn, who in the pre-war years was a driver for the state security organs and participated in the execution of the HFP (highest form of punishment – addition by O.Z.) sentence, explained after inspecting the found graves, that in April-May 1940 he participated in executing the decision to shoot about 13,000 officers and generals of bourgeois Poland...”

This information was secured. Though these Soviet KGB documents state in black and white that in the spring of 1940, Polish officers were shot by the Soviet secret police, the public version was very different:

“We consider it appropriate to clarify to the surrounding population that during the German occupation of Kharkiv, the German punitive organs carried out, without any honour, shootings against deserters and other criminal offenses of German soldiers and officers and their allies at the location of these graves. At the same time, the Germans buried the dead from various infectious diseases (cholera, typhus, syphilis, etc.), and the so-called gravesite was to be recognized by the health authorities as unsafe to visit. This place is to be processed with chlorine bleach, placed under quarantine and then covered in soil.”

This fact was secured: that the USSR's KGB clearly recommended the spreading of rumours that the Germans created this grave site during their occupation of Kharkiv.

Moreover, further KGB documents describe the plan “to eliminate special objectives” on several pages.

Detention centers were created for this conspiracy work with a staff in 21 subdivisions. They were given four vehicles to complete their tasks: the “GAZ-69” light truck, a dump truck, a tank truck and a truck for digging along with ... 13 tons of sodium hydroxide.

It is not difficult to recreate their calculations – one kilogram of reagent for every one bone, with – according to the KGB – 112 graves, then there were 13 thousand killed who were buried.

The liquidation of the “special objects” was done under the guise of constructing KGB education centers. The script was very simple. The KGB had detailed plans of the Kharkiv graves. It was enough to drive the machinery, grind the bones, fill the graves with chemicals, flood everything with water – and then wait a bit.

Their plan failed. The remains of the Polish prisoners of war survived. And, when in the early 1990s archaeologists began to excavate the former “NKVD special object,” this ugly history of destroying human graves also surfaced. For the USSR, it was not enough to build a virtual version of the past – sometimes the physical destruction of material evidence which contradicted Soviet historical myth was also needed.

And here we come to the answer of how historical myths are formed.

In this story, we see all the basic techniques of constructing myths in the USSR.

American scholars, Roy Baumeister and Stephen Hastings, wrote an exploration of what it means to distort collective memory about the past. They recall a number of different techniques: but for the context of our example, only three need to be mentioned about the formation of alternative versions of the past: avoidance, falsification, accusations against enemies.

Avoidance: This is an omission of references and avoidance of unpleasant facts. The Katyn story appeared “taboo” for more than 50 years and this is the key to the approach of this case. Moreover, this avoidance turned into denial of events which actually took place.

Falsification: In 1944, a special commission under the leadership of academic Nikolay Burdenko falsified evidence and not only denied Soviet responsibility for the crime but supplemented it with “proof” of the Nazi involvement in the Katyn massacres. Evidence was forged from “eyewitnesses” as well as certain material evidence. For example, for Burdenko’s report, proof was added with a letter that had a false date of departure to prove that the shootings took place no earlier than 1941.

Accusations against Enemies: This technique was used in 1943 a few days after the Germans accused the USSR of the destruction of Polish prisoners of war in their message, and in 1944, when the Burdenko Commission continued to blame the Nazis for this and even in 1969 from what we saw from the USSR’s KGB documents. The purpose of this was clear, to attribute the enemy with their own dishonour.

But the Katyn massacre is just one of the many myths Soviet propaganda and historiography surrounded the Second World War with. There are dozens of these myths, which operate in the collective memory of the post-Soviet space. This was how the USSR tried to construct the Great Myth of the Great War.

Some time ago, the Lviv Forum of Publishers invited me to a public discussion with the brilliant historian, Yaroslav Hrytsak. In this discussion, Professor Hrytsak proposed the distinction between myth and Myth. The differences seem small. But sometimes that means a lot. After all, they say, the quarrel between Western and Eastern Christianity is due to the letter “j”, debating about the sameness (*homousios*) and similarity (*homojusios*) of Christ and God. After all, the devil is in the details.

In this discussion, it seems important for me to say that myth is a distorted, sometimes simplistic, and fabricated version of the past. And this is why myths are dangerous: when our knowledge of the past is full of myths and not facts – we lose our understanding of the nature of the historical process. Cause-effect links break the thread of these myths. And we find ourselves trapped in its own distorted version of the myth of the past. And over time – we lose the skill to adequately assess not only the causal connection between the facts in the past and in the nature of the various processes of today. Myths – are the night blindness on the path of history. In the twilight, we can fairly shake our heads at the milestones of history. Myths are a dangerous thing.

Additionally, Yaroslav Hrytsak noted that apart from myths, there are still big Myths. Collective memory operates, not on the perfectly weighted scales of academic facts, but on the coordinates of these great and majestic Myths: the Cossack Myth, the Myth of the Great Rus-Ukraine, the Myth of the Great War...

Frankly, I do not like to clutter my work with quotes from other authorities but sometimes I have to! The famous Polish cultural sociologist Barbara Szacka (whose book *Czas przeszły, pamięć, mit* is a must read for all those interested in the field of collective memory) outlined a very similar definition and scope on the functioning of a Myth.

The Myth is based on the irrationality of the past, on the faith in this view and not on facts. The truth of this view is not subject to verification. However, Myth is also created by the social network of relationships. Moreover, Myth more quickly informs us about the anxiety and state of mind of a particular time rather than what the past really was. Eventually, writes Szacka, Myth is built upon values. The decisive feature is in the relationship between values and not about researching events and figures from a particular timeline.

That is why within this system, Volodymyr the Great appears near Bohdan Khmelnytsky and Taras Shevchenko and the Baptism of Kyiv in 988 alongside Independence. This Myth is fixated and transferred to the values and importance of a particular group pattern. Its function is to define group identity and legitimize the existence of social and political order. And this is why totalitarian regimes love myth so much, because in this way, they created their own Myths – for totalitarianism it was a way to legitimize itself.

The transformation of social values is accompanied by changes to collective memory. Every era has its own Great Myth of the Glorious Past: popular figures and historical events change.

Therefore, the USSR tried to construct a context to separate episodes and in turn created the Great Myth of the Great War. I understand that this will be another great simplification but if you ignore most of the details, the Soviet Myth of this war looks like this:

The most peaceful country in the world was treacherously, deceitfully and without declaring war, attacked by the fascist barbarians. If we signed any pacts with them – it was only to maximize the postponement of the inevitable war which we had to win with little blood and on foreign soil. However, because the war happened unexpectedly, this led to the huge losses during the first stage of the war. But the mobilization of the whole Soviet people effectively allowed the equipping of the Soviet country onto a war footing and the mass heroism of its soldiers and officers under the leadership of the Communist Party and especially comrade Stalin who became the key to the great victory of the Soviet people over the fascist invaders.

Please excuse the broad strokes which depict this Myth, but I wish to give it a bit of logic. Clearly, the Great Myth of the Great Patriotic War was committed with great skillfulness. It pretended that what did not fit the contextual framework did not exist and ignored important facts and the fate of individuals.

Stalin tried to justify this in his infamous radio speech on 3 July 1941: the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was just a way of delaying the beginning of the inevitable war with fascism. But this did not explain the secret additional protocols which allowed the aggression against Poland, Finland and the Baltic countries. Thus, for this aggression, new words were created: “liberation campaign” and “friendly help.” But the secret additional protocols were hidden for another half century in another “special folder”.

Another example: the Soviet Myth about this war negated Ukrainians in their subjectivity. In the context of this Myth, they could not act on their own or in their own interest without coordinating their goals with the global powers.

Thus, the “true” Ukrainians were in the USSR and the “wrong” ones were the nationalists and Nazi collaborators. The idea that the struggle for Ukrainian independence (and in fact its existence from 1917 to 1921) disappeared from the black and white Soviet discourse and at best was placed in quotes as being the “so-called ‘Ukrainian independence’”. This part of Ukraine’s past was strongly omitted by the USSR.

The birth of a number of myths was due to the desire to “blame the enemy” for their own sins. Along with the Katyn crime there was also the falsification about who destroyed Khreshchatyk Street in Kyiv and the ancient Assumption Cathedral in Kyiv or the dam in Zaporizhia. Dates and facts were falsified: Soviet propaganda claimed that Soviet troops left Kyiv on 21 September when in fact this happened on 19 September 1941. The history of the “heroic Panfilov Guardsmen” was in general literally created out of nothing. And Soviet propaganda, and Soviet historiography avoided the mention of the largest tank battle in history at the Battle of Dubno, which the inept Red Army lost to the Wehrmacht in the summer of 1941. For years, the USSR tried not to recall the Koriukivka massacre, which occurred in March 1943 due to the role of the Red Partisans in the destruction of this town since it would contradict the myth of them being the “people’s avengers.” In actuality, in Koriukivka, the Soviet partisans provoked a punitive action from the occupiers for the purpose of revenge but they did not even try to protect the civilian population of the town, despite having numerical support over the enemy. Yet another “taboo” – the public mood of the Soviet population which too often held anti-Soviet notes.

The Soviet Myth of this war, filled with falsifications and “taboos”, ignored whole pages and chapters of history. At the end of the USSR’s existence, in the wake of its publicity, this Myth began to collapse under the influence of publications of earlier prohibited diaries and memoirs and declassified documents from Soviet archives.

In the early 1990s, Ukraine and Russia were in a similar situation: according to the famous historian Andrey Zubov, Russia was even slightly ahead of Ukraine in exploring the historical heritage of totalitarianism. We can assume that in the mid-1990s, the attitude toward Stalin was roughly the same in both countries. But then something happened. In Ukraine, according to a poll titled “What unites us and what divides us”, conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiative Fund, by January 2015 Stalin’s historical role was 7% positive from respondents. In Russia, the various interdependent Ukrainian polls (among

them – the study by the Levada Center) resulted in an increase from 47% to 52% of people viewing Stalin as being good.

The difference was in the political memory of both countries. Ukrainians underwent condemnation of totalitarianism and the rethinking their history. But in Putin's Russia, Stalin was an "effective manager", the Russian people were "a nation of winners" and believed that "we could have won (the war) without the Ukrainians." Therefore, the greatest catastrophe of the 20th century was not the war, or the Holodomor, or the Holocaust but the "collapse of the USSR."

Ukraine and Russia split onto their own historical roads. Russia returned to the usual practices of the USSR by accusing their enemies of their sins. The hate speech of modern Russia's propaganda borrows from the war's vocabulary – "fascists", "retributive", "Banderites." The totalitarian war Myth once again kills people. Unpunished evil grows and is multiplied.

Hasty generalizations and the borrowing from NKVD-KGB stereotypes for school textbooks, direct falsification of facts, dimensional visions of the figures and events, all of this has been once again revived today.

However, it is important that Ukrainian collective memory does not trap itself into newly formed myths – for example, the famous "stories" about how "Zhukov wanted to evict all Ukrainians from Ukraine", or that de Gaulle "wanted to have an army like the UPA." Deconstructing old myths should in no way become the basis for creating new ones.

Frankly, I would like to quote a fellow historian again, Pieter Geyl: "I would like to be able to clearly distinguish between myth and history. Myth – a deformed past, shamelessly matched to the prejudices of their spokesmen, their national and religious convictions, intolerant or biased views. History – is the past, shown the way it really was." But there is just one "but".

Paradoxically, the deconstruction of the Soviet Myth of the Great Patriotic War sooner or later will lead to a new creation – the Ukrainian version of the Myth of the Second World War. There is no other way – collective memory functions with Myths and myths. The history of the Second World War in the American version – is mainly the war in the Pacific theater of operations, the French focus leaves little room for anything but the resistance movement, Polish collective memory of the Second World war does not fit into the "global" concept and is filled with events and phenomena that are associated almost exclusively with the history of the Polish fight: Westerplatte, Katyn, the Warsaw uprising,

Monte Cassino. Ukrainians too, sooner or later, will create their national vision of the war (after all, no one can carry around the entire historical library in their heads). And here too, one needs to be very careful.

Every nation builds its own historical Myth. Great, majestic and sometimes dangerous. Ukrainians have to learn for themselves about the hazards that come with Myths that are built on “taboos” and falsified myths. For instance, during the Second World War when the theory of racial superiority used historical myths. And now, when the naphthalene Kremlin was beaten on their imperial mantle. Even Great Myths can still work, when bombs are still ticking.

This book, *War and Myth*, is unlikely to affect this Myth but can “change” several dozen myths of the Second World War operating in the post-Soviet collective memory that was built on fraud, manipulation or the concealment of facts.

The authors of this book are dozen of historians working in different institutions and organizations: the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, the Institute of History of Ukraine and the Institute of Historiography and Sources of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, the Center for Research on the Liberation Movement, National Pedagogical Drahomanov University. The idea for this book emerged from an internet source: “LikBez. Istorychnyj Front”, which came about during the need to counter the spread of old and new historical myths. In Ukrainian this book was first published by Family Leisure Club in 2016.

The book *War and Myth. The Unknown Second World War* in no way claims an ultimate truth and a standard of knowledge of the Second World War and the list of these myths is not exhaustive. This book – is just historical fast-food, its appearance caused by the acute desire to satisfy the hunger for information about this period in terms of the information war. However, the authors warn: historical fast-food can be dangerous for intellectual health – and therefore offer an appendix of important and popular academic books which should be read carefully either following, along with or instead of this book. Finally, diversification, – the diversifying of sources about the past, along with critically thinking about the basic conditions in order to overcome all the myths of the Soviet times which have filled our collective subconscious. With *War and Myth* we declare war on myths. “Fire!”

Oleksandr Zinchenko
Historian, Adviser to the Head of the
Ukrainian Institute of National Memory

The Great Patriotic War

Statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Russian Federation concerning the adoption of the Ukrainian Parliament's package of laws on decommunization, 10 April 2015

“By trying to eradicate the term the ‘Great Patriotic War’ and replacing it with the ‘Second World War’ in Ukraine, the current Ukrainian government is not only seeking to create the essence of a large scale historical confrontation but also inflict a deep insult upon their veterans, taking away from them their sacred holiday, betraying the memory of millions of Ukrainians who fought in the ranks of the Red Army and who gave their lives to protect their Fatherland from fascism.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

Terms: the name “Great Patriotic War of the Soviet People against German-Nazi Invaders” meant the unified fight against the enemy-adversary for the united Soviet Fatherland and was the only correct historical terminology.

■ Fast Facts

The “Great Patriotic War” – is the ideologically branded Soviet name for the armed conflict between the USSR and Germany from 1941–1945, a component of the Second World War. The chronological scope of the Great Patriotic War and its ideological content is expressed in its very name and does not correspond with the experience of the Ukrainian people during the Second World War.

■ Detailed Facts

The Great Patriotic War is Soviet historiography and an ideological concept which was created by the Soviet Union and which is still compulsively used by the Russian Federation as an alternative to the term “Second World War” in the hopes of

preserving its influence in Ukraine and the former Soviet republics. In the beginning, the phase was an ordinary ideological cliché. It first appeared in Stalin's radio speech on 3 July 1941:

"The war with fascist Germany cannot be considered an ordinary war. It is not only a war between two armies. It is also a great war of the entire Soviet people against the German-fascist armies. The aim of this national patriotic war in defence of our country against the fascist oppressors is not only to eliminate the danger hanging over our country, but also to aid all the European peoples groaning under the yoke of German fascism."

From 1939–1941, Soviet propaganda called this global conflict the "Second Imperialist War", being completely unsympathetic to the victims of Nazi aggression and their desire to protect their homelands. Instead, the Communist



"The Motherland is Calling!" The most famous Soviet war poster urging citizens to defend their homeland – the USSR.

International gave instructions to the Communist Parties in European countries to criticize their government for their efforts on focusing on defence against the invaders.

After 23 August 1939, Communist and Nazi collaboration lasted 22 months until 1941. The name Great Patriotic War is just a fig leaf for the alliance between Hitler and Stalin. Soviet propaganda after Nazi aggression tried to cover up this prior cooperation between the two totalitarian regimes.

The “Second World War” and the “Great Patriotic War” are not identical concepts of either chronology or geography. The concept of the Great Patriotic War offers a simplified “black and white” image, where the USSR was a “good power” and their opponents were the “forces of evil”. The reality was much more complex.

Ukraine’s participation in the Second World War was not limited to the confrontation of the USSR and Germany in 1941–1945.

From the very beginning, already from 1 September 1939, Ukraine was affected by the war. By the last day of the Second World War – 2 September 1945 – in nearly all of the fronts of the armed forces there were Ukrainian soldiers and officers who took up arms, not only in the USSR but also in Poland, Canada, the USA and other countries of the United Nations.

In the summer of 1941, many residents of Ukrainian towns and villages were not fully aware of the threat of Nazism to the fullest extent. Already from September 1939, Soviet propaganda paid a lot of attention to the cooperation with their allies, the Third Reich. The Soviet propaganda organ, the Pravda newspaper, published the telegram from Hitler and Ribbentrop on 23 December 1939 where they warmly welcomed Stalin’s 60th birthday. Stalin replied: *“The friendship of the peoples of Germany and the Soviet Union, cemented by blood, has every reason to be lasting and firm.”*

Soviet propaganda misinformed a significant portion of the Soviet population which ceased to perceive the Third Reich as a potential enemy. The memory of the 1918 German experience was also still prevalent in Ukraine.

Only eight years passed since the Holodomor and only three from the Great Terror. During the decades that preceded the Second World War, the communist regime killed at least five million people in Ukraine. Many seriously believed that the beginning of the German-Soviet war was an opportunity to free themselves from Bolshevism.

Soviet propaganda, Stalin's repression and the memory of the past became fodder for society to view the Germans positively. Some even hoped they were liberators from the communist calamity.

The Ukrainian NKVD showed this confidence in Kyiv in the summer of 1941. The mass surrender of captured soldiers and officers of the Red Army was also evidence that hundreds of thousands of Soviet citizens were not ready to fight for the Stalinist regime and did not perceive the war to be patriotic.

The Soviet myth of the Patriotic War always emphasized the heroism of the Red Army during their offensive against the Wehrmacht and avoided some unfavourable facts. The overall picture is significantly different from that black and white and simplified version of this chapter in history.

Order of the Patriotic War, 1st grade – one of the visual elements of the Soviet myth of the Great Patriotic War



Myth 2

The Soviet Union Was Always an Ruthless Opponent of Nazi Germany

A.Uzulyas (*Colonel Andre*), *The Sons of the Night* “An implacable opponent of Nazism was the Soviet Union who was a powerful factor in the struggle against German aggression.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

The USSR was always a consistent opponent to Nazism.

■ Fast Facts

During the interwar period, Moscow and Berlin sought to destroy the system that was created by the victors of the First World War. During 1922–1933, the Soviet Union helped restore Germany’s military capability. The Russian Bolsheviks wanted a global communist revolution and in 1923 did not shun support for the German Nazis. During 1933–1939, the Soviet Union and Germany treated each other as ideological enemies which allowed them to get support from the international community. The accumulated forces of Stalin and Hitler were used for the united outbreak of the Second World War.

■ Detailed Facts

After the end of the First World War in 1918, the victor states established a system of international relations based on the Versailles Treaty. This system involved discrimination against the defeated Germany.

The aim of the United Kingdom, France and their allies was to not let Germany revive its military potential. They set reparations and limits on the amount and types of weapons that Germany could have. They took all of Germany’s colonies and a large part of their European territory.

In addition, the victor states tried to isolate the Soviet Union economically and politically due to a fear of communist expansion. The newly independent states such as Poland, Czechoslovakia and others were regarded as a factor of stability in Europe.

Germany and the Soviet Union were equally unhappy with this post-war parade and tried to change it and this became the prerequisite for relations between them. The first step toward this direction was the Rapallo Treaty between the USSR and Germany in 1922.

Between 1922 and 1933, Germany was not yet a Nazi state. However, thanks to their cooperation with the Soviet Union, Germany began to recover its army (the Reichswehr). During 1926–1931, Germany became the Soviet Union's largest trading partner.

In order to train German soldiers, the USSR organized Lipetsk (for pilots), Kama (for tankists), Tomka (for chemical weapons) educational and research centers. Future military commanders of the Third Reich completed internships in the USSR.

Cooperation between Moscow and Germany was not limited to government circles. In 1923, the Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr in Germany caused the radicalization of the opposition in the country. The Soviet Union hoped that the wave of popular anger in Germany would lead to a communist revolution. Given the popularity of the nationalists and Nazi groups, Moscow demanded that the German Communist Party work with the right-wing extremists.

After Hitler came to power in January 1933, relations soured. The conflict based on ideological antagonism between Nazism and Communism escalated between the two countries. But behind the scenes of this ideological confrontation, both states maintained a common interest – the elimination of the Versailles system. In May 1933, Tukhachevsky (a leading Soviet military theoretician) said to a visiting Reichswehr delegation:

“Do not forget, that our policies divide us but not our feelings, feelings of friendship between the Red Army to the Reichswehr... Germany and the USSR can dictate terms to the world, if we act together.”

In the summer of that year, the German General Staff held military-staff training along with the Red Army based on the defeat of Poland.

In the period from 1933 to 1939, the USSR had an active global propaganda campaign against the rise of the Nazi threat. Stalin’s antifascist course allowed the Soviet Union to attract many fans and managed to overcome international isolation.

At the same time, Germany proclaimed itself the main opponent of communist expansion. Hitler convinced the leaders of the Western states that he intended to fight the Soviet Union and even concluded an anti-Soviet treaty with Poland.

Britain and France believed in the German anti-communist orientation and therefore did not prevent it from reviving its industrial and military power. The former victors of the



*Aerial view of the
secret German
flight school in the
city of Lipetsk,
Russia*

First World War did not even protest against the territorial expansion of the Third Reich. The demonstrative opposition between Germany and the USSR was no less cooperative than in previous periods.

In 1939, Stalin decisively and knowingly destroyed attempts to organize an anti-Hitler coalition between the allied forces and the USSR. The Soviet leader demanded the right to occupy the eastern regions of Poland in order to join the alliance with France and Great Britain. This was an unacceptable condition.

Instead, secret German-Soviet negotiations began in April 1939, immediately after the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Hitler. The result of this was indicated in “Fall Weiss” (April 1939), the German plan of aggression against Poland. According to this plan, combat operations east of the Vistula River were not anticipated. Hitler was going to divide Poland between himself and Stalin.



*The German
“Fokker D.XIII”
aircraft at the
flight school in
Lipetsk*

Myth 3

The USSR Consistently Fought for Peace and the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact Was a Forced Move

Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 3rd Edition, Volume 5 “The Soviet Union placed itself as an alternative...of the Western powers’ position: they found themselves isolated in a direct threat against an attack from Nazi Germany or, exhausting the possibilities of an alliance with Britain and France, they signed the proposed German nonaggression pact and thus pushed back the threat of war. Inevitable circumstances forced the second choice. Concluded on 23 August 1939, the Soviet-German treaty contributed to the fact that, contrary to calculations of Western politicians, the Second World War began with a clash of the capitalist world.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

The policy of the USSR before the Second World War only included support for world peace and stopping Hitler’s aggression. Only because of the West’s rejection of Moscow’s peace proposals was the Soviet leadership forced to conclude the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact in order to win some time and postpone the beginning of the war.

■ Fast Facts

Stalin wanted a new great war, which would allow the communist movement to seize power in all of Europe. The signing of the Soviet-Nazi pact only accelerated the beginning of the Second World War.

■ Detailed Facts

The proposal for a collective security organization against the possible aggression of the Third Reich was expressed by Britain and France in April 1939. On 12 August, military missions from these countries arrived in Moscow, but nego-

tiations ended on 21 August mainly because the Soviet leadership deliberately put forward unacceptable conditions for cooperation. The Soviet representative, Kliment Voroshilov, demanded the right of the Red Army to occupy the Galicia and Vilnius regions, which were part of the Polish state.

However, Moscow drew their attention to Berlin along with their negotiations with London and Paris.

On 19 August 1939, Stalin spoke publicly about the need to nudge Europe to large-scale war, which would become an overture to “world revolution”.

Speaking at a meeting of the Communist Party Politburo, the Soviet leader said:

“The question of war and peace has entered a critical phase for us. Its solution depends entirely on the position which will be taken by the Soviet Union. We are absolutely convinced that if we conclude a mutual assistance pact with France and Great Britain, Germany will back off from Poland and seek a modus vivendi with the Western Powers. War would be avoided... if we accept Germany's proposal, that you know, and conclude a non-aggression pact with her, she will certainly invade Poland, and the intervention of France and England is then unavoidable. Western Europe would be subjected to serious upheavals and disorder... we could plan the opportune time for us to enter the war. The experience of the last 20 years has shown that in peacetime the Communist movement is never strong enough for the Bolshevik Party to seize power. The dictatorship of such a Party will only become possible as the result of a major war. Our choice is clear.”

Nazi Germany and Stalin's USSR were equally as unhappy with the world order which was formed as a result of the First World War. In these circumstances, the closeness of the Third Reich and the Soviet Union was a natural alliance. The choice in favour of a union with Germany gave the Kremlin a chance to successfully implement their geopolitical goals. The Soviet leadership planned the ascent of these countries into a big war during a convenient time. The only

accompanying element of this policy was procrastination which was mainly thanks to the German side of the pact.

In order to get close to Stalin, Hitler promised every assistance in the implementation of territorial claims upon the Baltic countries, Poland (including the modern territories of western Ukraine and western Belarus), Finland as well as in trade and economic relations.

Additionally, German and Soviet representatives signed an extremely broad economic agreement on 19 August. On the same day, Vyacheslav Molotov sent a draft agreement between the two countries to Berlin. The agreement guaranteed Hitler peace on the eastern borders of Germany and allowed a “blind” war with Poland, France and Britain.

On 23 August, German Foreign Minister Joachim Ribbentrop arrived in Moscow. The talks culminated in the



*World
Revolution – the
Soviet response
to the global
financial crisis.
Soviet poster from
the 1930s.*

signing of the non-aggression pact which historically has been called the “Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact” and which was essentially a pact between Stalin and Hitler.

The document had tragic consequences for the people of Europe and the world. This agreement was the mechanism which “opened the door” to a new world war.

The agreement would last for 10 years with an automatic extension of five more years unless one of the parties denounced it beforehand. Both countries pledged to refrain from any violent acts against each other, expressed their willingness not to support third parties in case of an attack on any of the contracting countries. The agreement prohibited the participation in international blocs and alliances against the participants of the Pact.

An additional secret protocol entered into the contract included the division of spheres of influence of Eastern and Central Europe. This document grossly violated the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a number of independent states.

The Soviet sphere of influence covered Estonia, Latvia, Finland, Bessarabia and the eastern parts of the Polish state



Cartoon from
L. Illingworth
in the British
newspaper “Daily
Mail”, 1940.

(east of the rivers Narva, Vistula and San). On the Soviet side, in addition to the Ukrainian and Belarusian ethnic lands, the Warsaw and Lublin provinces were included which was mainly inhabited by Poles.

These talks openly violated the existing European borders and the system of international agreements. In fact, Germany and the Soviet Union not only initiated this division of Poland but also the continental military conflict since the guarantors of Poland's security were Britain and France.

The Soviet Union denied the existence of the secret protocols of the Non-Aggression Pact between them and Germany, and the later German-Soviet Frontier Treaty until the late 1980s.

The issue of the secret agreements arose during Perestroika. A specially formed commission headed by Alexander Yakovlev, the secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which studied the issue and posted their opinions at the Congress of the People's Deputies of the USSR on 24 December 1989. The Congress condemned the signing of the secret additional protocol and other secret agreements with Germany, noting, that they registered the distinction of "areas of interest" between the USSR and Germany and other actions that legally contradicted the sovereignty of countries.

The original Soviet additional protocol was revealed later – in October 1992, after the declassification of the archives of the Central Committee. This secret protocol, together with other documents in "special folders," was released between late 1992 and the beginning of 1993. However, today – contrary to historical facts – even with the availability of additional secret protocols of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, many Russian historians and politicians denied it as a fake, forged by Western intelligence services for the purpose of tarnishing the USSR.

By signing the Pact, Soviet leaders were complicit in the crimes Hitler committed and the outbreak of the Second World War.

Myth

4

The War Started on 22 June 1941 for Ukraine

Soviet Wartime Song “The Twenty-Second of June
At Exactly Four O’clock
Kyiv was Bombed, We were Told,
This is what Started the War”

■ The Essence of the Myth

For the Ukrainian people the war against the Third Reich’s aggression against the USSR started on 22 June 1941.

■ Fast Fact

The participation of Ukrainians in the Second World War was not limited to the period of confrontation between the USSR and Germany in 1941–1945. The Second World War, from the very beginning, began in Ukraine. Within the Polish army, many Ukrainians fought against Germany in the first hours of the war on 1 September 1939. From 17 September, the Ukrainians also fought on the side of the USSR against the Poles. The the crossing of the Red Army of the state border of Poland meant the actual entry of the Soviet Union in the Second World War on the side of Nazi Germany in September 1939.

■ Detailed Facts

Even before the Second World War, on 14–18 March 1939, Ukrainians in Carpatho-Ukraine fought for their freedom from Hungary, which also supported Nazi Germany. According to various sources, the short fight for Carpatho-Ukraine cost the lives of between 2,000 to 6,500 thousand of its defenders.

Ukrainians in the Polish army began to fight Germany on 1 September 1939.

On the first day of the war, the German Air Force bombed Lviv; during the first half of September – Lutsk, Stanyslaviv (today Ivano-Frankivsk), Ternopil, Drohobych, Sarny, Yavoriv, Stry and other cities.

Among the million Polish soldiers, some 106–112,000 thousand (by some estimates up to 120 thousand) were Ukrainian. In September 1939 fighting, about 8,000 Ukrainian citizens of Poland were killed.

From 17 September 1939, the Red Army entered the conflict. After the Soviet invasion of Poland, Ukrainians took part in the fighting on the side of Poland and the USSR.

After the September campaign, about 60 thousand Ukrainians became German prisoners of war and over 20 thousand were sent into Soviet captivity.

Also, several hundred Ukrainians entered the war in the Wehrmacht under “Bergbauernhilfe” units (“Mountain-Peasant’s Help”).



Campaign posters calling to “Stand Up in the Ranks of the Carpathian Sich!” (1939)

Later, Ukrainian citizens of Romania, Slovakia and Hungary were mobilized into the armies of these countries.

In the Red Army, Ukrainians took part in the Soviet-Finnish War of 1939–1940. Particularly in the Soviet 44th and 70th Infantry Divisions, which were operating completely in Ukraine. The first of these were thrown into the Battle of Suomussalmi from 7 December 1939 till 8 January 1940. The 44th Division was almost entirely lost – with the loss of about 17.5 thousand people which exceeded 70% of its personnel. Almost 1200 soldiers were captured. The death toll for Ukrainians in the Soviet-Finnish War was estimated at approximately 27,000 people (according to some other sources – 40 thousand).

The first Ukrainian units who fought on the side of Finland were formed in early 1940. Volunteers were recruited mainly among the Soviet prisoners of war. One of the most famous commanders of Ukrainian volunteers was a participant of Kholodnyj Yar and author, Yuri Horlis-Horskyj.

*Wehrmacht
soldiers near
a road pointer
outside Lviv
(September
1939)*



The tragedy of the Ukrainian people was the lack of their own state and therefore, they were distributed among all the warring parties in this conflict. At the beginning of the German aggression against the USSR, in June 1941, Ukrainians had already been in the maelstrom of the World War for more than two years.

*Broken columns
of the Soviet 44th
Infantry Division
from Ukraine,
which were
abandoned in
the Finnish snow
(Suomussalmi,
December 1939)*



Myth

5

Stalin Did Not Coordinate Any Fighting with Hitler

Vyacheslav Molotov about the division of Poland in 1939

“If we did not meet the Germans in 1939, they would have occupied all of Poland to its border. Thus, we agreed with them. The Germans were forced into the agreement.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

Stalin decided to introduce his own troops onto the territory of western Ukraine and western Belarus on 17 September 1939. Therefore, he did not give these territories up to Germany to occupy.

■ Fast Facts

In the war against Poland, the USSR and Germany were allies. They coordinated their air campaign, jointly disarmed Polish units, co-ordinated with each other in their occupied territories and even held a joint military parade.

■ Detailed Facts

The planned German war of aggression against Poland began with the assumption of neutrality or assistance from Moscow. Otherwise, the German General Staff could not be confident in its success.

The “Fall Weiss” plan of the attack began to be developed in April 1939. The plan did not include the Wehrmacht occupation of the Ukrainian and Belarusian regions of Poland. According to Germany’s vision, these areas would be occupied by the USSR. As a fallback plan, the authors considered deploying the Ukrainian and Belarussian nationalists in uprisings.

However, Hitler was primarily interested in attracting Stalin in the division of Poland. During the spring-summer of 1939, the Germans made significant efforts in their agreements with the USSR.

Afterwards, as the Wehrmacht began hostilities against Poland, the German Foreign Office repeatedly insisted that the USSR join the war.

The Germans referred to the need for Stalin to occupy territory which was considered a Soviet sphere of influence under the secret protocol of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. But Moscow delayed being fearful of being exposed to Western democratic anger about the declaration of war.

From the first days of the Second World War, the USSR supported the aggressor. For example, on 1 September, the USSR offered the Germans the use of available radio stations in Minsk, which served as a guidance beacon for Luftwaffe bombers toward Polish cities. Finally, on 17 September Stalin told the German ambassador that the Red Army would begin its occupation of Poland. On the same day, Soviet troops occupied Ternopil and Rivne, followed by Kolomyia, Stanyslaviv (Ivano-Frankivsk) and Lutsk.



Red Army soldiers crossing the Soviet-Polish border (17 September 1939)

When Soviet troops crossed the eastern border, Poland was still resisting the Wehrmacht. At that moment, Warsaw had not yet surrendered. Western Ukraine and Belarus were in the rear of the Polish defence. Polish command hoped to regroup its troops and hold a strategic turnabout in the Carpathians. On 17 September, the Red Army deprived Poland of their last chance to fend off Germany.

Already on the second day of the Polish campaign, the Red Army appeared in the German-Soviet communiques. It stated that the actions of the Soviet and German troops in Poland *“do not have a goal that would be going against the interests of Germany and the Soviet Union and are contrary to the spirit and letter of the Non-Aggression Pact.”*

In the next communique from 22 September, a demarcation line between the two countries was already installed. And on 28 September 1939, the USSR and Germany signed the German-Soviet Frontier Treaty. Thus, both aggressors publicly stated that they had no contradictions when it came to Poland.

German and Soviet troop maneuvers in Poland continued.

After receiving the message that the Red Army crossed the border, German command gave the order to stop their

German General Guderian and Soviet Light Tank Brigade Commander Krivoshein inspecting troops during the transfer of Brest-Litovsk to the Red Army.



troops on the Skole – Lviv – Volodymyr-Volynskyi – Brest – Bialystok line.

On 20 September, Hitler ordered his troops to stop fighting with the Poles and retreat west to their August 1939 demarcation line. The Wehrmacht retreated and handed over the conquered territory to the Red Army.

In late September, both parties agreed to change the demarcation line. Now Soviet troops were diverted from the east. These were quite difficult maneuvers.

For example, the siege of Lviv and Brest was started by the Germans but as they later retreated, it was completed by the Red Army.

On 22 September 1939, a joint military parade was held during the arrival of the Soviet troops into Brest. The ceremony was attended by units of the Wehrmacht Mechanised Corps under the command of Heinz Guderian and the Light Tank Brigade led by Semyon Krivoshein.

There were also cases of German and Soviet troop interaction in their battles against the Polish Army. On 21 Sep-

*Soviet tank
crew disarms
Polish officers,
illustration
from the
newspaper "Vilna
Ukraina" – "Free
Ukraine,"
(4 October
1939).*



tember, the commander of the Ukrainian Front, Semyon Timoshenko, sent a directive to the troops:

"In cases when German representative's appeal to our troops to provide assistance for the destruction of Polish troops or gangs – commanders should allocate all necessary forces to provide for the joint elimination of enemy forces."

The directive was followed. For example, on 24 September, the Soviet and German troops carried out joint operations in order to evict Polish troops from Zamość. Between 26 and 28 September, in the district of Zhuravylntsi, the allies defeated several regiments of the Polish cavalry who retreated to Hungary. On 27 September, Marshal Timoshenko reported the defeat of Polish troops near Nemyriv together with the Germans.

On 28 September, Warsaw fell. The territorial division of Poland between the USSR and Germany was completed on 28 September 1939 during the signing of the Frontier Treaty.

*"Rendezvous":
cartoon in
"Evening
Standard",
a London
newspaper
(20 September
1939)*



Myth 6

Stalin was the First to Unite the Ukrainian Nation and the Denunciation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact Would Lead to the Disintegration of Ukraine

Alexander Dovzhenko film, Liberation of Ukrainian and Belarusian Lands..., July 1940.

“The age-old struggle of the Ukrainian people for their own unity has ended! The artificial wall that divided half of our people has fallen!”

Israel Shamir, Ukraine: Do Not Give up the Molotov-Ribbentrop Treaty? in Komsomolskaya Pravda, 24 November 2013

“Perhaps it is time for Russia to fulfill the long-held desire of the enlightened West and Russian liberals from Gorbachev to the present day – to denounce the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. After its denunciation by the Russian Duma, Russian troops may return to the Prypiat River and solemnly give Poland her former ‘eastern borderlands’, which have been called ‘Western Ukraine’ for 74 years. Let the Poles have Lviv and Stanyslaviv, they can quickly sort out the memory of Bandera and the other characteristics of ‘Western’ psychology.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

The first reunion of Ukrainian lands occurred in 1939–1940 with the arrival of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (Ukrainian SSR) into western Ukrainian territories. The western border of Ukraine was defined by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The denunciation of the Pact automatically allows the return of Polish rule in the western Ukrainian regions.

■ Fast Facts

The first legal act that proclaimed the unification of western and eastern Ukraine was the Unification Act between

the Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR) and the Western Ukrainian People's Republic (WUPR) on 22 January 1919. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact has no relevance to contemporary Ukraine and has long since expired.

■ Detailed Facts

The myth was formed immediately after the annexation of western Ukrainian territories by the USSR. It stressed that only the Communists were able to ensure the implementation of the dream of all Ukrainians – the unification of a fraternal people into one unified country.

In the postwar period in the USSR, this myth existed without any strict bindings to the signing of the Soviet-German Pact in reunifying Ukrainian lands and was not stressed. Its connection was actually realized by the Russian Federation after the collapse of the USSR – which responded to the conviction of an independent Ukraine within the secret protocol of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

Russian propaganda claims that to legally denounce the Pact means the return of western Ukraine and northern Bukovyna, which was united to the USSR in 1939–1940, to Poland and Romania, respectively.

The creators and current myth holders avoid another fact – the unification of Ukrainian lands actually occurred in 1919 by the Unification Act of the UPR and WUPR. Unlike 1939, it was on behalf of two Ukrainian nations who advocated independence and were equally sovereign governments.

The aggression of Bolshevik Russia, on the one hand, and the global rearrangement after the First World War on the other, led to the loss of Ukrainian independence and the separation of Ukrainian territory in 1921. The “Ukrainian question” was decided by the Bolshevik creation of a puppet Soviet Ukrainian state instead of the independent Ukrainian People's Republic. Legally, the division of Ukraine was affirmed in the Treaty of Riga in 1921.

The separation of Ukraine between two neighbouring states in 1921 was due to Bolshevik aggression and the direct participation of Moscow.

It is difficult to link the accession of western Ukraine, northern Bukovyna and Bessarabia to the Ukrainian SSR in 1939–1940 and the results of the struggle for the unity of Ukraine. It was the result of the secret agreements between two dictators. Stalin tried to spread communist ideas westward by territorial and ideological expansion.

