

Beyond the Pale? Conceptions and Reflections in Contemporary Ukraine about the Division Galizien*

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While the quest for recognition of Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) soldiers as Second World War veterans continues to provoke disputes in Ukraine, the position of former members of the Waffen SS Division Galizien, formed in 1943, is even more difficult. Its members were portrayed in Soviet propaganda as traitors of the worst sort: not only had they joined the German armed forces directly, but they had made common cause with the SS, an organization guilty of some of the most heinous crimes against humanity. This paper reviews contemporary Ukrainian discussions pertaining to the war years to give an indication of the division's current standing in Ukraine and the extent to which it has been embraced within a revised conception of national history in post-Soviet Ukraine. As the title of this paper suggests, the Division Galizien remains, for many, tainted by its collaboration with the German occupation. This paper will examine post-Soviet perceptions of the division and assess whether that situation is likely to change.

Several authors outside Ukraine have produced English-language monographs on the topic, and interpretations differ as to whether the division was simply an effort to form a national army directed solely against the advancing Red Army, or whether it represented a more sinister form of collaboration.¹ The division's official name was 14. Waffen-

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¹ See, e.g., Wolf-Dietrich Heike, *The Ukrainian Division 'Galicia', 1943–45: A Memoir* (Toronto: Shevchenko Scientific Society, 1988); Taras Hunczak, *On the Horns of a Dilemma: The Story of the Ukrainian Division Halychyna* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2000); Michael O. Logusz, *Galicia Division: The Waffen-SS 14th Grenadier Division, 1943–1945* (Atglen, Pa.: Schiffer Publishing, 2000); and the very unsympathetic Sol Littman, *Pure Soldiers or Bloodthirsty Murderers? The Ukrainian 14th Waffen-SS Galicia Division* (Toronto: Black Rose Books, 2003).

Grenadierdivision der SS (galizische Nr. 1). It was renamed the 1st Ukrainian Division of the Ukrainian National Army (1. Ukrainische Division der Ukrainischen National-Armee) in March 1945. The division was formed as the Third Reich belatedly tried to solicit the military help of non-German nationalities (for example, Latvians, Estonians, Ukrainians and many others) after the defeat at the Battle of Stalingrad. The division's organizer was the Nazi governor of Galicia, Otto Wächter, who worked closely with the chairman of the Ukrainian Central Committee during the German occupation of Galicia, Volodymyr Kubijovyč, the latter seeking assurances that the unit would be used only against the Red Army. Though many thousands volunteered to join the division, its final contingent was around eighteen thousand troops, with three regiments of infantry, one of artillery, and one of training reserves. Many of its members, according to historians, were associated with the Melnyk faction of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN-M), which had been prepared to co-operate with the German occupiers even after the Bandera faction (OUN-R) turned hostile.² The term "*galizische*" (Galician) was used because the Germans wished to avoid direct use of the more inflammatory "Ukrainian" and to ensure tighter German control. Attached to the German 13th Army Corps, the division was encircled by Soviet forces near Brody in western Ukraine in the summer of 1944 and routed. It was later reformed and transferred to Slovakia, and in March 1945 the Germans declared the formation of a Ukrainian National Army under General Pavlo Shandruk, to which the division was attached. With the defeat of Germany and the loss of the war in Europe, a large number of division troops fled westward and surrendered to British army in Austria. The POWs spent almost two years in Italy and were eventually permitted to enter the U.K. Subsequently, many immigrated from Britain to North America.³ The division's members have not been found guilty of war crimes. Indeed, the Canadian government's Deschênes Commission investigated such allegations in 1985 and found no evidence to suggest that division members took part in atrocities, guarded camps, and the like.

In postwar Soviet Ukraine the division was portrayed in uniformly negative terms. Even with the liberalization of the Soviet press in the late 1980s, this image did not change in the mainstream media. One writer in *Pravda Ukrainy*, the long-standing newspaper of the Communist Party of

² See, e.g., John-Paul Himka, "A Central European Diaspora under the Shadow of World War II: The Galician Ukrainians in North America," *Austrian History Yearbook* 37 (2006): 19.