The rhetoric about the need to liberate the fraternal Ukrainian and Belarusian peoples was only a screen to mask expansionist plans for the top management of the USSR. When in September 1939 negotiations turned to the Drohobych-Boryslav oil basin, Stalin refused to give this to Germany explaining that the “land was already promised to the Ukrainians.” But at the same time, the Soviet leader ordered the Red Army to retreat from the Ukrainian Chelm region, since the border with Germany was placed along the Western Bug River.

The borders of Ukraine had no direct relation to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the secret additional protocol, signed on 23 August 1939. The line of demarcation, which was agreed upon by Hitler and Stalin, passed through Warsaw – approximately on the Vistula, San and Narva Rivers. It was a more or less ethnic rather than a purely geographical

Grand proclamation of the Act of Unification of the UPR and the WUPR on Sophia Square in Kyiv. 22 January 1919.



division introduced in another document called the German-Soviet Frontier Treaty, signed on 28 September 1939.

Stalin's "reunification of Ukraine" in 1939 only lasted until the German occupation of the western regions of the USSR. The German attack on the USSR on 22 June 1941 de-facto denounced both agreements. The furthest western border of the Ukrainian SSR was fixed by international agreements with Poland and not with Nazi Germany.

On 30 July 1941 in London, the Soviet Union and the Polish government under Władysław Sikorski agreed to restore diplomatic relations and denounce the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression between the USSR and the Third Reich.

The first sentence of the Sikorski-Mayski Agreement from 30 July 1941 was: *"The government of the USSR consider the Soviet-German treaties of 1939 regarding the territorial changes in Poland null and void."*



Soviet propaganda poster about the annexation of western Ukraine as a liberation of western Ukrainian territories: "Long Live Soviet Power in Western Ukraine!"

The postwar borders were formed as a result of negotiations in Tehran, Yalta, Potsdam and San Francisco.

After the end of the war in Europe in August 1945, the USSR and Poland signed an agreement on state borders. According to it, Ukraine's western border ran through the so-called "Curzon Line". The city of Przemyśl and several other areas were transferred to Poland.

In 1948, a further eight Ukrainian localities in Ukrainian Galicia, which were also part of the Lviv and Drohobych regions, were submitted to Poland.

In 1951, a last exchange of territory occurred when Poland received the Ustrzyki Dolne territory. In exchange for this, Ukraine received the city of Krystynopol (now Chervonohrad) and Belz from the surrounding areas.

In 1975, the post-war borders of Europe were enshrined in the Helsinki Accords.

The western border of the Ukrainian SSR was set during a series of Allied conferences. This photo is from the Yalta Conference (4–11 February 1945)



After the collapse of the USSR, this western border of Ukraine was secured by bilateral agreements. The Treaty of Friendship and Neighbourliness between Ukraine and Poland dates back to 1992. Both sides recognized the inviolable validity of the borders and to mutually abandon any territorial claims in the future.

In 1993, the two countries signed another agreement on the legal recognition of the state border and cooperation. This document confirmed that Ukraine's western borders ran along the line established in 1945 between Poland and the Soviet Union and finalized the territorial exchanges of 1951.

These agreements did not contain any references to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, an agreement about the state border between the USSR and the Third Reich or the secret protocols between them. The current line of the Ukrainian-Polish border was protected by bilateral agreements between Ukraine and Poland and the Helsinki Accords.

Myth 7

“Golden September” – Ukrainians Welcomed the Arrival of Soviet Troops

Alexander Dovzhenko
film: Liberation of Ukrainian and Belarusian Lands..., July 1940.

“Lviv anxiously awaited the cavalry of Oleksandr Parkhomenko! There were joyous shouts, bread and salt met the armoured steel of the Semyon Timosheko division in Lviv!...Lviv became Soviet!”

■ The Essence of the Myth

On 17 September 1939, the Red Army launched its “liberation” campaign or “give a helping hand to our Ukrainian brothers and Belarussians brothers, who are living in Poland.” The entry of the Red Army into the territory of Galicia and Volhynia was accompanied by massive and sincere enthusiasm which was later reflected in the decision of the People’s Assembly of Western Ukraine to unite Ukrainians with the “great family of Soviet peoples”.

■ Fast Facts

The “Golden September” is the Soviet propaganda’s name for the September campaign of the Red Army against Poland. This propaganda painted a picture of mass enthusiasm and great expectations of western Ukrainians to establish a new order in these territories. In reality, the joy at the arrival of the Bolshevik regime was not complete and quickly changed to disappointment, fear and resistance.

■ Detailed Facts

The initial arrival of the Red Army was met with positive emotions from the residents of western Ukraine.

Society consisted of three ethnic groups: about 63% Ukrainians, a quarter Poles and a significant part of the rest were Jewish.

Access of Ukrainians and Jews to higher education and public administration in the Second Polish Republic was not equal to the Poles: minorities suffered from discrimination. This policy of the Polish state along with the ancient aspirations of Ukrainians of national independence, caused a lack of loyalty.

The Ukrainians welcomed the arrival of the Red Army as a way to get rid of the unpopular and at times repressive political regime. Some part of society had illusions that these changes will improve their socio-economic conditions. At the same time, Ukrainians in Galicia and Volhynia perceived Bolshevism as a threat. It would be an exaggeration to describe their attitude as overly enthusiastic – it varied greatly.

Quite often the ceremonial meetings of the Red Army satisfied...only the Red Army. Soviet political instructors arrived in some areas and tried to convince people of the necessity of organizing celebrations. In particular, they were



*Delegates of the
People's Assembly
of Western
Ukraine
(26 October
1939)*

to construct a triumphal gate decorated with branches of trees and welcome banners. “Why are you not meeting us? Maybe you’re not happy?” – these were conversations held between the newcomers and local farmers which was recorded in contemporary sources.

This did not occur without any incidents. In one of the local villages a gate was made of pine branches which was decorated with red flags along with the Ukrainian national blue-yellow banners. When the “liberators” appeared, one of them leaned over to the greeters and quietly whispered: “You who should be liberating us, not us you!” At that very moment, someone from the political department cut down the Ukrainian flag from the gate with one stroke of his saber. It was a cold shower for those present.

In addition to this, the alien appearance of the regime was disenchanting. Not only were they wearing the cheap and substandard fabric of the Soviet military uniforms but even the look of the Red Army and their behaviour was startling. For example, memoirs and diaries of eyewitnesses are fixated on the facial expression of the soldiers which often

*In those days,
in order to win
people’s sympathy
for unpopular
decisions, the
government
brought in
their “stars”.
Oleksandr
Dovzhenko
appearing at a
pre-election rally
in the Hutzul
region (October
1939)*



indicated their hard travels and stress. There were not happy faces on these people.

Very often when the army entered settlements they were often silent, with no conversation or songs. Put together this made quite a depressing scene. All of this showed that the everyday behaviour of ordinary members of Soviet society was imprinted by misery and poverty.

As an anecdote they told the story of a soldier who was accustomed to complete insufficiency in the USSR. He was shocked when at a Galician market he could buy as many loaves of bread as possible. Similarly, there were many jokes that "in the USSR there is everything": "A lot of lemons? – Yes, an entire plant near Kharkiv produces lemons!"

The attitude of the people to the new government included another widely known joke: everyone was talking about



ОБРАЇТІ ТРУДОВОГО НАРОДУ!

ГОЛОСУЙТЕ

за входження Західної України до складу Радянської України, за єдину, вільну і квітучу Українську Радянську Соціалістичну Республіку!

Назавжди знищимо кордони між Західною і Радянською Україною!
Хай живе Українська Радянська Соціалістична Республіка!

Видання галереї Ілюстраційна Українського Фронту «Легіон Україна»

Художник: А. Шинкаренко

Soviet propaganda election poster. The result of this vote was preordained. The election of "people's representatives" was held on an unopposed basis. The poster reads: "Elect the Working People! Vote..."

the wives of Soviet officers who were buying up everything that they had never seen before. They wore negligées and nightgowns as evening dresses, and even walked down the streets in them.

One of the authors of these memoirs said of those days that if the first impression did not cause a disappointment then relations could have been better. After 20 years of economic Bolshevism in the USSR, the strangers looked miserable and showed everyone what kind of poverty – not only material but also spiritual – existed in Soviet society: “Out of their material misery came a horrible spiritual misery of the Bolshevik world.”

If these were the first impressions of the “golden” September – it was hard to expect more in the following days and months.

The Soviet authorities tried to quickly legitimize themselves in these territories. From the perspective of international law, the “Red Army liberation campaign” in September 1939 was a typical annexation and its result – the occupation of foreign lands. In order to legitimize itself, the communist regime organized elections to the People’s Assembly of Western Ukraine in a very manipulative way.

Elections took place under pressure from the new government; there were cases when candidates were imposed upon communities. Very often the candidates at the local meetings were not even from the locality but rather strangers from the USSR. A paradoxical situation occurred when the occupier’s citizens voted for joining the USSR and not the natives of the annexed territories. Also, the national composition of the delegates to the National Assembly did not correspond with reality: there were 25% of Poles within the population but there were only 3% in the Assembly, Jews – who came to close to 10% nationally made up 4.3% of delegate seats and Ukrainians – 92%.

There were already corresponding arrests in the first days of the Golden September. The pinwheel of repression spun and could not ignore the local people. This was how the true attitude to the new government formed in Galicia and Volhynia.

The Nazis Committed the Executions of Poles in Katyn

Yury Mukhin, "The Germans had absolute motive to dig up the graves of the Poles who they killed and buried in Katyn as a show of grandeur and for a drawn-out propaganda show."
The Anti-Russian Vileness, 2003

■ The Essence of the Myth

In Katyn in the summer of 1941, the Germans shot 11,000 Polish prisoners of war and the Soviet documents in the "Special Folder No. 1" are falsified.

■ Fast Facts

The mass execution of Polish prisoners of war was committed in the spring of 1940 by the NKVD in simultaneous special operations in Katyn, Kalinin, Kharkiv, Kyiv and other cities.

■ Detailed Facts

On 13 April 1943, the world first learned about the Katyn massacre when the Third Reich occupational authorities reported on the radio about the discovery of mass graves (10,000) of Polish officers killed in the USSR.

The USSR issued a statement soon after, which rejected these accusations and blamed the Nazis for the destruction of the Poles.

The Soviet commission headed by academic Nikolay Burdenko stated in January 1944: during the summer of 1941, the evacuation of the front-line zone near Smolensk failed to take 11,000 Polish internees who were in the ON-1, ON-2, ON-3 camps, who were subsequently shot by the Nazis.

In 1946, the USSR tried to accuse the Nazis of the destruction of the Poles in Katyn during the Nuremberg Trials. However, the Military Tribunal questioned the arguments of the Soviet party and did not support the charges. Their allegations were not supported by the Tribunal due to a lack of evidence.

So, what actually happened? In September 1939, thousands of Polish officers and several hundred thousand soldiers who were citizens of Poland were held in Soviet captivity – Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, Belarusians, Lithuanians and Armenians. In November 1939, most soldiers were released home. Three special NKVD camps – Starobilsk, Kozelsk, Ostashkov – were created with 14,700 Polish army officers, Border Guards and police officers. Another 11,000 were in prisons in western Ukraine and western Belarus.

On 5 March 1940, the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, Lavrentiy Beria, presented to the Politburo a memorandum which proposed the destruction of the captured Poles: *"Based on the fact that they are the defective inveterate enemies of Soviet power, the NKVD of the USSR considers it necessary... to consider this in a special manner, with the use of capital punishment – death."*

In this document, those "for" were Stalin, K. Voroshilov, V. Molotov and A. Mikoyan. M. Kalinin and L. Kaganovich agreed via telephone.

The protocols from these "Notes" were literally copied word for word in the No. 13 Protocol of the Communist Party from 5 March 1940. Question No. 144 of the Protocol involved the destruction of 25,700 prisoners of war without a trial. The question contained 935 letters which means that for every one letter, 27 lives were lost.

Prisoners in the Starobilsk camp (3,820 people) were shot in the premises of the NKVD office in the Kharkiv city center and hid in a secret forest cemetery in the suburbs of Piatykhvatky. Those from the Ostrashkov camp (6,311 people) were taken by the Kalinin NVKD (now – Tver) and buried

near the village of Mednoye. The prisoners of the Kozelsk camp (4,421 people) were shot in Katyn near Smolensk. About 7,300 prisoners from the prisons in western Ukraine and Belarus were shot in various cities of the USSR.

According to a note from 3 March 1959 from Alexander Shelepin, the head of the KGB to Nikita Khrushchev, the first secretary of the Communist Party, 21,852 prisoners were liquidated during the Katyn massacre.

A common Soviet myth about Katyn eventually grew into a new falsification: which weapons were used and who shot the victims (the use of German company "Geco" cartridges), when and who forged the documents in the Special Folder No. 1 and as to the number of those buried in Katyn (11 thousand).

Подлежит возврату в течение 24 часов
во 2-ю часть Особого Сектора ЦК (Пост. ПБ ЦК от 5.V.27 г. пр. № 100, п. 5)

СТРОГО СЕКРЕТНО

Всесоюзная Коммунистическая Партия (большевиков). ЦЕНТРАЛЬНЫЙ КОМИТЕТ

№ П/В/144. Тов. Пелепину,

27 февраля 1959 г.

Выписка из протокола № 12 заседания Политбюро ЦК от 193 г.

Решения от 5.V.40 г.

144.- Вопрос НКВД СССР.

1. Предложить ВКД СССР:

1) Дела и материалы в лагерях для военнопленных - 14.700 человек бывших польских офицеров, чиновников, помещиков, поляцких, разведчиков, жандармов, осадников и тюремщиков.

2) а также дела об арестованных и находящихся в тюрьмах западных областей Украины и Белоруссии в количестве 11.000 человек членов различных К-Ф шлюзовских и дискуссионных организаций, быв их командиров, агентов, бывших польских офицеров, чиновников и жандармов - рассмотреть в особом порядке, с применением к ним высшей меры наказания - расстрела.

Б. Рассмотрение дел провести без выноса арестованных и без пред'явления обвинения, постановления об окончании следствия и обвинительного заключения - в следующем порядке:

а) на лиц, находящихся в лагерях военнопленных - по справкам, предоставляемым Исполкомом по делам военнопленных ВКД СССР.

б) на лиц, арестованных - по справкам их колл, предоставляемым ВКД СССР и НКВД СССР.

В. Рассмотрение дел и вынесение решений возложить на тройку, в составе т.т. Морозова, Ярухова и Митякова (начальник 1-го Спецотдела ВКД СССР).

СЕКРЕТАРЬ ЦК И. СТАЛИН.

Extract from
Protocol No.
13, prepared
by the head of
the KGB of the
USSR, Alexander
Shelepin (27
February 1959)

In fact, 11,000 victims were never buried in Katyn. The German commission under Dr. Butz in the spring of 1943 examined 4,143 bodies from eight mass graves.

In the spring of 1943, during the exhumation, 1,650 letters were found along with 1640 postcards and 80 telegrams that were dated before April 1940 and from a Kozelsk address. All this indicates that those who were shot in Katyn were prisoners of the Kozelsk camp.

The rest of the 14,700 prisoners were condemned to death in POW camps and killed in Kharkiv and Kalinin (Tver). Nearly 6,500 prisoners of the Ostashkov camp were buried in mass graves near the village of Mednoye, which was never under German occupation. From 17–20 October 1941, the village was on the front line but on 21 October the Wehrmacht was driven back during a Red Army counter-offensive.

Another one of the Katyn myths was associated with the ammunition found in the graves near Smolensk: *“The Germans shot the Poles in Katyn because in the heads of the dead were found German ammunition bullets.”*

Indeed, there were German bullets and shells found in Katyn – the 7.65 D Geco. This same German bullet was also found in the mass graves of Poles in Mednoye, where the Germans never entered.

There was an explanation for this in the testimony of the KGB General Dmitry Tokarev, who in 1940 was the head of the Kalinin NKVD. The perpetrators of the mass executions used the small-caliber Walter gun because these weapons overheated much less than the Soviet ones. The guns were specially brought in for the Kalinin operation.

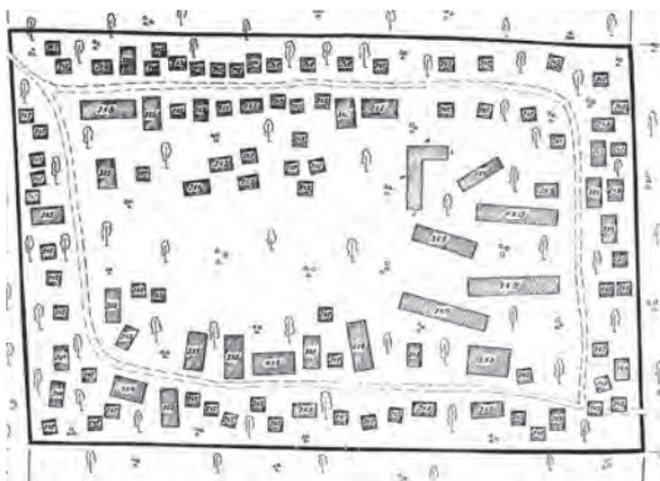
A shot from a standard Soviet weapon resulted in an external hemorrhage with 1 liter of blood loss. In one night in Kalinin, 250–350 prisoners were killed – this meant 250–300 liters of blood on the floor of the killing chamber. A smaller caliber gun significantly reduced this external hemorrhage.

In Kharkiv, the TT pistol was used. The problem of severe hemorrhaging was solved in another way by the Kharkiv NKVD – rationing their method for mass executions. A shot to the cervical vertebrae was used rather than a shot to the head. The bullet went through the vertebrae and came out through the eye opening. This greatly reduced the bleeding.

The burial of the Poles in Katyn and Kharkiv was organized in secret NKVD cemeteries. Beginning in 1938, about 5000 Kharkiv residents were buried in Piatykhhatky near Kharkiv. Polish citizens who were “moved” to the communist regime were also murdered in Bykivnia and Katyn by the Soviet Union. If you accept the statement that the Germans shot the Poles, it is difficult to understand why the Germans would bury their victims solely in NKVD cemeteries. The only exception to this rule was in Mednoye.

The next myth: the Katyn documents in Special Folder No. 1 are falsified, hence, Stalin’s guilt is not proven.

There is no doubt about the authenticity and accuracy of the materials in the Special Folder. Even if these documents were never found – it does not change anything in the Soviet responsibility of this crime: the Katyn case has hundreds of documents with thousands of pages.



Site map of the massive Polish burials in Piatykhhatky near Kharkiv. From the archives of the Ukrainian KGB in the Kharkiv oblast, 1969.

The Special Folder No. 1 is only 11 pages: the original Beria notes with the proposal to shoot prisoners, a page with Question No. 144 from the 13th Protocol of the Politburo, multiple copies made for Beria in 1941 and a note from the USSR KGB head Shelepin to Khrushchev from 3 March 1959.

Aside from the Special Folder, there are detailed lists of all the prisoners of war in all the camps, orders for the organization and holding of the operations from the NKVD's prisoner of war office, camp management reports on its implementation, partially preserved informational details and lists, and the daily cryptograms from the NKVD heads in Kalinin and Kharkiv on the implementation of the executions.

There is no possible way to falsify such a huge amount of documents. These materials give an almost complete picture into all the circumstances of the Katyn crime and leave no doubt about the responsibility of Stalin's communist regime.

Myth 9

The USSR and the Third Reich were Not Allies from 1939–1941

*The History of the
Second World War
in 12 volumes,
Volume 3*

“The Communist Party and the Soviet government tried to avoid moving the country to war. When it was resolved, the Soviet Union defined its attitude to the warring imperialist groups as neutral ... [from November 1940] the Soviet government never returned to any negotiations with the Germans about the proposal of political cooperation, despite repeated reminders by Ribbentrop.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

The Soviet Union never was an ally of Nazi Germany and in those cases where joint actions took place, this was motivated by political and military necessity.

■ Fast Facts

This was not so much myth as taboo. The cooperation of the USSR and the Third Reich was not written about in Soviet textbooks or encyclopedias and was even circumvented in academic writings. However, the Soviet Union remained an ally of Hitler from September 1939 to June 1941, supplying him with whatever was necessary for the conduct of war in Europe including raw materials, produce and information.

■ Detailed Facts

In their joint aggression against Poland, the military cooperation of the Wehrmacht and the Red Army was primarily in sharing information about the deployment of Polish troops and joint actions for their defeat. The Poles repeatedly had to deflect strikes on both fronts.

When Germany launched their attack on England and France after their Polish campaign, the Soviet Union declared these countries aggressors and the Communist Party

of Britain and France were instructed to criticize their government through the Communist International – though they were only protecting themselves from Nazi aggression.

In late 1939, the USSR attacked Finland, beginning the Soviet-Finish War of 1939–1940, during which it was declared an aggressor and expelled from the League of Nations on 14 December 1939.

This Soviet aggression in Finland was observed by Germany. Hitler did not allow the Finns to use German cables to communicate via radio to the United States for help. At the end of the war, when there was a chance of an Anglo-French landing in Scandinavia, Germany urged the Finns to make peace.

In 1939–1940, the Soviet Union officially recognized and established diplomatic relations with the Hitler bloc and supported their puppet governments: Slovakia, Manchukuo, and the Vichy Regime of Marshal Petain in France.

Soviet leaders exchanged congratulatory telegrams with their Berlin colleagues on the victorious wars against their



Signing the agreement on German-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Demarcation, 28 September 1939.

neighbors, the Soviet press and propaganda justified the Nazi aggression and muddied the “Anglo-American warmongers.”

The Soviet Union provided the German army with advantageous army-naval bases in the Kola Peninsula, from which the Wehrmacht attacked Norway in March 1940. The USSR supplied the Luftwaffe with weather reports during the bombing of the British Isles.

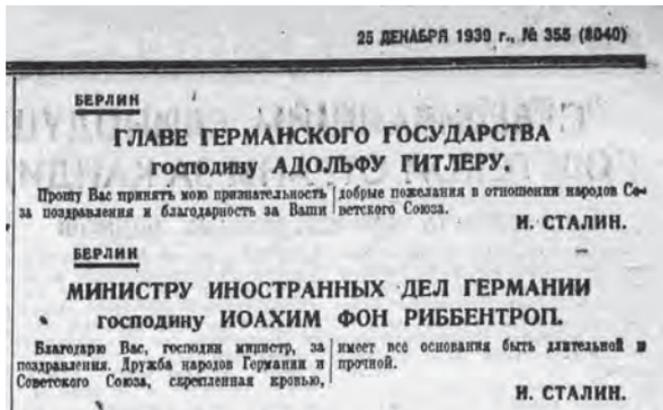
Soviet icebreakers made the difficult passage of the Arctic Ocean passable and the German auxiliary cruiser Komet passed through the Bering Gulf and managed to sink and capture several anti-Hitler coalition ships.

Active cooperation also took place during special operations. The NKVD and the Gestapo coordinated among themselves during repressive actions in Poland, created a joint training center and held a series of joint conferences in Krakow and Zakopane.

One form of cooperation was the transfer of German communists, who fled to the Soviet Union after Hitler came to power, back to the Gestapo. Most of them were killed by the Nazis.

Thanks to trade relations with the USSR, Germany successfully overcame the British economic blockade in the first phase of the Second World War, receiving useful raw materials for their war economy from Stalin.

*“Friendship,
sealed with
blood” – words
uttered by Stalin
himself about the
cooperation of the
Soviet Union with
Nazi Germany.
“Pravda”
Newspaper (29
December 1939)*



German industry received the following from the Soviet Union until the 22 June 1941 aggression:

- 865 thousand tons of oil;
- 140 thousand tons of manganese ore;
- 14,000 tons of cooper;
- 3000 tons of nickel;
- More than a million tons of timber;
- 2,736 kg of platinum;
- 1.463 million tons of grain.

Strategic raw materials and food were transported through Soviet territory from the Pacific basin and the Middle East.

Moreover, many Soviet specialists managed to visit German aircraft factories and even bought several combat aircrafts and the newly constructed Lutzow cruiser.

From September 1939 to June 1941, the Soviet Union remained an ally of the Third Reich, supplying it with necessary raw materials, products and information to conduct an aggressive war in Europe.

Essentially, this meant that the conquest of France and the bombing of Britain occurred because of Soviet resources. The German bombers who flew to London were using Soviet fuel.

*German auxiliary
cruiser "Komet".
In 1940, it passed
the Northern
Sea Route to the
Pacific Ocean with
the help of the
"Lenin", "Joseph
Stalin" and "Lazar
Kaganovich"
icebreakers.*



Myth

10

In 1941 the Soviet Union Was Not Preparing for a War

Georgy Zhukov, "Not believing in war and trying to avoid it, the Soviet people were taught the basic principles and means to implement peaceful economic plans." Memoirs and Reflections in 2 Volumes, vol. 1.

■ The Essence of the Myth

Through the very nature of the people, the Soviet regime was peaceful and the USSR was not preparing for a war. It was because of this that there were temporary difficulties and defeats in 1941.

■ Fast Facts

In 1941, the USSR was the most militarized country in the world. Documents of the Soviet leadership from 1940–1941 showed that all strategic plans for war with Germany were envisioned solely in an offensive war.

■ Detailed Facts

Readiness for war is defined primarily within the armed forces of the state. At the end of the 1930s, the Soviet Union was the most militarized country in the world. Military procurements in the USSR in 1939 amounted to 26% of expenditures or 12.2% of the national income. For Germany, in the same year, these figures were 23% and 9%, respectively.

By 1941, the armed forces of the USSR quickly increased due to the introduction of general military conscription on 1 September 1939.

In 1941, army costs increased to 43% of budget expenditures. The personnel increased more than 2.5 times – from 1.943 million in 1939 to 5.7 million in June 1941.

During the same period, the number of cannons and mortars more than doubled from 55,800 to 115,900.

In 1939, there were 18,400 tanks, and by 1941 there were 23,300.

At the same time, the number of combat aircrafts was 15,500, then it became 22,000.

On 22 June 1941, the German army outpaced the Red Army only by the number of personnel (more on this in Myth 11).

There is ongoing debate among historians: Was the Soviet leadership planning an attack on Germany? There is no direct documentary evidence of this. There is evidence that plans of an attack were discussed, but most of developments and facts relating to the strategic defense plan do not exist. The German attack on 22 June 1941 turned the USSR into a martyr. Until this time, the whole world perceived the Kremlin as an aggressor and ally of the Third Reich.

Before the war, a cult of the armed forces was cultivated. Soviet poster reads: "More Metal – More Weapons!"



On 5 May 1941, Joseph Stalin said to the graduates of military academies:

“We had for some time held the line of defense. And now, when we rebuilt our army, saturate technology for modern combat, when we have become stronger, now we must go from defense to attack. Ensuring a defense for our country, we much must act in this way.”

Also in May, the General Staff proposed to inflict a pre-emptive strike against German troops. Additional troops, carrying strategic stocks, were redeployed to the border of Germany and Romania along with topographic maps of Poland, Germany and Romania. However, Stalin forbade his commanders to plan any operations that would prepare their defenses.



The graduates of military schools on parade in Red Square (1941). Perhaps, Stalin even appeared before them.

None of the documents from 1940 till 1941, which contain Soviet plans for a possible war with Germany, describe defensive plans, only plans for an offensive war.

For instance, the concentration of Soviet troops in certain areas specified in an operational plan were to be completed from 1 June to 10 July 1941. Accordingly, after 10 July, everything was to be ready for an offensive in the east.

The signed Soviet plans of aggression against the West were similar to Hitler's Barbarossa plan but had yet to begin.

There are famous documents which showed the USSR's plans to attack the Third Reich:

- 1) The memorandum from the Commissar of Defense and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army to the Central Committee of the Communist Party and V. Molotov: "On the basis of the strategic deployment of the Soviet Armed Forces in the West and East," from 16 August 1940;
- 2) Policy briefings from 18 September 1940;



Red Army soldiers in Red Square in Moscow during a parade on 1 May 1941.

- 3) A report from the People's Commissar of Defense and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army to the Central Committee, Stalin and Molotov: "On the strategic deployment of the Soviet Armed Forces in 1941," from 5 October 1940;
- 4) Notes from the Kyiv Special Military District's Chief of Staff, in accordance with the decision of the Southwestern Front plans to deploy in 1941, from December 1940 (N.B. the term front was used six months before the war began);
- 5) A directive from the People's Commissar of Defense and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army and Commander of the Western Special Military District regarding a plan for the development of operational deployment of troops to the country, April 1941;
- 6) Considerations on a strategic plan for the deployment of the Armed Forces of the USSR in case of a war with Germany and its allies from 15 May 1941 prepared by Gregory Zhukov, Semyon Timoshenko and Alexander Vasilevsky.

This last document should be briefly cited: *"The main attack of forces in the Southwestern Front is to be placed toward Krakow, Katowice, cutting off the Germans from their southern allies."*

The Wehrmacht Was Stronger Than the Red Army at the Outbreak of the War

Great Soviet Encyclopedia, Volume 5 “The enemy was superior to the Soviet forces: in personnel – by 1.8 times, in medium and heavy tanks by 1.5 times, in new combat aircraft – by 3.2 times, in guns and mortars – 1.25 times. The direction of the main attack of the enemy created the most significant advantage in strength and means...”

■ The Essence of the Myth

Wehrmacht command had significant numerical superiority over the Soviet troops in the main areas of impact which caused the defeat of the Red Army in 1941.

■ Fast Facts

The overall balance of power against the USSR at the beginning of hostilities was not in favor of the Germans. In June 1941, the Wehrmacht had no explicit quantitative superiority over the Red Army and even the number of basic types of military equipment were inferior. However, training of personnel and the level of technology used by the Wehrmacht was much higher than in the Red Army.

■ Detailed Facts

The Soviet Union at the end of the 1930s was the most militarized country in the world. By June 1941, the number of Red Army soldiers significantly increased. On 1 September 1939, the USSR introduced universal conscription. The number of personnel increased by almost threefold: from 1.943 million in September 1939 to 5.710 million in June 1941. Despite this, the Wehrmacht in 1941 was still ahead of the Red Army in terms of personnel with 8.3 million.

At the beginning of June 1941, Germany had full mobilization, yet the Soviet Union did not. Total mobilization only

started after the attack. Soviet potential to increase personnel was enormous. In Ukraine during the first year of the war, almost 3.2 million people were mobilized.

In June 1941, the balance of power of both parties along the Soviet-German border looked like this:

Equipment/ Side	Wehr- macht and Allies	Red Army	Advan- tage of Third Reich	Advan- tage of USSR
Personnel	4.3 mil- lion (166 divisions)	3.3 mil- lion (190 divisions)	1.3:1	
Artillery	42,601	59,787		1.4:1
Aircraft	4,795	10,743		2.2:1
Tanks	4,436	15,687		3.5:1

These indicators show that the USSR should have prevailed against its opponent. The Soviets had 59,787 guns and mortars against the 42,601 enemy guns which meant a ratio of 1.4:1 in favor of the Red Army.

The number of tanks and other military equipment of the Wehrmacht was significantly inferior to the Red Army.



Famous researchers say that the data shows the Soviets were almost four times stronger in terms of armored technology. There were 15,687 Soviet tanks (although, many needed repair) against the 4,436 tanks and assault guns of the Wehrmacht.

Other calculations based on serviceable tanks also confirmed Soviet superiority: 12,379 Soviet tanks confronted 3,266 German tanks and tankettes with an additional 402 tanks from the Germans' allies.

In mid-1941, the Wehrmacht did not have any heavy tanks. The Red Army was only faced with 439 new medium tanks and 3,500 light. The Soviet command concentrated 636 KV heavy tanks, 1,225 T-34 medium tanks and more than 10 thousand light tanks along its border districts.

The Soviets had a double advantage in aviation. There were 10,743 Soviet aircrafts against the Luftwaffe's 4,795.

According to these figures, on 22 June 1941, **Germany and its allies** had an advantage in the number of personnel but **were significantly inferior to the USSR in terms of technical equipment.**

This balance of forces where the Red Army had tremendous technical superiority was the biggest problem for the German command.

The Soviet troops on the territory of Ukraine were especially powerful. As of 21 June 1941, the balance of forces and assets of both parties intended to conduct an armed struggle in Ukraine was as follows:

Red Army Forces	Wehrmacht Forces	Ratio of Red Army: Wehrmacht
70 Infantry, Armoured, Mechanized and Cavalry Divisions	57 Divisions	1,7 : 1
19 Border Troops	13 Brigades	
4 NKVD Regiments		
14 Fortified Districts		
2 Air Assault Corps		
24 Individual and Separate Artillery Units		
Reserve Command of the First Strategic Echelon		
1.9 million Personnel	992,000 Personnel	1.1:1
19,188 Guns and Mortars	15,940 Guns and Mortars	1.2:1
5,528 Tanks	725 Tanks	7.6:1
3,472 Serviceable Aircraft	801 Luftwaffe Aircraft, 500 Romanian Air Force Aircraft	3,3 : 1
232 Black Sea Fleet Warships and River Fleets	29 Romanian Navy Warships	8:1

In June 1941, the Wehrmacht did not have an explicit quantitative superiority over the Red Army. The number of the Wehrmacht's basic types of military equipment was inferior. However, the level of training of the Wehrmacht personnel and the level of military technology was higher than the Red Army.

The apparent advantage of the Wehrmacht was their troop deployment and full combat readiness which focused on attacking Soviet forces. The Red Army was just beginning to focus on this and to deploy their troops along their western border.

The Germans had a very high morale and hoped for another lightning war. In the summer of 1941, the Wehrmacht was the strongest army in the world, making it a very serious opponent.

And though the Soviet designers managed to create a war machine before the war which corresponded to international standards of military-technical developments or even exceeded it, the Red Army had yet to learn how to skillfully use it.

So the idea that the defeat of the Red Army in 1941 was caused by the numerical superiority of the enemy is not true.

During the 1930's, the USSR built thousands of tanks and did not forget to boast of this during parades on Red Square in Moscow.



Myth

12

Nazi Germany Attacked the USSR “Treacherously, Without Declaring War”

Vyacheslav Molotov, radio speech from 22 June 1941 “Today, at four in the morning, without any claims against the Soviet Union, without declaring war, German troops attacked our country...”

Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 3rd Edition, Volume 5 “On 22 June 1941, Nazi Germany treacherously and suddenly attacked the Soviet Union.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

The essence of the myth can be summarized in two words: “treacherously” and “without a declaration of war”. The “treacherous” and unexpected attack led to the first period of defeats during the Soviet-German military conflict.

■ Detailed Facts

From April to 22 June 1941, the USSR and its top leadership received dozens of various communications and intelligence reports on the aggressive plans of the Third Reich against the USSR.

On the night of 22 June 1941, the USSR’s People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Molotov received the German ambassador in Moscow, Friedrich Werner von der Schulenburg. During the meeting, Schulenburg handed a note to Molotov regarding the beginning of the war.

At four in the morning of the same day in the German Foreign Ministry, the Reich’s Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop gave a written memorandum on the beginning of the war to the Soviet ambassador to Berlin, Vladimir Dekanozov, in which German claims against the USSR were described and the reasons for the attack explained.

And de facto, and de jure, this was the official declaration of war against the Soviet Union.

■ More Facts

Like many other Soviet historical myths about the war, this myth is a smokescreen. We have to first explain how in 1941, the Soviets failed to prevent the advancement of German troops until the walls of Moscow.

It was said that during the entire pre-attack period, the Soviet Union did everything to consistently “fight for peace” and to “delay” the beginning of the war by any means. But the sneaky and cunning enemy still attacked unexpectedly when no one was ready. That was why the defense failed. That was why, instead of breaking the aggressor with as little blood and hostile territory, the Soviets had to retreat all the way to Moscow. That was why six Soviet republics came under Nazi occupation for such a long time.

The origin of this myth is taken from Molotov’s famous radio speech from 22 June 1941.

*German
Ambassador
to the USSR
Friedrich
Werner von der
Schulenburg –
he handed
Molotov the
note of Germany
declaring war
on the USSR in
Moscow.*



In this speech, Molotov said that at four in the morning, without declaring war and without any claims, German troops crossed the border and attacked the Soviet Union.

Eventually, under the influence of repeated propaganda the myth underwent only minor changes. Its most common version today repeats that Germany treacherously attacked the USSR, without declaring war.

But the creators and the current holders of this myth avoid other facts. The full text of Molotov's speech is largely unknown by the public. Therefore, only a small portion of his speech is ever cited – that which speaks of the treacherous "attack without a declaration of war."

However, in the same speech, Molotov said that Ambassador Schulenburg came with "*a statement on behalf of his government that Germany decided to declare war against the USSR due to the accumulation of the Red Army near the eastern German border*" on the morning of 22 June.

The current holders to this myth prefer not to remember this part of Molotov's speech. Even after the war, Marshal Georgy Zhukov recalled that around 4:30 am on 22 June, "*Ambassador Count von Schulenburg asked to receive him because he had an urgent message. The Ambassador was charged to V.M. Molotov... After some time, Molotov quickly entered the office and said that the German government declared war on us.*"

Molotov recalled this 22 June meeting with Schulenburg after the war. In his own words: "*The German Ambassador handed the note simultaneously with the attack.*"

At four in the morning on 22 June, the Soviet Ambassador in Berlin, Dekanozov, was summoned by Ribbentrop, the head of the German Foreign Ministry. In their recorded conversation, the following was stated:

"The Imperial minister of foreign affairs began the conversation with comments about the hostile attitude of the Soviet government to Germany and the serious threat which Germany sees in

the concentration of Russian [troops] on the eastern border to Germany, this forced the Reich to use military countermeasures. Dekanozov found detailed statements for the reasons to explain the German position in the memorandum that the Imperial Minister presented him."

The act of Germany officially declaring war against the USSR was the presenting of the memorandum to the Soviet ambassador in Berlin, along with the statement given by the German Ambassador Schulenburg in Moscow and Molotov's relevant notes.

Also, Nazi Germany's attack on the Soviet Union was accompanied not only by a declaration of war but also an explanation for the reasons which led to it.

This event was preceded by numerous warnings about the Third Reich's preparations for a war against the USSR. In the summer of 1940, based on intelligence reports by 'Yarema', the Soviet spy, (Ukrainian artist Mykola Hlushchenko), a memorandum was given to the top leadership of the USSR about Germany's preparation for aggression. In addition to numerous warnings, intelligence reports also came in from



*Ukrainian artist
and Soviet
spy, Mykola
Hlushchenko.*

the Western powers but the Kremlin viewed it as attempts to split the USSR-German alliance. Before the onset of the war, Wehrmacht soldiers deserted, crossed the German-Soviet border and reported to the Soviet military about the upcoming attack. Other researchers call upon various other warnings, from a few dozen to several hundred.

Beginning in April 1941, Kyiv, Minsk and Moscow received information about the preparation and the concentration of military forces along the German-Soviet border. Only 10 days before the Nazi aggression, the Soviet Union received almost 50 different warnings about the exact dates of the enemy's attack.



Cartoon from L. Illingworth in the British newspaper "Daily Mail" (1941)

In total, the border guards cited 22 June as the date of a possible attack 25 times, based on information from defectors and the Polish population along the border.

One of these documents was published in June 2013 by the Security Services of Ukraine archives and includes a memorandum of the Ukrainian Communist Party Secretary Khrushchev on the concentration of German troops along the border areas of the USSR.

The note was signed on 15 May 1941 by the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the Ukrainian SSR, Pavlo Meshyk and revealed a wide range of Wehrmacht preparations: the construction of a military airfield near the city of Jaroslaw, the concentration of a large amount of troops in its vicinity, the relocation of tanks and heavy artillery to the Soviet border from Krakow, Rzeszow and Radom, the arrival of the army leadership (but the name is not mentioned) to Przemyśl.

This document is worth quoting:

“Arriving along the border strip are German soldiers from the occupied countries – France, Norway and Denmark – spreading rumors that German army command intends to capture western Ukraine, cutting off a wedge from the side of Rava-Ruska and Lviv to Romania. The entrance of German troops against the Soviet Union is to begin after the end of the rainy season, as soon as the weather clears.”

As one can see, Commissar Meshyk gave Khrushchev information about a possible attack, along with information about various rumors. The attack on the USSR started at dawn on 22 June 1941, five weeks after the writing of this memorandum. Was it sudden?

Myth

13

The German-Fascist Aggressors

Pravda Newspaper, 23 June 1941. “Fascist Germany committed a looting attack on the Soviet Union. Our valiant army and navy and brave hawks of the Soviet air force will inflict a crushing blow to the aggressor. The government calls upon the people and the citizens of the Soviet Union to strongly unite their ranks around our glorious Bolshevik Party, around the Soviet government and around our great leader – Stalin. Our cause is just. The enemy will be defeated. Victory will be ours.”

Joseph Stalin, Report Given at a Meeting of the Moscow Council of People’s Deputies on the 24th Anniversary of the October Revolution, 6 November 1941 “The German-fascist invaders are plundering our country, destroying the towns and villages created by the labours of the workers, peasants and intellectuals. The Hitlerite hordes are murdering and outraging the peaceful inhabitants of our country, having no mercy on women, children or old people. Our brothers in the regions of our country seized by the Germans are groaning under the yoke of the German oppressors.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

Another mythical term: in this war, all opponents of the Soviet Union were fascists.

■ Fast Facts

The term “fascists” has been transformed by Soviet propaganda to an ideological bogey man in order to identify all their opponents: before, during and after the Second World War.

■ Detailed Facts

Joseph Stalin in a report at the meeting of the Moscow Council of People’s Deputies on 6 November 1941 for the

24th anniversary of the October Revolution justified why the Hitlerites could not be considered National-Socialists:

“Can the Hitlerites be regarded as nationalists? No, they cannot. Actually, the Hitlerites are now not nationalists but imperialists. As long as the Hitlerites were engaged in assembling the German lands and reuniting the Rhine district, Austria, etc., it was possible with a certain amount of foundation to call them nationalists. But after they seized foreign territories and enslaved European nations and began to reach out for world domination, the Hitlerite party ceased to be a nationalist party, because from that moment it became an imperialist party, a party of annexation and oppression ... Can the Hitlerites be regarded as socialists? No, they cannot. Actually, the Hitlerites are the sworn enemies of socialism, arrant reactionaries and Black-Hundreds who have robbed the working class and the peoples of Europe of the most elementary democratic liberties ... And if these brazen imperialists and arrant reactionaries still continue to masquerade in the togas of ‘nationalists’ and ‘socialists,’ they do this in order to deceive the people, to fool the simpletons and to hide under the flag of ‘nationalism’ and ‘socialism’ their piratical and imperialist nature.”

The ideological “fascist” bogeyman in Soviet propaganda previously appeared on the pages of the pre-war press in order to determine the diverse political regimes from Italy to Poland. The next step of Soviet propaganda was to replace the concept of National-Socialist with fascist, the word “fascism” thus acquired a negative connotation and it became common to define all “nationalist-socialist” ideologies which competed with communism or with political regimes that were in conflict with the USSR. We should try to understand how and why this happened.

First, one has to recall who the fascists were, where and when they came from.

Fascists were members of the Italian Union of Combatants (Fasci Italiani di Combattimento) which was founded by Benito Mussolini in 1919. “Fasci” in Italian means “union”, where the name “fascist” takes its name. On the basis of

this union, the National Fascist Party was formed in 1921 (Partito Nazionale Fascista, PNF).

On 28 October 1922, the fascists conducted the March on Rome (Marcia su Roma) under which the Italian King Victor Emmanuel III was pressured to ask their leader (“Duce”) Benito Mussolini to form a new government. In a few days, on 31 October, Mussolini was appointed the Prime Minister of Italy, which from this time and practically up to the end of the Second World War was considered a fascist state.

Soviet propaganda significantly expanded the geography of this term. Apart from fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, propagandists called Francisco Franco’s Spain, Miklos Horthy’s Hungary, Ion Antonescu’s Romania, Ante Pavelic’s Croatia and Jozef Pilsudski’s Poland “fascist”.



The Germans always called themselves National-Socialists. Pre-election poster of the Nazi party, 1932.

Later, the Soviet government branded the ideology and activities of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists as “fascists”.

At times, it was complete absurdity. For example, Soviet propaganda called the government of Yugoslavia under Josip Broz Tito “fascist”, the leader of the anti-Nazi partisan struggle (among other things – against Ante Pavelic’s Ustase units).

Did Nazism and fascism have anything in common?

The Fuhrer of the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler was never in the ranks of the Italian fascist movement. Since 1919, he was a member of the German Workers Party (Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, DAP), which in 1920 transformed itself to the National Socialist German Workers Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, NSDAP). Germany, when it was headed by the Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler from 1933 to 1945, was a Nazi state and not a fascist one. Any term other than Nazis or National-Socialist is an incorrect association with Hitler, his supporters and the political and military structures of the Third Reich.

*Nuremberg
parade
(6 September
1937)*



Why did Stalin avoid using the term “national-socialist”? It can be assumed that he feared that Soviet propagandists would find similarities between the Nazis and the communists. The historical precursor of the Russian Communist Party was the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and had an extremely similar name to the National Socialist German Worker’s Party. Stalin did not like using the same term as Hitler – “socialism”.

So, in the Soviet Union in the 1930s a tradition of calling the German National Socialists (Nazis) fascists was established.



*Real fascists:
Benito Mussolini
leading a
Blackshirt March
on Rome
(28 October
1922)*

Myth

14

The Largest Tank Battle of the War Took Place near Prokhorovka in 1943

Military Encyclopedia Dictionary, 1984. “Prokhorovka – an urban village, the regional center of the Belgorod province, near which on 12 July 1943 during the Battle of Kursk, the largest tank battle of the Second World War occurred.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

The largest tank battle of the Second World War took place in the summer of 1943 near Prokhorovka. It involved 1,200 tanks and self-propelled artillery. Losses by both sides amounted to 700 tanks. The German forces were defeated, and the remaining went on the defensive. This was the turning point of the Battle of Kursk.

■ Fast Facts

The largest tank battle of the German-Soviet war took place in the summer of 1941 on the territory of western Ukraine. It lasted a week near the towns of Dubno, Brody and Lutsk. It included more than 3,000 Soviet and more than 700 German tanks and self-propelled guns (SPGs). This battle ended in an ignominious defeat for the Soviet troops.

■ Detailed Facts

Traditionally, the largest tank battle of the Second World War was usually considered to be the Battle of Prokhorovka in the summer of 1943. According to the official Soviet version, both sides had up to 1,200 tanks and SPGs. German forces were destroyed and the remaining forces went on the defensive, and that was the turning point of the Battle of Kursk.

By focusing on the Battle of Prokhorovka, Soviet propaganda moved another tank battle to the sidelines. It took place in the summer of 1941 in western Ukraine near the

towns of Dubno, Brody and Lutsk. But during Soviet times it was useless to seek out any details about this affair. If it was mentioned in the official historiography, it was only in passing.

In the Military Encyclopedia Dictionary edited by the Chief of the General Staff of the USSR, Nikolai Ogarkov, the tank battle of 1941 was only a “white spot”.

The official publication from the Institute of History of the USSR, The Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945, devotes only one sentence to it:

“... counterstrokes by the troops of the 1st German Panzer Group resulted in a large tank battle in the areas around Lutsk, Brody, Rivne, Dubno, which lasted until early July and which led to the breakdown of Nazi command’s plan of capturing Kyiv.”

The same terse terms about this were also mentioned in the memoirs of Soviet military leaders.

Meanwhile, by comparing the number of engaged weaponry, Prokhorovka was clearly not the bigger event. One can judge for oneself.

Soviet T34 tanks of the 8th Mechanized Corps of the 26th Army of the Southwestern Front, destroyed by the German 111th Division and “Herman Gering” Regiment near Dubno.



The Battle of Prokhorovka lasted only one day. The Battle for Dubno-Brody-Lutsk stretched for a whole week – from 23 to 30 June 1941.

The Soviet side had five mechanized corps and within this, more than 2,800 tanks.

The Germans countered this armada with four divisions with 585 tanks and SPGs.

Afterwards, in order to help their side, another Soviet (with 325 tanks) and one German (143 tanks) armoured division appeared.

Therefore, in general, the battle involved more than 3,000 Soviet and more than 700 German tanks and SPGs. During the Battle of Prokhorovka, the strength of both sides was almost three times smaller.

What is the reason that the tank battle in western Ukraine remained almost unnoticed by Soviet historiography?

Already on the evening of 22 June, the Soviet troops on the Southwestern Front were tasked to encircle and destroy the German troops in the Volodymyr-Volynskyi and Dubno, and on 24 June to take the Polish city of Lublin. The Chief of Staff, Georgy Zhukov, personally came to the frontlines to coordinate operations.

However, the Soviet tank units entered the battle separately and their counterattack stalled. The troops did not receive any reinforcement and were surrounded. On 29 June, Command gave the order to retreat to the almost lifeless mechanized corps. The next day, a general offensive began but looked more like a retreat.

The Soviet side lost over 2,500 tanks. The majority of losses included non-combat technology. In some parts, losses were between 40 and 80 percent. The German losses were more modest – only 260 combat vehicles. Moreover, most of these tanks and SPGs were renovated and returned into the array.

None of the Soviet objectives during this battle were attained. Despite their numerical advantage, they fell back to the old Soviet-Polish border line. After a few days, the German troops broke through the hastily organized defensive line there and on 10 July 1941 entered Zhytomyr.

Soviet propaganda claimed that at the beginning of the war, the Wehrmacht allegedly had better quantity and quality of tanks that dominated the Red Army (for more on this, see Myth 11). Because of this, many still believe that the poorly armed Soviet soldiers stopped the armada of German tanks with grenades or even simply by Molotov cocktails. Including a big tank battle into this narrative of June 1941 was rather difficult. It was also difficult to explain why this battle ended in such a shameful defeat if it was led by the future “Victory Marshal” Georgy Zhukov.

That is why there was no proper place in the official Soviet history of the war of this tank battle near Dubno, Lutsk and Brody.

*Abandoned
Soviet tanks of
the 67th Tank
Regiment, 34th
Tank Division
near Dubno (June
1941)*



Myth

15

The Dnieper Hydroelectric Dam in Zaporizhia, Khreshchatyk Street and the Assumption Cathedral in Kyiv Were Destroyed by the Nazis

Kyiv-Hero. A Compilation of Materials on the Heroism of Kyivians during the Great Patriotic War

“By the order of the German command, troops looted, blew up and destroyed an ancient cultural monument – the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

The “German barbarians” planted mines on the Dnieper Hydroelectric Dam in Zaporizhia, Khreshchatyk Street and the Assumption Cathedral in Kyiv.

■ Fast Facts

The Dnieper Hydroelectric Dam was mined by NKVD officers with the goal of preventing the rapid approach of the Wehrmacht. The result was huge numbers of casualties among civilians and Soviet troops. Planting mines on Khreshchatyk Street, the Assumption Cathedral in the Pecherksa Lavra and downtown apartments in Kyiv was also organized by Soviet security forces.

■ Detailed Facts

The Soviet security services planted mines extensively in cities which they then handed over to the Germans. They then detonated the mines so they would inflict maximum damage to the enemy according to the “scorched earth tactics” proclaimed by Stalin on 3 July 1941.

In Stalin's speech, he called for the destruction of everything of value in areas that were threatened by enemy occupation in order to make it impossible from the Nazis to remove anything. He also called for the organization of subversive activities in the occupied territories:

"In areas occupied by the enemy, guerilla units, mounted and on foot, must be formed; sabotage groups must be organized to combat enemy units, to foment guerilla warfare everywhere, blow up bridges and roads, damage telephone and telegraph lines, set fire to forests, stores and transports. In occupied regions conditions must be made unbearable for the enemy and all his accomplices. They must be hounded and annihilated at every step, and all their measures frustrated."

However, this call was mainly related to resources such as vehicles, fuel, grain, livestock and foodstuffs, and the destruction of monuments of global significance and important engineering structures during the retreat was not supposed to count.

Stalin's speech was based on the provisions of the Directive of People's Commissars of the USSR and the Central Committee of the Communist Party on 29 June 1941 for party and



*Dnieper Dam,
destroyed by
NKVD units in
August 1941.*

government organizations along the frontline areas to mobilize all their forces and means to defeat the Nazi occupiers.

During the implementation of the “scorched earth tactics”, Soviet military command and the NKVD killed tens of thousands of civilians and Soviet troops. The removal and destruction of stockpiles of food in the fall and winter caused a famine in the Nazi-occupied territories.

From the perspective of international law, the “scorched earth tactics” is to be considered a war crime.

The most famous manifestations of these tactics during the retreat of the Red Army in 1941 was the destruction of ancient architectural monuments of central Kyiv and the Dnieper Hydroelectric Dam in Zaporizhia.

On 18 August 1941 at about eight in the evening, NKVD officers detonated the Dnieper Dam, without any warnings. The 20 ton explosion destroyed 165 meters of the dam, resulting in a 20 meter wave of water washing away the city strip. It swallowed up Khortytsia Island and reached the cities of Marhanets and Nikopol – located almost 80 kilometers downstream of the Dnieper.



*Ruins of the
Assumption
Cathedral (1942)*

The number of victims is not known because no one could even begin counting them. Most researchers usually say about 100,000 dead, including 80,000 residents of Zaporizhia and its surrounding area, refugees from neighbouring regions and close to 20,000 Soviet soldiers who could not escape the city. German command estimated that their losses in manpower were about 1,500 people.

The reason for this action was the fear of a rapid onset of German troops, whose main forces only came into the area in early October 1941.

In Kyiv, before the surrender of the city to the Germans, the communist authorities began to destroy stocks of food, the water supply, a power plant and blew up four bridges. According to eyewitnesses, the bridges were still being used by retreating Soviet troops during the explosion.

It was then that the Soviet secret services placed mines in almost the entire city center. The buildings along Khreshchatyk Street, the State Bank building, Opera Theatre, the Central Party Committee building in St. Michael's Square and the NKVD building on Volodymyrska Street, the Lenin Museum – the former pedagogical museum, where at one point the Ukrainian Central Rada met are all locations that were targeted. There is also evidence of attempts to place



*View of
the ruined
Khreshchatyk
Street (September
1941)*

explosives in the St. Sophia Cathedral, one of the oldest Orthodox churches.

In the Lavra monastery, in addition to the Assumption Cathedral, other buildings were also loaded with explosives.

The Germans were in no hurry to enter the city, practically not attacking it and only strengthening its surroundings. They planned to save Kyiv in order to house their garrisons there.

German troops entered Kyiv on 19 September 1941.

Interestingly, the Soviet Information Bureau did not report the surrender of the Ukrainian capital until 21 September. In Kyiv, for more than a day, the occupiers were in the city and the Soviet radio and newspapers continued to argue further that “on 20 September, our troops fought persistent battles with the enemy along the entire front and especially fiercely in Kyiv.” Obviously, the Soviet Information Bureau lied. It is these little things that formed the distorted Soviet vision of this war.

The explosions that occurred on Khreshchatyk Street on 24 September started a huge fire. The Germans tried to extinguish it, dragging hoses from the Dnieper River and pumping out water. However, the Soviet underground cut the hoses. Prior to this, the Soviets had removed the fire trucks from Kyiv and there were not enough German fire engines. The fire lasted nearly two weeks. Around the Khreshchatyk Street area, 324 buildings were destroyed and thousands of Kyivans were left homeless.

The explosions by the Soviet secret services were blamed on the Jews in Kyiv by the German occupational authorities and it was used to justify their mass killing in Babi Yar on 29 and 30 September 1941. During these two days, the Nazis shot almost 34,000 children, women and the elderly.

The explosion of the Assumption Cathedral in the Lavra occurred on 3 November 1941, two hours after the visit of the Slovak President Jozef Tiso. His visit took place at 12:30 pm.

There are several versions of this event. At 14:30 there were small explosions in the cathedral. Then, two people ran out, one of whom was in a Red Army uniform. One of the police guards noticed the fugitives and opened fire as they ran – all were shot. After a few minutes, the Assumption Cathedral soared into the air and was destroyed by a tremendous explosion. The body of the sappers lay in the ruins of the cathedral until March 1942.

Myth 16

Sevastopol – "The City of Russian Glory"

TV Channel Zvezda, 14 June 2015 "The city of Russian glory is celebrating its birthday. Today, the Icon of the Fertile Sky Mother of God arrived from the city of Kronstadt. It was created after the return of the Crimea and Sevastopol to Russia. The Icon flew into the city this morning by helicopter."

■ The Essence of the Myth

The defense of Sevastopol is the most outstanding example of Russian heroism and self-sacrifice that should be an example for all to follow.

■ Fast Facts

This cliché is used in the Russian information sphere to encourage the reader to think that the city is indeed shrouded in glory and this glory belongs exclusively to the Russians. Both cases are serious perversions: firstly, concerning the glory and secondly, it being exclusively Russian.

■ Detailed Facts

During the Crimean (Eastern) War of 1853–1856, the city-fortress of Sevastopol was defended by troops of the Russian empire for 349 days. The Anglo-French troops eventually stormed and captured it. During the unsuccessful defense, the Russians were forced to submerge their entire fleet and it is no surprise that Russian publications tell a different version of these events in order to morally compensate and calm public opinion. A big role was given to the cliché of a "city of Russian sailors", which was later transformed into the "city of Russian glory."

The cliché was revived after the 250-day unsuccessful defense of Sevastopol from the Wehrmacht in 1941–1942. It

quickly became one of the "golden" Soviet myths about the Second World War.

Indeed, the battle of the Sevastopol garrison was hard and brutal. The city was attacked in November 1941, and required all the strength of its defenders to withstand it.

However, the defense of Sevastopol had a rather humiliating end. On 30 June 1942, the German troops took Malakoff and the defense of the city became unpromising.

The High Command was evacuated over two days, 200 people by plane and 700 by submarines. The private staff was demoralized. With no way to evacuate them, 100,000 Soviet soldiers who were defending Sevastopol were abandoned to their fate. The soldiers continued the senseless fight as they never received any orders to stop. As a result, up to 20,000 soldiers were killed, while the rest were captured.

On 3 July 1942, the Soviet Information Bureau reported:

"Soviet troops left Sevastopol but the defense of the city will go down in the history of the Great Patriotic War as one of the most brilliant pages of its history. Sevastopol enriched the glorious

*Hero of the
Soviet Union,
sniper Lyudmila
Pavlichenko –
one of the many
Ukrainians
who heroically
defended
Sevastopol.*



combat traditions of the peoples of the USSR. Boundless courage and rage to fight the enemy and dedication of the defenders of Sevastopol, Soviet patriots inspired further heroic deeds in the struggle against the hated occupiers."

Aside from the defense being less than glorious, to ascribe all the glory of the fight to only the Russians is completely incorrect. At least 23% of the Red Army was composed of Ukrainians. Among the defenders of Sevastopol, it could not have been any less. In addition, the backbone of the defense units came from the Separate Coastal Army that before then, operated in southern Ukraine and in the defense of Odesa. Along with local recruits, the percentage of Ukrainians in this fight was probably even higher than in the Red Army.

Therefore, at least a quarter of the Soviet soldiers in Sevastopol were ethnic Ukrainians and at least one third – came from Ukrainian lands. Contrary to the myth, among the defenders of Sevastopol there were representatives of other nationalities. But their exploits were less valuable and their glory – cheaper.

Column of Soviet prisoners of war moving from Cape Khersones into the city, Sevastopol (July 1942)



The “Death Match” in Kyiv Finished With the Killing of the Soviet Team

Denis A. A Screen Adaptation of the ‘Match of Death’, 21 June 2011

“The plot of the film *Match* depicts the real story, when during the Great Patriotic War in occupied Kyiv, there was a football match between the Kyiv Dynamo team and the German Flakelf team. The Germans wanted to show that they were a strong football team and wanted their team to win so much to the extent that the lives of the footballers were at stake ... the Kyiv players were ordered to lose ... But they won and some of them were shot right on the football field while the rest were sent to concentration camps...”

■ The Essence of the Myth

In the summer of 1942, a football match took place between local Kyiv players and Wehrmacht soldiers. The Germans, after a devastating defeat, shot their rivals.

■ Fast Facts

In June-August 1942, Kyiv hosted several matches of the local Start team (which included the pre-war Dynamo and Locomotive football clubs) against teams of German and Hungarian soldiers. The last game took place on 16 August and although it ended with the defeat of the Germans, this did not lead to the death of the Soviet athletes. Four of them were killed the next year as prisoners in the Syrets concentration camp.

■ Detailed Facts

The myth of the Germans shooting the Soviet athletes after the game became a canonical part of Soviet propaganda after its appearance in 1957 in the Petr Severov and Naum Khalemskym’s story *Ostannij Poiedynok* (The Last Fight) and the film *Tretyj Tajm* (The Third Half) which was released five years later.

Soon after, it became an official position. In 1965, during the 20th anniversary of the Victory of the War, the players were awarded state medals for courage and for military merit and in 1971, a monument to the shot players was unveiled at the Kyiv stadium.

At that time, the KGB leadership knew the true fate of the Start players. In a report by KGB detective Major Udin, on behalf of his superior Fedorchuk, they were denounced as collaborators:

“Clearly, the players were left to live in the occupied territories, not trying to move from the retreating Red Army in whose ranks their very presence was greatly required during this difficult time for the country. Subsequently, they supported initiatives of traitors of the Fatherland, the representatives of the city council which was supported by the occupational authorities and created a team, from what was left of the athletes of the sports club in Kyiv, including the local team players which included players from Dynamo and Locomotive. This team repeatedly met in friendly matches against the football team of Wehrmacht and Hungarian units, stationed in Kyiv.



Poster of the revenge match between “Start” and “Flakelf”, the so-called “Death Match” (9 August 1942)

All team members were employed (at Bakery No. 1 and a sausage factory). Over time, mastering the situation, they organized stealing food and later, weaving through the city's traffic, in order to meet each other to exchange their products.

In this circumstance, perhaps, the occupiers were tired of fun football and took all the players to a war camp. As the inquiry shows, the cause of their death in the camps was not political, but random. Witnesses say that based on the behavior of one prisoner of war (who stoned a service dog to death), the occupiers lined everyone at the camp up and shot every fifth prisoner."

The Soviet myth about the killing of the team acquired such international significance that it led to the Hamburg Prosecutor's Office opening a criminal investigation into the alleged killing of the players in 1974.

A careful German investigation lasted more than thirty years.

On 18 February 2005, their opinion, prepared by the senior prosecutor Jochen Kuhlmann on the case, was published. It reads: *"The many versions distributed in the former Soviet Union about the reasons for the shooting of four players after their victorious game against the German occupiers on 9 August 1942, are obvious lies. The match, held on 9 August 1942, as with the previous matches like the one held on 16 August 1942,*



*Commemorative picture taken after the "Start"-
"Flakelf" game (9 August 1942)*

took place in a friendly atmosphere. After the game, a photograph of both sports teams was taken – the German soldiers and Soviet players... No connection can be found between the football game held on 9 August 1942 and the shooting of three players at the Syrets camp.”

This did not dispel the myth, however. In 2011, the Russian film *Match* was released. The film is described as being based on a “true story,” about the shooting of the Soviet team right after their victory over the Germans.



Poster for the last “Start” game which was held on 16 August 1942.

Myth

18

The Nazis took Black Soil from Ukraine in Wagon Trains

Veniamin Hridin, Hero of the Soviet Union “In Ukraine, German troops stubbornly resisted the attack of our troops on a big railway junction and pushed wagon after wagon to Germany, with what we thought was grain ... we were amazed: the Germans were not taking grain to starving Germany but the famous Ukrainian black earth!”

■ The Essence of the Myth

Whether the Germans were attacking or retreating – it did not matter. In every case, they assembled their guns and took up shovels to remove the fertile black soil layer and sent it to the Reich.

■ Fast Facts

This myth is a stratification of various stories, such as the export of raw materials, products and Ostarbeiter to Germany, along with the plans for the agricultural colonization of Ukraine by the Germans and so on. However, in reality the Nazis were very meticulous in calculating their stolen property – and the soil listed as a resource in any of the documents.

■ Detailed Facts

Given the legendary state of the Soviet roads and sparse network of railways, there is little wonder that the Germans always had problems with supplying their troops with necessary materials. Furthermore, the digging, loading and transporting of soil is a very laborious process and the soil itself, even the most fertile would not translate into any immediate positive economic effect. As such, given the choice between the export of manganese and iron ore or black earth, the Nazis were inclined to favor the ore.

After the war, several researchers focused on the topic of the Nazi plunder of the East. Among them, for example, was N. Muller, an author from the German Democratic Republic, and V. Kosyk, a Ukrainian from France as well as many others. Nowhere in the research based on a thorough search of Nazi archives, find any evidence that the Nazis exported Ukrainian black earth.

Despite the almost total prevalence and almost national status of this myth, it must be noted that it exists in the imagination of “eyewitnesses.”

This simply never happened.

*Ostarbeiters
being exported
en masse to
Germany by the
Nazis. But no
black earth soil*



The Nazi Ost Plan Involved the Destruction of All Slavs

The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 3rd Edition, Vol. 18

“The ‘Ost Plan’ included the physical destruction of 30 million people and the eviction (and practically, the destruction) of more than 50 million Belarusians, Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, Czechs and so on to western Siberia, the Northern Caucasus, South America and Africa (up to 85% of the population of Poland, 65% from western Ukraine, 75% from Belarus, a significant part of the population of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia). They planned to settle about 10 million Germans on the ‘freed’ territories and the rest of the population that remained was subject to Germanization ... The defeat of fascist Germany by the Soviet army stopped the full implementation of this.”

Lev Bezymenskyj, The German Generals – With Hitler and Without

“What was Hitler planning on doing in continental Europe? According to archival documents, a series of plans were developed based on the main racist demands of Hitlerism – the extermination of the Jews and Slavs.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

The Nazis planned to exterminate all “subhumans” that included not only Jews, but also Slavs: Ukrainians, Poles and Russians, which was why the Ost (East) Plan was created. That is why the Red Army not only defeated a large aggressive force but also saved the Ukrainians from complete destruction.

■ Fast Facts

The planned fate of the Slavs in the territories captured by the Nazis did not provide for their complete extermination, but the policy of the Third Reich toward the Ukrainians was never constant and varied depending on the situation on the front. The Ost Plan was rather a post-war colonial domination plan of the occupied territories and not a plan for the “destruction of the Slavs” during the war.

■ Detailed Facts

This myth was designed to justify the actions of the Soviet leadership, army and especially the NKVD during the war. Communist propaganda managed to convince many residents of the former USSR, from young pioneers to pensioners, of Nazi plans to destroy all the Slavs and – in particular – all of the Ukrainians. That is why, they say, the Red Army led by Joseph Stalin saved them from destruction. And if in this, there were some ugly actions in regards to this “rescue” or even crimes, than that noble goal justifies those means.

For a long time, the original Ost Plan was lost. It consisted of several documents, elaborated on at different times from February 1940 to September 1942.

Its contents were mainly known through memoirs and references from other documents. So often in the minds of the Soviets, the Ost Plan functioned as a document, containing a specific plan to exterminate the Slavs and expand the available living space for the Germans. The Ost Plan became considered a baseline Nazi policy document, of which a significant portion was dedicated to the extermination of Slavs.

The most repressive methods were to be applied to the Poles and Russians. It was believed that the plan called for the deportation and/or physical destruction of 50–75 percent of Poles, Czechs and Russians and approximately 25–30 percent of Ukrainians and Belarusians and a further 30–40 percent of Ukrainians were to be deported eastward to Siberia.

However, the Ost Plan was known for some time, mainly through the memorandum of Erhard Wetzel, an expert at the Nazi Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories. This memorandum was not about the destruction but rather the eviction of 65 percent of western Ukrainians. The rest of the Ukrainian population was to be subject to gradual Germanization.

Moreover, Wetzel's notes contain the following words: *"We are now interested in increasing the number of Ukrainians as opposed to Russians. But this should not lead to the thought that the Ukrainians will, over time, take the Russians' place."* According to Wetzel, in the long run, birth control would lead to the reduction of the Slavic population and the German hegemony in the eastern lands of the Third Reich.

Cleansing the occupied territories and organizing German settlements there, was proposed to be carried out by the resettlement of the local population to other collective and state farms, while granting them the right to use these lands.

The most stringent German plans regarded the Poles, but this was caused not by racial considerations but rather political and historical ones. The Nazis understood that most of the Poles were hostile towards the Germans.

True, Wetzel, the author of this note, critically assessed the feasibility of the Ost Plan and meant it within a defined and scheduled period of time.

One of the original documents of the Ost Plan was found in the German archives and published by the Humboldt University several decades ago. The colonization of the occupied territories included a wide range of economic and infrastructural changes – the construction of new highways, railroads and even new cities. There were also sources of funding identified for the projects. The plan was broken down into a five-year plan, to begin 30 years after the war finished.

Thus, the Ost Plan was a post-war development. However, it was never definitively adopted and in 1943, its development stopped. Therefore, it is incorrect to attribute this document as a baseline which guided the Nazi's genocidal policies.

To carry out a mass destruction of Ukrainians, Poles and Russians, the Nazis did not need any additional "constitutional" documents. The totalitarian ideology of Nazism led to the arrogant attitude toward the other people East of the Reich. Hitler, Goebbels, Bormann and the other

leaders of the Reich clearly articulated their vision for the fate of the Poles, Czechs, Ukrainians, Belarussians and Russians – those who were still alive would be used as slave laborers and their cultural and educational needs would only be minimally met.

As one can see, the Nazi plans for the Ukrainians was not promising. But the extermination of the Slavs, in general, and Ukrainians in particular, was not mentioned in the Ost Plan.

The Reich's policy toward Ukrainians varied depending on the general military-political situation. In Germany itself, various departments had different approaches to the "Ukrainian question" at the same time. Himmler's (SS) office traditionally took a tough stance. While the Abwehr and the Ministry of the Occupied Eastern Territories advocated that Ukrainians be involved in the fight



Discussions about building new colonies in the East – one of the elements of the "Ost" plan, Berlin (20 March 1941)

against the USSR. Alfred Rosenberg, the Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories, proposed to give Ukrainians self-governance and suggested that in the future, the German allies would grant Ukrainians their own state.

In the General Government from 1939 to 1941, the Nazi authorities treated Ukrainians fairly loyally. They provided access to administrative services, allowed schools to be organized, published and produced newspapers, created economic cooperatives and a network of the so-called “aid committee.” Ukrainians were also granted religious freedom.

But in 1941, the situation changed.

After the German attack on the USSR, Stalin launched his scorched earth tactics on territory relinquished to the Nazis. The destruction of crops in villages and food stocks in the cities began in accordance with Stalin's order starting from the first days of July 1941. The Soviet authorities abandoned the population to their own fate, without any means of survival.

Before the attack on the USSR, between March and May 1941, the leadership of the Third Reich decided on a number of measures known as the Hunger Plan. These measures included the massive requisitions of products in the occupied territories of the USSR for export to Germany and western Europe, which led to the planned starvation of the occupied cities of Ukraine. The Hunger Plan foresaw the possible death of 20–30 million people, considered to be the “excess population” in the Nazi occupied territories of the USSR.

In other words, Stalin's orders were superimposed by Hitler's plans. Between December 1941 and March 1942, these scorched earth tactics led to a mass starvation and the death of millions of civilians and prisoners of war.

In fairness, it must be said that responsibility for this genocide lies at varying degrees with both totalitarian regimes: the Nazis and the Soviets.

Myth 20

The Communist Party – a Leadership of Strength, Creator of the Great Victory

*Leonid Brezhnev,
Report dedicated to
the 20th Anniversary
of the Victory
in the Great
Patriotic War*

“A force appeared in the world that crushed fascism. A decisive role in the defeat of humanity’s worst enemy was played by the Soviet nation, its glorious heroic army which was led by the Leninist Communist Party.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

All the achievements of the nation and army of the USSR during the war, are considered the result of the irresistible strength and advantages of the Communist regime. Citizens unanimously defended the Soviet system and demonstrated the monolithic unity of the Bolshevik Party.

■ Fast Facts

With the onset of the catastrophic German attack on a significant part of Ukrainian citizenry meant the eventual collapse of the Soviet regime within the newly occupied territory. The communist system had lasted only twenty years and demonstrated its cruelty, inhumane nature and at the same time, its economic failure. Half of the Ukrainian Communist Party who were left in the occupied territories renounced their ideology. The majority of people who remained were indifferent to the change of government, others joined the ranks of the resistance movement and there were those who even resorted to collaborating with the occupational regime.

■ Detailed Facts

Soviet society in the summer of 1941 was disoriented by propaganda, demoralized and divided by different attitudes towards the Soviet regime and the Germans.

The Communist's foreign policy made a 180 degrees U-turn in 1939 when the “German fascists” became friends and not enemies in the Soviet press – which was a complete surprise for Soviet citizens. The USSR was Germany's partner for nearly two years, despite the obvious “ideological” conflict. Anti-communism remained as an integral part of the Nazi ideology. Despite this, the imperial ambitions of the USSR allowed them to enter into an alliance with Hitler's regime and proclaimed them “friendly”. It was a surprise and shock for the people being attacked by the Reich.

The other part of Soviet society hid their opposition to the Communist regime by their conformist behavior. During the Holodomor of 1932–1933 and the Great Terror of 1937–1938, the Soviets revealed their criminal nature and economic inefficiency in Ukraine. During the annexation of Galicia and Volhynia in September 1939, Sovietization also led to a dissatisfaction with the new government from the general population and the strengthening of the anti-communist liberation movement.

On the other hand, in the summer of 1941, a certain part of society supported the Communist authorities such as a significant part of the Komsomol youth who were educated by Soviet propaganda. However, the older generation who had experienced the frustration of twenty years of “people's power” and the peasants, who were more radical than the city residents were not supportive: *“it did not give us anything good and we should not defend it.”*

The huge army, in spite of the prewar propaganda, proved to be unable to protect the people. By the end of 1941, the Wehrmacht lost 300,000 men. At the same time, the Red Army lost four times that, about 1.2 million. A further 3.9 million Soviet soldiers and officers were held in captivity. Large areas were quickly occupied. The catastrophic defeat of the Red Army in the summer of 1941 resulted in the near collapse of the Soviet regime in some Ukrainian areas.

The NKVD informed the top leadership about this oppositional sentiment. One of these situational reports was

dated 25 June from Kyiv, only three days after the start of German aggression:

“Kozhemiankin, a laboratory assistant in the Kyiv Research Institute of Labor and Occupational Diseases: ‘... Let the devil take them, so that someone else comes in quicker. Let Hitler come, it can’t be worse.’”

Party officials and civil servants were the first to leave the territories that were threatened by German occupation. Against this background, the Ukrainian Communist Party was in a state of half-life. At the time of the German attack, the Ukrainian republic's party consisted of about 565,000 people. One-fifth of the Ukrainian communists illegally left the republic's territory as refugees. Two-thirds were officially evacuated. Only 150 thousand members of the Communist Party remained in the occupied territories. And only 40 thousand of those carried out underground work and participated in guerrilla warfare.

Some communists took part in the resistance movement and others supported the occupational authorities. Of those who remained in the occupied territory, 46,500 thousand were killed by the German punitive organs. Twenty-two communists registered with the Gestapo, 34,000 destroyed their party membership cards and 6,000 renounced their party affiliation.

*Red Army
soldiers are
captured in
the Kyiv region
(September
1941)*



After this, when the Germans were expelled from Ukraine, from the 113,890 members of the Ukrainian communist party who survived the occupation, more than half failed to renew their membership in the party.

Demoralization also swept through the Red Army in the summer of 1941. Mobilization was under threat. The army ranks at that time were filled up to 200,000 volunteers, while 2 to 3 million recruits remained in the occupied territories after deserting, due to changes to the front lines and for “other reasons.” During the second half of 1941, the NKVD detained 685,000 people on suspicion of desertion. Officially, the number of deserters from the Red Army during the war was estimated at between 1 and 1.2 million people. Most were surrounded in the “cauldron” in the summer of 1941 and many became prisoners.

Commissar Beria said that in 1941, about 10,000 deserters were hung or shot. We cannot rule out that these figures were underestimated.

That was why on 16 July 1941, the institution of political officers was restored. They were to follow the commanders of military units.



*Red Army
soldiers
surrendering*

Another indicator of the Soviet leadership's distrust of the military was in decree No. 001919, which, in September 1941, introduced defensive squads for every division that would kill any retreating Red Army soldiers.

Soviet soldiers were kept on the front by many ways, not only through heroism but also through ruthless repression. On 28 July 1942, Stalin gave order No. 227 – “Not one step back” – that treated any retreat as treason and provided military tribunal sentences or executions in place of defensive squads:

“... Form within the limits of each army 3 to 5 well-armed defensive squads (up to 200 persons in each), and put them directly behind unstable divisions and require them in case of panic and scattered withdrawals of elements of the divisions to shoot in place panic-mongers and cowards and thus help the honest soldiers of the division execute their duty to the Motherland.”

That is why the “unshakable unity” of the party, army and the people are only propaganda clichés. Sometimes, the leadership role of the Communist party also meant aiming guns in order to enforce laws.

Later, from 1942 to 1943, people were motivated to change due to various reasons, including a new occupational regime of terror and the success of the Soviet troops in the East. But even between 1943 and 1944 the attitude of the Ukrainians in central Ukraine differed from attitudes in Galicia and Volhynia, and in Bukovyna and Bessarabia in their want for the return of the communists – their attitudes were different from other regions. After all, very often at this stage of the war, victory took place not thanks to but contrary to the role played by the Communist Party.

Myth 21

Panfilov's Twenty-Eight Guardsmen

Krasnaia Zvezda
Newspaper,
28 November 1941

“Over fifty enemy tanks moved along the lines which held the Panfilov Division's Twenty-Nine Guardsmen... Only one of the twenty-nine was faint of heart... Only one raised his hand... Several guardsmen simultaneously, not saying a word, without a command, shot the coward and traitor... All twenty eight laid their heads. They were killed, but did not let the enemy pass.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

On 16 November 1941, near the Dubosekovo station, 28 Soviet soldiers of different nationalities – Russians, Ukrainians, Kazakh, Kyrgyz – entered into a battle against 50 German tanks, who were pushing against Moscow. The company's political instructor V.G. Klochkov, encouraged the fighters to fight and said in immortal words: “Russia is a vast land, yet there is nowhere to retreat – Moscow is behind us!” During the battle, almost all of the heroes died but the cost of their lives destroyed 18 enemy tanks and hundreds of Nazis.

■ Fast Facts

The history of the Panfilov's 28 Heroes was invented by the employees of the *Krasnaia Zvezda* newspaper. After the series of publications in the press, a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union, posthumously, to the 28 Guardsmen on 21 July 1942. The events of the “Victory of Panfilov's 28 Heroes” became part of the canonical Soviet mythology of the Great Patriotic War. Panfilov's story is widely present in the Soviet, Russian and also Kazakh and Kyrgyzstan state ideology: books have been written about them, films made, monuments erected in their honor, streets and parks named after them, and they're mentioned in the hymn of Moscow.

■ Detailed Facts

In late November 1941, the newspaper *Krasnaia Zvezda* published an editorial called “The Testament of 28 Fallen Heroes” on the heroism of the soldiers in General Panfilov’s Division, which destroyed about two dozen German tanks and gave their lives to stop the advancing Germans to get to Moscow: *“Over fifty enemy tanks moved along the lines which held the Panfilov Division’s Twenty-Nine Guardsmen... Only one of the twenty-nine was faint of heart... Only one raised his hand... Several guardsmen simultaneously, not saying a word, without a command, shot the coward and traitor.”* Further it stated that the 28 guardsmen destroyed 18 enemy tanks and *“all twenty-eight laid their heads. They were killed, but did not let the enemy pass.”*

The author of the work, literary editor of the newspaper, A. Krivitsky, did not mention any of the hero’s last names. Of course, this remarkable feat could not remain nameless and two months afterward, in the same *Krasnaia Zvezda* newspaper, and in another article by Krivitsky titled “On the 28 Fallen Heroes,” was published with the names of the guardsmen killed. The author of the article included the name of the political officer, Klochkov, and described the battle:

“The attack of the guns was reflected back. Over seventy enemy bodies lay near the trench. The faces of the tired soldiers were smoky with gunpowder, lucky people who worthily engaged their forces with the enemy but they did not know their fate, not knowing what mainly lay ahead. Tanks! Twenty armored monsters moved to the line that was being defended by twenty-eight guardsmen. The soldiers looked at each other. They expected an unequal battle. Suddenly, they heard a familiar voice: ‘You were healthy, heroes!’ The company’s political instructor Klochkov came into the trench... On that day, Klochkov first noticed the direction of the tank column and hurried along the trench. ‘Well, my friends?’ – said the political instructor to the soldiers. – Twenty tanks. Less than one per brother. That’s not that much!’ People smiled... The battle lasted over four hours.