³ <<http://encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?AddButton=pages\D\1\ DivisionGalizien.htm>>

Ukraine, for example, expressed fury in May 1991 at news of the erection of a memorial in the village of Yaseniv, Brody raion, Lviv oblast, that included the names of the division members. The author maintained that the Germans had used the division as an instrument of terror against those who defied German rule, and he cited a chronicle alleging that the division had murdered Polish civilians in the vicinity of Ternopil. The author also claimed that archives revealed the story of a special commando unit from the division that killed 1,500 civilians in Lviv, shot Soviet POWs in Zolochiv, burned the settlement of Olesko, and caused the deaths of three hundred inhabitants. Additionally, he accused the division of rounding up people for slave labor in Germany. All the commanding positions in the division, this same article noted, were held by Germans, and SS chief Heinrich Himmler had expressly forbidden the use of the term “Ukraine” and its derivatives when creating the unit.⁴

Indeed, Ukrainians today appear divided in their views on the division, the motives behind its creation, and whether they were justified. In mid-June 1992 *Literaturna Ukraina* opened the debate by publishing an interview with a veteran of the division, Ivan Oleksyn, then president of the Ukrainian Fraternal Association in the United States and a man known at the time for providing aid to the victims of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. The interviewer cited earlier comments in the newspaper *Visti z Ukrainy* (Kyiv) from 1979–80, which had referred to Oleksyn as an “SS-ite” and a “Nazi stool pigeon.” He then added the following by way of introduction: “Today most of our people know what the UPA fought for. But an understanding of what led Ukrainians into regular military formations needs to be developed.” Oleksyn explained that when the war began in Galicia, some people developed the idea of creating the UPA, and others, the division. Both the OUN-M and OUN-R backed the UPA in order to mount a struggle against both enemies (Germany and the Soviet Union). Others believed that since Ukrainians would not receive assistance from other states, it would be impossible to fight on two fronts. They favored forming a military unit within the German army—there was no alternative, Oleksyn emphasized.⁵

As the interview continued, Oleksyn was asked what the SS denotes in *Waffen SS Division Galizien*. He responded that it did not have that name, but was the First Ukrainian Division of the Ukrainian National Army (in fact, it took that name only in 1945) and that Ukrainian troops

⁴ K. Doroshenko, “Pamiatnik fashistskim prikhvostniam,” *Pravda Ukrainy*, 25 May 1991.

⁵ Yurii Pryhornytsky, “Ivan Oleksyn: Use zhyttia borovsia za Ukrainu. Dyviziia ‘Halychyna’. Yak tse bulo,” *Literaturna Ukraina*, 18 June 1992.

did not wear SS insignia on their uniforms. Its true goal, in contrast to that depicted in Communist propaganda, was the struggle for Ukraine, to free it from the “Bolshevik yoke.” According to Oleksyn, each member considered himself an heir of the mantle of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen of the First World War and had no wish to assist the Germans. Many division troops died at Brody because the Germans retreated after the first engagement, leaving the division to face the Red Army. Toward the end of the war, the division found itself in Austria, close to the border with Yugoslavia. But no one believed it was really the end of the war. Everyone “was convinced” that the United States would refuse to countenance the Soviet takeover of Central and Eastern Europe. After the 1945 Yalta summit, however, people recognized that a new situation had arisen. Subsequently the remaining division members were interned at the large British POW camp in Rimini, Italy.