Already fourteen tanks were frozen motionless on the battlefield. Sergeant Dobrobabin was already killed, soldier Shemiakin was killed... Konkin, Shadrin, Timofeev and Trofimov were dead... Klockhov's inflamed eyes looked at his comrades. "Thirty tanks friends – he said to his men – all of us will have to die perhaps. Russia is a vast land, yet there is nowhere to retreat – Moscow is behind us." All the circumstances of the battle, including the legendary words of the political instructor that were mentioned in the article, were allegedly retold by the only surviving soldier of this battle, I. Natarov, before his death in a hospital.

After the articles on this story were published, Krivitsky spoke about it across the whole country. Like the heroism of Nikolai Gastello and Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, everyone knew of the Panfilov heroes. Soon after, on 21 July 1942, at the request of the Western Front command, they were all posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

Throughout the whole war and two years after it, almost no one doubted the veracity outlined in the Krasnaia Zvezda story on the circumstances of the battle, until there was one event that forced the military prosecutor's office to investigate.

From where the myth began. The first report about the "feat" of Panfilov's 28 Guardsmen in the "Krasnaia Zvezda" newspaper from 28 November 1941.

Пролетарии всех стран, соединитесь!



КРАСНАЯ ЗВЕЗДА

ЦЕНТРАЛЬНЫЙ ОРГАН НАРОДНОГО КОМИССАРИАТА ОБОРОНЫ СОЮЗА ССР

№ 280 (5035)
28 ноября 1941 г., пятница
ЦЕНА 15

Завещание 28 павших героев

В городе Лух, куда рывком стекала Москва, была красавица матушка соборная гора, весь город лежал в её объёме. Красной армией, шагнув вперёд, стояли, поперек в тех, чтобы любой омане отступить врата, протоптали дырку вешкам. Не матушка — вот высшей дак наг завола. Пылали все гореть — вот бившей ваят жана.

И так, где этот донец стал волей нашей доней, там, где нашёл былина провалами повстанцам до последней капли крови

того выдана. С ней была доброты и чести. Красной армии, ее боялся враг, потому и эту минуту как бы отстал гореть. С ней была великое стратегическое благодеяние на благополучию борьбу с врагом.

План на дончик выкатил на стору сияющая, но в и ту "тонический" жемчугу, куда гореть жаркошла на толо, что на последние два парашюта ударили на конрак. Уже возжаждет исламарамыли талане илважно заступил на олар бое. Той донца была чужие часть, и пролетариат

ОТ СОВЕТСКОГО

Утреннее соо

В течение ночи на 27 ноября наши сна были вое с противником на вод: 142.

* * *

Наша часть, действующая на окоп участках Западного фронта, в ожесточенном бою уничтожила несколько батальонов. На долом был отбитых свыше тысячи сна убитых солдат и офицеров противника в 15 снайперских и разведочных взводах.

* * *

Легчею части тов. Шевченко, вей мигает на Восточном фронте, за черту уничтожила 2 батальона противника, 7 взводов. Было 200 летчиков и по

Everything began to fall apart in the autumn of 1947: in the Kyrgyz town of Kant the Ministry of State Security (MGB) arrested Ivan Dobrobabin on suspicion of collaborating with the Nazis. During his detention, Dobrobabin told the authorities that he was one of the 28 Panfilov heroes, presenting as his evidence a book about the dead guardsmen where a description was written about him. After this, Dobrobabin was moved to Kharkiv and the Military Prosecutor of the Kharkiv Garrison began to study the circumstances of the case.

The Prosecutor's investigation found that Dobrobabin was in fact in the 4th Company of the Panfilov Division during the 16 November battle near Dubosekovo but, as he himself said, *"did not commit any exploits and everything that was written about him in books about the Panfilov heroes is false."*

And this is not all. In the Prosecutor's investigative report, it stated: *"... that, apart from Dobrobabin, survivors included Ilarion Vasileev, Grigory Shemiakin, Ivan Shadrin and Danil Kuzhubergenov who also appeared in the list of 28 Panfilov men who died in the battle with German tanks. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the circumstances of the battle."*

*Monument
dedicated to
Panfilov's 28
Guardsmen in
one of the furthest
places away from
their "heroism",
Almaty
(Kazakhstan).
It is inscribed
with words
that Klochkov,
the political
instructor, never
said*



Dobrobabin, although he did not consider himself a hero, then told investigators the medley of his strange and twisted fate. During the battle on 16 November he was wounded and covered with earth. The German command found him and took him prisoner. After Dobrobabin fled or was released by the Germans, he reached his native village in the Kharkiv province and there, joined the police. With the arrival of Soviet troops, he was arrested. The Germans, who re-occupied the village, then released Dobrobabin. He again joined the police but with the front line approaching, he fled to the Odesa region. In March 1944, Ivan was re-mobilized back into the Red Army where he stayed until the end, was awarded for his service twice, demobilized and went to live in Kyrgyzstan, where he was arrested.

The investigating prosecutors did not try to conceal the details of the case or stop the investigation. They carefully questioned all the participants of those distant events, who were still alive, in particular – the former regimental commander I. Karpov, the former head editor of *Krasnaia Zvezda*, General D. Ortenberg, the author of the article A. Krivitsky.

Facts began to emerge which were undesirable for a broad disclosure. The newspaper version of the Panfilov Division was threatened by actual history. After the completion of the Prosecutor's investigation, the detailed events of the autumn of 1941 were reconstructed.

Everything began with a trip of the *Krasnaia Zvezda's* correspondent, Koroteev, to the headquarters of the 16th Army Division. There, he met with the Commissar of the 8th Guards Panfilov Division, Egorov, who spoke of the heavy fighting in their sector of the front and the heroic actions of one soldier from his company who died but they managed to delay the German tanks. The Commissar himself was not present for this point in battle, but rather learned about it afterward. When the journalists (with Koroteev was a correspondent from *Komsomolskoj Pravdy*)

asked if they could travel to the regiment that included this heroic company, there was a categorical refusal.

Back in Moscow, Koroteev told his editor about his trip and the conversation with the Commissar: *“Ortenberg asked me, how many people were in the company. I replied that the company was apparently incomplete with about 30–40 people. I also said, that among these men, two appeared to be traitors... and here is how the number appeared – 28, since from the 30 two were traitors. Ortenberg said, that I didn’t need to write about the two traitors and, obviously, when talking to someone, I decided to write only about one other traitor. On 27 November 1941, my brief correspondence was published in the newspaper and on 28 November in Krasnaia Zvezda the published editorials of ‘The Testament of the 28 Fallen Heroes’ appeared which Krivitsky wrote.”*

This was how the story of the 28 Panfilov heroes was born. After this, when the front moved west, A. Krivitsky went to Dubosekovo junction and together with the commander of the regiment and 4th Company visited the site of the battle. When he asked about the names of the fallen hero commanders of the company, there was no

This mythical feat continues to be glorified today. Poster of the feature film entitled “Panfilov’s Twenty-Eight” (2016)



answer: *“Kaprov did not give me any names, and instructed Muhamedyarov (regimental commissar) and Gundilovich (4th Company commander) who were taking notes, to take the information from some report or list. So, I had the list of 28 Panfilov men who died in the battle at Dubosekovo junction against German tanks.”*

All later works about the Panfilov heroes included information from Krivitsky's article. These include articles by N. Tikhonov, V. Stavskyj, A. Bek, M. Kuznetsov, V. Lypko and M. Svetlov. After being questioned by investigators, Kaprov, the former regimental commander, said that *“there was no battle of the 28 Panfilov men with German tanks at the Dubosekovo junction on 16 November 1941 – this is a continuous fiction. On that day, at the Dubosekovo junction a part of the 4th Company of the 2nd Battalion fought against the German tanks and they did indeed fight heroically. More than a hundred men of the company were killed, not 28 as it was written in the newspapers. None of the reporters asked me then. I never told anyone about the 28 Panfilov men and I could not even speak on it because there was no such battle. I never wrote any political report about this event. I do not know on what materials the articles written on the battle of the 28 guardsmen of the Panfilov Division are based on, including those in Krasnaia Zvezda.”*

However, the military prosecutor's office, having followed their evidence, concluded in their report *“... that the feat of the 28 guards-Panfilov men, illuminated by the press, is a fictional story created by the Krasnaia Zvezda correspondent Koroteev, the editor Ortenberg and, especially, the literary secretary of the newspaper, Krivitsky.”*

Myth 22

The Western Lend-Lease Aid Program Was Negligible

■ The Essence of the Myth

Aid from America and other Western countries to the Soviet Union as part of the Lend-Lease program during the war was insignificant. It did not affect the economic potential of the country or the results of the military operations of the Red Army at the front. The USSR would have defeated Nazi Germany even without the economic assistance from its allies.

■ Fast Facts

The Lend-Lease assistance program was one of the decisive factors in the victory of the Allies over the Axis powers. The USSR only partially paid the USA for the lend-lease program with gold. Overall, the USSR (and Russia as the successor of the Soviet Union) has still not paid its debt in full.

■ Detailed Facts

The Lend-Lease program – a system which the USA offered mostly free of charge, gave the Allies ammunition, equipment (both military and industrial and agricultural), food and strategic raw materials, including oil. The concept of this program gave the American President the right to decide assistance to any country whose defense was recognized as vital to American interests.

Aid was given to 42 countries. The main clients became the United Kingdom but also the USSR, France, China and other countries that were part of the British Commonwealth. The total volume of the program cost more than \$50 billion from 1941 to 1945. The amount of aid to the Soviet Union amounted to \$11.3 billion. According to some west-

ern experts, general Western support to the USSR reached about \$19 billion.

In the USSR, the importance of these supplies was somewhat recognized but also deliberately downplayed. In 1947, the famous economist Nikolai Voznesensky's report emphasized that the total amount of aid from the Western countries to the Soviet Union under the Lend-Lease program accounted for only about 4% of the Allied assets spent on the war. And that the tanks and aircraft that were supplied were mostly old models.

This myth emphasized the exceptional contribution of the Soviet Union to victory in terms of the opposition of the USSR to the USA within the Warsaw Pact and NATO. Particular attention was focused on the dwindling roles of the Allies. The decreasing importance of the Allied aid in Lend-Lease was one of the main components of this policy.

Historians and economists in North America and Europe, by contrast, claimed that without Lend-Lease the Soviet Union was unlikely to have stopped the German aggression.

The vast majority of researchers recognize that the material-technical and humanitarian aid from the USA and other countries given to the USSR during the war as part of the Lend-Lease program and other humanitarian organizations has been, until recently, artificially reduced and downplayed. The deliveries were important for the army as they were given access to new armaments and industrial equipment.

*Pilots of the 21st
Guardsmen
Fighter Aviation
Regiment near
the American
P-39 "Airacobra"
plane (May
1943)*



In recent years, against the backdrop of deteriorating relations with the West, this belittling trend in the role of Allied aid during the war has been renewed. This myth has not only been preserved but it has been updated by the Russian Federation, including a book by the current Russian Minister of Russia and the head of the Russian Military-Historical Society, Vladimir Medinsky, entitled *Vojna. Mify SSSR. 1939–1945* (War. Myths of the USSR. 1939–1945), which was published in 2011.

The range of supplies for the USSR was determined by the Soviet government and was intended to obscure the deficit in the supply of the Soviet industry and army. This assistance was extremely important and even a saving grace for the USSR.

According to various estimates, the total amount of Western supplies acquired for the army were:

- For armored troops: 12–16 percent,
- For aviation: 10–15 percent,
- For the navy: 32.4 percent

The proportion of transport vehicles from Lend-Lease reached 70 percent, thus the Soviet army traveled mostly in American cars. The basic Katyusha chassis came from the Studebaker. While the United States gave about 20 thousand cars for the Soviet Katyusha, the USSR only produced around 600 trucks.

Soviet mechanized units, equipped with American “Willys” Jeeps, Central Front in July 1943.



British “Churchill III” tanks for the 48th Heavy Tank Regiment moving along Kyiv streets (November 1943)



The USSR received from the Lend-Lease:

- 622,100 tons of rails (over 56 percent of domestic production),
- 1,900 locomotives (2.4 times more than the amount produced in the Soviet Union during the war) and 11,075 wagons (10.2 times),
- 3,606,000 tires (43 percent),
- 610 thousand tons of sugar (42 percent), 664,600 tons of canned meat (108 percent)

The USA and the British Empire provided 18 percent of the air fuel used by Soviet aircraft during the war.

The Soviet BM13 “Katyusha” rocket launcher on a chassis of an American “Studebaker” truck (June 1945)



The food supplies that were delivered to the USSR under Lend-Lease were enough to feed an army of 10 million people for 1,688 days – thus the entirety of the war.

And given the calorie content of the food provided by individual companies and humanitarian organizations and the drinking alcohol imported into the USSR, it can be argued that the food which came from the Allies, per calories, was not only enough to fully maintain the Red Army during the war but was also a significant supplement to the diet of the civilian population.

What Did the USSR Receive from their Western Allies during the War?

- a. Railway lines
- b. Locomotives
- c. Train Wagons
- d. Tires
- e. Sugar
- f. Canned Meat
- g. Vehicles
- h. Aviation Fuel

The USSR also received from the Lend-Lease Program: Tanks, Tractors, Rifles, Automatic Weapons, Pistols, Explosives

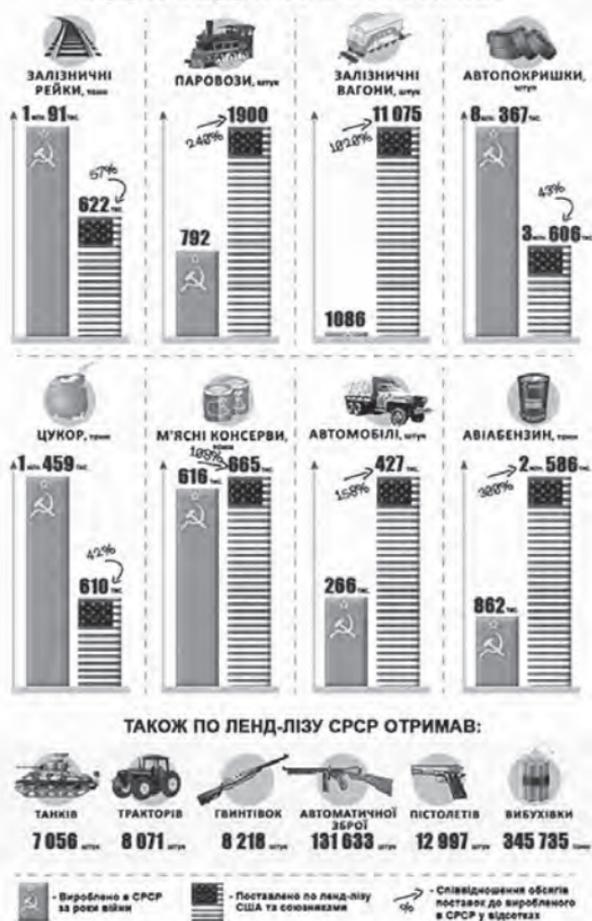
**Made in the USSR during the war*

**Delivered by the USA and other Allies during Lend-Lease*

**Ratio of supply to production in the USSR in percentages*

Infographics by Olena Kozin (depo.ua)

ЩО ОТРИМАВ СРСР ЗА РОКИ ВІЙНИ ВІД ЗАХІДНИХ СОЮЗНИКІВ



Myth 23

Ukrainians – Collaboration Champions of the World

Andriy Medvedev, New Ukrainian Heroes under the SS Banner, vesti.ru, October 2014. “Collaborators were everywhere – among the Greeks and the British, among the Russians and Jews – but nowhere in the mass consciousness of the people was cooperation with the occupiers this encouraged. What is happening today in Ukraine and the Baltics is a European abnormality.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

Ukrainians were the main collaborators with the Nazis and were happy to work for them.

■ Fast Facts

The scale of Russian military collaboration with the Germans was bigger than the Ukrainian.

■ Detailed Facts

The collaboration of the Third Reich’s occupied peoples with the Nazi regime had a pan-European character. Its basis was political motivations and social causes – the need to survive in extreme conditions of warfare and a totalitarian regime. Economic and domestic cooperation could not be avoided in any of the occupied territories.

For the representatives of the European nations occupied by Germany, political and military cooperation with the enemy was a choice which jeopardized their civic duty towards their own homeland. An alternative to political and military collaboration could be active or passive resistance or simply the rejection of excessive assistance to the invader. Hitler’s captive western European nations could hope to win as part of the anti-Hitler coalition in order to solve the problem of their liberation.

The situation in Eastern Europe was different. Here, the Nazi occupational regime was tougher but the pre-war situation was also not acceptable to every resident. The problem of stateless people and hostile political regimes existed before the German occupation. This was especially clear in the territories that the Third Reich captured from the Soviet Union. The Nazis actively used the national questions in the USSR and people's dissatisfaction with Stalinism in their fight against Moscow. However, instead of liberating the people as they had expected, the Nazis launched a regime of terror and even greater enslavement.

The nature and extent of cooperation was determined by the occupiers themselves and not their enslaved people. For political and ideological reasons, the Nazis chose which initiatives to support or encourage and which to suppress depending on the occupied population and German political thought. For example, in small Latvia, local residents formed two divisions of the Waffen-SS, but all petitions from the Polish political representatives about the formation of an allied Wehrmacht national force were rejected.

Small, stateless nations who were completely occupied by the Germans (like the Crimean Tatars) were in a particularly difficult situation. Logic dictating that national survival via cooperation with the invaders was paramount.

Consider the reasons for collaboration with the Nazis in Ukraine and Russia.

Both countries suffered from the totalitarian Stalinist regime and had reason to hope for the overthrow of Soviet authorities. Unlike the Russians, there was an additional motive for the desire of the defeat of the USSR in Ukraine – the desire to restore independence. This was especially true in western Ukraine, that was occupied by the Soviet Union for less than two years before the German occupation and this short experience was not very rosy.

Germany fully occupied the Ukrainian SSR, while the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) lost only about 17 percent of its territory. The entire population of Ukraine

was larger than the population in the occupied territory of Russia. When the Wehrmacht reached Russian territory, Soviet citizens' illusions about the "German liberators" had already been significantly weakened. The occupation of Ukraine lasted longer than that of the western regions of Russia.

Calculating the exact number of representatives of each of the two occupied nations who served with the Germans is not difficult. Although there was a clear correlation between the Nazis and the national military formations they created, there is no clear correlation between the national status of certain eastern battalions and the nationality of its personnel. In the "Russian" formations there happened to be many ethnic Ukrainians and vice versa. Even the political orientation of a soldier did not always determine his place in military service.

In general, researchers believe that there was about 250,000 "Ukrainian" personnel in formations of the Wehrmacht, SS, police and other structures. In "Russian" formations, this range falls somewhere between 300 and 800 thousand, depending on the methodology of calculations.

Most of the "eastern" units had company and battalion staff and belonged to the police or Wehrmacht (units of 100–500 people). Some of them wore the "ROA" ("Russian Liberation Army") armbands while others wore the "UVV" ("Ukrainian Liberation Army"). There was only the 14th Waffen-SS Division "Galicia", which formed in 1943–1944, among the Ukrainian forces in German service and numbered no more than 1000 personnel (during its



*Ukrainian
soldiers of the
204th "Schuma"
Battalion.*

entire lifetime, about 32,000 people went through its formation). By November 1944, the Division was officially denied the right to be called “Ukrainian.” Other large Ukrainian formations – regiments and brigades – only started to be created in the last year of the war.

From the very beginning there were more colorful and numerical units of Russian forces. The Russian Liberation People’s Army (RONA) which at first emerged as an anti-partisan militia, turned itself into a brigade and later into the 29th Waffen-SS Division. In September 1943, RONA had 12–15,000 soldiers. The Russian Corps in the Balkans had over 10,000 soldiers. The Russian People’s National Army (RPNA) – 4,000 soldiers. The 1st Russian National Brigade of the SS “Fellowship” – 2,500 soldiers. The pro-Russian XV SS Cossack Cavalry Corps consisted of about 30,000 soldiers. The vast majority of prisoners of war who were colonels and generals of the Red Army did not serve in the “Ukrainian” but rather the “Russian” German formations.

In trying to find a political basis for Russian cooperation with the occupiers, they created “parties” which mimicked the Nazi party’s ideology. These were, for example, the Russian National Labour Party, the Fighting Union of the Russian Nationalists and the People’s Socialist “Viking” Party of Russia. The majority of Ukrainian political personnel who collaborated with the Third Reich were more politically mature and less exposed to Nazi indoctrination. Of course, there were cases of Ukrainian organizations who followed Nazi ideology, like the Ukrainian Free Cossacks, but their influence was negligible.

A unique phenomenon in the occupational zones was the Russian military-civilian governments. After receiving permission from Wehrmacht command, the “Lokot Autonomy” existed in the Bryansk province. Its Russian administration led a population of over half a million people for over a year. It was in these forms that the Russian anti-communist nationalist movement existed. The Ukrainians in turn established the UPA, which fought against both totalitarian regimes.

The military-political leadership of the Third Reich was generally more inclined to use the Russian national question rather than the Ukrainian. This was particularly evident in the closing stages of the war, when a desperate Berlin gave carte blanche on the active formation of national military units and their political representations. The Germans supported the Russians and inclined the Ukrainians to submit to their “big brother.”

On 14 November 1944, the Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia (KONR) was created in Prague and led by General Andrei Vlasov. On 28 January 1945, soldiers began swearing their allegiance to KONR. In late April, they nominally were composed of three divisions (one was being formed) and with additional units, there were 120–130,000 people. Instead, the Ukrainian National



*Soldiers of the 1st
Division of the
Committee for the
Liberation of the
Peoples of Russia
(KONR) Armed
Forces raising the
Russian flag.*

Committee (UNC), led by General Pavlo Shandruk was only recognized by the Germans on 12 March 1945. Under the banner of the Ukrainian National Army (UNA), Shandruk managed to collect about 38,000 people, including two incomplete divisions.

In this way, Russian “success” in cooperating with the Third Reich seems more reputable and the Ukrainians should give up their place to them.

Myth
24

The Nachtigall and Roland Battalion and the Galicia Division Were Punitive Units of the SS

The Communist Party of Ukraine, Headline from Their Official Website, 7 December 2007

“Israel is ready to provide documentary evidence of the atrocities of the Nachtigall SS battalion under the command of Shukhevych.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

During the Second World War, the Germans created the Nachtigall and Roland battalions and the Galicia division out of Ukrainian nationalists. These units were staffed with Nazi collaborators, including those from SS structures, its leadership was subordinate to the SS and used in their ranks. The Nachtigall, Roland and the Galicia division were designed to kill civilians in the occupied territories.

■ Fast Facts

Nachtigall and Roland operated as part of the Wehrmacht and were never part of the SS structure nor did their soldiers ever receive SS ranks. At the beginning of the German-Soviet war, both battalions performed supporting functions and in the fall of 1941 were reorganized into the 201st Battalion of the Protective Auxiliary Police.

The Galicia division was founded in 1943 but did not belong to the general SS but rather to the Waffen-SS (Armed SS) and was primarily used as a battle unit.

■ Detailed Facts

This myth was formed during Soviet times. According to the myth, all members of the Ukrainian resistance movement during the war were traitors and puppets in the service of Germany who gladly carried out all of their “owner’s” whims. The Germans entrusted them with their dirtiest job – conducting punitive actions against unarmed civilians.

In most cases, the authors of these “sensational” stories did not understand the differences between the military formations who operated on the territory of Ukraine during the war. Therefore, for the ordinary spectator, there are never any questions when one hears “SS Nachtigall Battalion”. But the facts show otherwise.

The Nachtigall and Roland Battalions were never part of the SS. The initiator of this was not the Reichsfuhrer-SS Himmler but the OUN, together with Wehrmacht officers and in particular with the German military intelligence (the Abwehr).

However, each of the founders of the battalions pursued their own objectives. To a certain extent, the OUN saw these two battalions as a basis for a future Ukrainian army. Indeed, in early 1941, the OUN leadership knew about the preparations of Germany for war against the USSR and hoped that at the moment of the beginning of the war, it would manage to organize an uprising in Ukraine and create an independent state.

To prepare for the uprising and the subsequent maintenance of the territory, people needed military experience and weapons. However, in the situation the OUN found themselves after the annexation of western Ukraine to the Soviet Union, its members could receive military training in the ranks of only one army – the German. Western European countries were not ready to accept the OUN as an independent player and would not give them any help. And talks with their main enemy – the USSR, were also unacceptable.

In talks with the leadership of the Abwehr, the OUN leadership tried to create special units where members of the

organization were to undergo military training and afterward – to become the basis for the formation of a new Ukrainian army.

The German side had somewhat different plans. The Abwehr leadership regarded Nachtigall and Roland as reconnaissance-diversion battalions who, during the war, had to organize sabotage operations against Soviet military units, but also to ensure the safety of the moving German units, disarm remnants of the Red Army and protect the prisoner and ammunition wagons.

The tasks that the battalions were assigned by their Abwehr leadership, as well as the OUN, were significantly different from the tasks performed by the SS in the occupied territories.

The rank and file of the commanders of the battalion were Ukrainians. They wore military, instead of SS ranks and their commanders from the German side were also from the Wehrmacht. Nachtigall and Roland did not obey SS commands.

Despite OUN expectations, the two battalions were only used in a limited way during the fighting. In the summer of 1941, Roland moved into Moldova and the Odesa region, where its personnel stayed for a few weeks in anticipation of further orders and were then returned to Austria.



*Soldiers of the
"Nachtigall"
Battalion*

The Nachtigall battalion took part in the German army's occupation of Lviv and reached Vinnytsia. Already in August 1941, it was withdrawn from the front and on 16 September, the two battalions were reformed.

The Galicia division had a completely different history. Its creation began almost two years after the creation of the Nachtigall and Roland battalions in the spring of 1943, in eastern Galicia, which was then a part of the German General Government.

Although the official name of the formation had the abbreviation "SS" until April 1945, it was a purely military formation even from its very beginning. Therefore, it was not included in the general SS structure (Allgemeine SS), but rather in the so-called Armed SS (Waffen-SS). Over forty of such divisions existed and half of them were personnel from the German occupied and allied countries (Croatians, Latvians, Estonians, Hungarians, French, etc.). The Galicia division was designed to fight on the front next to the Wehrmacht.

Poruchik (Senior Lieutenant) of the "Galicia" Division, Volodymyr Kozak. Note the collar patches: instead of the SS runes, the Galicia Division wore the "lion" – a stylized emblem of Galicia.



The rank and file and lowest command personnel were Ukrainians – mostly natives of Galicia. The Germans held command positions until 1945, although there were also some Ukrainians there, such as Mykola Palienko, one of the commanders of the battalions.

Ukrainians entered the ranks of the division with different motives. Some looked to the Galicia division for the opportunity to gain military experience and weapons in order to join the UPA, which at that time was unable to train and equip large numbers of soldiers. Others hoped that the division would be the basis for the formation of Ukrainian military units that would fight the Soviet Union, even on the side of the Germans. There were also those who joined the ranks of the division to avoid the forced labour in Germany or to not remain on territory that would quickly be overrun by Soviet troops. A certain portion of soldiers were forcibly mobilized into the Galicia division.

Officially, the OUN-Bandera (OUN-B) branch opposed the formation of the division and even appealed to the Ukrainians not to join. But in fact, a certain number of its members were in its composition. Their aim was also to receive training and weapons, and serve as a constant link between division soldiers and the UPA until it was the right time to organize their transition to the Ukrainian underground. In contrast, the OUN-Melnyk (OUN-M) branch urged young people to join the division, considering it an opportunity for the formation of an armed struggle against the USSR.

The Galicia division took part in battles against the Red Army. In the summer of 1944, the division moved near the town of Brody in the Lviv region and was at the disposal of the 13th Army Corps, as part of the Army Group North Ukraine, where it was placed as a second line of defense. During the battle, the division was surrounded and defeated. Out of 11 thousand soldiers, only 3 thousand were in the vicinity, and 1,500 led by General Freitag retreated towards the Carpathian Mountains. The rest either died, were captured by the Soviets or joined the UPA. The division lost 70 percent of its personnel.

After this, the division was sent to Slovakia where it participated in the fight against the Slovak partisans. In January 1945, it was moved to Yugoslavia to fight against the communist guerrillas led by Josip Tito.

The Soviet myth about the division also included the allegation that the Galicia division was involved in the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising in August-September 1944, but this was not true (more on that in Myth 41).

In April 1945, the division fought along the front near the Gleichenberg Castle in Austria. In late April, its troops were withdrawn from the Armed SS and given a new name – the “1st Ukrainian Division of the Ukrainian National Army.”

After Germany’s surrender, the division’s soldiers were interned in the British and American zones of occupation but after 1948, they immigrated throughout the world – to the USA, Canada, Australia, Argentina and other countries. In 1985, the Deschenes Commission was set up in Canada to investigate the possible presence of war criminals in Canada, including immigrants from Ukraine and the Baltic States. After studying archival materials and examining witnesses in Canada and Western Europe, the Commission prepared a report in which none of the emigrants who were former members of the Galicia division were found guilty of war crimes during the Second World War.



*“Roland”
Battalion Choir
(1941)*

Myth 25

Bandera and the Ukrainian Nationalists Were Agents of the Nazi Secret Service

Anatoli Chaikovskyy, Bandera and Shukhevych were Agents of Hitler's Secret Service and That's It, Bulvar Gordona, 12 January 2010.

“...The Nuremberg Tribunal declared the SS, SD and other Nazi security services and organizations as criminals, and the OUN members took part in this. Subsequently, the UN General Assembly adopted the appendix: ‘All war criminals of the Second World War are subject to investigation, arrest and trial. They are not covered by a statute of limitations. They do not have the right of asylum...’ It’s a shame, that nobody had the idea to add an item on the prohibition of awarding the title of Hero to these people. Bandera and Shukhevych were agents of Hitler’s secret services, and that says it all.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

Stepan Bandera, Roman Shukhevych and all the other members of the OUN-B were agents of the Gestapo, SS, SD or the Abwehr and performed only the tasks of these services. The UPA were also agents of the Third Reich intelligence and fought on the side of the Nazis.

■ Fast Facts

The cooperation between the Ukrainian nationalists and the German intelligence is an important fact. The myth however incorrectly evaluates the nature of the cooperation. The nationalists acted in the interests of the Ukrainian state, building a cooperation with the Abwehr as a situational alliance. The peak of this collaboration occurred in the period of 1939–1941, that is during the time that Stalin made a pact with Hitler. After the proclamation of the Act of the Ukrainian State in Lviv on 30 June 1941 and the subsequent arrest of the nationalist leadership, the Ukrainian nationalists and the Germans split permanently.

■ Detailed Facts

The origins of the myth lay in the wrong understanding of the period of cooperation between the OUN and Nazi Germany in the 1930s and early 1940s.

The OUN began to cooperate with Germany due to geopolitical considerations. Germany was a traditional enemy of Poland.

Also, the Ukrainian Military Organization (UVO) had contacts with the intelligence department of the democratic Weimar Republic in the 1920s. With the advent of Nazi power, Germany became the largest country on the European continent (except for the USSR), which actively sought to rebuild the Versailles system. This coincided with the interests of the OUN, as the victors of the First World War did not place an independent Ukraine on the map. Germany was seen as a situational ally for the Ukrainian nationalists.

It should be noted that OUN relations with Germany were not very rosy. After signing the Polish-German non-aggression treaty in 1934, the OUN leader Yevhen Konovalets, moved from Berlin to Switzerland. In the same year, Germany gave Poland the OUN leader Mykola Lebed, who was hiding there after the OUN's attempt on the Polish Interior Minister Bronislaw Pieracki. Eventually, contrary to nationalist expectations, Hitler agreed to the Hungarian occupation of Transcarpathia and the Soviet occupation of western Ukraine. Moreover, the Ukrainian underground sharply criticized the Germans in their publications such as the Nation Building magazine. OUN and Lithuanian relations were much better, since they were mutual enemies of Poland.

However, Germany was the only real force able to challenge Poland and the USSR, and after the OUN split between Bandera and Melnyk, they continued collaborating with the Germans.

The OUN-B, through contacts with the Abwehr and individual general-sympathizers of the Ukrainian liberation movement, established military training for the organization's members. In exchange for intelligence, the Germans allowed the nationalists to conduct training of paramilitary guards in factories (Werkschutz), in worker commands and police schools in the German occupied zone in Poland. In addition to this, the organization created a network of military courses independent from the Germans for all its members, including Stepan Bandera.

In February 1941, Bandera reached a verbal agreement with the head of the Abwehr, Admiral Canaris, and the commander of the Wehrmacht, von Brauchitsch, as to the creation of a Ukrainian Legion. With the help of the OUN, two battalions were formed: Nachtigall and Roland. They were to carry out reconnaissance and sabotage tasks. And after the beginning of the war, the function of Nachtigall was limited to guarding communication lines and Roland did not participate in any hostilities.

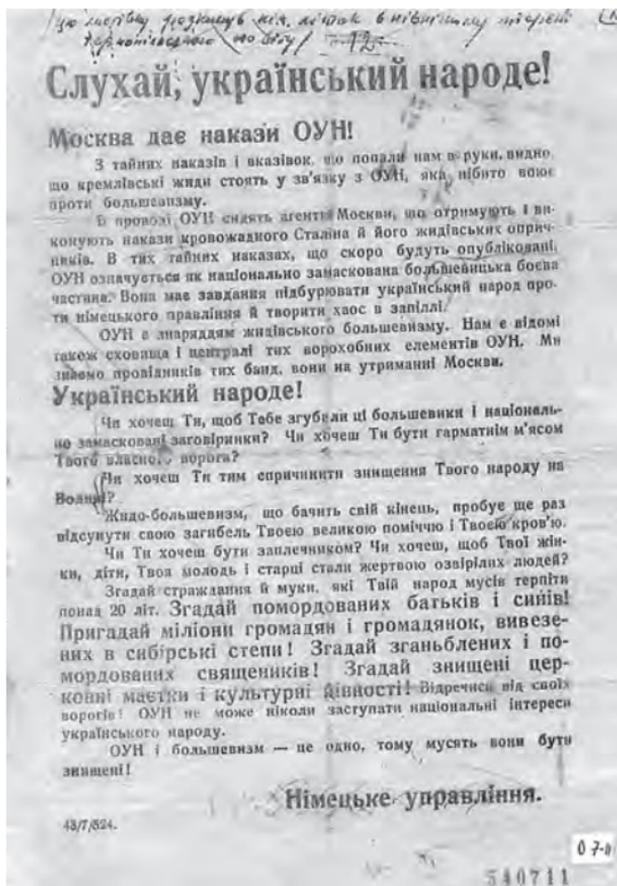


*Stepan Bandera –
Revolutionary
OUN Leader*

Additionally, the commander of Nachtigall was Ukrainian Roman Shukhevych. However, during the formation of the battalion, his soldiers refused to take an oath to Germany and swore allegiance only to Ukraine (for details, see Myth 24).

In August 1941, the Nazis reformed Nachtigall and Roland after the beginning of their repressive actions against the nationalists because they proclaimed the Act of the Ukrainian State. The Germans created the 201st Police Battalion out of some of the battalion's personnel, which during March-December 1942 engaged in the protection of German strongholds and opposing the Soviet partisans in Belarus. Unlike Nachtigall and Roland, the creation of the 201st Battalion was not coordinated by the OUN-B,

During the time when Soviet propaganda called the Nationalists agents of fascism, subordinates of Dr. Goebbels accused the OUN of working with the Bolsheviks. The German leaflet states that "Moscow gives the OUN orders" and "The OUN and the Bolsheviks are the same, and they must be destroyed!"



and Ukrainian soldiers went to serve there in order to avoid arrest by the Germans.

On 1 December 1942, the soldiers in the battalions refused to continue their service. Consequently, the Germans, dissolved this contract and the officers were arrested.

The mood and intentions of the battalions were eloquently conveyed in a verse from their song:

*“The Forty-Second Year Passes,
Our Squad is Dissolving,
One to his Wife, Another to his Mother.
– And us, the rest, to the Insurgents!”*

Shukhevych managed to escape custody and became the military referent of the OUN-B Leadership and later led the organization.

There is no sense in exaggerating the importance of the Abwehr cooperation for the OUN-B. Typically, the Abwehr recruited OUN members in individual procedures but the



*Julian Kovalskyi –
“Nachtigall”
veteran and first
Chief of Staff of
the UPA. Killed
in battle with the
Nazis*

OUN Leadership used this and gave these agents their own tasks. These relations had a pragmatic character for the union when both sides extracted their own benefits, without any political commitment. The Gestapo Chief Heinrich Muller told his colleague in the SD (Security Services) Walter Schellenberg, that the *“Ukrainian nationalist leaders uncontrollably work on their own goals.”*

Notably, during the same period of 1939–1941, the ally of the Third Reich was officially the Soviet Union. Did this mean that Stalin became an agent of Hitler? In this game of war, everyone was trying to use each other for their own interests.

It is worth mentioning that part of the future leadership of the OUN and UPA served in the Red Army in 1940–1941. For example, the propaganda referent of the OUN-B Leadership and the Chief of the Politico-Educational Department of the UPA General Staff in 1945–1951 was Petro Fedun, who was an artillery commander who fought on the Soviet-German front. However, these facts did not make the OUN-B leaders into “communist agents.”

Immediately after the German attack on the USSR on 23 June 1941, the OUN-B sent a memorandum to the Reich Chancellery as to how to solve the Ukrainian question af-

Today’s myth creators say that this picture features Bandera sitting in the center in a German uniform. In actuality, this is Reinhard Gehlen, a Wehrmacht officer



ter the collapse of the USSR. In it, among other things, were these words: *“Even if German troops, upon entering Ukraine, are at first welcomed as liberators, that situation will soon change if Germany does not come to Ukraine to restore the Ukrainian state with its respective slogans.”* Therefore, even at that point, the OUN-B anticipated the possibility of an anti-German armed resistance movement if the Germans took a hostile position towards an independent Ukraine.

However, despite cooperation with Germany in the military sphere, the OUN-B conducted its own political line. A vivid demonstration of this behavior was the declaration of the Act of the Ukrainian State on 30 June 1941 in Lviv. This was a complete surprise for the Germans – an independent Ukraine was not part of the Third Reich’s plans. On 5 July 1941, the Nazis arrested Bandera and on 9 July, the head of the newly created government, Yaroslav Stetsko.

From July-August, the occupiers pressured the leaders of the OUN-B to withdraw the 30 June Act. However, they resolutely refused and were sent to Berlin prisons. From 15 September 1941 to the end of the war, German punitive authorities arrested close to 1,500 OUN-B members. On 25 November 1941, the Security Police issued arrest and execution warrants for activists of the “Bandera group” who were *“preparing an uprising in the Reichskommissariat Ukraine in order to create an independent Ukraine.”*

The military training obtained with the help of the Germans was later useful during the anti-German struggle of the OUN and UPA in 1942–1944. Many veterans from the Nachtigall and Roland battalions and the 201st Police Battalion joined the UPA as instructors or military commanders. From the first UPA headquarters, the General Commander Vasyl Ivakhiv (otherwise known as “Som”) the Chief of Staff Julian Kovalskyi (“Harpun”) and the Adjunct of the General Staff Semen Sniatetskyi (“Sivka,” “Siyka”), all fell in battle with the Germans on 13 May 1943. The last two were former officers of the “Nachtigall” Battalion.

It is doubtful that agent-puppets of the intelligence services would use such independent actions. After all, how can a puppet fight against its leader and sponsor?

The idea that the OUN-B leadership were German agents or that they were blindly executing German intelligence orders cannot be considered. The OUN's struggle had its own logic – to achieve an independent Ukrainian state. All their efforts, including military cooperation with the Germans, were subject to exactly this one purpose. The OUN hid their plans from the Nazis. And the Declaration of Ukrainian State Act on 30 June 1941 became a moment of truth in OUN relations with the Germans.

It became apparent that in fact, the German Nazis and Ukrainian nationalists were enemies.

Myth 26

Roman Shukhevych Served in the Armed SS

Anatoli Chaikovskiy, Bandera and Shukhevych were Agents of Hitler's Secret Service and That's It, Bulvar Gordona, 12 January 2010.

“Volunteers dressed in SS uniforms, their commander was claimed as a ‘Roland member’, Major Pobigischiy, and one of the captains – Shukhevych, who was promoted to the rank of SS Hauptsturmfuhrer and was awarded the Iron Cross.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

The Chief Commander of the UPA, Roman Shukhevych, had the rank of SS Hauptsturmfuhrer and received the German Iron Cross from Hitler, not once but twice, for participating in punitive operations against civilians.

■ Fast Facts

There are no connections between Roman Shukhevych and the SS, there is also no information that Shukhevych was awarded any insignia by the Wehrmacht or the Third Reich.

■ Detailed Facts

Long before the beginning of the global armed conflict, the Ukrainian nationalists considered the possibility of a new major war as a chance for an armed struggle for the independence of Ukraine.

The Ukrainians needed allies in the creation of a national military structure. However, the range of allies was very limited since the activities of these military formations was directed against countries that split up the Ukrainian people during the interwar period.

The OUN was aware that independence was only possible with the help of an army. An army needed not only brave rank and file but also professional officers and modern weapons. All of this could be provided by a state mechanism. And therefore, they needed to find an ally that would agree to help in equipping the core of this future army. Germany was considered quite a suitable option because of their common enemy – the Soviet Union.

The Nachtigall and Roland battalions were the result of an OUN agreement with the German military intelligence (the Abwehr) and considered by the Ukrainian nationalists as the nucleus for a future independent armed forces. They had no relations with the structures of the SS and acted within operational control of the Wehrmacht.

The OUN-B fully understood they had an agreement with a totalitarian state that would pursue only its own interests. In order not to become an instrument for the wrong hands, the OUN-B leaders put forward their own conditions – any



Roman Shukhevych in a "Nachtigall" Battalion uniform. There are no "SS" insignia – runes and skulls – on the uniform

future battalions would be under their political leadership and would be subordinate only to Germany in matters of military tactics and training. Ukrainian soldiers never took an oath to Germany. Also, the OUN-B reserved the right to grant military ranks and introduced their own internal organization among the units. Both battalions were preparing for a war on the Eastern Front and could not, in any case, be used against the Western Allies. The OUN succeeded in granting the Ukrainian Nationalist Fellowship (DUN) – as the OUN called both battalions – the right to have their own chaplains, who became the spiritual guardians of the Ukrainian soldiers. Also, there was no Nazi propaganda among the DUN.

Roland and Nachtigall in the spring of 1941 were trained in Neuhammer and Seibersdorf (Germany). On 22 June 1941 – in the first hours of the Soviet-German war – Nachtigall took part in the fighting. The commander of Roland on the Ukrainian side was Major Yevhen Pobigischiy and the commander of Nachtigall was Captain Roman Shukhevych.

On 30 June 1941, Nachtigall arrived in German occupied Lviv. Here, all the soldiers received leave for a week while their commander had to take care of urgent personal matters. At the same time, a group of OUN-B members led by Yaroslav Stetsko entered Lviv and they proclaimed the restoration of the Ukrainian state. This event took place on the same evening of 30 June 1941.

In August 1941, the soldiers learned of the arrest of the Stetsko government (Ukrainian National Government) in which Roman Shukhevych was appointed deputy minister of defense. The Nachtigall battalion soldiers demanded the release of the Ukrainian government officials. On 13 August, the “rebellious” battalions were withdrawn by the Germans from the front and sent to the rear, back to Neuhammer.

From Neuhammer, there was a written memorandum sent out demanding the release of the arrested OUN-B Leadership and members of the government and the return of the battalion to the eastern front. These requirements were not fulfilled and the battalions were disbanded by the Germans.

Both battalions were reorganized in the autumn of 1941 into one group – the 201st Schutzmannschaft battalion, which was formed on a contract basis. After additional training, this battalion was sent to Belarus in order to protect communication lines. The local German occupational authorities in Belarus tried to persuade Shukhevych to participate in the recovery of “contingents” from peasants but received a strong negative as an answer.

On 1 December 1942, the term of the contract expired and the battalion soldiers refused to swear allegiance to Adolf Hitler. The battalion was moved to Lviv where the officers were arrested. Roman Shukhevych managed to escape and by November 1943 he led the UPA.

As we can see, Roman Shukhevych did not serve in any part of the SS. The Nachtigall battalion was subordinate to Wehrmacht command. During the Nuremberg trials, the question of the Nachtigall battalion’s participation in war crimes was never raised.

The story that Shukhevych allegedly received the Iron Cross from Hitler himself is also fiction. It was expanded on in 2007, by the leader of the Ukrainian Communist Party, Petro Symonenko, during a session of the Ukrainian Parliament. In actuality, there are Ukrainian on the list of Iron Cross recipients (mainly from the SS Galicia division) but Roman Shukhevych is not among them. In 2010, a court ordered Symonenko: *“At the earliest moment, the judgement of the plenary session of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine is to come into force, to refute widespread false information about Roman Shukhevych.”* Despite this, the myth of Shukhevych’s Iron Cross is still actively exploited in certain environments.

Indeed, Shukhevych did receive a medal, not from Hitler but rather from an underground government – the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council. Of course, this was not a German but a Ukrainian award: the Golden Cross of Combat Merit 1st Class and the Golden Cross of Merit 1st Class, which was awarded to the UPA commander in 1950, posthumously.

The Ukrainian Nationalists Massacred Jews During the War, Especially in Lviv and Babi Yar

A. Wojtsekhovskyy, Z. Dygas, G. Tkachenko. Without the Right for Rehabilitation. Collection of Publications and Documents, 2006.

“So with the blessing of the ‘holy’ church, one of the most brutal crimes of the century was carried out – the extermination of the Jews in Ukraine and beyond. Its executioners were not only the SS Einsatzkommando... but also the Ukrainian nationalists, who became famous as hired killers and fascists.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

During the war, the Ukrainian nationalists, as apostates of the Germans, killed the Jews en masse, acting as their main driving force. The majority of cases of mass extermination of Jews at the hands of Ukrainian Nationalists were in Lviv and at Babi Yar in Kyiv.

■ Fast Facts

The massive and systematic extermination of the Jews during the war in Ukraine was carried out by the Nazis. They formed special structures for this – the Einsatzgruppen, Einsatzkommando and Sonderkommando. To strengthen them, the so-called auxiliary police, which were attached to the destructive operations of the Holocaust, was used. It was formed from the local population, Soviet prisoners of war, and former employees of the Soviet police and among them could have been OUN members. They included not only Ukrainians but also Russians and other nationalities. At times, representatives of the local population were also present at the Jewish pogroms, and not only Ukrainians but also representatives of other nationalities. Most of them were not members of the OUN or other Ukrainian na-

tionalist organizations and did not necessarily profess any nationalist views.

■ Detailed Facts

This is another historical myth created by Soviet and later Russian propaganda which tried to justify the struggle of the Soviet secret police against the OUN and UPA. They say that during the war, the “Banderites” not only did everything to exterminate the Jews en masse but also the Poles and anyone speaking Russian. And therefore, the “valiant Chekists” and officials of other “internal organs” “fought” with the “Banderites” until the end of the 1950s because they wanted to prevent the massacre of others.

The Soviet and Russian propaganda included not only OUN members but also members of structures which had no connection to the Organization into the ranks of the “Ukrainian nationalists”.

Often, one can find the assertion of the “mass extermination of Jews by Bandera followers” in Russian media and that “Bandera was responsible for the destruction of Western Ukrainian Jews” to the point that the Nachtigall and Roland battalions are almost made the main initiators of the Holocaust in Ukraine. Thus there is a mixing of concepts in the minds of the viewers and readers trying to artificially create a “logical line”: Ukrainians, who advocated for an independent state, are nationalists and Ukrainian nationalists during the war destroyed the Jews and therefore, anyone who supported the Ukrainian state was explicitly or secretly anti-Semitic and criminals.

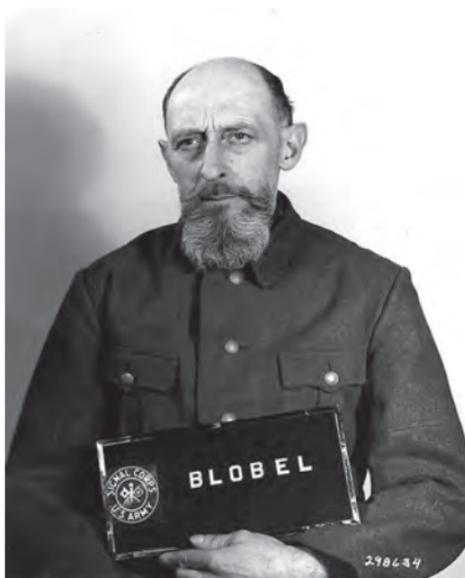
The massive and systematic extermination of the Jews during the war years in Ukraine was not conducted by Ukrainian nationalists but rather Nazi military and paramilitary structures. It was mainly through the so-called Einsatzgruppen, Einsatzkommando and Sonderkommando. They consisted of employees from the German security services, SS, police and support staff.

For example, the headquarters of the German Einsatzgruppen arrived in Lviv on 1 July, a day after the German army occupied the city. During this time, a Jewish pogrom took place. A common myth is that the main organizers and executors of the massacre were OUN members and soldiers from the Nachtigall Battalion.

However, the OUN-B leadership in their resolutions of the Second Great Council in April 1941 indicated that the main purpose of the Organization was the creation of the Ukrainian state and the organization of the Jewish pogroms was an attempt of external forces to divert attention of the “Ukrainian masses” with the goal of using their anti-Jewish sentiments.

Nachtigall as a military unit also did not take part in the organization or the implementation of the pogrom. One of the soldiers of the battalion later recalled that the battalion commander, Roman Shukhevych, ordered soldiers not to participate in massacres of the civilian population. In addition, the post-war hearings at the West German trial of Theodor Oberlander, found no involvement of Nachtigall in the Jewish pogrom. Furthermore, recently declassified KGB documents testify that the allegations against soldiers of this

*Paul Blobel –
Commanding
Officer of
Sonderkommando
4a, which
carried out the
execution of
Jews at Babi Yar*



battalion was an elemental part of the special operation of the Soviet secret police in 1959–1960.

Of course, the fact cannot be refuted that some soldiers of the battalion, as well as other Ukrainian nationalists, had their own motives in participating in the pogrom. However, the main instigators and organizers of the pogrom were representatives of German institutions.

After the withdrawal of the Red Army from Lviv, thousands of corpses of prisoners were found in the city's prisons – they were shot, without trial by the NKVD before their retreat. This caused the city residents a mass disturbance, who took advantage of German structures to direct their anger and aggression toward the Jews, even though there were representatives of the Jewish community among those who were executed in Lviv prisons.

The main role in the massacre of the Jewish population was played by the local “drudge”: small and very criminal elements of the lower classes of society which included representatives of different nationalities. Of course, no statistics could be found on this. However, at that time, the Ukrainians were a minority in Lviv.

By the end of July 1941, the German Einsatzkommando carried out mass executions of local Jews. In the autumn, the Nazi occupational administration created a ghetto. On the orders of the German authorities, the Jews of Lviv were forcibly deported there. During this operation, about 5,000 of the elderly and infirm were killed.

In the winter of 1941–1942, the Nazis began sending Jews from the Lviv ghetto to concentration camps, primarily to Janowska and Belzec. This was done by units of the SS, German and auxiliary police which consisted of the local population. Only in these two camps, 45,000 Jews from western Ukraine were destroyed there during the war.

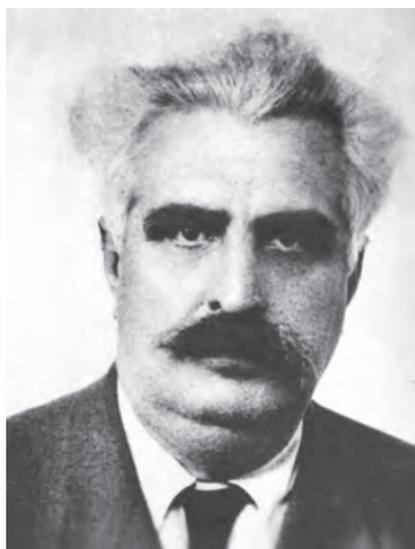
The Nazis systematically murdered Jews who could not work. They declared that the only Jews with so-called “worker's cards” could live in the ghettos and the Germans

periodically arranged “cleansings” where they burned houses of hiding Jews. On 1 June 1943, the Lviv ghetto was eliminated on orders of the occupational authorities. SS units and German police were involved in this action. About 3,000 Jews were killed during the liquidation of the ghetto, while 7,000 were taken to the Yaniv concentration camp.

In other regions of Galicia, mass extermination of Jews were held in March-April 1942 by the Sonderkommando, Wehrmacht and Schutzpolizei.

In Kyiv, the mass executions of Jews took place in Babi Yar. After the occupation of the city, on 29–30 September 1941, German troops of the Sonderkommando under the direction of Paul Blobel and German police shot more than 30,000 Jews. The Jews were shot en masse in the first half of October. Soviet and Russian propaganda often stress that a major role in these shootings was played by the “Banderites” in the Bukovyna company and the Kyiv auxiliary police. The appearance and active use of these ideas by the mid-1980s coincided with the beginning of a large-scale propaganda campaign to mark the 40th anniversary of the Nuremberg Trials, which was led by the USSR.

*Fedir Vovk –
OUN(B)
member, Vice-
President of
the Ukrainian
Supreme
Liberation
Council –
Righteous among
the Nations
for saving Jews
during the
Holocaust*



However, this propaganda used the ignorance of the ordinary citizens about the Ukrainian liberation movement and skillfully blended various structures.

The Bukovyna company had no connection to the OUN-B. It was created by the OUN-M – “Melnykites”. In any case, the soldiers of this company arrived in Kyiv only in the first half of November, more than a month after the Babi Yar crime and therefore could not take part in these executions.

The creation of the Kyiv police began in late September 1941. Some authors mistakenly equate the commander of it with a leading OUN-B figure, Dmytro Myron (“Orlyk”) and on this basis conclude that this police force was formed by the Banderites and consisted of “Ukrainian nationalists”. But in reality, their commander was Anatoli Konkel, who had a similar nom-de-guerre as Dmytro Myron (who never commanded the Kyiv police force). This same police consisted, mostly, of Soviet prisoners of war. And the “Ukrainian” part was pretty arbitrary and used only on a territorial basis. After all, the majority in its ranks were not Ukrainians but Russians and other nationalities. Finally, during the shootings at Babi Yar, the Kyiv police did take an active part but performed only auxiliary functions – putting up posters, patrolling surrounding areas and collecting things from those who were shot. The German Sonderkommandos and German police shot the Jews. Moreover, neither the population of Kyiv nor OUN structures took part in the shootings at Babi Yar.

Unfortunately, the local population had their own reasons to take part in the pogroms and other anti-Jewish actions in Ukraine. But these included not only Ukrainians but also Russians, Poles and other nationalities. Among them there could have been some members of the Ukrainian nationalist organizations or people who had nationalist views. Even the German documents from the war stated that they did not have broad support among the people for the Jewish pogroms and other anti-Jewish actions.

There is evidence of cases where the OUN-B in central and eastern Ukraine gave Jews false passports or even sheltered them from the Germans. Among those who rescued the Jews during the war were also OUN members, including the wife of the Supreme Commander of the UPA Roman Shukhevych, Natalia; the priest Father Omelyan Kovch (OUN member since the 1930s); the Vice-President of the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council, Fedir Vovk who were later recognized as “Righteous among the Nations”.

Myth 28

The Red Partisans – The “People’s Avengers”

Great Soviet Encyclopedia), 3rd Edition, Vol. 19

“The partisans were called the ‘People’s Avengers’. They took revenge against the fascist invaders for their treacherous attack on our country, for the terror, looting and violence they committed in the occupied territories. The partisan movement... was the struggle of the Soviet people against the fascist invaders in the temporarily occupied territories of the USSR, the main form of which were armed partisan and underground fighters... It unfolded throughout the occupied territories and had an unprecedented performance in history and scope.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

After the German attack on the Soviet Union, the local population en masse and immediately joined the Soviet partisans. Their orders, from the early days of the war, were for an active resistance to the invaders and causing heavy losses. They also took revenge for the suffering of civilians.

■ Fast Facts

The Soviet partisans were formed mainly in a central and planned manner by the Soviet authorities. The core leaders were from the Soviet party branches and members of the NKVD. By 1943, their activity was limited to areas where there were no large occupational forces. The Soviet partisans repeatedly abused the local residents, requisitioned food and property and sometimes killed civilians.

■ Detailed Facts

Unlike the resistance movements of Western Europe, which were a result of the self-organization of the civilian population, the Soviet partisan movement was created and controlled by the Communist Party and the NKVD who provided them with Red Army support, communication and weapons.

In the commands of the Central (CHPM) and Ukrainian (UHPM) Headquarters of the Soviet Partisan Movement, there were no requirements to protect people from terror or repression from the enemy.

Partisans fought in battles and carried out diversionary work, despite the interests and security of the civilian population. Their activities were not only the cause of violent repressions upon the masses by the occupiers but the partisans often did not try to protect the civilians from any punitive actions. A typical example of this was the Koriukivka massacre in March 1943.

The USSR government tightly controlled the Red partisan movement. There was a commissar, along with a political and NKVD officer in each squad. The Chief of the UHPM became the experienced NKVD officer, Tymofei Strokach.

An important task of the Soviet partisans was controlling the political loyalty of the local population. Any unauthorized initiative by the partisans “on the ground” was to be placed under complete central control. The “People’s Avengers”, who were not used to communist activities or who attempted to act independently from the guidance of the center, were carefully checked.

Some were immediately accused of disloyalty and subject to reprisals after the war. For example, the leader of the Soviet underground in the Uman province, Kuzma Hryb, was sentenced to 15 years in prison for confiscating property and the Rzhyshchiv underground regional committee head of the Ukrainian Communist Party was generally called a “nationalist.”

In early 1942, the Red partisan movement virtually ceased to exist. This was a consequence of the collapse of its governing bodies on the ground, betrayal and loss of its material base along with active operations of the occupiers.

According to the Ukrainian SSR NKVD, 1,874 units numbering about 30,000 soldiers were formed during the entire period from the beginning of Nazi aggression until 1 March

1942. However, on 1 May 1942, in NKVD communications to their units, only 37 partisan groups were incomplete with two thousand participants. The loss of Soviet partisans in the first year approached nearly 100 percent of the movement.

According to historians, between 115,000 and 180,000 soldiers went through the ranks of the Soviet partisan movement in Ukraine in 1941–1944. The majority “went over to the partisans” only after an Allied victory of the war in 1943–1944 was determined and after the massive Soviet offensive in the west.

From the very beginning of the German-Soviet war, the core of the partisan units and detachments were the communist nomenclature, NKVD employees and Red Army military personnel. Much of the then partisan activists who became the leadership of the Soviet partisans, were in 1920–1930 involved with the organization of forced collectivization, the Holodomor and Soviet repression.



*Gregory
Balytskij –
commander
of the “Stalin”
Chernihiv-
Volhynia partisan
unit*

The partisan leader of the Chernihiv province was the pre-war First Secretary of the Regional Ukrainian Communist Party Committee, Oleksiy Fedorov, and later a Major-General of the NKVD. His first deputy was Mykola Popudrenko, who before the war was the Third Secretary of the same committee. In one of his orders from October 1941, Fedorov ordered the “*destruction of all the kulaks, who re-occupied their former houses.*”

Archived documents are filled with the testimonies of the brutality of the Soviet partisan food requisitions. These events were hidden in the documents of the top leadership of the USSR with the euphemisms such as “self-provisions” and the “partisans exist at the expense of local resources.”

As retribution for the actions of the Soviet partisans, the Nazi occupational regime destroyed more than 670 residential settlements and at least 50,828 civilians on the territory of modern Ukraine.

Between 1 and 2 March 1943, Nazi punitive squads completely burned down the town of Koriukivka in the Chernihiv region, along with its inhabitants. About 7,000 people killed and 1,290 homes burned. Only around 10 houses survived in the town.



Chernihiv-Volhynia partisan unit Command

The Koriukivka massacre was the greatest crime against a civilian population of its kind during the Second World War in Europe. However, unlike Khatyn, the Koriukivka massacre did not become a symbol of mourning for the Union and its history was silenced by the USSR.

The reason for this silence is quite simple: the Koriukivka massacre was useless for Soviet propaganda, because it was provoked by a partisan attack on the local occupational authorities. In addition, when a later detachment numbering about 300–500 people launched a punitive destruction of the town, the partisans did nothing to protect it. Although a Fedorov partisan unit was standing within 15 kilometers of the town and numbered 3–5,000 soldiers and therefore, had a tenfold advantage in terms of numbers over the enemy. There were also advanced partisan patrols located three kilometers from Koriukivka who idly watched the glow of the burning town. And after a few weeks – on 18 March – in the Bolshevik newspaper, the Red partisans denounced the bloody disgrace of the massacre of Koriukivka residents on the occupiers and remained silent about their own inactions.

*Anton Brynskij –
commander of a
partisan brigade
in Polissia. Killing
his own partisans
and civilians in
his brigade for
looting was a
norm for him*



Soviet historiography and propaganda also avoided descriptions of unworthy acts and crimes of the Soviet partisans, and the documents of the partisans were classified in Soviet archives.

The orders mention cases when the commanders of the partisan groups sent soldiers *“on the path of robbery whose objective was delivering pigs or sheep to the farmers”*, or that a group of soldiers *“took by force, one pig, a board of meat, a pound of flour and salt”* from the locals.

In the documents, one can also read how a partisan commander *“once again proved to be looting, that is took cloth from a farmer and exchanged it for vodka.”* Or when a sergeant of the Propaganda Department stole a horse from a local resident and demanded in return two liters of moonshine. Or when the deputy commander of a partisan unit *“repeatedly drank and drunkenly threatened the population with weapons.”*

The behavior of the Soviet partisans was not a surprise to the Soviet leadership. For example, in one of its dispatches, the head of the UHPM, Timofei Strokach, wrote about the commander of the Lenin unit in Volhynia: *“Your reconnaissance unit of 50 people [in] the beginning of December along the Horyn River, killed 48 civilians because there was one shot made at you. Your reconnaissance of 26 November, took 150 heads of cattle from the civilians in the village of Rokytne. People in the detachments began to deteriorate and engaged in looting.”*

The Soviet myth about the red partisans as the “People’s Avengers” was conceived as a “smokescreen” from the beginning. Under the veil of the fictional magnitude of communist resistance to the occupiers, these uncomfortable pages had hide from history.

Myth 29

The Only “Real” Partisans Were the Soviet Partisans

*Sergey Buntovskyy,
Bandera was not
Alone... In Memory
of the Real Heroes
of Ukraine, anti-
fashist.com*

“Considering, that the personnel of the guerrilla groups which operated in Ukraine were recruited from local volunteers, then we can say that Ukrainians, with the exception of the natives in Galicia and Volhynia, were very active in the fight against the invaders. Some of those, who went to serve the Nazis, were not greater than people from other Soviet republics. This proves the fact that by 1941, the Soviet government was perceived by the populations of the USSR (except in the 1939 annexed lands) as their own. Accordingly, the pro-German nationalist organizations such as the OUN and UPA were mostly alien to Ukrainians.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

The Soviet partisans are “ours”, because they obeyed Soviet command and acted in the interests of the people. All other formations did not act in the best interest of the Ukrainian people.

■ Fast Facts

Soviet propaganda and historiography often saw history as a black and white picture. Everyone who was not “ours” were “fascists”. The activities of the other partisan formations were not noticed, ignored and quite often demonized, with information about them falsified. However, in Ukraine, various anti-German resistance movements were active including communist and nationalist ones. The same situation occurred in many other European countries.

■ Detailed Facts

During the Second World War, the European resistance movements were not able to achieve internal unity and create a single centrally coordinated leadership.

Often, in the occupied territories of Central and Eastern Europe, two or more resistance movements were formed. The nationalist variant fought for the creation of independent states or the restoration of their pre-war forms. Nationalist partisans subordinated themselves to the legitimate government of their countries, which were usually abroad. Their competitors were often partisans organized by the Communist Party. The communists, who sought to come to power in their own countries were generously supported by the USSR.

These great intricacies of the partisan movement were seen in Ukraine's neighbor, Poland. After the German occupation, the soldiers of the Polish Army formed an underground-partisan movement known as the Home Army (AK). They performed the Polish government's tasks, which operated in exile in London. This anti-Nazi and anti-communist force advocated for the liberation of Poland without the help of the USSR. However, the Polish Worker's Party had its own forces, the People's Army (AL). Its purpose was to establish a communist regime after the expulsion of the Germans.

Incidentally, this is not a complete list of Polish partisans. There was also the moderate-left's People's Party led the Bataliony Chlopskie (Peasants' Battalion, BC). In numbers alone, this group (with 160,000 men) was only second to the AK (350,000) in partisan formations in Poland. As a result of the merger of 17 partisan organizations, the Polish National Armed Forces (NSZ) was created. These formations were recognized by the Polish government in exile in London, but had different views on the war's strategy and tactics.

They were combined into temporary alliances but then competed among themselves. At times, it became a bloody mutual struggle. Especially uncompromising were the nationalist formations who wanted the communist AL out of the NSZ. After the war, the nationalist formations continued their struggle in Poland against the communist regime and became known as the "cursed soldiers."

A real civil war unfolded in the Yugoslavian underground. The King's faithful Chetniks fought not for life but rather for the death of the communist partisans. The Chetniks were former soldiers of the Royal Army, organized by General Dragoljub Mihailovic into the Yugoslav Army in the Homeland. Other partisan units were united in the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia under the leadership of the Communist Party leader, Josip Broz Tito. The Western Allies initially supported the Chetniks but toward the end of the war, Tito's partisans were favored. This was a decisive factor in their power struggle. In 1946, the Chetniks were defeated and Mihailovic executed.

Bloody infighting was also marked in the Greek resistance movements. The Communist Party formed the National Liberation Front's military wing, the Greek People's Liberation Army. Their greatest rival became the National Republican Greek League. A third partisan group was the National and Social Liberation, which fought for a liberal-republican system.

*Home Army
partisans during
the Warsaw
Uprising (August-
October 1944)*



Under British mediation, all of these signed the National Bands Agreement in July 1943 for a joint struggle against the German-Italian occupation. But the communists did not want to restore the old order after the victory of the liberals. Therefore, in October 1943, the Greek People's Liberation Army launched partisan attacks against other partisan groups. As a consequence, a bloody civil war began that lasted until 1949.

The resistance movement against the Japanese invaders in China, which lasted from 1937–1945, was also not simple. In order to expel the occupational forces, the nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek and the communists under Mao Zedong stopped their civil war and fought together. After the liberation of China, their mutual struggle was renewed.

The common struggle of the partisans of various political beliefs against an external aggressor was widespread. They all envisioned different futures for their countries after liberation. And they tried to eliminate their opponents from the arena of struggle. In this regard, Ukraine was not unique.

A Chetnik-Nationalist detachment before combat operations, Southern Serbia (1943)



From the first months of the German-Soviet war, the partisan struggle was organized by Soviet command. In 1942, the nationalist resistance movement began to be formed. The Polissian Sich was formed under the Otaman Taras Borovets and the OUN-M. At the turn of 1942 and 1943, the OUN-B created the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. This diversity of nationalist partisans existed until the end of 1943, when the OUN-B united them into a single UPA.

But the USSR tried to construct a black and white picture of the war, where there was a correct “us” and the traitors were the “Banderites.” In fact, across Europe, the communists and nationalists joined together for the destruction of Nazism and its satellite states, even though each was guided by its own strategy and goals.



*Yugoslav
communist
partisans
entering Belgrade
(October 1944)*

Myth 30

UPA – “Hitler’s Henchmen” and Never Fought Against the Nazis

Dmytro Tabachnyk, Minister of Education and Science (2010–2014), 12 November 2012

“There is no document which would testify to the UPA fighting against the Nazis. In ’42, and in ’43 and in ’44, the Germans supplied weapons to UPA detachments.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

The UPA was formed by the German invaders, and in close cooperation with them it conducted punitive operations against Soviet partisans, Ukrainians, Jews and Poles. There is no evidence of anti-Nazi battles of the UPA.

■ Fast Facts

The struggle between the UPA and the German occupiers and their allies are documented in numerous German, Soviet, Polish and UPA documents. The UPA, German and Soviet sides considered the UPA operations as an anti-German uprising.

■ Detailed Facts

The atrocious occupational policies of the Nazis forced the OUN-B Leadership to defend the population with arms. The first UPA sotnia (company) was created on 22 January 1943. By 7 February, it had defeated the German command of the Reich-center of the Volodymyrets region in the Rivne province.

In the spring of 1943, the UPA constantly increased their numbers and the scale of their resistance. The fiercest skirmishes against the Germans were in the Lutsk, Kovel, Horokhiv, Rivne, Kremenets, Kostopil, Sarny and Lanivtsi

regions. In March 1943, the insurgents seized these regional centers five times. At the end of the first month of spring, the German government under Reichskommissar Erich Koch reported that only two regions were free of “gangs” in Volhynia.

The occupational administration began to carry out anti-partisan operations involving armored vehicles and aircrafts. At the end of April, entire German divisions were transferred to the Berezne, Liudvypil, Mizoch, Ostroh, Shumsk and Kremenets regions to deal with the UPA.

The punitive actions of the Nazis were limited. If in March, the UPA units attacked German economic targets only eight times, then by April it increased to 57 attacks and in May – 70.

At a meeting in Rivne on 5 June 1943, the Minister for the Nazi Occupied Eastern Territories, Alfred Rosenberg and the Head of the Occupational Authorities in Volhynia and Podillia, Heinrich Schoene, reported that in his administration the *“Ukrainian nationalists cause more difficulties than the Bolshevik gangs.”*

Interestingly, this fact was later acknowledged by the leadership of the Soviet partisan movement. The commander of the Soviet partisans, Petro Vershigora, on 4 March 1944, reported to the Ukrainian Headquarters of the Partisan Movement: *“We cannot allow the same mistakes in Poland that we had in Volhynia, giving the leadership of a popular uprising against the Germans into the hands of the counter-revolutionary, nationalist groups.”*

The available Nazi forces to suppress the resistance were not sufficient. Therefore, in July 1943, the struggle against UPA forces was taken up by the anti-partisan commander in the East, Erich von dem Bach. The 8th SS Cavalry division Florian Geyer, consisting of 10,000 soldiers and 10 artillery battalions, were transferred under his direction. Air cover was given by 27 aircrafts, on the ground there were 50 tanks and armored vehicles.

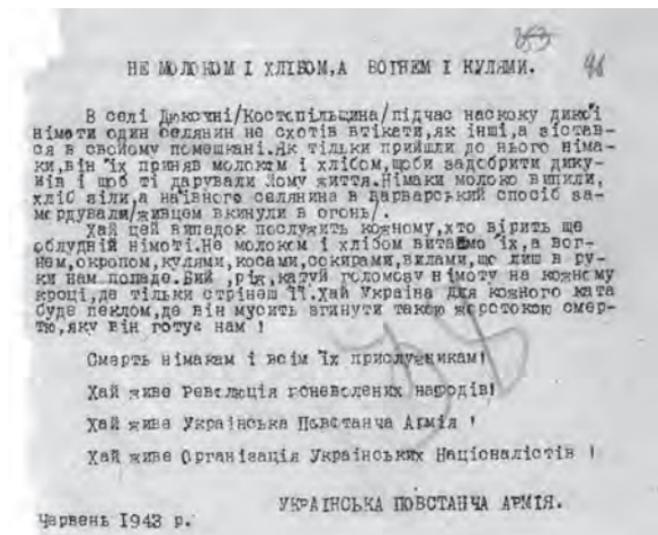
However, the UPA maneuvered themselves accordingly and were not destroyed. Overall, in July, insurgents attacked German bases 295 times and agricultural targets, 119 times.

At the beginning of August 1943, von dem Bach withdrew to Galicia for the fight against the Sydir Kovpak’s Soviet partisan detachment raid. The German attacks lessened and so the anti-German activities of the UPA increased: 391 attacks on garrisons and 151 attacks on enterprises.

But soon, the Higher SS and Police Leader in Ukraine, Hans Prutzmann, organized new attacks against the UPA. These attacks occurred in southern Volhynia from 23 August to 9 September 1943. At first, the village of Antonivtsi was bombed, which was the headquarters of Bohun military group. Following this, the punitive expedition attacked UPA camps around the Kremenets forests. The Bohun military group was split into small units and broke out of the encirclement.

In the summer of 1943, the insurgent movement against the Nazis appeared in Galicia. On 18 August, the Ukrainian People’s Self-Defence (UNS, the original name of the UPA in Galicia) attacked a German stone quarry in Skole, Lviv province. The nationalists freed 150 forced laborers and the camp guards were destroyed.

*UPA leaflet
calling for:
“Death to the
Germans and all
their Henchmen!
Let Live the
Oppressed
Nations! Let live
the Ukrainian
Insurgent Army!
Let Live the
Organization
of Ukrainian
Nationalists!”
(June 1943)*



In autumn 1943, the large-scale fight between the insurgents and the Nazis began. On 3 September, near the town of Dolyna, the Ukrainian soldiers shot the German battalion from higher ground in order to draw them into the narrow mountains. The occupiers left about 200 soldiers on the battlefield. From 25–29 September, the Trembita Sotnia deflected a punitive attack on their camp on Mount Stovba.

From 29–30 November 1943, there was a large battle between 1,500 and 2,000 Schutzmann and the Kryvonis-II battalion near the village of Nedilna in the Sambir region. The insurgents retreated with considerable losses but left the battlefield with almost their entire battalion headquarters and the battalion in tact

In Volhynia, the last big anti-insurgent operation was directed by Prutzmann in November 1943. Between 2–3 November, the city of Stepan was bombed from the air and the Zahrava military unit was pushed northward. Simultaneously, on 3 November, German planes bombed and shelled the town of Kolky, where the UPA formed the Kolky Republic (more on this in Myth 31). It should be noted here that the Nazis were not able to capture the territory of the



*Nazis shooting
insurgents
taken prisoner
during the Battle
of Nedil'na,
Drohobych (2
December 1943)*

so-called Republic from June until the beginning of November 1943, when during the attack, 600 civilians were killed.

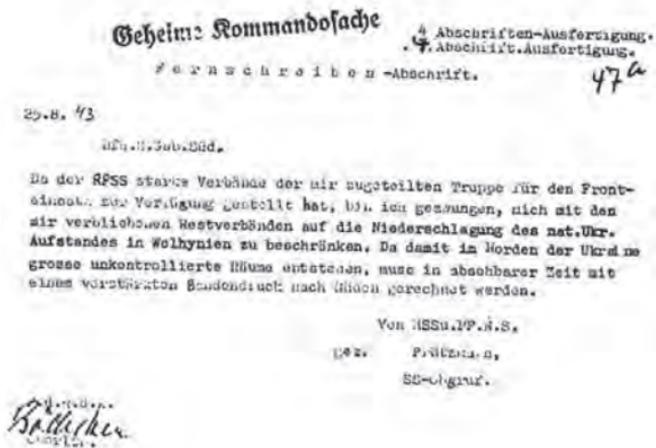
In October-November 1943, there were 47 battles between the UPA-UPS and the German occupiers, and rural UPA self-defense units were involved in 125 battles. The Germans lost more than 1,500 soldiers.

The complete suppression of Nazi activities by UPA resistance failed. With the fast approaching Soviet-German front, most German military forces were transferred. Therefore, massive German anti-partisan operations in Volhynia were no longer necessary.

In Galicia, this confrontation lasted until the end of the summer in 1944. The UPS reformed itself into the UPA-West. UPA soldiers in March-April 1944 defended Ukrainian villages from German looting. Sometimes, it was not fully successful. In May, the Wehrmacht broke the Halajda and Siromantsi Sotnias in the Lviv province.

From 31 May to 6 June 1944, in the Chornyj (Black) Forest, the UPA fought the 7th Armored Division of the Wehrmacht. The confrontation reached its peak in Galicia in mid-summer.

Telegram of
Hans Prutzmann
concerning the
suppression of
the “Ukrainian
Nationalist
Uprising” in
Volhynia (25
August 1943)



The biggest clash of the UPA-West and the German-Hungarian troops took place around the Lopata Mountains at the junction between the Drohobych and Stanyslaviv (Ivano-Frankivsk) regions. These events are also reported on in great detail in the written reports of the Polish underground. From 6 to 16 July 1944, there was intense fighting from artillery shelling which moved through the melee of battles. But the insurgents were victorious under the command of Vasyl Andrusiak, "Rizun". The occupants lost about 200 soldiers and retreated, while only 50 Ukrainians were killed.

Under the blows of the Red Army, the Wehrmacht left Ukraine. By early September, there were mostly only minor clashes and disarmament of German units by the UPA.

There were episodes in the history of the Ukrainian insurgent movement when some commanders tried to hold illegal talks with German command where they offered "neutrality in exchange for weapons" or "food in exchange for weapons." We also know of several cases when based on these talks, around 80–100 small arms were handed over to the insurgents. But such arrangements were not welcomed by the command of the Ukrainian underground. In some cases, they were even punished. In March 1944, Porfyriy Antoniuk ("Sosenko") was shot for these illegal negotiations based on a sentence given by an UPA court-martial. Also in April 1944, the UPA executed Mykola Oliynyk ("Orel").

Afterward, talks with the German occupational authorities were held with the OUN-B leadership. The occupiers were interested in stopping OUN and UPA anti-German activities in order to throw more of their forces against the Soviet attack. The OUN sought to secure the release of political prisoners from concentration camps (Stepan Bandera, Yaroslav Stetsko and many others) and obtain weapons for the UPA, which they always lacked. The meetings between the OUN leadership and German authorities took place in March, April, June and July 1944. The result was that the insurgents received hundreds of weapons and

in September-October 1944, the Nazis released Bandera and other Ukrainian nationalists, who, however, were left under Gestapo supervision.

In return, the OUN-B reduced the intensity of their anti-German operations (mainly in Volhynia) but did not stop them altogether. As reported by German Major Muller, an officer in Army Group “South”, *“at that time, as some national-Ukrainian bands put themselves upon the orders of the German Wehrmacht or performed their tasks, others made mad battles against the Wehrmacht with fanatical hatred.”* Examples of such “mad battles” were in the Chornyj Forest or along the Lopata Mountains in Galicia which are mentioned earlier.

The activities of the UPA were recognized as anti-German by the insurgents and by the German occupational leaders like Schoene, von dem Bach and Pratzmann and the Soviet partisan commander, Vershigora. Researchers estimate the losses suffered by the Germans and their allies due to the UPA were about 12,000 soldiers. In the armed confrontation with the occupiers, the Ukrainian underground and insurgent units lost between 10–12,000 people.