As for the UPA, Oleksyn said that “we supported it” and that many division members eventually found their way into its ranks. When asked about his and his associates’ attitude to Hitler, Oleksyn responded that they did not believe that Hitler could win the war. If matters had developed differently, then the division might have turned its arms against the Germans, except the latter had convinced the Ukrainians that they supported the idea of the liberation of Ukraine. Later, “when we realized that Hitler had other plans,” many members went into the UPA and fought on two fronts.⁶ The interview clearly stretched the bounds of credibility at times. One wonders how in the summer of 1943 it was possible to believe that Hitler and the Germans supported the concept of Ukrainian independence. By this time both leaders of the OUN were confined in Sachsenhausen, the abortive declaration of independence in June 1941 was becoming a distant memory, and the concept of new collaboration was clearly induced by the changing circumstances of the war, that is, with the Germans retreating and the Red Army advancing rapidly.

An article in the same issue of *Literaturna Ukraina* by another veteran of the division, Vasyl (Wasyl) Veryha, a Canadian citizen, former editor of *Visti kombatanta* (Veterans’ News, 1965–74), and author of several books on the history of the Division Galizien, continued the theme. The “insurgency of the ‘Halychyna rifle division’” in the summer of 1943, when Ukraine was completely occupied by German forces and “Red Moscow imperialism,” Veryha contended, should be regarded as a continuation of the Ukrainian people’s struggle for sovereignty. Young Ukrainians, especially in the western territories, had been educated in the traditions and legends of the “War of Liberation” of 1918–21. In 1941,

⁶ Ibid.

when war broke out again, “all Ukrainians,” he claimed, sympathized with the Germans. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians in the Red Army crossed the border to the German side, believing that the time had come to fight for Ukrainian independence. However, by the end of 1941, according to Veryha, it became clear that an independent and sovereign Ukrainian state was not part of German plans. Ukraine had been turned into an exploited colony under the guise of the Reichskommissariat Ukraine, which was administered from the town of Rivne. On 2 February 1943, following the German defeat at Stalingrad, Ukrainians again faced the question “What is to be done?” In the following month the German administration of Galicia took account of the fact that Ukrainians were prepared to take up arms in the struggle with Bolshevism and turned to the Ukrainian Central Committee under Kubijovyč. The Germans proposed to create a Ukrainian military formation, one division in size. While it is true, noted the author, that the Germans made the proposal for their own political ends, leading Ukrainian circles accepted it for their own ideological reasons. A partisan struggle could not continue without a regular army, and Ukrainian leaders—especially veterans of the struggle of 1918–20—maintained that Germany would either have to conclude a peace that allowed it to keep some of the regions it had occupied, or to collapse, leaving behind a chaotic situation in Eastern Europe.⁷

How did Ukrainians respond to this challenge? As Veryha explained, the division was meant to serve as a Ukrainian people’s army to restore and strengthen an independent Ukrainian state, on the model of the Sich Rifleman during and after the First World War. At the very least, it was evident that Ukrainians required an armed formation to protect people and property from the Germans and before the possible chaos of a revolution. A request was made to the Germans that the division be used on the Eastern Front against the Bolsheviks, and never against the Western Allies. It was clear, he writes, that the division was not part of the structure of a German New Europe, but operated only in the interests of the Ukrainian people. Ukrainian military leaders, for example, had approved contacts with the Western Allies. The division was met with hostility by the Soviet partisans under Sydir Kovpak and by the Polish Government-in-Exile. However, according to Veryha, young Ukrainians supported it because it was Ukrainian, not because it was part of the SS. Again the question was asked: why the SS designation? Veryha responded that the division was given this name “against the will of the Ukrainians.” But it was only a formal title and had no links with Nazi ideology or implications of subordination to the Nazi Party. Officially its title was Waffen SS

⁷ Vasyl Veryha, “Im prysvichuvala velyka ideia ... Dyviziia ‘Halychyna’, iak tse bulo,” *Literaturna Ukraina*, 25 June 1992.