In order to put an end to this myth of history, one must cite one of the many German documents that the former Education and Science Minister, Dmytro Tabachnyk, “did not know” about. This is the telegram from Prutzmann from 25 August 1943: *“The General Command of the Army Group ‘South’. In relation to the fact that the SS Reichsführer gave strong detachment units, they assigned me military units for the front, I have to limit the remnants of these units in order to suppress the Ukrainian national uprising in Volhynia. In northern Ukraine, large uncontrollable areas have arisen, that in the near future should expect an increase of pressure from these southern gangs.”*

Myth 31

The UPA Did Not Derail a Single Train Wagon

*Yuri Kozlov,
The Banderitization
of Ukraine*

“The so-called UPA, during its entire existence, never destroyed any German tanks, did not derail any railway trains, did not liquidate any German general-punitive units. There is no document that claims that the UPA leadership made any decision on military actions against the German army.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

The UPA did not cause any losses to the German occupiers and did not play any role in the liberation of Ukraine from the Nazis.

■ Fast Facts

The number of German personnel killed by the UPA, was small compared to the number killed by the Soviet partisans in Ukraine. However, the Ukrainian insurgents tipped the anti-German struggle mainly by countering the economic despoils of the local population, exporting the Ostarbeiter for forced labor and defended Ukrainians from punitive operations.

■ Detailed Facts

How did the strategic goals of the UPA differ from the Soviet partisan movement?

Soviet partisans were organized by state groups who fought in the Wehrmacht's rear for the benefit of the Red Army. The headquarters of the partisan movement, which was in Moscow and other unoccupied cities, supplied the partisans with command personnel, weapons, equipment, medicine and other resources, including cigarettes. The main purpose of the partisan struggle was to gain intelligence, sabotage German communications, destroy military equipment and

carry out terror attacks on high-ranking officials of the occupational administration.

The UPA wanted an independent Ukrainian state. The OUN-B wanted both the expulsion of the Germans and were against the return of Soviet power. Therefore, facilitating the victory of the Red Army was not part of the plans of UPA command.

The UPA did not receive any help from anyone and had to fight with whatever they could. The main anti-German nationalist struggle was in their opposition to the economic exploitation of Ukraine and the protection of local residents from terror and from being exported for forced labor.

The UPA's priorities were to establish control over the countryside or to cut the Nazi state from its source of agricultural products. During the spring of 1943, the UPA was able to take control of most of the areas of the general Volhynia-Podillia region. The leader of the district, Heinrich Schoene, on 30 May, was forced to admit that *"only the territory along the highways and railways are in the hands of the Germans."*

In the areas where the UPA expelled the occupiers, "insurgent republics" were created. In these republics, the UPA High Command organized the local administration, conducted elections, established schools, assigned land, and restored companies and so on.

The most famous was the Kolky Republic. On 13 June 1943, the UPA unit "Kotlovyna" won control over this district town in the Volhynia province and established their own Ukrainian authority. The insurgents reopened the power station, bakery, dairy, post office, school and a Ukrainian administration.

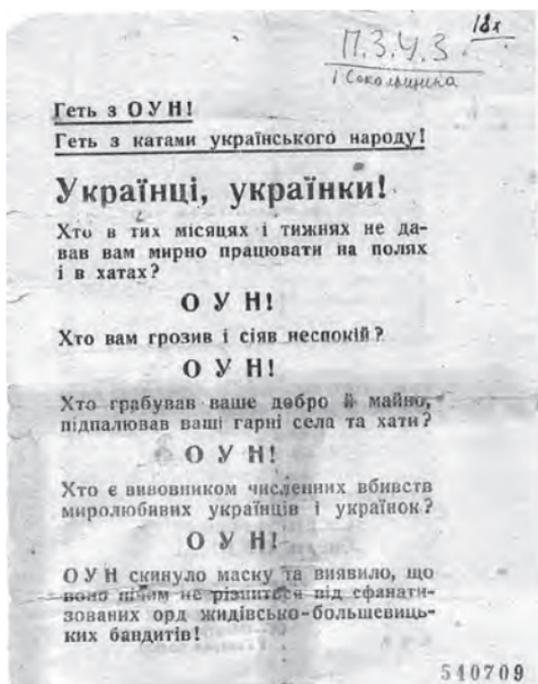
The people lived without an occupying force until 3 November, when the Nazis won Kolky with the help of paratroopers, aircraft and armored vehicles.

Famous Soviet partisan commander, Pyotr Vershygora, confessed: *"... The west bank of the Horyn River, the Stydyn, Stepan, Dubrovytsia regions, the Kolky-Rafalivka region*

were in the hands of the UPA... The Volhynia – in particular the Horodyshe, Turiisk, Porytsk, Horokhiv and Volodymyr-Volynskiy regions were completely under the control of the UPA. Enemy garrisons were only in the large settlements along communication and regional centers...”

In Galicia, by the end of April 1944, the UPA controlled 40 villages (the Bibrka, Peremyshliany, Berezhany and Rohatyn regions). The capital of the “republic”, which lay on the side of the road among the forest, was the village Dusaniv.

In order to wreck the opportunities for the Nazis to rob Ukrainians, the insurgents attacked German companies, warehouses, Liegenschaft (state farms). On 25 June, the Reichskommissar Erich Koch recognized that the “insurgents and partisans attacked important access points in the country and the rails, roads and bridges supplying the front, state farms, dairies, grain and hay stocks and industries available to them.” The Polish underground of the Home Army reported in July that on the territory of the Volodymyr-



Leaflet against the OUN calling for: “OUN Out! The Executioners of the Ukrainian People Out!”, which was signed by the German General von dem Bach distributed in Volhynia in summer 1943

Volynskiy region, the UPA burned 17 major German farms, and 24 in the Lutsk region.

The real threat for the UPA were attacks led by the German *landwirtschaftsfuhrer*, officials responsible for pumping food from the Ukrainian peasants. During the night of 19–20 March 1943, the *sotnia* of Ivan Klymyshyn (“Kruk”) killed a *landwirtschaftsfuhrer* in his house in the city of Kremenets. On 20 June, another *sotnia* killed a *landwirtschaftsfuhrer* during a fight with police in Berezhitsi. In July, the insurgents eliminated the *landwirtschaftsfuhrer* from Verba and Demydivka regions of the Rivne province. On 2 October, the “Velykan” *sotnia*, under the command of Mykhailo Kondras (“Velykan”) during their raid on the village of Popivtsi in the Volochysk region, Khmelnytskyi province, killed the *landwirtschaftsfuhrer* and two of his guards. By the end of the occupation, no *landwirtschaftsfuhrer* in Volhynia could be assured of his life.

The UPA carried out constant attacks on the economic infrastructure of the Reichskommissariat Ukraine in Volhynia which led to the loss of the following by the end of April 1943:

- 74.82 percent of arable land for supplies;
- 76.45 percent grain standards;
- 77.86 percent of cattle supplies.



German map from 17 July 1943, showing regions of Volhynia where the UPA operated

The same Soviet partisan commander Vershygora confirmed that: *“The economic situation of the regions which the UPA controls is more favorable than the Soviet areas, the population lives richer and there is less robbery...”*

More successful was the UPA and OUN underground sabotage activities against the export of Ostarbeiter, forced laborers, to Germany. In 1942, from the wider Volhynia-Podillia area, 233,000 people were taken to Germany for forced labor, for the whole year of 1943 only 43,000 people were taken, thus over 5 times fewer.

UPA diversion on railways happened infrequently. Unlike the Soviet partisans, the insurgents did not have any aircrafts that could deliver explosives. Thus, the nationalist were limited to sabotaging railway lines of local importance.

In the spring of 1943, the local UPA troops destroyed the track in several places on the Sokal-Volodymyr-Volynskij-Kovel railway. And until the arrival of the Soviet front in 1944, these connections were not used. On 7 June, the peasant troops damaged the Lviv-Lutsk rail line and derailed a German train between the villages of Brany and Stoyaniv. Thirty Germans were killed. The German administration admitted that in July 1943, the Ukrainian insurgents made 682 sabotage operations on railways and in August, 1034.

Anti-German UPA operations lasted for about a year and a half, from 1943 to mid-1944. It is necessary to remember that during this time, the Ukrainian insurgents killed about 12,000 German soldiers, their allies and servants. This was correlated with the real (and not twisted by the Soviets) losses of Germans as a result of Soviet partisan activities in Ukraine, up to 15,000 people.

The insurgents dealt sensitive blows to the German economy in the occupied territories, disrupting the export of Ostarbeiter from Volhynia and by clearing a significant number of the rural areas of the Nazi occupiers.

Bandera Personally Led the UPA

The Great Patriotic War: 1941–1945: Encyclopedia for Students “Almost 1 million former Soviet citizens (ROA, Muslim Battalions, Cossack formations, police and so on) served in the ranks of the Wehrmacht during the war. The 180,000 in the Ukrainian Insurgent Army of S. Bandera (UPA) stood apart as those who fought not only the Soviet but the Polish partisans but often the Nazis. For Bandera, the war for ‘independent Ukraine’ continued until 1945.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

Stepan Bandera directly supervised all the structures of the liberation movement, including the UPA, during and after the war.

■ Fast Facts

Stepan Bandera was the founder and leader of the OUN-Revolutionary branch from 1940–1941 and then the leader of the OUN Émigré from 1946–1959. Bandera could not personally command the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, since he was a Nazi prisoner from July 1941. The UPA began to be formed only in 1942. From the moment of his arrest, on 5 July 1941, Bandera physically could not control any political or military nationalist formations.

■ Detailed Facts

On 10 February 1940, at a meeting of the nationalist leaders in the Polish city of Krakow, Bandera created and headed the Revolutionary Leadership of the OUN. He rallied around a new generation of OUN members, who had different visions for the strategy of liberation than the other OUN leaders.

During the Second Great Council of the OUN in April 1941, Bandera’s organization finally took shape and called themselves the OUN-Revolutionary. But in publications,

it was referred to as the OUN-B for Bandera, in order to differentiate it from the OUN-M, under Andriy Melnyk.

Bandera led the Revolutionary OUN until 5 July 1941, when he was arrested for refusing to renounce the Declaration of Ukrainian State Act which was proclaimed on 30 June 1941 in Lviv.

He was taken to a prison in Berlin and from that point he was not able to come back to Ukraine. Mykola Lebed temporarily replaced Bandera.

In the end of 1942, the Volhynia regional OUN-B leadership initiated the creation of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

Vasyl Ivakhiv, otherwise known as “Som” or “Sonar,” – the military referent of the same regional leadership, became the first commander.

After his death in battle with German troops on 13 May 1943, the position of Supreme Commander of the UPA was taken over by Dmytro Kliachkivskyi (“Klym Savur”), the regional OUN leader in Volhynia.



*Vasyl Ivakhiv –
founder and first
commander of the
UPA*



*Ivakhiv's case
as the Supreme
Commander
was developed
by Dmytro
Klyachkivsky*



*Roman
Shukhevych –
longest servicing
UPA Supreme
Commander*

From December 1943, the UPA was led by Roman Shukhevych (“Taras Chuprynka”) until his death on 5 March 1950. Shukhevych was elected as head of the OUN Leadership Bureau instead of Lebed on 13 May 1943. So in December 1943, the OUN and UPA leadership was placed in the hands of one person.

The last leader of the Ukrainian liberation movement was Vasyl Kuk (“Lemish” or “Vasyl Koval”) until he was arrested by Soviet security officers on 23 May 1954.

The OUN-B and the UPA appealed to the population using the personality of Stepan Bandera. They considered him as their leader, even though he was behind bars. Due to this the OUN members and UPA soldiers were popularly called “Banderites.”

Bandera himself was released from Sachsenhausen Nazi concentration camp on 27 September 1944, and then spent time under the supervision of the Germans.



*Last of the
Mohicans. Vasyl
Kuk – Supreme
Commander of
the UPA from
1950–1954*

In February 1945, he was elected as a member of the OUN Leadership Bureau. When in February 1946 he became a member of the Émigré OUN, he was elected the head of its leadership. He remained in this position until he was killed by a Soviet agent on 15 October 1959.

Stepan Bandera was never the commander of the UPA. He headed the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Revolutionary) and the Émigré OUN members. The Ukrainian Insurgent Army was commanded by Vasyl Ivakhiv, Dmytro Kliachkivskyj, Roman Shukhevych and Vasyl Kuk. Although they were all associated with Bandera and recognized his authority, Bandera himself remained a symbol of the Ukrainian liberation movement even if he could not exercise any operational management over the OUN or UPA from his cell in the Nazi prison and camp.

The UPA Fought for a Mono-Ethnic State

Aleksandr Diukov. "Naturally, different nationalities held different policies but in the end, Ukraine was to become a Ukrainian-nationalist mono-ethnic state and this could only be achieved through the shedding of a large amount of blood, a very strong repression against the representatives of national minorities."
Attempts to Rehabilitate the OUN-UPA – A Crime Against Victory, 13 October 2008.

■ The Essence of the Myth

The soldiers of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army organized the mass annihilation of the non-Ukrainian population, wanting to realize their own political program, which included the creation of a mono-ethnic state devoid of minorities.

■ Fast Facts

The aim of the Ukrainian insurgents was an independent Ukrainian state. This is what was stated in their program documents. There is no evidence that its citizens could only be ethnic Ukrainians. The Ukrainian underground produced informational materials which were aimed at representatives of different ethnic groups with the aim to involve them in a joint anti-Nazi or anti-Soviet struggle. Moreover, there were other nationalities apart from Ukrainians in the ranks of the UPA.

■ Detailed Facts

The Ukrainian Insurgent Army was created in late 1942. Its main organizers became the leaders of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, but namely its Bandera wing, thus the program provisions of the OUN-B were formed on the basis of the UPA political strategy.

The Revolutionary OUN leadership, headed by Stepan Bandera, was created in February 1940. In December, the Organization published its first public statement, a manifesto to Ukrainians and other nations of the USSR about the joint struggle for the creation of national states. The main purpose was the struggle against the Soviet occupational regime: *"We, Ukrainians, will fly the flag of our struggle for the freedom of nations and people."*

This struggle was to bring freedom to all people enslaved by Moscow and to create their own lives on their own native lands based on their own decisions. Its objectives also included dignity and human freedom, freedom of conscience, religion and belief.

The manifesto contained no calls or demands for the elimination of any minority. Instead, it ended with a call for a joint struggle of all the oppressed peoples for the collapse of the Soviet empire. The key slogan of the Ukrainian insurgents for the next decade was *"Freedom to nations! Freedom of the people!"* which was written for the first time in the December 1940 manifesto.

In April 1941, the Second Great Assembly of the Bandera wing of the OUN took place in Krakow. A resolution of this Assembly became the strategy of the struggle for Ukrainian independence during the war.

As in the December manifesto, several provisions emphasized the need to fight for an independent Ukrainian state, for the *"freedom of all peoples oppressed by Moscow, and for their right to have their own state."*

The Poles and Jews are the only minorities specifically mentioned in their orders. It was noted, that the OUN will fight only those Polish groups whose aimed to restore the Polish occupation of Ukrainian lands.

As for Jews, rumors of their mass support for the Communist regime had been popular since the interwar years. But, besides that, the Jewish pogroms were viewed by the

nationalists as an attempt to divert attention from their main goal – obtaining Ukrainian statehood from their main enemy, Moscow. Therefore, fighting against the Jews was conducted only to the extent that they were considered the mainstay of the Communist regime. No calls for the destruction of all Poles, Jews or other national minorities were ever made in OUN resolutions.

Certain provisions from the Second Great Assembly were expanded and concretized in May 1941. This mainly concerned the instructions which were to be realized after the promotion of Ukrainian nationalist authorities once the Soviet troops had retreated under pressure from the German army.

These guidelines did not contain instructions about the destruction of all national minorities. It proclaimed the slogan of “Ukraine for Ukrainians” but this meant that power in Ukraine should belong to the Ukrainians, and not the occupiers which they would fight until they stopped occupying Ukrainian lands.

Fragment of the appeal of the Supreme UPA Command to the Russians ending with: “Long Live the Independent Russian Nation State!” Long Live an Independent Ukraine! Long Live the Independent States of People in Europe and Asia!” (June 1943)

Борьба русских должна идти под лозунгом, общим всем поработенным империализмами народам: «Свобода народам – свобода человеку!» «За самостоятельные национальные государства Европы и Азии!»

Русский народ сейчас поработен ударом коммунизма не хуже других народов. Большевицким империализмом он свергнул в кровавую расправу, в которой гибнет миллионами. Спрашивается во имя чего? Во имя поработения других народов. Принесет ли это ему мир в последствии? Нет, это принесет еще больше жертвы. Надо сконстатировать еще раз, что не в империалистической войне выход, а в борьбе против чужих и своих империалистов и не поработение других народов в восстановлении своего национального государства на русской этнографической территории.

РУССКИЕ В УКРАИНЕ!

У вас есть возможность войти в соглашение с украинским народом и начать борьбу против империалистического гитлеризма и большевизма, за национальное русское государство.

Борьбу за освобождение уж поднимала Украинская Повстанческая Армия! Входите у нас в УПА вступайте с оружием в руках в ее ряды. Организуайте русские национальные военные отряды при УПА.

Русские, мобилизованные германцами! Переходите с оружием в руках в ваши национальные отряды при УПА. Поднимайте общую борьбу против общих врагов!

Да здравствует самостоятельное русское, национальное государство!

Да здравствует самостоятельная Украина!

Да здравствует самостоятельные государства народов Европы и Азии!

Ставка, июнь 1943 г.

Главная Команда
Украинской Повстанческой Армии

The May 1941 provisions also discussed the possible elimination of Polish, Russian or Jewish leaders. Representatives of ethnic groups were considered suspicious because they were believed to support the former occupational regimes, either the Polish or Soviet.

But suggestions of a possible liquidation consisted not of entire ethnic groups but rather specific activists who collaborated with the enemy or fought against the OUN and the Ukrainian state.

Other representatives of national minorities were guaranteed the same rights as ethnic Ukrainians.

Similar ideas concerning ethnic groups were formulated in the decisions of the second OUN conference in 1942. It also signaled out Poles and Jews. As for the first group, it emphasized the need for “reducing Polish-Ukrainian relations” and in relation to the Jews, they talked about the

**УЗБЕКИ, КАЗАХИ, ТУРКМЭНЫ, ТАДЖИКИ, БАШКИРЫ,
ТАТАРЫ, НАРОДЫ УРАЛА, ВОЛГИ И СИБИРУ,
НАРОДЫ АЗИИ!**

Война, в которую вовлекла Вас Москва ведется за империалистические интересы. Москва и Берлин спорят между собой об этом, кому из них Вас грабить. Империалистическая Москва целыми веками грабила у Вас Ваш хлеб, Ваше железо, Ваш уголь, Ваш скот, Ваш хлопок, а во время войны брала с Вас — подать крови: Ваших сыновей и отцов на фронт.

Вам же за это прислала своих чиновников, которые издевались над народом, презирали Вашу культуру, насмехались над Вашим языком.

Сегодня хочет заменить империалистическую Москву — Берлин. Два хищника сцепились и кричано дерутся между собой за добычу. В этой ожесточенной борьбе они уже падают из сил. Уж виден их конец. Фронт разваливается, наступает период национальных революций!

Это время должны использовать народы Европы и Азии для изгнания империалистов из своих территорий и восстановления национальных самостоятельных государств.

На территории Украины, борьбу за это дело уже подвела Украинская Повстанческая Армия (УПА). УПА ведет борьбу под лозунгом: „Свобода народам, свобода человеку!“ „За самостоятельные государства народов Европы и Азии!“

Порабощенные народы Восточной Европы и Азии!

Входите в связь с УПА!

Переходите с оружием на сторону повстанцев!

Поднимайте общую борьбу с империалистами!

Да здравствуют самостоятельные государства порабощенных народов!

Да здравствует Самостоятельная Украина!

**ГЛАВНАЯ КОМАНДА
УКРАИНСКОЙ ПОВСТАНЧЕСКОЙ АРМИИ**

Ставка, июль 1943 г.

*UPA Command
appeal to the
people of Central
Asia: “The Front
is Falling Apart,
Now is the Time
for a National
Revolution! The
Enslaved Peoples
of Eastern Europe
and Asia! Join
the UPA!” (June
1943)*

unsuitability of taking part in anti-Jewish actions because it took attention away from their main enemy. For all national minorities friendly relations were proposed and a cooperation on the basis of a common front of oppressed peoples.

In February 1943, the third OUN conference once again repeated the idea of creating a common front of oppressed people for a joint struggle against state-occupiers.

The resolutions of the Third Extraordinary Great OUN Assembly in August, 1943 finally approved the resolution on *“the full right of national minorities to cultivate their own form and content of their national culture”* and *“equality of all citizens of Ukraine in public and civil rights and obligations, regardless of their nationality.”*

There were no exceptions for “suspicious” ethnic groups in these texts. These decisions were the basis of the political program of the UPA, which was reflected in their document *What the Ukrainian Insurgent Army Fights For*.

The UPA consisted mainly of Ukrainians and was formed on territory covered by the insurgent struggle but other national representatives were also in their ranks.



*Mandyk
Hauszman
(1929–2013) –
Jewish UPA
insurgent*

For example, Leiba-Itsyk Dobrovskyj, who was Jewish, worked in the political department at the UPA headquarters in Volhynia. He became the author of UPA leaflets to the people of the Caucasus and Central Asia which called on them to join the UPA. In the documents and memoirs there are other Jewish names who served as doctors in the UPA. This included Shaia Varm, who from 1943–1944 saved the lives of many insurgents, Samuel Noiman, Aron Kozlovskyj, Abraham Shtertser and others. For some time, Mandyk Khasman, a Jewish youth took part in one of the insurgent groups.

In the UPA from 1943–1944 so-called national units existed, including Uzbek, Georgian, Azerbaijani and others. Reports from Soviet partisans say that a part of the UPA at the beginning of 1944 was not Ukrainian by nationality. The documents also include numerous cases of the Ukrainian underground cooperating with the Jews, Poles, Czechs and representatives of other national minorities.

Therefore, the main goal of the UPA struggle was to obtain an independent Ukrainian state within the ethnic Ukrainian lands. Insurgents formulated their policy towards minorities depending on the attitude of the certain people or structures (and not nationalities as communities) to fight the UPA and the Ukrainian state.

Myth 34

Charles de Gaulle Hoped to Command the UPA and Che Guevara Admired the Ukrainian Insurgents

Oleksandr Hunko, Che Guevara and General de Gaulle Admired Bandera, Hazeta po-Ukrainjinsky, 13 October 2013

“If I had such an army, like the UPA, the German boot would never tread French ground” – said Charles de Gaulle, French President from 1958–1969.

“What kind of army can boast that even within ten years after the end of the Second World War, it could still fight without external support? Mihailovic’s Chetniks in Yugoslavia surrendered a year after Tito came to power. The Forest Brothers in the Baltics lasted for two years. The Home Army in Poland also two years. The UPA was the most stable” – said Che Guevara.

■ The Essence of the Myth

The leader of the French resistance movement and the French President, Charles de Gaulle dreamed of having an army like the UPA and the Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara called the Ukrainian insurgent model the toughest of all the guerrilla movements.

■ Fast Facts

There is no French source which contains these phrases from the French president. Different variations of this expression exist only in Ukrainian publications. Similarly, Che Guevara does not speak about the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in his works.

■ Detailed Facts

General de Gaulle’s phrase where he mentioned the UPA, first appeared in 1990 in Ukraine. The French president’s statement existed in different versions, where individual words changed, but the content was the same.

All of these variants were Ukrainian or originated in Ukrainian publications. Usually, none of them can link de Gaulle's words to the French original. Sometimes, it is claimed that it came from de Gaulle's memoirs or during his speech in the city of Rambouillet in August, 1944. But the memoirs of the French politicians do not contain any mention of the OUN or UPA. In the speech in Rambouillet, there is also no mention of them. There are no French sources that confirmed that de Gaulle made this statement. Efforts of historians to find them via the French Embassy were unsuccessful.

Moreover, Charles de Gaulle was not a pro-Ukrainian politician and advocated for a rapprochement with the USSR. Firstly, because the Soviet Union was a French partner in the anti-Hitler coalition. And also because after the Second World War, France deepened its cooperation with the Soviet Union in order to oppose US influence in Europe. So the French president had no reason to support the anti-Soviet armed resistance. And it is unlikely that he would have known about the OUN and UPA activities from behind the Iron Curtain.



Charles de Gaulle

The other supposed authority on the UPA was Ernesto Che Guevara. Historians with higher degrees even often cite him. Allegedly, the famous revolutionary and guerrilla fighter observed in his memoirs or in interviews the longevity of the UPA activities without any external support. Usually, those who quote him, do it without reference to the source.

The fact that an activist of the communist movement would say anything positive about the anti-Soviet nationalists is alarming. Moreover, the quotation that is spread only talks about the anti-communist movements in Ukraine, Poland, Yugoslavia and the Baltic States. Why out of all of the world's guerrilla movements were only the anti-communist ones selected for comparison? Where Che would had gotten any objective information about the Ukrainian liberation movement is unclear. On the whole, the Soviet Union and external communist propaganda spoke of the "Ukrainian-German nationalists", "fascist henchmen", "hirelings of foreign intelligence services", "Banderite murderers" and so on. Then who can the Cuban commander be talking about?



*Ernesto "Che"
Guevara*

One should refer to his classic work, *Guerrilla Warfare*. It was published in 1960 and translated into Russian a year later in Moscow. The only passage which refers to Ukrainians is:

"It should be noted that in current interpretations there are two different types of guerrilla warfare, one of which is a struggle complementing great regular armies, such as was the case of the Ukrainian fighters in the Soviet Union, and does not enter into this analysis."

The great revolutionary was writing about the actions of the Ukrainian Soviet partisan groups and not about the UPA. In other primary sources, the commander expressed no support for the UPA or Ukraine. Therefore, Che Guevara never said this about the UPA.

None of the statements about the UPA from the French President Charles de Gaulle or the Cuban commander Ernesto Che Guevara are not supported by primary sources.

Myth 35

The Crimean Tatars Deserted En Masse at the Beginning of the War

Ihor Pykhalov, "After the start of the Great Patriotic War, many Crimean Tatars were drafted into the Red Army. But their service was short-lived. As the front approached Crimea, desertion and surrender was widespread. It became apparent, that the Crimean Tatars were awaiting the arrival of the German army and did not want to fight ... As we see, the Crimean Tatars deserted without almost any exceptions."
Why Did Stalin Evict a Peoples,
2008

■ The Essence of the Myth

In the summer of 1941, the Soviets launched their mobilization campaign in the Crimea which included 20,000 Crimean Tatars. After the Nazi breakthrough at Perekop, all mobilized Tatars threw down their weapons and fled home.

■ Fast Facts

Over 17,000 Crimean Tatars were part of the Red Army at that moment of German invasion in 1941 and were part of the entire war. One such Tatar was Amet-Khan Sultan who received the Hero of the Soviet Union award twice. After the defeat in Crimea, conscripts from the 51st Army fled, no matter what their nationalities, and so not just the Crimean Tatars who were in the minority.

■ Detailed Facts

The appearance of this myth is owed to a memorandum written by Deputy State Security Commissar of the USSR Bogdan Kobulov and the Deputy Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR Ivan Serov on behalf of Lavrentiy Beria:

"... All conscripts into the Red Army made up of 90,000 people, including 20,000 Crimean Tatars... 20 thousand Crimean Tatars deserted in 1941 from the 51st Army during the retreat from Crimea..."

However, the note was created on 22 April 1944, a long time after the described events but close to the date of the deportation of Crimean Tatars. Its contents justified the forced relocation of an entire people.

The above mentioned 20,000 Crimean deserters migrated to another memorandum from 10 May 1944 from Beria to Stalin, which proposed the deportation of the Crimean Tatars to the Uzbek SSR (more on this in Myths 36 and 37).

At the beginning of the German-Soviet war, 21,000 thousand inhabitants of Crimea joined the ranks of the Red Army. Several new waves of conscriptions added to the amount another 72,000 Crimeans. That is the 90,000 residents of Crimea that is referred to in the first note above, who were drafted in 1941.

The mobilization potential of the local population was 10–12 percent. The total number of Crimean Tatars in the summer of 1941 who could join was around 18–20 thousand. Two-thirds of those bravely fought in the Soviet army and often outside of the Crimea. This is evident, for example, with the help of the German General Army Command from 20 March 1942, which dealt with the 10 thousand Crimean Tatars serving in the Red Army.

In August 1941, the 51st Army began to be formed on the peninsula, which mostly consisted of inhabitants from other regions, and only 29,000 Crimeans. The Crimean Tatars numbered slightly more than 5,000 people in this total. Therefore, desertion from the 51st Army by the Tatars was four times less than what Beria reported to Stalin.

Taking into account the total defeat which was committed by the troops of Erich von Manstein against the Soviet defenders of the Peninsula, any special or mass desertion of only one nation cannot be discussed. Undisciplined and fresh recruits of all nationalities scattered equally and were defeated under the blow of the Wehrmacht. Therefore, there is no such thing as 20,000 Crimean Tatar “traitors.”

Instead, it is clear that in 1944 the decision was made to send 8,995 Crimean Tatars who participated in the war directly to special settlements under military supervisions. Among them were 524 officers and 1,392 non-commissioned officers who all served in the war.

In other words, the number of Tatars who deserted in the summer of 1941 from Soviet troops, were proportionally no more than the other national representatives of the USSR who were in similar conditions. And thus, no more than the number of Crimeans who continued to fight in the Red Army under the end of the war.

Under these accusations of treason from May 1944, more than 190,000 Crimean Tatars were deported from the Crimea. These included those who surrendered and those who continued to fight during the war.

This figure also included those who could not even take up arms: children, women, and elderly people.

*Red Army
prisoners of
war at an
assembly point in
Sevastopol (July
1942)*



Myth 36

The Crimean Tatars – “Traitor-Nation”

Ihor Pykhalov, Why Did Stalin Evict a Peoples, 2008 “As we see, being a part of the Russian state, the Crimean Tatars betrayed their country every time an enemy came upon Crimean land. Their expulsion was well deserved and an appropriate action. The guilt of the Crimean Tatars was so obvious that even Khrushchey, who rehabilitated ‘the innocent victims of illegal repression’ right and left, did not dare return them to their ‘homeland.’”

■ The Essence of the Myth

All Crimean Tatars during the Crimean occupation collaborated with the Nazis, fought against the partisans, slaughtered civilians and therefore were fairly and justified deported in 1944.

■ Fast Facts

Among the Crimean Tatars there were about 15–16 thousand collaborators, but almost all of them eventually died or were arrested by the NKVD. The punishment of an entire nation for the sins of some of its members is a crime against humanity that shows signs of genocide.

■ Detailed Facts

In a memorandum to Stalin on 10 May 1944, Beria stated two reasons for the deportation of the Crimean Tatars: “treason” against the Soviet people and the “undesirability” of these inhabitants along the border. The next day, the allegation of mass collaboration was repeated in the decision of the State Defense Committee No. 5859cc on the eviction of the Tatars.

However, in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union not a single nation exists that did not, to some extent, collaborate with the Nazis. If this applies to all people who came under German occupation, why were the Crimean Tatars such an exception?

About 15–20,000 Crimean Tatars went through the German “volunteer formations” (“Hiwi”) during the war. Incidentally, this number was never in the ranks of these units simultaneously. What is also often forgotten is that in the “Tatar” battalions, apart from the Crimean Tatars, were other nationalities. Between 15–16,000 were Tatar, which amounted to 6.5–7% of the entire Crimean Tatar population.

The fate of the collaborators is indeed greater than the average in the occupied areas of the USSR. But this is not enough to charge it with “total collaboration.”

These charges also do not take into account the specificity of “small nations” who completely fell under the occupation. Therefore, modern public moods should be taken into account for this game. The hope for small nations to escape on their own was useless. The Nazis also flirted with the national feelings of the indigenous Muslim peoples of the Soviet Union. In this context, it is worth mentioning that 180,000 so-called “Turkestan-men” served in the Wehrmacht, although the war did not spread to Central Asia.

Overall, the Crimean Tatars fought more in the Red Army ranks than in the various military and paramilitary formations associated with the Wehrmacht and the occupational authorities.

The maximum number of Crimean Tatars in the “Tatar” auxiliary detachments of the German armed forces at the end of 1943 amounted to 15–16,000.

The most efficient part, the 5–6,000 “Hiwis,” were evacuated from the Crimea along with the 11th Wehrmacht Army and fought outside the peninsula.

Out of the three thousand personnel of the Schuma battalion, a third were disarmed by the Germans and placed in concentration camps. Most likely, these thousand people still ended up in a GULAG after the war. Part of the “self-defense” moved to the side of the partisans, including the whole of A. Rajimov’s company.

Close to 3,500 men from the German volunteer formations were evacuated to the west with the retreating Wehrmacht. In actuality, Beria’s informants believed that about 5,000 “active minions” were evacuated but the rest, mostly women and children, were shipped to Romania and Bulgaria via sea ports from 14 to 26 April 1944.

The fate of the Crimean Tatars developed differently. After 1944, 2,500 of those enlisted were reformed and re-located into East-Turkish units of the Battle Group “Crimea”. More than 800 “Hiwi” were sent to the 35th Grenadier Division. The remaining were enrolled in the Volga-Tatar Legion in France and supported anti-aircraft units. Therefore, all together about 8,5–9,000 male collaborators came from the Crimea. By the time of Germany’s surrender, only about 3,500 “volunteers” were still alive. The rest died or disappeared. At the end of the war, a very significant part of them were returned to the USSR, where they were sent to GULAGs.

In Crimea, about 5,500 Crimean-collaborators remained, of whom almost a thousand were killed in battles.

Immediately after the expulsion of the Nazis from Crimea, the Soviet state security services began hunting for “anti-Soviet elements”, mainly through paramilitary groups.

In accordance with Beria’s proposal from 5 July 1944, there were 7,833 arrested, carried out with more than 15,000



*Crimean Tatar
volunteers in
the Wehrmacht
dancing on the
southern coast of
Crimea (summer
1942)*

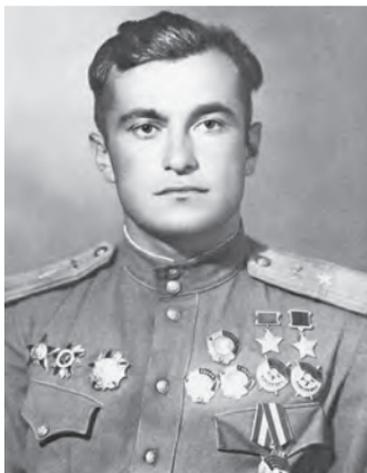
rifles and automatic rifles, more than 700 machine guns and 5 million ammunition. The fate of these people, of which almost 6,000 were Crimean Tatars was obvious – arrest, detention, camps.

Therefore, the majority of collaborators either perished in battle or suffered individual punishment after the war. Very few could escape punishment for collaborating with the enemy. In the Soviet regime and its modern apologists, there is no reason to justify the deportation of the Crimean Tatars due to their “mass collaboration” with the Germans. Anyone who was to be punished, should have been done so individually.

Entire families and those Crimeans who served honestly in the Red Army, as well as most of the Crimean Tatar soldiers and officers who could not return from the front to their fatherland, Crimea, were not spared relocation (a little more about this in Myth 35).

The concept of the “Tatar-traitor” is one of the key components of the general Russian myth about the “ancient Russian Crimea.” No charges against the Crimean Tatars of “mass treason” could justify deportation and without an excuse to this crime, one cannot explain the total Russification of the peninsula. All of this can only be attempted to be justified as one of Stalin’s many genocides.

Pilot Amet-Khan Sultan, Crimean Tatar, twice awarded Hero of the Soviet Union (1945)



Myth 37

The Deportation Meant Salvation for the Crimean Tatars

Sergey
Kara-Murza,
Soviet Civilization,
vol. 1

“This type of punishment, it is difficult for everyone, it was a salvation from death for the majority of the male population, and thus, for the ethnic group. If the Chechens were judged individually according to the laws of war, then this would turn into an ethnocide. The loss of such a large part of young males would undermine the demographic potential of the people ... So, the German exiled and the parents were asked if they preferred if their sons were judged under ‘civilized’ laws and shot as traitors who fought on the side of the enemy or the whole family was to be evicted to Kazakhstan? One can guess the answer that 100 percent of those who could really imagine themselves in a position to respond, chose to be happily deported. Another thing, I don’t care for those detractors who blame the USSR for the fate of the Chechens or Crimean Tatar men, and even for all the other nations.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

The crimes of the Crimean Tatars were so massive and caused so much hatred from the other inhabitants of Crimea, that deportation was the only real salvation for them. If Stalin had decided to pursue the charges of collaboration based on Soviet law, all the adult men would have been shot and a whole nation would have died out. Another danger was the Soviet fighters, returning from the front, could enact mass revenge against the Crimean Tatars for their betrayal.

■ Fast Facts

All the collaborators either died or suffered punishment individually and therefore there was no threat. The compulsory execution for the cooperation with the Germans is a fictional story spread by the amateur historian/academic Kara-Murza. Instead, their new living conditions inflicted the real, if not obvious, loss of the Crimean Tatars.

■ Detailed Facts

If the more common version of the myth of the Crimean Tatars' crimes (deportation is a fair punishment for them) could be called patriotic chauvinism, than this case (deportation gave them salvation) is a liberal-chauvinist myth. After all, the central tenet of this version, the total mass collaboration of the Crimean Tatars with the enemy remained unchanged. This is owed to a book by Sergey Kara-Murza entitled *Soviet Civilization*, in which this approach is demonstrated in his openly cynical form.

The facts remain the same: that out of the 15–16,000 armed collaborators, the majority of Crimean Tatars were either killed in battle or arrested and sent to the GULAGs (see Myth 36). Therefore, every possible attempt to prove that Stalin could legally kill every male for collaborating with the enemy but chose deportation has no grounds.

Similarly, there is nothing to confirm the belief that Soviet soldiers would have resorted to mass lynching of Crimean Tatars. The reliability of this version is reminiscent of the horror stories about Ukraine's modern day right-wing paramilitary group, the Right Sector, that are expounded by Russian television.



*"Train of Death".
Painting by
Rustem Eminov*

Moreover, a year and half after their deportation to Central Asia, official reports found that only 25 percent of the Crimean Tatar population was left. These were mostly the weakest: women, children and the elderly. Their life became the real price of the Soviet “salvation” of the Crimean Tatar people.



*Deported
Crimean Tatars
in Central Asia
collecting cotton*

The Liberation of Ukraine

Ukrainian Presidential Decree from 20.10.2009 No. 536/2009 “In order to nationally celebrate the liberation of Ukraine from fascist invaders...the Day of Ukraine’s Liberation from Fascist Invaders is established, which will be celebrated every year on 28 October.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

Soviet troops liberated Ukraine from the fascist invaders on 28 October 1944.

■ Fast Facts

With the expulsion of the Nazi occupiers in 1944, Ukraine did not receive freedom rather it was only occupied by another totalitarian regime. The result of which was mass repressions and deportations including hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians, Poles and the entire Crimean Tatar people and the mass starvation of hundreds of thousands of residents in Ukraine between 1946–1947.

■ Detailed Facts

There are three errors in the phrase “Soviet troops liberated Ukraine from the fascist occupiers on 28 October 1944.”

Firstly, Soviet troops did not liberate but rather expelled the occupiers. The expulsion of the invaders did not bring about a free Ukraine just another totalitarian regime.

Secondly, the last battle with the occupiers on modern Ukrainian territory took place almost a month later.

Thirdly, it is improper to use the term “fascist” to describe the Nazis (more on this in Myth 16).

Between December 1941 and January 1942, Soviet forces organized the first major offensive on Ukrainian territory.

The Red Army managed to recapture only minor areas like the whole territory of Crimea and Barvinkove.

Their next attempt at developing preliminary success resulted in two catastrophic defeats of Soviet forces in the spring of 1942 in Crimea and near Kharkiv and their retreat back to the Volga. The entire Ukrainian territory was then occupied by German troops.

In February 1943, after the developing offensive operations after the victory at Stalingrad, Soviet troops occupied Kharkiv and some other Ukrainian cities but in March 1943, they had to withdraw from them because of a German counterattack.

Only in the autumn of 1943, did the final expulsion of the Nazi occupiers from Ukraine begin.

A tradition to celebrate the liberation of Ukraine on 28 October began in the USSR since on that day in 1944, Soviet troops drove the Germans from the territories of Soviet Ukraine along its then border.

In the summer of 1945, in accordance with international agreements, Czechoslovakia gave the Soviet Union Trans-



*Soviet poster
from 1944,
which spoke
of "liberating"
Ukraine*

carpathia, which became part of the USSR. Therefore, they subsequently decided to transfer the day of commemorating this celebration to the day when German troops left the last settlements of the modern Zakarpattia province.

But on 28 October 1944, Soviet troops only began fighting for the city of Chop. The fight for this area lasted until 25–26 November – only then were the Nazi occupiers fully expelled from Ukraine.

All of Ukraine was involved in expelling the occupiers: regular Soviet troops and Red partisans (with more than 3 million Ukrainian soldiers), the national underground headed by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and Ukrainian soldiers along all the other fronts in the world which brought together the victory over Hitler.

The expulsion of the Nazi occupiers was accompanied by mass crimes, organized by the Stalinist regime and the Soviet troops under his command:

– the “black infantry” was used – hastily mobilized Soviet locals commanded (in the military field) and thrown into battle unprepared, without uniforms and sometimes unarmed which can be seen as a deliberate attempt to destroy the Ukrainian population;

– The Ukrainian soldiers in the Soviet Army were used in battles against the nationalist underground between 1943–1944. This meant a fratricidal war between the Ukrainians who served in the Red Army and the UPA (for more details see Myth 39);

– In 1944, when Crimea was purified of the Germans, the Soviets launched a series of deportations. The entire Crimean Tatar population was deported to Central Asia (180,000) and the local Greeks, Bulgarians and Armenians were also deported;

– People who were in occupied territory including the Ostarbeiter and Red Army prisoners of war faced various legal restrictions and harassment;

– Ukrainians continued to suffer losses even after the war since mass repression of Ukrainian Nationalists lasted until Stalin's death. According to various estimates, during the suppression of the nationalist movement in western Ukraine, about 150,000 people were killed, 130 thousand were arrested and more than 200 thousand were deported.

–As a result of the organized mass starvation in 1946–1947 in Ukraine, almost 1 million people were killed and about another million political prisoners suffered in GULAGs. The last political prisoner of the communist regime was Bohdan Klymchak who returned from the camps on 11 November 1990.

The expulsion of the Nazi occupiers from Ukraine did not bring about peace and freedom but rather the return of the communist terror, mass deportations and the persecution of dissidents.

The Ukrainian liberation movement, not believing that the German expulsion was a liberation, continued to fight for the independence of Ukraine for another decade. The harassment of dissidents did not stop until the collapse of the USSR.

True freedom and sovereignty for the Ukrainian people only came on 24 August 1991, with its acquisition of independence.

In 1970 in the northern outskirts of Uzhhorod, a monument entitled "Ukraine – Liberators" was unveiled



The Red Army– Which Liberated Ukraine from the Fascists – as Shot in the Back by the UPA

Vladislav Gulevich “Captured Ukrainian soldiers walked through the streets of Donetsk. Their grandfathers, great-grandfathers fought against fascism and these – were imitating the fascists themselves. And even in battle under the blue-yellow flag, the same one under which the OUN-UPA shot the Soviet soldiers in the back.”
“The Dwarf’s Rabies”, August 2014

■ The Essence of the Myth

The UPA fought against the Red Army which fought against the Third Reich and this is proof that the UPA acted on the side of the Nazis.

■ Fast Facts

The UPA fought against both the Soviet Union and the Third Reich, and saw the USSR as an aggressor and enemy of an independent Ukraine. But the Red Army was not the enemy of the UPA but rather the Communist Party, the NKVD and other repressive elements of the Soviet Union.

■ Detailed Facts

Between February-March 1944, the Red Army carried out operations on the territory of western Ukraine. At the same time, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army was also active in Volhynia and Galicia and was opposed to the Nazi troops. The Red Army also represented the totalitarian regime that was hostile to Ukrainian statehood but the attitude to her was radically different.

Before the entry of the Red Army into western Ukraine, on 24 December 1943, UPA command gave tactical instructions

on the future offensive of the Red Army and how to behave in these changing circumstances. According to this document, UPA units were forbidden to engage in battles with the Red Army, even in order to acquire weapons, and were ordered to spread into villages and farms and “sit out” the front.

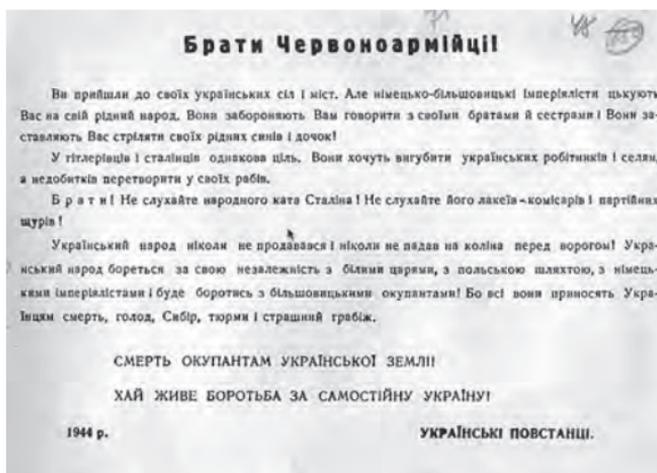
There were several reasons for this decision. First and foremost, the main objective and the main enemy of the fight of the anti-Soviet underground was the Communist Party and the NKVD. The Red Army was considered a possible field for nationalist propaganda, whose purpose was to bring its soldiers over to the insurgency.

The second was more pragmatic. In a military confrontation against the soldiers of the stronger Red Army, the UPA would only weaken itself and could not achieve any tangible results.

There were cases when the Ukrainian underground learning from intelligence reports about the ethnic composition of Red Army units, avoided clashes with “Ukrainian” Soviet troop units.

But, despite the good intentions of command, their instructions were not always followed. Western Ukraine was overrun to the point, that, avoidance of clashes was extremely difficult. In addition, many commanders acted based on the tactical situation of the “here and now”. Therefore, fights between

*Ukrainian
insurgent leaflet
to Red Army
soldiers calling
on them to join
the fight for an
independent
Ukraine (1944)*



the Red Army and the UPA occurred. According to various estimates, from January to March 1944, there were 153 to 200 of such attacks, in April-May 1944 their number reached 350. There were also full-scale battles, like, for example, on 22 March near Derman in Volhynia.

Further clashes were provoked by the punitive actions of NKVD which involved the Red Army – this occurred in late September-October 1944. This type of practice became more frequent in the spring of 1945, after the end of the war in Europe. At this point, the insurgents who were in the “not shooting those who are shooting at you” situation, were then forced to take up arms.

UPA command ceased to succeed in reminding their subordinates that they should not fight the Red Army but rather the NKVD troops. A separate UPA Supreme Command decree ordered their soldiers not to attack the Red Army first, unless the situation required opening fire. The attitude to the captives was regulated in individual instructions published on 5 August 1944, the second edition on 26 April 1946. The prisoners were supposed to be handled correctly, spoken to politely, avoid indiscretion, fed, provided recreation and – if necessary – their wounds treated. Other instructions for dealing with Red Army soldiers included banning any ridicule of the Soviet order.

Despite the extremely unfavourable conditions for realizing contact talks, there were many cases when meetings of insurgents and Red Army soldiers ended on quite friendly terms. In August 1945 near the village of Nevochyn, the Red Army soldiers told the insurgents where the KGB divisions were located and on their farewell, said “goodbye” and advised them to “beat those bastards.” A month before this event, the Red Army soldiers and insurgents peacefully “divided” among themselves the village of Pidpechery in Ivano-Frankivsk province. By chance, the Dzvony sotnia and a Red Army unit quartered there together. Relations were almost neighbourly, the insurgents generously endowed their neighbours with propaganda literature.

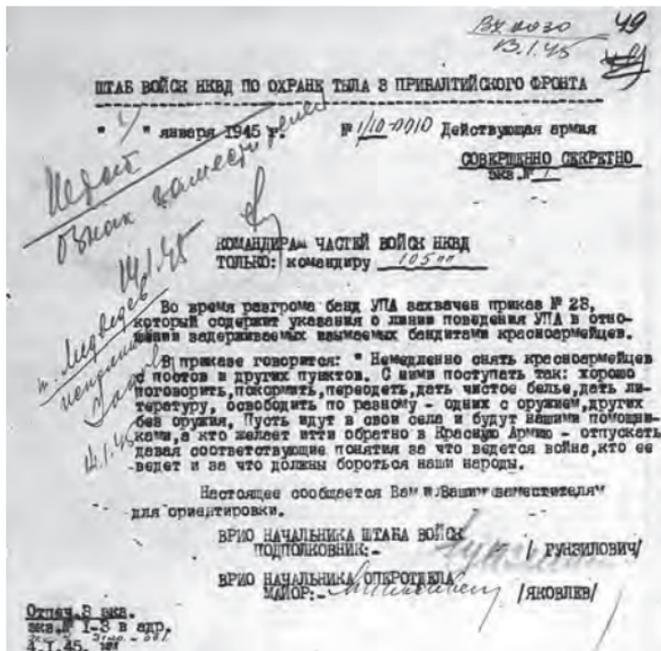
Red Army prisoners of war were often released by the insurgents after having propaganda conversations with them. In March 1944, insurgents released 10 people from captivity, who were also fed. And such cases are often mentioned in documents.

This should not be a surprise because the main enemy of the UPA was the NKVD troops. It was a struggle carried out systematically and did not stop.

And the biggest battles, like the battle of Hurby in April 1944 or the battle of Univ in September 1944, was carried out by the UPA against the NKVD.

The fight against the NKVD lasted long after 1945, the last battle of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army was recorded in the early 1960s.

Notification of the Command of Internal Troops of the NKVD that insurgents release captured Red Army soldiers (4 January 1945)



Myth 40

Zhukov and Beria Ordered the Deportation of all Ukrainians to Siberia

From "Order" No. 0078/42, 22 June 1944
"Send all Ukrainians, who lived under the German occupation, to the distant borders of the USSR."

■ The Essence of the Myth

In June 1944, a joint order from Beria and Zhukov on the deportation to Siberia of all Ukrainians who were under German occupation was released. It was not realized because the eviction of so many people (over 20 million) in such a short amount of time was impossible.

■ Fast Facts

This document is a German propaganda leaflet.

This leaflet was Hitler's propaganda attempt to undermine the combat and morale of the Red Army, and was largely aimed at Ukrainians.

■ Detailed Facts

The fact that the Soviet government planned the deportation of the Ukrainians who "lived under occupation" to "the distant borders of the USSR" in 1944 – is one of those myths about the war which appeared not during the USSR or in modern Russia but in Ukraine after its independence in 1992.

However, back in 1956 in Nikita Khrushchev's, the USSR's First Secretary, report "On the Personality Cult and its Consequences" at the XX Party Congress he spoke about the deportation of peoples under Stalin: "*Ukrainians have escaped this fate because there were too many of them and there was nowhere to send them. If not for that, he would have evicted them.*"

The documentary foundation to the myth, the faked Soviet order, was found in the Central State Archive of Public Organizations of Ukraine (f. 1, op. 70, str. 997, arc. 91) and published on 27 February 1992 in *Literaturna Ukrajina* newspaper by the candidate of historical sciences, Vasyl Marochkin.

But Marochkin did not include all the information about what he found in the archives. He did not say that this document claimed to be an order was only a German propaganda leaflet. Almost immediately, this “oversight” was identified. *Literaturna Ukrajina* published a letter to the editor on 5 March 1992 from Ruslan Pyroha, the then director of the archive where the document was found. But his explanation did not convince many people.

The first month after the publication of this order in Ukraine, its authenticity was repeatedly and reasonably decried. However, consciously or unconsciously, it was referred to in different publications.

Therefore, it is necessary to explain it in detail.

Decisions on deportations would usually be taken by the USSR’s State Defence Committee and arranged through

*General
Commissar of
State Security,
Lavrentiy
Beria who in
1938–1945
led the NKVD
of the USSR.
Was personally
responsible for
organizing and
carrying out mass
deportations of
people from the
USSR during the
Second World
War*



a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, a decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR or through the USSR's State Defence Committee. Or an order would refer to a resolution from the Defence Committee. In our "order", this procedure was not followed.

The formation of the said faked order did not meet the requirements for forming these types of documents. The order was allegedly signed by two Commissariat leaders and the text reads in the singular – "I command" (should it not be "we command"?) Zhukov's position is stated as Deputy Commissar of Defence whereas he was, in fact, the First Deputy Commissar of Defence.

Other nuances should be noted, including the fact that Soviet documents of NKVD divisional troops never used the word "punitive." In the document, the 12th and 25th NKVD Divisions were mentioned. The 12th Infantry Division was not part of the NKVD and was stationed in the Far East. The 25th Division was part of the NKVD but it was used to protect railways.

Most importantly, according to rough estimates, there were at least 20 million people living on the territory of Ukraine during the German and Romanian occupation. Was it even possible to suddenly evict, as was stated in this "order," that many people with only two divisions?

According to Beria's report to Stalin from April to June 1944 the Crimean Tatars, Bulgarians, Greeks, Armenians and other foreign nationalities were deported from the Crimea to the eastern regions of the USSR, a total of more than 225,000 people. This operation involved 23,000 soldiers and officers of the NKVD troops with a ratio of ten deported to every one NKVD soldier.

Therefore, in order to evict "all Ukrainians", it would have been necessary to involve at least 2 million NKVD troops.

In order to activate that many personnel and carry out the deportation of that many people in such a short amount of time and also "*at night and suddenly, so as to prevent es-*

cape and so no family members warn their relatives in the Red Army,” was absolutely unrealistic.

The timing of the beginning of this operation (“*eviction is to begin after the grain is harvested and given to the state for the needs of the Red Army*”) is not very specific and means that the order is unacceptable because the function of an order is to coordinate and synchronize the actions of many people.

Among the main arguments of those who believe in the validity of the order is the testimony of the former head of the Ukrainian SSR NKVD, General Vasyl Riasnoj, a Russian poet, writer and journalist. His convictions and political views are those of an ardent supporter of Stalinism and were written in Felix Chuev’s book *Soldaty Imperii: Besidy. Spohady. Dokumenty*. However, the testimony that Chuev translated is not credible, as is shown by the modifications in the text of a published work by Morachkin.

If one were to believe Chuev, than Riasnoj, after realizing he held the order to evict all Ukrainians, pointed out that “this order was brought to me from Moscow by one of the deputy Commissars of Internal Affairs.” Who exactly brought it, Riasnoj failed to mention. But the most important issue is

Marshal of the Soviet Union Georgy Zhukov, in 1944 commanded the First Ukrainian and First Belarussian Fronts, and coordinated actions of Soviet troops on the territory of Ukraine and Belarus



that “for the active work against the Red Army with the OUN, the performances of the ‘boiivok’ (OUN security agents), for the hostility to the Russian people, comrade Stalin ordered to evict all Ukrainians from their motherland and specifically – to Siberia.” The order was issued “on behalf of” Stalin (since the order was signed by Beria and Zhukov, Riasnoj does not mention any of this).

Furthermore, to quote Riasnoj as presented by Chuev:

“Yes, evict Ukraine – this is not Chechnya or the Crimean Tatars. I identified the most active enemies of the Russian people and the Soviet government – hardened wolves. My boys filled several trains and sent them. But then they suddenly stopped this order. In this, which I didn’t know at first, the Commissar for Ukraine did not know about. Something happened between the Ukrainian chiefs and our real leaders, having a difference on whether to engage in this matter. They say, the Ukrainian leaders threw themselves to the feet of Stalin begging him to stop the evictions. And Stalin gave in.”

No other documents record the Soviet leadership’s intent to evict Ukrainians. However, the facts and documents confirm that hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians were blamed, for example, in the involvement of the liberation movement in 1944 and after, until the death of Stalin, and they were deported to camps and exile.

There is an undeniable fact that reprisals against Ukrainians who lived under German occupation continued to be committed a long time after the war. This was not only in the form of deportation or detention, the punishments often had slightly different, and at first glance a gentler nature. Their right of access to higher education and certain positions was limited. But this meant millions of lost out on their dreams, careers, and above all – life. For a long time, the Communist regime treated those who survived the occupation as second class citizens.

Myth 41

Ukrainians – Butchers of the Warsaw Uprising

*Marian Kaluski,
The Participation
of Ukrainians in
the Suppression
of the Warsaw
Uprising, kresy.pl,
29 January 2011*

“Thus, the literature which relates to the Warsaw Uprising, is full of testimonies, information and documents which implements Ukrainians in this crime, who fought together with the Germans. Because of the extremely refined barbarism and manslaughter... In actuality, perhaps there is no publication on the Warsaw Uprising that does not question the Ukrainian barbarism during the uprising.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

The German Army units composed of Ukrainians, including the SS, played a significant role in the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising. The Ukrainian participation in the fight against the rebels was accompanied with war crimes.

■ Fast Facts

In fact, no Ukrainian formation had any important role in suppressing the uprising, but rather it was units of Russian nationalists and Cossacks. Russian collaborators were participants in the uprising and biased researchers later tended to call them “Ukrainians”. There was only one Ukrainian part of a battalion that was involved. There is no documentary evidence about them committing any massacres in Warsaw.

■ Detailed Facts

The Warsaw Uprising against the German occupation lasted from 1 August to 2 October 1944.

A speech by the Polish government in exile in London initiated the uprising. The main rebel fighting force was the Polish Home Army (AK). The aim of the uprising was to liberate the capital before the arrival of the Red Army.

But the rebels did not calculate the force that would be used against them. In early September, it became clear that German punitive units would be able to suppress it.

By that time, the Soviet troops were closing in on Warsaw. The zone of the uprising and the Soviet 1st Ukrainian Front was only divided by the Vistula River. Despite requests for assistance, Stalin's support for the Warsaw Uprising was minimal. The Red Army moved into a general offensive.

The rebels who survived were forced to surrender to the Germans.

German troops in some areas of Warsaw resorted to tactics of total destruction of the rebels along with civilian and urban developments. War crimes were committed by SS formations, such as the SS Dirlewanger. Units were also composed of Soviet citizens in the German service.

In post-war Polish publications, it was widely believed that a large number of Ukrainians were among the German punitive troops. The Ukrainians were accused of war crimes against the residents of Warsaw. They even alleged that part of the SS Galicia division took part in suppressing the uprising. Actually, the role of Ukrainians in the fight against the rebels was greatly exaggerated.

Rumors of the arrival in Warsaw of Ukrainian SS units spread even before the uprising. The Polish underground claimed that Ukrainian units committed terrible crimes against the civilian population. The prejudice of the Warsaw residents against the Ukrainians was due to the news about the bloody conflict between the Ukrainians and Poles in western Ukraine. And the Germans formed the 14th Waffen Division of the Armed SS out of the Galician Ukrainians. Therefore, during the uprising, Warsaw residents through this "learned" about the Ukrainians.

In the memoirs of Warsaw residents, collaborationist units from the USSR were usually referred to as "Ukrainian" or "Kalmyk". The "identification" criteria was not affiliated

with any national formations but rather the European or Asian appearance of its soldiers.

In fact, the vast majority of those so-called “Ukrainians” were soldiers from the regiment of the Russian 29th SS Division RONA and several battalions of Russian Cossacks. Some of them really were ethnic Ukrainians but associated themselves with Russia, not Ukraine.

Warsaw residents usually associated “Russians” with the Red Army. The Poles tried not to call the representatives of collaborationist formations “Russian”. Meanwhile, the same SS RONA formation, together with the SS Dirlewanger regiment were the ones who committed most of the war crimes in Warsaw. They fought almost from the very beginning to the very end of the uprising.

What was the role of the Ukrainian national forces who were in the service of the Germans in suppressing the uprising? The only example of this were the two companies of the Ukrainian Legion of Self-Defence (ULS) under the command of Petro Dyachenko. Another name of this unit was the 31st SD Battalion.

Officers of the consolidated RONA regiment during the Warsaw Uprising (August 1944). Among their fighters were one of the greatest war criminals in Warsaw



Together with other German units, the ULS destroyed the Soviet troops' springboard on the left bank of the Vistula River and fought the AK in the coastal areas of Warsaw (Czerniakow and Powisle). Here, ULS soldiers fought until 23 September 1944.

An analysis of the Warsaw residents' testimony about this period and place does not provide any grounds to assert that the ULS committed any war crimes. In any case, no "Ukrainians" are mentioned in connection with killing civilians.

The common myth that the SS Galicia Division was involved in the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising began to be used in Polish historiography. In fact, at the time of the uprising, the division did not exist. A few days before the explosion of the Warsaw Uprising, on 22 July 1944, it was crushed by Soviet troops during the Battle of Brody, which took place in western Ukraine. Most of the soldiers were killed, captured or transferred to the UPA. The remnants retreated to the Carpathian Mountains. The order to form a new Galician Division was only issued on 5 September. The first combat-ready units were created on 28 September in order to participate in the fight against the Slovak uprising.



*Soldiers of the
Ukrainian Self-
Defence Legion*

Thus, none of the SS Galicia division units took part, nor could they take part, in the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising. However, at the time of Germany's surrender a part of the Galician Division could have been soldiers who had fought against the Warsaw rebels. That is because on 6 March 1945, ULS soldiers combined with the Galicia division. But these sad facts do not change this fact: the large participation of Ukrainians in the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising is a myth.

Myth 42

The Nuremburg Trials Condemned the Ukrainian Nationalists

*Oleksandr
Volevodz, Prof.,
Moscow State
Institute of Inter-
national Relations,
6 March 2014*

“There is documented proof that only on the territory of Ukraine 5.3 million people were killed due to the crimes of the Nazis and their henchmen. The ‘soldiers’ of the OUN-UPA, as well as their Nazi collaborators, participated in this ... That is why, based on the principles of the Nuremburg Trials, Bandera and the Banderites were globally recognized as war criminals. That is why many of them were sentenced by the courts after the war and Bandera – killed.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

Bandera, personally, the OUN and UPA as a whole, were condemned at the Nuremburg Trial and even though they were not condemned, they are still considered war criminals.

■ Fast Facts

Neither Stepan Bandera or Roman Shukhevych, personally, or the OUN and UPA as an organization were convicted by the International Military Tribunal in Nuremburg. None of the 42 volumes of the Tribunal’s materials contain any convictions against them.

■ Detailed Facts

In the materials of the Nuremburg Trials, a comprehensive list of individuals and organizations are available that they consider criminal. The Ukrainian nationalists are not on that list. Out of the 42 volumes from the case, only 7 were published in the USSR in Russian which opened the space up for large-scale falsifications and distortions. Critics of Ukrainian nationalism hoped to find a sentence about Bandera in one of the unpublished volumes. However, analysis of the materials shows that there is no mention of Bandera and therefore, nothing can be construed about him.

In the 25th Volume, it states that the majority of Ukrainians in the worker camps aligned themselves to the “Bandera camp” and that immigrants follow both the anti-German “movements of Bandera and Melnyk.”

Volume 27 contains testimony about some mass revenge shootings of the “Bandera groups.”

In Volume 29, the “Bandera movement” is referred to along with their aims to achieve statehood.

In the 38th Volume, the commitment of the Ukrainians and the “Bandera movement” to the idea of independence is referred to.

In Volume 39, an order from the Einsatzgruppen is revealed which orders the destruction of the OUN-B as fighters for Ukrainian independence. Here is the short document in full:

*“Einsatzkommand C/5
Auxiliary Police and SD
25 November 1941
Kyiv
Dnipropetrovsk
Mykolaiv
Rivne
Zhytomyr
Vinnytsia*

Referring: OUN (Bandera movement)

It has been reliably established that on the territory of the Reichskommissariat, the Bandera movement is preparing a revolt with the ultimate goal of establishing an independent Ukraine. All members of the Bandera movement should be detained immediately and after a detailed examination under the guise of looters, to be privately eliminated. Minutes of the interrogations should be given to Operational Unit C/5. This document is to be destroyed by unit commanders after reading.

*Obersturmbannfuhrer SS
Signature (unreadable)”*

Russian researchers refer to materials like the interrogation of Abwehr Colonel Erwin Stolze, who mentioned the order of the “Ukrainian nationalist leader” Melnyk, codenamed “Consul 1”, and Bandera to immediately convene and provoke demonstrations in Ukraine during the German attack on the Soviet Union or to break the direct rear of the Soviet army and convince international public opinion in order to seemingly “collapse of the Soviet rear.”

However, firstly, this reference was only left in the speech of the Soviet prosecutor Nikolai Zoriya (Volume 7) and was never used in sentencing and secondly, the Abwehr during Nuremberg was not recognized as a criminal organization and thus cooperating with them in terms of the trial was not compromising.

And yet, during NKVD interrogations, even the highest Soviet commanders confessed, under torture, to being “fascist spies”.

- Seite 3 -

No. 7

Einsatzkommando C/5
der Sicherheitspolizei u.d.SD O.U. den 20. November 1941
— Kdo — Tgb Nr. 124321/41. G. R. S.)

An die
Ausseeposten: Kiew
Dnjepropetrowsk
Nikolajew
Rowno
Shtjtnir
Winniza

Betr.: OUN (Bandera-Bewegung)

Es wurde einwandfrei festgestellt, dass die Bandera-Bewegung einen Aufstand im Reichskommissariat vorbereitet mit dem

¹⁾ „IT“ im, datierter (Zurück „GSP“) Aktenausgangskasse
²⁾ „G.R.S.“ Handschrift, in rechtheckigen Rahmen 1 r unter Datum: „IT“ (14)

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34-0358

Endziel, eine unabhängige Ukraine zu schaffen. Alle Funktionäre der Bandera-Bewegung sind sofort festzunehmen und nach einer eingehenden Vernehmung als Plünderer in aller Stille zu liquidieren.

Die Vernehmungsprotokolle sind dem Einsatzkommando C/5 zu übersenden.

Dieses Schreiben ist nach Kenntnissnahme durch den Kommandoführer sofort zu vernichten.

Unterschrift (voll)
H-Obersturmbannführer

German order to execute OUN(B) members without trial, published in volume 39 in the complete collection of the Nuremberg Trial materials

Myth 43

Soviet Troops Never Committed War Crimes

D. Samoilov, "Germany suffered not only a military defeat. It was given a mercy kill. And the population of Germany would have suffered more if not for the Russian national character – lack of anger, inability to take revenge, love of children, warmth, lack of a sense of superiority, remnants of religious and internationalist consciousness in the midst of its mass of soldiers. Germany in '45 was spared by the natural humanist Russian soldier."

People with the Same Options: From Military Notes

■ The Essence of the Myth

The Red Army defended the USSR from the fascists, saving millions of people from destruction and carrying freedom to all the enslaved people of Europe. Soviet soldiers during the war did not commit any war crimes. All the talk about it is hostile propaganda and falsifications denying the “soldier-liberators” their heroism.

■ Fast Facts

Red Army soldiers during the Second World War committed crimes against civilians. These crimes were not alone in their characteristics. Many Red Army soldiers were condemned for this during their military tribunals.

■ Detailed Facts

The 1907 Hague Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land strictly prohibited plunder, confiscation of private or community property and obliged soldiers to respect and honour the rights and lives of individuals.

In October 1944, the Red Army entered the territory of East Prussia. As one Red Army soldier wrote to his parents in Smolensk: *“We are now allowed to do anything with the German scoundrels.”*

“Now our soldiers can see how their [the German] shelters burn, how their families become homeless and pull them with him into the viper’s nests, – wrote another Soviet military officer. “They, probably, hope to stay alive but we have no mercy for them.”

From a frontline letter of a Red Army Captain, we find these words: *“Our guys have ‘tasted’ all the German women. There are a lot of trophies.”* Another Soviet officer-front line soldier left a diary entry: *“Of course, it is incredibly cruel to kill children. But the Germans deserve these atrocities.”*

Leonid Rabychev, a senior lieutenant-signaller, described how the Soviet troops in East Prussia overtook a convoy of German refugees. The Red Army soldiers pushed carts full of property into a ditch on the side of the highway, the elderly and children were pushed aside and *“attacked thousands of women and girls.”*

Numerous cases of the Red Army crimes against the civilian population are in German documents. In January 1945 in the Johannisburg district of East Prussia, Soviet

German Gabriele Këpp, who was raped by Red Army soldiers when she was 15 years old. In 2011, she published her memoirs entitled “Why am I born a Girl?”



soldiers killed dozens of civilians along with several French prisoners of war in refugee columns. In February, about 50 people, primarily children and youth were shot by an order of a Soviet officer. In the district of Opole, Red Army soldiers killed more than 1,200 German civilians in January 1945 alone. In the district of Wehlau, Soviet tanks shot at a column of refugees, mostly women and children. In the district of Walsrode, the Red Army fired on a German medical convoy. From the thousands of wounded, only 80 people managed to escape. These are only some examples from several German regions occupied by the Soviet army.

Robbery, looting, arson, violence against the civilian population and prisoners became widespread. For this reason, special orders from Soviet command along the fronts emphasized the inadmissibility of such behaviour and required the restoration of discipline in the army as soon as possible. The Directive of the Soviet High Command obliged *“to change the attitude toward the Germans, both prisoners of war and civilians. Behave better toward the Germans.”*

But these measures were clearly not enough. In late March 1945, a memorandum addressed to the Secretary of the

“Here lie 24 killed Germans”. Mass civilian grave in the city of Nemmersdorf in Eastern Prussia, where the Red Army killed Germans on 21 October 1944. Today, this is the village of Mayakovskoye, Kaliningrad province of Russia and there is no sign of a mass grave anywhere.



Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Malenkov, records the case of the mass rape of women by Soviet soldiers at the Nemmersdorf estate. These women were not even German. The document states that this estate was the temporary placement for the liberated "Ostarbeiter"! One of the official reports of the Main Trophy Administration of the Red Army included that among the "spoils of war" were thousands of pianos, hundreds of thousands of carpets, furniture and clocks.

In fact, the crimes of Soviet soldiers against civilians was so massive and irrefutable that they had to be accepted even in official Russian historiography. The President of the Association of Second World War Historians, O. Rzhesheskyj stated that in the first month of 1945 alone, for excessive behaviour against the local population, the tribunals convicted "4,148 officers and a large number of rank and file."

This photo, taken in August 1945 in Berlin, was published in "Life" magazine and captioned with the following: "A Soviet soldier struggles to take a woman's bicycle in Berlin."



Myth 44

The Flag Raised Over the Reichstag Was Done by Yegorov and Kantaria

*History of the
Great Patriotic
War of the Soviet
Union*

“Early in the morning of 1 May 1945 on the statuary terrace that crowned the building, the Victory Flag was already waving. It was raised by the intelligence sergeants M. A. Yegorov and M. Kantaria.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

Another Soviet taboo about the war, one name is no longer on that list of flag bearers, Ukrainian Alexei Berest was struck off the list.

■ Fast Facts

On the night of 1 May 1945, Lieutenant Alexei Berest together with Mikhail Yegorov and Meliton Kantaria raised the Victory Flag over the Reichstag. All three were presented with the title Hero of the Soviet Union. But Alexei Berest was not included on the award list. According to one version, Marshal Georgy Zhukov personally did this since he did not like political officers. Another explanation is that a Ukrainian figure among the bearers was undesirable for political reasons because the Ukrainian liberation movement stubbornly resisted Soviet rule in Galicia and Volhynia. Some argue that the reason for the removal of Berest off this list was personally done by Stalin.

■ Detailed Facts

From the very beginning, the history of the raising of the “Victory Flag” over the Reichstag had more questions than answers. In 1960–1961, the Marx-Lenin Institute under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union created a special commission which had to dot all the “i’s.”

The results of this commission slightly changed the official version. However, this had no effect on the fate of the officers and soldiers involved. The Soviet leadership did not want radical revisions, limiting it to a “facelift.” Yegorov and Kantaria remained as the official “bearers”.

On the eve of the storming of the Reichstag, the Military Council of the 3rd Shock Army 1st Belorussian Front produced nine Victory Flags – for each division involved. For convenience, the flags were numbered.

The first assault attempt began in the morning of 30 April. They wanted to make a gift to Stalin for 1 May and anything short of victory would be a cruel joke. Not checking information carefully, High Command reported that at 14:25 the fifth “Victory Flag” was raised on the Reichstag. This fifth flag belonged to the 150th Rifle, Order of Kutuzov 2nd class, Idritsa division.

Word immediately reached Moscow and it then instantly spread around the world. Thus, when it became clear that this was not the case, it was too uncomfortable to refute the information. In addition, the commander of the 79th Corps,



Alexei Berest

General-Major Semen Perevortkin, who was in charge and whose soldiers stormed the Reichstag, was afraid to anger Marshal Zhukov. To somewhat remedy the situation, the commander of the 150th Division, General-Major Vasylyl Shatilov instructed the commander of the 756th Regiment, Fyodor Zhinchenko, to urgently raise the flag at least on the first floor of the Reichstag. The first red flag in front of the Reichstag was raised by a Ukrainian, Sergeant Petro Scherbina.

The real storming of the Reichstag began on the evening of 30 April. The first “Victory Flag” in the opinion of most researchers, was raised at approximately 23:00 by Captain Vladimir Makov. However, he, like the rest, did not survive. Perhaps, he burned in the fire or fell from the Reichstag because he was not properly secured.



Yegorov and Kantaria with the Victory Flag on the roof of the Reichstag. Berest is not in the frame

Around midnight, the captain of the 1st Infantry Battalion, Stepan Neustroev, ordered his subordinate, Lieutenant Alexei Berest, to lead the group that had to set flag #5 on the dome of the Reichstag. Afterwards, the leadership presented awards to the three “bearers” – Berest, Yegorov and Kantaria. All of them were perfect from the point of view of the Soviet leadership, their biographies fitted the image of a Soviet hero.

Why Alexei Berest, who led the group, did not remain in the official Soviet “canon” and what was to be blamed for this: his nationality or his position? Even today, this is not known for certain.

On 8 May 1946, for raising the Victory Flags over the Reichstag, the title “Hero of the Soviet Union” was awarded to: Captain Vasili Davydov, Sergeant Mikhail Yegorov, Junior Sergeant Meliton Kantaria, Captain Stepan Neustroev, Senior Lieutenant Konstantyn Samsonov.

Alexei Berest’s postwar fate ended tragically.

After the war, Berest settled in the Rostov province, Russia. He worked as a district commander of the cinema department. Not abandoning his attempts to restore justice, he wrote to various authorities. Perhaps this was the reason for the audit of his department and detection of a lack of funds. In 1953, a criminal case was brought against Berest. He received 10 years in a Perm camp. He sat out half his sentence and was released under an amnesty. After his release, he worked in the Rostselmash foundry. He died on 3 November 1970, rescuing a 5 year old girl from a train.

On 6 May 2005, the President of Ukraine V. Yushchenko posthumously awarded Alexei Berest the title of Hero of Ukraine.

Myth 45

The War Ended on 9 May

Zhukov, G.K. "In the afternoon of 9 May, I received a call from Moscow and they informed me that all the documents about the surrender of Nazi Germany were received and given to the Commander-in-Chief. So ended the bloody war. Nazi Germany and its allies were finally defeated."

■ The Essence of the Myth

The war for the Soviet Union ended on 9 May 1945.

■ Fast Facts

The anchoring of 9 May as the date of the end of the war into the minds of Ukrainian citizens is a result of the historical policy of the Soviet Union. In fact, for the USSR, the Second World War ended on 2 September 1945.

■ Detailed Facts

The act of unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany in Reims was signed on 02:41 on 7 May 1945.

The signing ceremony was attended by a group of journalists. However, at the request of the representative of the Soviet Union, Ivan Susloparov, the USA and Great Britain agreed to postpone the public announcement about the surrender so that the Soviet Union could prepare a second surrender ceremony in Berlin. The reporters promised to report on the surrender only 36 hours later, at exactly 3:00 on 8 May 1945.

However, German radio announced the signing of the surrender on 7 May at 14:41. Following this, an hour later, Edward Kennedy from Associated Press also reported it and set himself free of the promise to keep it a secret. How-

ever, Kennedy was fired from the agency and the continued silence of the surrender to the West lasted the entire day.

During the day of 8 May, the surrender of Germany was officially announced.

There was an absolute ban on broadcasting the news of the surrender on 7 May in the Soviet Union. The reason for that was that the Soviet representative, General Ivan Susloparov, signed the act in Reims without having a directive from Moscow. Kremlin instructions did not come in at the right time. Shortly after signing the act, General Susloparov, received a telegram with Stalin categorically prohibiting the signing of the surrender.

Stalin protested the signing of the surrender in Reims because the Western Allies played a leading role. The Soviet leader refused to recognize the act and demanded the signing of a new act of German surrender by the Red Army in Berlin and also – as already mentioned – to request that the Allies not officially announce victory until the second surrender comes into force on 9 May, Moscow time.

This request was refused by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and American President Harry Truman. Churchill explained that he would need to inform Parliament. Truman said that Stalin's request came in too late for him to cancel the Victory announcement. Stalin, in turn, said: "The act, signed in Reims, cannot be undone but it cannot be accepted. Surrender should be made as an important historical fact and signed not on the territory of the victors but where fascist aggression came from – in Berlin, and not unilaterally but necessarily with the Commander-in-Chiefs of all countries in the Anti-Hitler coalition."

In response, the Allies agreed to a re-signing surrender ceremony in Berlin.

On 8 May at 22:43 Central European Time – or 9 May at 00:43 Moscow Time – in the Berlin suburb of Karlshorst, another German surrender was signed. The text repeated verbatim that from 7 May. The Karlshorst act confirmed

the ceasefire specified in the Reims act at 8 May at 23:01 Central European Time.

The same day, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued a decree that announced 9 May as Victory Day.

Despite signing the surrender with Germany, fighting was still occurring along the front. The Germans did not want to surrender to the Red Army and tried to break out into the Western zones of occupation, at all costs. Therefore, the Nazis were finally expelled from Prague on 10 May and the last group of German troops in Czechoslovakia and Austria were expelled on 19 May.

Carrying out its obligations to the anti-Hitler coalition, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan on 8 August 1945. This war was seen as a direct continuation and part of the Great Patriotic War. On 2 September 1945, the day of Japan's surrender, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued a decree which called 3 September Victory Day over militaristic Japan.

Both holidays – 9 May and 3 September – were declared national holidays. But in 1947, these were again declared work days.

Later, when the “Great Patriotic War” foundation was laid out in Soviet ideology, the emphasis was made on the vic-



*Wehrmacht
General Jodl
signing the
German
Instrument of
Surrender, Reims
(7 May 1945)*

tory over Germany. The point of this manipulation was to move the focus from “World” to the term “Great Patriotic” and thus divert public attention from other armed conflicts in which the Soviet Union acted as an aggressor during the Second World War: their attack on Poland, western Ukraine and Belarus, Finland and the Baltic States. The official name of the holiday was the “Holiday of the Victory of the Soviet People in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945.” In this way, the events of 1939–1941 when the USSR entered into an alliance with the Third Reich were removed from the focus of public attention and Nazi-Soviet cooperation was ignored.

In 1965, 9 May became a national holiday again with mandatory military parades in honor of the holiday. In this way, 9 May finally became fixed in the public consciousness as the Day of Victory and the date of the end of the war.

Formally, the war with Germany was over on 25 January 1955 by a decree from the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR entitled: “On Ending the State of War between the USSR and Germany.”