Grenadierdivision rather than SS Grenadierdivision, as was traditional for German units. Its soldiers did not have the right to wear the SS emblem, Veryha stressed, and bore the blue-and-yellow colors of Ukraine.⁸

Six months later, on the fiftieth anniversary of the division's formation, *Literaturna Ukraina* returned to the subject with an article by Yurii Pryhornytsky, a Ukrainian journalist and author from Kyiv. Until recently, he observed, little had been known in Ukraine about the division. The association with the Germans was enough to frighten some people, eliciting feelings of righteous anger. But "sooner or later reality will become more ambivalent," he predicted. The division was never part of the German Army, but the question remained whether Ukrainians had taken up arms on behalf of an alien occupier who wished to enslave their country. On the basis of materials published in the West, Pryhornytsky concluded, that question could be answered in the negative. He cited a 1990 brochure published in Toronto and New York that explained the context in which the division was created—the brutal massacre of political prisoners by the Soviets as they retreated in the wake of the German invasion in the summer of 1941; and fear of the ruinous nature of Russian Communism and the harm it could inflict on Ukraine.⁹ Thus, while German rule had brought few benefits, some Ukrainians had not wanted to miss an opportunity to create a strong, modern, and well-trained Ukrainian military unit within the German armed forces that could constitute the core of a future Ukrainian army. Pryhornytsky further argued, with reference to the book by Wolf-Dietrich Heike,¹⁰ that the training was also of benefit to the UPA, which used division soldiers as military instructors. Various commissions subsequently investigated the division for potential war crimes, he noted, but none were uncovered. They included the Porter Commission (1947) in the United Kingdom, which resolved that in spirit Ukrainians were anti-fascists. Indeed, the veterans of the First Ukrainian Division of the Ukrainian National Army were planning to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of its formation in Toronto, reported Pryhornytsky. While there were people in Ukraine who remained hostile to the veterans, a majority, Pryhornytsky believed, would understand the quiet, restrained remembrance of the anniversary.¹¹

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The reference is not cited in full, but it is most likely *Ukrainska dyviziia "Halychyna": Materiialy do istorii* (Toronto: Brotherhood of Soldiers of the First Division of the Ukrainian National Army, 1990).

¹⁰ Heike, *The Ukrainian Division 'Galicia'*.

¹¹ Yurii Pryhornytsky, "Sheho ikh velo u dyviziuu?" *Literaturna Ukraina*, 14 January 1993.

Other authors were even more forthright in their defense of the division. In a 1993 article in the Lviv newspaper *Za vilnu Ukrainu*, one author insisted that the division was not collaborationist, but fought for Ukrainian independence. Unlike German SS units, the division did not commit war crimes—Soviet propaganda in this regard was nothing more than the fabrications of a hostile power trying to discredit any force that challenged its authority. Why did they join the Germans? This author concluded that they had no choice. The clash of two imperial powers demanded armed resistance, and “the UPA could not take everyone.” The opportunity was therefore taken to train cadres. The division received the blessing of the respected metropolitan of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Andrei Sheptytsky,¹² and the author tells of one division soldier who saved thirty peasants from German reprisals.¹³ Another author writing in the same newspaper later that year demanded the rehabilitation of the division: it was a combat unit, its SS affiliation was a formality, and it did not commit war crimes. Many people joined for patriotic reasons, this author asserted.¹⁴

Not everyone agreed with this assessment. In Kyiv there was a campaign to ban celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the division. One author, Danylo Kulniak, writing in the nationally distributed newspaper *Ukraina moloda*, deliberately distinguished between the original 14. Waffen-Grenadierdivision der SS (galizische Nr. 1)—which he thought had “compromised itself” as a tool in the hands of the Germans—and the reformed First Ukrainian Division of the Ukrainian National Army. The later formation, in his view, was more worthy of Ukrainian national aspirations. As for the Waffen SS division, it had been organized by the “collaborationist” Ukrainian Central Committee in Cracow. German attempts to recruit members, this author alleged, had fallen flat, and young people had to be drafted by force. There was a high rate of desertion and a lack of commitment to serve under the German banner. Explaining why there had been so many volunteers, however, the author adds that a majority of recruits *did* believe that they were fighting for the national interests of Ukraine.¹⁵

¹² Metropolitan Sheptytsky had been opposed to the OUN for many years. His attitude changed in 1938, when a Soviet agent assassinated the head of the organization. Evhen Konovalts, and Andrii Melnyk, the head of the Orly Catholic Association of Ukrainian Youth, was elected to replace him. See, e.g., Kost Bondarenko, “Istoriia, kotoruiu ne znaem ili ne khotim znat?” *Zerkalo nedeli/Dzerkalo tyzhnia*, 29 March–5 April 2002.

¹³ Oksana Snovydyovych-Maziar, “To chy byly vony kolaborantamy?” *Za vilnu Ukrainu*, 8 June 1993.

¹⁴ Yaroslav Yakymovych, “Z zhertovnym stiahom ikh zvytiah,” *Za vilnu Ukrainu*, 21 August 1993.

¹⁵ Danylo Kulniak, “Esesivska chy ‘Persha ukrainska’? Z pryvodu odnogo iuvileiu,”

What should these young people have done? In Kulniak's view, the only true act of patriotism would have been to join the UPA to fight both the Soviets and the Germans. In this way the author denounced both the Ukrainian Central Committee and the members of the OUN-M who collaborated with the Germans, thereby giving impetus to Soviet propaganda and the unfortunate phrase "Ukrainian-German nationalists." (The many examples of collaboration by the OUN-R were conveniently omitted from his critique.) The author then quoted several insurgents who criticized the formation of the division. However, it was now time, Kulniak declared, for reconciliation between the remaining division veterans and those Ukrainians who had advanced from the east but failed to bring democracy, statehood, and well-being.¹⁶

The attitude of this author might be described as reluctant acceptance of people who went astray. It was a far cry from the position taken by *Za vilnu Ukrainu*, which wrote unabashedly about the heroism of division fighters. In 1994, for example, the newspaper published Ihor Fedyk's vivid account of the Battle of Brody, portraying it as a time when the division's morale was especially high as it launched its defense of the motherland against the "Bolshevik onslaught" (no doubt including Ukrainians who also thought they were freeing their motherland!). During the first hours of its deployment at the front, the division was subject to constant air strikes. On 13 July 1944, as Fedyk explained, the Red Army began its offensive. Between 15 and 18 July, despite heroic resistance, the division was encircled, together with the 13th German Army Corps, near several villages. In each village the conflict continued, and many of the soldiers who fell into Soviet captivity were executed. About 7,000 division soldiers died, and almost 3,000 of those who could not break out of encirclement joined the UPA. A further 3,000 did break out and retreated with the Germans, forming the Second Ukrainian Division on Austrian territory. Fifty years earlier, Fedyk stressed, Ukrainian soldiers had died fighting for the freedom of Ukraine, and their sacrifice was not in vain. "The echo of their valor, enshrined in our memory for fifty years," could now be heard in independent Ukraine.¹⁷

In a similar vein another Ukrainian-Canadian veteran of the division, Vasyl Sirsky, asserted that patriotism could not be measured by the uniform a soldier wore. The volunteers for the division, he argued, joined up under German auspices because they were conscious of the need to fight for Ukraine. He expressed resentment at the way the UPA was constantly

Ukraina moloda, 3 September 1993.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ihor Fedyk, "Vystoialy; prorvalysia!" *Za vilnu Ukrainu*, 14 July 1994.