*Soviet delegation
at the signing
of Germany's
unconditional
surrender on 8
May 1945 in
Berlin*



Myth 46

Victory Day Has Always Been the Most Important Holiday in the USSR

Russian Television Channel Pervyi Kanal, 9 May 2014 “Victory Day – a national holiday, the first and foremost in our country.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

In the Soviet Union, Victory Day has always been the most important holiday.

■ Fast Facts

Victory Day, as a national holiday and non-working day, was introduced in the USSR in May 1945. However, in December 1947, it ceased to be a national holiday. Until 1965, there were no special events conducted on 9 May. During this time, a much bigger Soviet holiday was celebrated on 1 May, International Worker’s Day, and 7 November, the anniversary of the October Revolution. The 9 May holiday only became a national holiday in 1965, when the cult of the “Great Victory” began.

■ Detailed Facts

In today’s Russia, propaganda efforts have made Victory Day into the biggest national holiday. Its scope has long overshadowed New Year’s Eve and other public and religious holidays. Senior Russian leaders do not tire of stressing the “holiness” and almost sacred meaning of Victory Day to all the other former countries of the USSR. Due to this, for people born after the collapse of the USSR, 9 May has always had a special meaning. Many are convinced that in Soviet times, Victory Day was the primary national holiday. Russian propaganda strongly supports and extends these beliefs.

The myth about the “most important holiday” was intended to create a link between contemporary Russia and the Soviet Union, one which was “feared” and “respected” by all Western countries. Due to this propaganda, the period of time has come to be perceived as a kind of golden age and the current Russian leadership appear to be the successors of this “glorious” Soviet tradition.

But time to get back to the facts.

Victory Day first emerged in the Soviet Union on 8 May 1945. Then, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued a special decree declaring 9 May, Victory Day, a national day of celebration and decided to make it a non-working day. However, no special celebrations were organized. Even the Victory Parade ordered by Stalin in Moscow was held on 24 June.

There were no special celebrations, festive parades or processions of veterans on Red Square in the following years. In December 1947, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR announced that it would once again become a working day. Instead, the extra holiday day was transferred to 1 January. After this, celebrating Victory Day at the state level was carried out by modest Soviet means. In fact, the only celebrations were artillery salutes which took place in several major cities of the USSR. Exceptions were not even made for the 5th, 10th and 15th anniversary of the Victory.

In contrast, the celebration of 7 November as the anniversary of the October Revolution in the USSR was more ostentatious. The military parade, the demonstrating workers on Red Square and the obligatory presence of the leaders on the rostrum of the Mausoleum. Similar events took place on International Workers Day on 1 May.

Only in 1965 did Victory Day once again become a national holiday. During this occasion, a military parade was held on Red Square. The Victory Flag was first carried out and examples of Soviet intercontinental missiles were displayed to the public. At the same time, a jubilee medal '20 Years of Victory of the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945' was awarded

the more than 15 million people. Cities of the Soviet Union were awarded the honorary title of Hero City (for more on the Hero City refer to Myth 48). In the Kremlin Palace, congresses were solemnly held with participation of state leaders. The traditional minute of silence honoring the dead was initiated across the USSR on television and radio.

The decision to change the status of Victory Day was taken by the top Soviet leadership, headed by Leonid Brezhnev. During this period, the Communist Party urgently needed to regenerate their authority. So began the active exploitation of the patriotic theme and the creation of the cult of war veterans. In 1967, on the eve of 9 May in Moscow, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier memorial complex was inaugurated. The Eternal Flame was brought from the grave of the October Heroes in Leningrad. Next to the memorial, the Honour Guard No. 1 was established and the laying of the wreaths by the first people of the state became a traditional event on Victory Day.

As one sees, the value of one of the most important elements of celebrating Victory Day came only in Brezhnev's era. But then it went on to share this status with 1 May and 7 November.



Decree from the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR from 8 May 1945 "On Announcing 9 May as Victory Day" (from the "Izvestia" newspaper, 9 May 1945)

Among others, there is no other supreme holiday like Victory Day. In many other countries, Victory Day meant celebrating their own victory. More often the war for independence or generally just one of the battles against their invaders.

Victory Day is celebrated for the citizens of Bangladesh (in their war of independence from Pakistan), Vietnam (for the 1965–1975 war against the USA), Estonia (for the battle of Vonnu against the German Landwehr in 1919), North Korea (for the 1950–1953 war against South Korea and the USA), Turkey (for the Battle of Dumlupinar against Greece, which ended the 1922 War of Independence), Croatia (for their war of independence). For these countries, Victory Day is celebrated on other dates which do not coincide with 9 May.

Some countries do not even have a Victory Day in their holiday calendar. This, for example, is Uruguay, New Zealand and Panama.

In Western European countries and in the USA, victory over Nazism is not honored on 9 May but rather on 8 May. This date coincides with the Act of Germany's surrender coming into force, which was signed by representatives of the USA, USSR and the Third Reich. In most European countries, this day is called Victory in Europe Day, Victory of Nazism Day, Remembrance and Reconciliation Day or just the End of the War in Europe Day. Slovakia celebrates 8 May as the Victory over Fascism Day. In the Netherlands, Liberation Day is celebrated earlier, on 5 May. In Italy, Liberation Day is celebrated on 25 April.

In 2004, the UN General Assembly, in a resolution marking the 60th anniversary of the Second World War, stated that countries can mark their own days of victory, liberation and celebration and declared 8 and 9 May as days of remembrance and reconciliation. The member states of the UN, individuals and non-governmental organizations were invited to celebrate one or both days to commemorate all the victims of the Second World War.

But the world is not limited to the USA, Europe and the former Soviet Union. And beyond their borders, other countries do not celebrate either the day when the war ended in Europe or the day of victory over Nazism. This celebration does not exist in Argentina, Brazil, China, Mexico, Chile, Japan and a number of countries in Africa, Asia and South America.

Only in the former Soviet Union, with the exception of the Baltic States, is Victory Day celebrated on 9 May. As a public holiday it exists in countries such as Azerbaijan, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as well as in a number of self-proclaimed “republics”. And this is only through the strength of habit.

In Ukraine, this tradition is gradually receding into the past. From 2015, 8 May is celebrated as a national Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation and 9 May a Day of Victory over Nazism in the Second World War.



*Decree from
 the Presidium
 of the Supreme
 Soviet of the
 USSR from 23
 December 1947
 "On Announcing
 1 January as a
 Public Holiday"*

Myth 47

Victory Marshal

Medynskyy, V., The War. Myths of the USSR. 1939–1945 “Why does the commander-cannibal myth enclose its black shadow over Marshal Zhukov?...But Marshal Zhukov was the target for another reason, the unabated attacks on our victory. Simply our great XX century commander – is its symbol.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

Georgy Zhukov was a brilliant strategist, talented and the most effective among the Soviet generals during the war. Zhukov made the largest contribution to the victory over Germany and that is why he is called the Victory Marshal.

■ Fast Facts

Calling Georgy Zhukov the “Victory Marshal” is not just incorrect but also has no foundation. As a front commander during the war, he also suffered crushing defeats and military setbacks. Either in terms of battles conducted by him as commander of front-line operations or those which he planned as the chief of staff and as the representative of Supreme Command.

■ Detailed Facts

The myth of Zhukov as the Victory Marshal began to be formed during the Brezhnev era with the publication of the Marshal’s memoirs, *Spohady i Rozdumy*, in 1969, and after Zhukov’s death in 1974. The Zhukov cult reached its peak towards the end of the 20th century when in 1994, the military Order of Zhukov was created. A year later, in Moscow, next to Red Square, a bronze horse sculpture depicting the Marshal during the Victory Parade was unveiled.

Zhukov as a military leader and a man was an extremely complex and ambiguous figure, despite the lack of suffi-

cient general and military education (four class school plus courses for cavalry commanders) and a low level of personal culture. He had a talent for military affairs, defined by his strong, cruel and uncompromising will and the ability to direct all his efforts towards his goal. On the other hand, he was described as a ruthless and cruel man who carried out unjust actions and deeds, towards his subordinates.

It is difficult to accuse him of cowardice. He was often on the front, where he would sometimes personally “give an order.” At the same time, he did not contemplate the losses, did not respect his soldiers' lives but because of them he received his position in the pantheon of Soviet generals and commanders of the Second World War as “the star of the first magnitude.” Along with his failures and a crushing defeat, he owned his achievements in successful Red Army operations. But this success was often achieved not by high-level military prowess but repeated advantages in strength and capability.

He was far from an all-round strong and honest man. He was not devoid of the Napoleon complex. He took credit for other people's achievements and services. And he had a weakness for material things and luxury.

Particular pieces of evidence go against Zhukov's prominent role in the war. Criticism of his working methods, allegations of large losses and his boorish attitude toward his subordinates can be found in the memories of many marshals, generals and war veterans. Sometimes this was because of jealousy of his fame or personal insults but mostly these were objective accusations.

After the German attack on the USSR, being the chief of the general staff of the Red Army and a member of the main high command, Zhukov was sent to as a representative of the STAVKA to repel the enemy in the southwest, and then on the western front. However, his counterattack did not improve the situation and led to the defeat of his troops. The Red Army retreat turned into a flight. There were colossal losses in manpower, weapons and military equipment. Therefore, Zhukov lost one of several tasks assigned to him.

In late July, he was removed from the position of chief of general staff and appointed commander of the Reserve Front. Only Stalin's personal commitment saved Zhukov from repeating the fate of the western front's commander colonel-general Dmitry Pavlov, who was executed together with a group of other generals.

From October 1941 to August 1942, Zhukov commanded the western front. In 1942, it was a year of brutal defeats and huge losses. Zhukov conducted continuous offensive operations, which ended in failure. The total losses in the Rzhev-Vyazma offensive amounted to about 777,000 people, nearly 75 percent of troops before the operation. This was the bloodier of the two Rzhev operations which occurred in August and November-December 1942.

But even after this failure with heavy losses and performances under Rzhev and Sychyovka, Stalin appointed Zhukov as deputy supreme commander and first Deputy of the People's Commissar of Defence in late August. At the same time as the representative of the STAVKA, he steered the Stalingrad area. And although Zhukov's results were very modest, in January 1943, for his personal achievements he was awarded the first ever Marshal of the Soviet Union title.

Another ugly page in the biography of the Marshal was Operation Polar Star, (February-April 1943). After breaking the siege

Marshal of the Soviet Union Georgy Zhukov during a parade in Red Square (24 June 1945)



of Leningrad, he planned to defeat the German Army Group North, liberate the Leningrad region and create conditions for a successful offensive in the Baltic States. But the operation ended in failure and Soviet forces suffered heavy losses.

After the death of Vatutin, Stalin ordered Zhukov to lead the 1st Ukrainian Front. On 10 April 1944, for the liberation of Ukraine, Zhukov was awarded the highest military award, the Order of Victory No. 1.

In the summer of 1944, Zhukov coordinated the operations of the 1st and 2nd Belarussian Front in the Bagration Operation. Zhukov appropriated to himself the major achievements in carrying out successful operations which resulted in the enemy being cleared from the territory of Belarus, and effectively deprived others, particularly the command of the 1st Belarussian Front, Konstantin Rokossovsky, of any fame.

In late March 1945, with Stalin's light hand Zhukov was the first to receive the second Order of Victory, "for the skillful tasks of the Supreme Command." Later, two gentlemen were added to the cohort and given the highest military award – Marshal Vasilevsky and Stalin himself.

The apotheosis of military glory for Marshal Zhukov became the Battle for Berlin. On 16 April, he as the commander of the 1st Belarussian Front, began his offensive, unprecedented in scope and rapidity. However, it also resulted in a large amount of losses. According to official and clearly underestimated data, the Red Army in its Berlin operations lost 352,000 people, including more than 78,000 killed. The size of the daily losses of personnel and equipment (over 15,000 people, 87 tanks and SPGs, 40 planes) during the Battle for Berlin, exceeded all other Red Army operations, where the losses were the result of fights, unlike the first battles of the war when the daily loss of Soviet troops was mainly through a significant number of prisoners. The intensity of these losses, this operation was only comparable to the Kursk battle.

Perhaps, for his "achievements", Georgy Zhukov is called the "unsurpassed national commander" of all time, who "highly exalted the glory of Russian arms" in modern militarized Russia.

Myth 48

Hero Cities

Resolution of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the Honorary Title 'Hero City', 8 May 1965

“The title of ‘Hero City’ is given to the cities of the Soviet Union, whose workers’ displayed heroism and courage in defending the Fatherland during the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

Some cities of the USSR, which particularly distinguished themselves during the war, gained national recognition as hero cities.

■ Fast Facts

Awarding the honour of Hero City occurred haphazardly, candidates were selected based on the subjective opinion of the Soviet leadership and not on the city’s combat contribution to the victory.

■ Detailed Facts

The phrase Hero City was originally used as a metaphor. In 1942, Pravda newspaper used "hero city" to describe Leningrad, Odesa, Sevastopol and Stalingrad. On 1 May 1945, Stalin ordered the capitals of 16 republics, and the four "hero cities" to hold a salute: Leningrad, Stalingrad, Sevastopol and Odesa. In the decree establishing the medal 'For the Defence of Kyiv' in 1961, the capital of Ukraine was also named a hero city.

What is a “hero city” and what kind of city can earn the title?

It was first identified in 1965. For the 20th anniversary of the victory over Germany, the Presidium of the Supreme

Soviet of the USSR approved the relevant resolutions. The title of Hero City was given to cities across the USSR that showed “courage and heroism” during the war.

How exactly does one determine the extent of heroism? The resolution does not say. No special commissions were created for this. The decision was based on the sole discretion of the Presidium of the Supreme Council.

The value of the Hero City was part of the active cultivation of the myth of the Great Patriotic War (more on this in Myth 46). The first award was given 20 years after the war. It was given to 6 cities: Leningrad, Odesa, Sevastopol, Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad), Kyiv, Moscow and later to the Brest Fortress.

In the 1970s, Kerch, Novorossiysk, Minsk and Tula also became hero cities. The final awards were given to Smolensk and Murmansk in 1985, to mark the 40th anniversary of the war.

In total, there were 12 hero cities and the Brest hero fortress.

Even in the USSR, people noticed that this award process was not always fair. Many residents of different cities and villages were involved in the victory over Germany, and not

Diploma from the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR from 8 May 1965 “On Awarding the Hero City Kyiv the ‘Gold Star’ Medal”



only those along the front lines. The rear supplied recruits, welcomed evacuated specialists and industrialists. But no rear cities received any stars. Attention was focused on those cities where fighting occurred.

However, the successful defence of cities depended not only on the heroism of their defenders. There were many important operational and strategic factors, geographical features, troop numbers involved in the fighting. The combination of these adverse factors allowed the successful defence of Leningrad, Odesa, Sevastopol and Moscow. For many other settlements the situation was hopeless.

Despite this heroic resistance, the hero cities of Odesa, Kyiv, and Sevastopol were lost to the enemy. Kyiv fell after an impressive encirclement of the armies along the southwestern front. The defenders of Sevastopol were left to their fate by their command at a critical moment. The miscalculations of planning the first landings on the Kerch Peninsula ended in tragedy. Almost every case of heroic defence did not occur

The “Kyiv Hero City” monument at the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War



without some shameful defeats and examples of inappropriate behaviour from their leadership.

Minsk, Kerch and Smolensk were captured instantly by the Germans. The defence of each of these cities did not last a week.

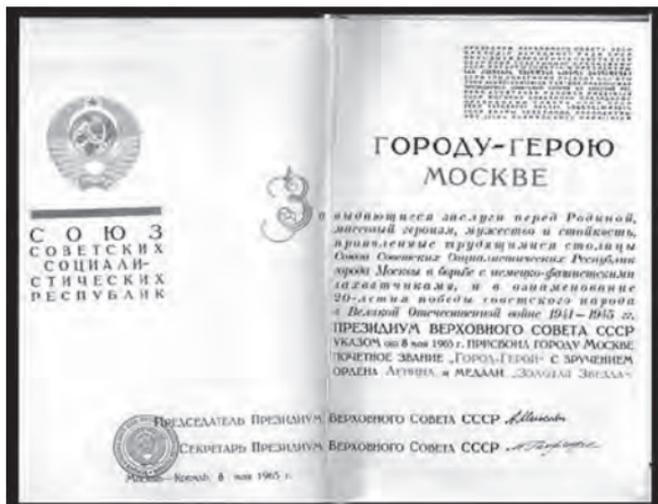
Minsk became a Hero City only in 1974, as the capital of the “partisan-republic.”

Kerch, like Novorossiysk, was awarded the title in 1973 for the 30th anniversary of the German defeat in the North Caucasus and the Crimea. The key to why this city was chosen is simple: Leonid Brezhnev, the General Secretary, fought near Novorossiysk.

Smolensk was eventually recognized as a hero city after the persistent requests of the local regional party. Their justification was that Smolensk has long been known as the gateway to Moscow. It did not matter that these gates were defective in 1941. Tula also awarded the title by the persuasion of the Soviet leadership.

A number of truly heroic cities did not receive any stars. For example, there were numerous unsuccessful attempts

*Decree from the
Presidium of the
Supreme Soviet
of the USSR
from 8 May 1965
“On Awarding
Moscow the
Honourary Title
of ‘Hero City’”*



for Voronezh to be awarded the title. This pre-front city hampered the enemy longer than Stalingrad and was also not captured.

Brezhnev refused to recognize Kursk as a hero city, even though the Battle of Kursk received international recognition.

The counterattack on Rostov-on-Don in the autumn of 1941 was one of the first, (besides the Kerch landing), to be successful. But the Rostov region, as the successor of the Don Cossacks, had a reputation as being unreliable and was not awarded the title.

There were four great battles for Kharkiv between 1941–1943. The city passed from hand to hand three times. Meanwhile, feats in these battles worthy of the hero stars, were not awarded by the Soviet leadership.

What was the reason for this selectivity?

Formally, the award was only symbolic but in reality it meant access to certain privileges. The Hero City Administration received generous material resources, including better commodity security. Obligatory material bonuses that were given to Hero Cities significantly limited the generosity of the Communist Party.

The Soviet Union could not feed that many heroic cities. Therefore, the celebration was dragged on for decades and not all worthy places were awarded.

Myth 49

Russia Could Defeat the Nazis Even Without the Ukrainians

Then Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin during the TV Conversation with Vladimir Putin. Continued, 16 December 2010.

“If we look at the statistics from the Second World War, then it turns out that the greatest losses in the Great Patriotic War were in the RSFSR. More than 70 percent of the losses. This means, the war was won, I don’t want to offend anyone, mainly due to the human and industrial resources of the Russian Federation.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

The Russian people bore the brunt of the war.

■ Fast Facts

Victory over Nazism in the Second World War was not the result of the actions of any one country but rather the joint actions of all participants in the anti-Hitler coalition. Therefore, even the question of a “sovereign victory” by one country is absurd: the combination of each of these countries was important. At the same time, the Ukrainians in this remark have been unfairly diminished.

■ Detailed Facts

Where did the statement that the “RSFSR made up 70 percent of the losses in the Great Patriotic War” come from?

The official position of the Kremlin relies on estimates of Russian military historians, according to which between 1941–1945 there were 34.5 million Soviet citizens in the Red Army and Navy. The total losses amounted to 8,668,400 out of which, 1,376,000 Ukrainians (therefore 15.9 percent of the total military casualties of the USSR or more than all the losses of the USA, Great Britain and Poland combined).

In fact, as calculated by independent historians, the military losses of the Soviet armed forces fluctuated between 11–12 million, of which approximately 2.5 million were Ukrainian, thus 21–22 percent.

However, everything depends on how one counts: *by ethnicity or territory*.

Russian military experts calculate their figures based on ethnicity and automatically ignore citizens of other nationalities (Russians, Belarussians, Poles, Jews, Germans, Tatars, Moldovans, Armenians, Greeks and others), whose grandfathers and great-grandfathers lived in Ukraine, for whom this land was home. Since Ukraine was always multinational, this approach and its reasons for its usage, leave many questions.

The use of this ethnic approach reduced the non-Russian peoples share of losses to 33.7 percent.

According to estimates of Ukrainian researchers, nearly 7 million people from Ukraine fought in the Red Army, thus they made up approximately 23 percent of the total armed forces of the USSR.

The number of Ukrainian citizens in the Red Army constantly changed throughout the war. In 1941, they account-

Commanding unit of the 1st Ukrainian Front in ceremonial dress during a parade on Red Square (24 June 1945)



ed for 15–20 percent (second only to Russians). In 1942, the Ukrainian share decreased in the Red Army: many were taken prisoner or were on occupied territory. In early 1944, during the liberation of Ukraine, the number of Ukrainians increased to more than 22 percent.

Between 1944–1945, the share of ethnic Russians in some armies of the Soviet army was only about 40 percent, for example, the 60th Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front, who liberated Auschwitz and Krakow, was composed of 36 percent Russians and 32 percent Ukrainians.

This became known during the scandal in the winter of 2015. The Russian Ministry of Defense was upset when the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grzegorz Schetyna, said that “Ukrainians liberated Auschwitz.” Finally the national composition of this military component was declassified (70 years after the war!). Quite accidentally therefore, the Russian Minister of Defense contradicted the words of Vladimir Putin's statement about the 70 percent loss to human resources.

One should also not forget about the quality of the indicators. About 2.5 million Ukrainians were awarded Soviet orders and medals. For exceptional courage, 2,000 were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. The Hero of the Soviet Union was awarded to I. Kozhedub three times, a further 32 Ukrainians were awarded it twice including A. Molodchy, D. Glinka, P. Taran, M. Bondarenko, O. Mazurenko, A. Nedbaylo, V. Mykhlyk and others.

Many Ukrainians were part of the Red Army command: G. Kulik, S. Tymoshenko, I. Chernyakhovsky, A. Grechko, A. Yeremenko, K. Moskalenko, P. Zhmachenko and R. Malinowski.

On behalf of the USSR, the Japanese Instrument of Surrender was signed by the Ukrainian General K. Derevianko.

The group who raised the so called “Victory Flag” over the Reichstag was headed by the Ukrainian lieutenant O. Berest.

The international recognition of the Ukrainian contribution of the victory over Nazism was granted by UN membership to the Ukrainian SSR.

Supporters of the ethnic approach in assessing the contribution of Ukrainians to the victory over Nazism should be reminded of some important facts.

For Ukrainians, the war did not begin in June 1941, but rather on 1 September 1939. At the beginning of the Second World War in the Polish Army, which totaled 1 million people, approximately 120,000 ethnic Ukrainians served. During the September campaign in the battles against the Nazis, 8,000 Ukrainians were killed who were citizens of Poland.

Ukrainians fought in the Allied armies. This fact, is in contrast to the Ukrainian service in the ranks of the Wehrmacht and SS troops, on which some Russian historians remain silent.

Among the US military, there were 40,000 Americans of Ukrainian descent who participated in Operation Overlord (the landing of Allied troops in Normandy). The number of Ukrainians in the Canadian Army, according to various sources, ranged from 35 to 50,000.

Commanding unit of the 3rd Ukrainian Front in ceremonial dress during a parade on Red Square (24 June 1945)



From 1940, five thousand Ukrainians fought in the French Foreign Legion. In 1944, the French resistance movement had three separate Ukrainian units.

Thousands of ethnic Ukrainians, former Polish citizens, who after 1939 were deported to the eastern regions of the USSR, joined the 2nd Polish Corps under General Władysław Anders. In 1942, the Corps left the territory of the USSR and as part of the British expeditionary troops, took part in battles in Italy.

In the summer of 1943, the 1st Czechoslovak Separate Brigade was formed and commanded by Colonel Ludwig Svoboda. Out of the 15,000 personnel, 11,000 were Ukrainians from the Carpathian region.

A few words are also worth mentioning in this context about the evacuated human resources and industrial capacity from the Ukrainian territory. It is hard to imagine a common victory without the Ukrainian metallurgical and engineering companies and Ukrainian experts who built tanks and planes in the southern Urals.

Most importantly, what escapes Putin's attention is a fair assessment of the joint effort of the anti-Hitler coalition. Without the American Lend-Lease, victory would have been impossible in Eastern Europe. Lend-Lease was not possible without successful military operations in the Pacific theater. Therefore, the success of the many victories of the Red Army are directly dependent on US military efforts across the globe. And this is only one example of a similar matter. No one can really say whose help or whose efforts in the war were so decisive.

Putin's words are an example of manipulation of facts and instrumentation of history, deliberately narrowing people's perspective.

Myth 50

“No one is Forgotten, Nothing is Forgotten”

*Olga Bergholz, “There lay Leningrad people.
Piskaryovskoye Memorial in St.
Petersburg, 1959* There are citizens – men, women, children.
Next to them, Red Army soldiers.
With all their lives
They defended you, Leningrad.
Cradle of the Revolution.
Their names are precious
Here we enumerate no one.
Many of them are under the eternal granite guard
But know, hear these stones,
No one is forgotten, Nothing is forgotten.”

■ The Essence of the Myth

The phrase “No one is forgotten, Nothing is forgotten” is the main propaganda slogan of the Soviet post-war period, the appeal-oath that concerns perpetuating the memory of Soviet citizens who died during the so-called Great Patriotic War. This was first used in a poem by Olga Bergholz in 1959. It is written on the memorial slate in Piskaryovskoye Memorial, where the victims of the siege of Leningrad are buried.

■ Fast Facts

The list of the victims of the war, which were honored in the USSR, was not complete for a long time. Among those forgotten were the prisoners of war, the disabled veterans, the victims of the Holocaust, the Ostarbeiter and the members of the so-called border conflicts. Lastly, are the events before 22 June 1941. Similarly, the defeat of 1941–beginning of 1942 is forgotten. Even Soviet sanctuary – the graves of Soviet soldiers – suffered from neglect. Amalgamation has occurred, graves have been transferred and soldiers' names lost.

■ Detailed Facts

The "Great Patriotic War of the Soviet People against the German-Fascist Invaders" was the main myth of the Soviet Union in the postwar period. This image of the war appeared as a heroic feat of only the Soviet people headed by the ruling party. The expression "No one is forgotten, Nothing is forgotten!" was another propaganda slogan. The official memory ignored many facts and inconvenient victims.

Even during the war, the Soviet leadership launched a process of perpetuating the memory of heroes and memorable events. In Ukraine, soon after the expulsion of the Nazis from Kyiv, the generals of the defense of the capital were buried: Kirponos, Potapov, Tupikov. In 1957, they were reburied in Glory Park. It was designed as a place to honor the heroes of the Great Patriotic War with an Eternal Flame and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

During 1943–1944, the Central Commission of the Ukrainian Communist Party prepared a large-scale plan to erect a monument to the liberators. This was never built. However, until 1 October 1947, the Ukrainian SSR streamlined 31,688 collective and 64,670 individual Soviet soldier graves, created 2,613 monuments, 9,861 tombstones and 52,549 tomb signs.

It seemed to the Soviet public that no one is forgotten, nothing is forgotten. However, researchers have highlighted a negligent attitude towards the military burials. By the late 1950s, a consolidation of graves occurred. They were transferred and the names of the victims were lost.

They did not find room for Soviet prisoners of war in any versions of the victory. Other researchers approximated their numbers from 4.5 million to 5.75 million. The Germans killed at least half a million Soviet prisoners of war. Hunger and the inhuman conditions of their detention and transportation killed another 2.6 million prisoners.

The majority of those mobilized during the war were permanently disabled as a result. After victory, they were left to random counterfeiting and begging. All these people were

an inconvenience to the authorities. In 1949 in places far from the central cities, Soviet authorities organized nursing homes. Many former soldiers were forced into these homes. They were held as prisoners. Officially, the authorities did not mention them.

Driving the war count on 22 June 1941, the Soviet Union acknowledged a series of events which did not fit into the overall heroic canon. The Battles of Khalkhin Gol, the so-called Golden September of 1939, the Soviet-Finnish war, the occupation of western Ukraine and Bessarabia, the so-called border conflict with the Baltic States. The participants of these were dropped from the privileged position of “veterans of the Great Patriotic War” and were considered “participants in the border conflict.”

Soviet propaganda “forgot” about a number of defeats between 1941–beginning of 1942. For the catastrophe of 1941, Soviet historians found a euphemism, they described



*Piskaryovskoye
Memorial in
St. Petersburg,
which bears Olga
Bergholz' words*

it as a "period of temporary setbacks," due to the "infidelity of the German attack" and the predominance of the enemy.

There was also a silence over the ethnic composition of partisan units and the Red Army. All of this supported the myth of the brotherly nations of the USSR as one of the elements of victory. Out of the spotlight was the problems of international relations and national minorities during the war.

These taboos included the deportation of Crimean Tatars and German Ukrainians, the Ukrainian-Polish conflict and even the Holocaust tragedy. The prohibition/displacement of the memory about the Jewish catastrophe was due to the reluctance of the Soviet authorities to view the Jews as the greatest victims of the Nazi occupation. Numerous Jewish burials, their places of mass executions on Ukrainian territories were called graves of "peaceful Soviet citizens, victims of the Nazi occupational regime." Only during Perestroika, did the voices of the Jewish victims begin to be heard. Another unpopular theme was the occupation of Ukraine, the Ostarbeiter problem and also the Ukrainian liberation movement, who fought both the Nazis and the Communists.

Above all, the Soviet authorities also did not want to establish the exact number of the victims of the war. Immediately after the war, the Soviet Union announced they lost 7 million. Later, however, the figure of 20 million was exploited. Before the collapse of the USSR, the number of casualties rose to 27 million. The exact number of victims has still not been established to this day. The systematic accounting of losses were not even from the military. A huge number of dead still lay unburied in old trenches.

Afterword, or Myths and War

After watching Russian television and reading the news from their information agencies, it seems that for the Kremlin the Second World War is not over. The threat of fascist aggression still hangs over the world. Its epicenter has shifted eastward, to Kyiv. The only source of its resistance is still Moscow – the global pillar of anti-fascism.

Russian propaganda is using the Soviet military propaganda's form and meaning. Its language is full of terms from the Second World War: the Ukrainian government are "fascists"; the Ukrainian army are "vigilantes"; the people who collaborate with them are "aids"; and, the terrorists who oppose Ukrainian authorities are the "militia."

The Kremlin argues that the current war against Ukraine is not an aggression against a neighboring state but rather a continuation of the fight against the fascists who threaten Russia and the world. And many people in Ukraine and Russia believe this propaganda to the point where they have taken up arms. They act like actors in popular Soviet movies about the Great Patriotic War, where the Germans are evil and they are the good guys who oppose them. But in this game of war, they pay with their lives and the lives of those who they are fighting against.

Myths about the Second World War are used in Russian propaganda not only in Ukraine or Russia, but throughout Europe and the entire world. Russia confidently monopolized the Red Army's victory over Nazism, even though within its ranks there were millions of Ukrainians and other nationalities. According to the Russian leadership, this victory is a pardon for their present actions: "We cannot be aggressors, because we liberated the world from Hitler."

Experts and journalists who are not familiar with the history of Ukraine, believe this threat of Ukrainian fascism because they see the Bandera red-black flag on the Maidan or among Ukrainian soldiers in eastern Ukraine.

But the history of Bandera – (imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp and a victim of Soviet propaganda and finally killed by the KGB in 1959) – is still unknown, as is the history of the movement he headed. Its members, after a brief period of collaboration with the Third Reich in 1939–1941, launched a massive anti-German insurgent struggle at the end of 1942.

During Soviet times, one could not write about this fight because the USSR was anti-fascist and everyone who was against the main anti-fascist, Stalin, must then be a fascist. A similar division still divides half the world. Today's Russian propaganda is the only place where Putin, THE main anti-fascist, is seen. Fascists include the Ukrainians who disagree with Russian policy.

The modern means of influencing the population has been updated but is still based on an old influence of social representation, stereotypes and myths which were formed and maintained by the totalitarian regime for decades. Deconstructing these myths in Ukraine could not take place after the fall of the regime.

The memory of the war was central to the post-war Soviet ideology. Victory Day was intended not to mark the anniversary of the surrender of Germany, but rather the day after – 9 May (obviously, an isolationist policy for the USSR in their victory over Germany and the appropriation of this victory) – became a major public holiday. Gradually, this holiday pushed even 7 November – the anniversary of the October Revolution – into the background which was, before this, the most important holiday of the Soviet communists.

This myth was to serve as a basis for the formation of Soviet identity and in the long term, a Soviet nation. Its elements were based on mass patriotism and sacrifice in the name of the Soviet Fatherland, unprecedented mobilization of all “Soviet” people in the fight against a terrible threat, and a messianic march westward with the goal of liberating Europe. The Great Victory – was the last great accord of this myth because it confirmed the correctness of the Soviet leadership and communist government's chosen course, power and insuperability.

A peculiar preparation occurred in the 1920–1930s when it was totally installed within the public due to the massive destruction of everyone who did not fit the image of an ideal “Soviet man” and who thought independently.

The necessity of accepting this new myth was understood during the first months of the war. Several million soldiers were unwilling to defend the USSR because they did not consider it their homeland and were captured and later died in German or Soviet camps.

They were replaced by a new generation who were more influenced by Soviet propaganda. This generation remembered less of the horrors of the previous decade and the helplessness of the first days of the war. In addition, at this point, these people saw the real horrors of the Nazi occupation and therefore did not believe in the liberation of the Germans. With the strengthening of the German occupational regime and the victory of the Red Army, the number of those loyal to the Soviet government grew steadily and went far beyond the pre-war period.

The circumstances of the war years created the ideal conditions for the formation of a new Soviet identity. Millions of people of different nationalities were in the Red Army – they had to speak the same language, were cut off from the outside world, answered to their political officers who instilled in them a new Soviet consciousness and new values.

Difficult shared experiences, situations that were constantly bordering between life and death, the presence of a common enemy who repeatedly demonstrated their inhuman nature, and a belief in a joint mission created the best conditions for such a task. The army became a melting pot – representatives from various nations came out as a unified Soviet nation. And one can assert that it, at least partially, fulfilled its task. Today, many years after the fall of the Soviet Union, the war veterans remain principally the most consolidated and articulated pro-Soviet group in the post-Soviet society.

The "Great Victory" was a rehabilitation of Soviet power for the terrible crimes committed. Fear of Stalin, the executioner, turned into a sense of gratitude to the leader and protector. Outside the USSR, it contributed to the establishment of a more pro-Soviet sentiment in the world after the war, more than any of the Communist International's efforts put together.

The "Great Victory" served another important function for the Soviet leadership after Stalin – it legitimized its power, providing it with the required heroic aura. In fact, after Stalin's purges, no allies of Lenin were left – the people ordained during the October Revolution.

The myth of the "Great Victory" continued to live even after the fall of the USSR. In each former republic, and now independent state, the 9 May anniversary was regularly celebrated. The 60th anniversary of the war, which took place in Moscow in 2005, attested to this: for the Russian leadership this was more than just a tribute to tradition or a certain historical inertia. The "Great Victory" again became a key part in the new state ideology of the Kremlin.

Russia went to great diplomatic scandals to protect the “sacred memory of the victory”, mercilessly criticizing all attempts to revise the outdated Soviet concept of the war. They even prepared to adopt a special law that would punish anyone who tried to question the “Great Victory.” The force of the new law would apply to all post-Soviet countries, although how is not known.

The last point is very important – it shows that Russia is not just reviving old historical myths but they are actively trying to export them.

The resuscitation of the concept of the “Great Victory” is only one element in the new Kremlin policy – the essence of which is the restoration of the Russian influence in the former Soviet space. For this, it uses everything: energetic blackmail, the presence of the Russian-speaking population and even the possession of nuclear weapons. Not least in this arsenal is the so-called “common history”, a central point of which is the concept of the “Great Patriotic War” and the “Great Victory” and the Soviet myths about the war. Their extensive use in propaganda by means of film, television and literature, aims to retain the former Soviet nations within the orbit of Russian influence. The joint heroic past has become a platform for the creation (or maintaining) of a strong pro-Russian lobby in independent states.

Another mission of the “Great Victory” is to push into the shadows the great slaughter which ended in the USSR with the “Cold War” – forgetting about it, throwing it into the historical dustbin along with the “terrible years of the Yeltsin democracy.” That is an important task for a government which says that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe in history and draws its strength from the past of a “country, in which everyone counts.”

Therefore, the myths of the war are used not only as a humanitarian function – they are seen as an important tool for restoring this geopolitical influence.

There has been almost no problems with these myths in most post-Soviet states, with the exception of the Baltic States. In the Baltic States, Russian influence is essentially confined to a Russian media presence which demonizes and creates “terrible examples of their history” for Russia, after their entry into NATO and the EU.

Suddenly, the Kremlin began having problems with their implementation of Soviet/Russian propaganda of the World War in Ukraine. Especially after 2004, when Ukraine began to implement their own politics of memory which not just opposed but sometimes diametrically opposed those of Russia. Condemnation of the crimes of the communist past, the opening of archives of the

communist secret services in Ukraine have occurred almost simultaneously with the attempts of rehabilitating the Soviet past in Russia. Not surprisingly, this history became another arena for rivalry between the two countries, hotter still than their competition in the energy sector.

It is also not surprising that after the elections in 2010, the pro-Russian candidate Viktor Yanukovych undertook significant changes in Ukrainian national memory and perhaps this most clearly manifested itself in matters relating to the history of the Second World War.

Through the efforts of the Dmytro Tabachnyk, the Minister of Education, the term “Great Patriotic War” returned to the history books and there was an extraction of information about the Ukrainian liberation movement and its leaders. A law was passed on the usage of the so-called Victory Flag (in reality, the red Soviet flag) during 9 May celebrations which again appeared during military parades. Member of Parliament, Vadym Kolesnichenko, tried to borrow Russia’s historical laws which envisioned a consolidation of a Soviet view of the war. Some of them were even included in the notorious dictatorship package of laws on 16 January 2014.

The existence of Soviet myths about the war in Ukraine was extremely important for Russia because they became the main and last elements of Soviet identity for our citizens.

As events showed, after the fall of Yanukovych, Russian President Vladimir Putin drew on this island of Soviet identity, using it to sabotage Ukraine.

It is not the Russians or the Russian-speaking Ukrainians, (whom Putin supposedly protects), that are the basis for terrorism in eastern Ukraine or the annexation of the Crimea but rather the “Soviet people.” It is no accident that one of the key elements of their symbolism is the so-called “St. George’s ribbon” – the same Russian imperial (hence its name) and Soviet symbol linked to the concept of the “Great Patriotic War.”

Myths about the past war became weapons in the present war. That is why debunking them is important. Not only to understand what actually happened but to see the true face of one of the greatest tragedies in our history. This is important not only within the new humanitarian policy of the state but also as an element of our security policy.

Since the spring of 2014, a special state body, the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, introduced new commemorative practices for dates related to the Second World War.

Celebrating the anniversary of the end of the war is no longer a reason for militarist propaganda but rather an opportunity to remember all the victims of those terrible years. The new symbol of this memory has become the red poppy and a new date, 8 May, is now the Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation.

These changes were quickly and easily accepted by Ukrainian society because it occurred against the backdrop of current extreme experiences. The war helped many modern Ukrainians see and understand how many lies surrounded them about the war. They stopped believing the Soviet propaganda because modern Russia echoed it. But because of this, they want to know more about what happened in the past.

Ukrainians try to answer these questions by searching in books or articles and watching films. Historians are not ready to meet this rapidly growing demand because it requires something unusual for academic researchers – primarily an educational-popular format. Its peculiarity is in the fact that authors are very knowledgeable on this topic but cannot explain complex issues in clear language for those who do not understand it and do not hold a research degree in it.

The educational-popular format, designed for a wider audience, can dispel the myths about the Soviet war which still have a significant impact on public consciousness. The same can be said about the nature of this work which combines the efforts of a group of historians at the Institute of National Memory, the the LikBez. Historical Front, a public initiative, the Center for Research on the Liberation Movement and the Family Leisure Club Publishing.

Dear reader, the result of our collaboration is this book that you are holding in your hands. We hope that it will help you understand the main lesson of the events of 1939–1945: it should not be repeated again. This should be the truth, at the very least.

Volodymyr Viatrovych
Historian, Director of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance

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