glorified at the expense of the division's soldiers. Politicians and professors who seemed "allergic" to the German army, he claimed, should remember that such renowned generals as Myron Tarnavsky and Roman Shukhevych had begun their military careers in German-sponsored units (the former in the Austrian army, the latter in the Nachtigall Battalion). Yet UPA veterans, Sirsky complained, evaluated the division negatively and derided the commemoration of its "martyrs." The seven thousand lives lost at Brody, he believed, had saved the lives of thousands of Ukrainians who managed to flee to the West. This compared favorably with the millions of casualties caused by the actions of the UPA, including the deportations of family members to Siberia. In the 1940s older and more experienced people had doubts about the creation of the UPA, regarding it as tantamount to national suicide. Time had shown that they were correct.¹⁸ This angry diatribe, which took the form of a review of a book about the division by the Ukrainian-American professor Taras Hunczak, thus deepened the debate. The author was not simply asking that division veterans be recognized alongside the UPA as genuine Ukrainian heroes, but rather insisting on the replacement of the latter with the former as more deserving.

These comments echoed an anonymous article that had appeared in *Za vilnu Ukrainu* a year earlier, in August 1993. Explaining the difficulty of organizing Ukrainian military formations in the Distrikt Galizien, the article focused on Volodymyr Kubijovyč, head of the Ukrainian Central Committee and a key figure in the formation of the division. When approached by Governor Wächter, the Ukrainian side, led by Kubijovyč, issued a list of demands: that the division must be used only against the Bolsheviks; that its officers must be Ukrainian; that the name and insignia should be Ukrainian; that the division had to be subordinate to the Wehrmacht; and that its formation had to constitute the first step toward the creation of a Ukrainian national army. However, as the anonymous author noted, the Germans broke this agreement and subordinated the division to the SS. The division's members, the author claimed, were hostile to Nazi ideology, but they faced the prospect of slave labor in Germany if they refused to join.¹⁹

In another article in *Za vilnu Ukrainu*, Mykhailo Yatsura described Kubijovyč as a Ukrainian patriot who was conscious of German goals and willing to promote a Ukrainian agenda. He was also aware of the expansion of the UPA insurgency in Volhynia and therefore initially cautious about accepting Wächter's proposal to form a Ukrainian military

¹⁸ Vasyl Sirsky, "Knyha, iaka vymahaie dyskusii," *Za vilnu Ukrainu*, 29 July 1994.

¹⁹ "Ishly u bii za svoiu peremohu," *Za vilnu Ukrainu*, 7 August 1993.

unit under German auspices. According to Yatsura, Kubijovyč preferred to retain some control over the division's formation and therefore presented his set of demands, which the Germans largely ignored. In Yatsura's account, there was no question that the initiative came from the Germans and that they would probably have attempted to form a Ukrainian division even without Ukrainian assistance.²⁰

In recent years there have been further attempts to shed more light on the division and explain the motives of its creators with greater clarity and sympathy. In 2001, Ivan Haivanovych published an article, "Ne nazyvaite 'SS'!" (Don't Call It the 'SS'!) in *Ukraina moloda*, in which he decried the lack of objectivity on this subject in contemporary Ukraine. While the legacy of the Ukrainian People's Republic of 1918 has been publicly acknowledged and there has been a growing understanding of the "OUN-UPA,"²¹ the division remains falsely accused of collaboration. Haivanovych argued in favor of situating the division in its proper historical context, stating that the key question is why Galicians volunteered en masse to join it. He claimed that by 18 June 1943 there were eighty-four thousand volunteers. In his view this was a reaction to the repressive policies of the Soviet regime, including mass deportations and the NKVD murders of 1941. Nazi propaganda had some appeal to the population, but there was disappointment over the German failure to recognize an independent Ukraine on 30 June 1941. So why did Ukrainians continue to turn to the Germans? The answer, according to Haivanovych, was that after the Battle of Stalingrad joining up with the Germans was the lesser evil. The article included an interview conducted in 1993 with a former division recruit, Roman Debrytsky, who asserted that the only alternative was forced labor in Germany (an argument discussed earlier). Debrytsky described the war as a tragic period in which Ukrainians had to fight one another. He and his comrades fought with SS weapons, but, he insisted, they remained patriots.²²

In a follow-up article in *Ukraina moloda* in February 2001, Ivan Krainii claimed that most allegations regarding war crimes the division committed derived from Polish memoir literature. He argued that these sources were unconvincing and called for an unemotional examination of

²⁰ Mykhailo Yatsura, "Professor Kubiiovych i Dyviziia 'Halychyna,'" *Za vilnu Ukrainu*, 30 September 1995.

²¹ The Kyiv historian and journalist Kost Bondarenko has pointedly noted that the OUN and the UPA were two distinct organizations with very different structures, strategies, and leaders, and that the conflation of the two is unjustified. See Bondarenko, "Istoriia, kotoruiu ne znaem."

²² Ivan Haivanovych, "Ne nazyvaite 'SS'!" *Ukraina moloda*, 30 January 2001.

the division's legacy. Krainii advanced the case for rehabilitating the division, citing the example of the Baltic countries, where four similar Waffen SS divisions were organized. The public perceived division members as traitors and collaborators largely as a result of Soviet propaganda. Only in 1990 did some émigré memoirs about the division arrive in Ukraine. The most ominous problem, according to Krainii, centered on the two letters "SS." However, he wrote, the division belonged to the Waffen SS and was intended as a battle unit, and members of the Ukrainian Central Committee had insisted that it be a Ukrainian formation. The author interviewed a former member, Volodymyr Malkosh, who revealed he had joined the division because of his strong anti-Soviet sentiments and nationalism. As Malkosh tells it, he had two roads open to him—joining the UPA or the division. He chose the latter because he felt it would be the basis of a future Ukrainian national army and was fearful "warlike neighbors" would lay claim to Ukraine's territory. After the division's defeat at Brody, Malkosh remained in the area of Soviet occupation. He entered the Lviv Polytechnical Institute in 1946 but was arrested when the authorities noticed the Waffen SS ID number tattooed on his arm; he was sentenced to fifteen years in the Gulag.²³ Krainii's account differed notably in the way he described the choices facing Ukrainians in 1943. Whereas other authors had suggested the alternative to joining the division was forced labor in Germany, Krainii maintained the choice was between joining the division or the UPA. Other authors have argued that joining the division enhanced opportunities for ending up in the ranks of the insurgents. Evident here is a political division among rank-and-file nationalists whose long-term goal was an independent Ukrainian state. In other words, those who joined the division were influenced by political leaders with very different views from those of the OUN-R.

This latter interpretation also found favour with Kost Bondarenko, a Ukrainian journalist, historian, and student of Ukrainian nationalism. In a wide-ranging article titled "Istoriia, kotorui ne znaem ili ne khotim znat?"/"Istoriia, iakoi ne znaiemo. Chy ne khochemo znaty?" (The History We Do Not Know. Or Would Prefer Not To Know?), published in *Zerkalo nedeli/Dzerkalo tyzhnia* in 2002, he analyzed the formation of the division in the context of the ongoing rivalry between the OUN-M and the OUN-R. The origins of the division dated from 1941, when the Germans announced the goal of establishing the SS Division Sumy, to be recruited from Ukrainian POWs, with further efforts in the Carpathians

²³ Ivan Krainii, "Za shcho voiuvala diviziia 'Halychyna'?" *Ukraina moloda*, 7 February 2001.

in 1944.²⁴ Bondarenko claimed that when German leaders made the decision to create the Division Galizien, they were of the opinion that Galicians and Ukrainians represented two racially different nations. They felt that the former were “practically Aryans,” and this myth was the basis on which the division was formed. (Presumably, however, if the Germans intended to establish a division made up of Ukrainian POWs, then the Aryan issue might have been a secondary factor.)

Until the summer of 1944, Bondarenko noted, the UPA was not active in Galicia, where a limited form of Ukrainian administration (the Ukrainian Central Committee) continued to exist. (At the time, UPA military operations were centered in Volhynia and Polisia.) The OUN-M considered that the division afforded soldiers of the future national army a good opportunity to gain skills and experience. The OUN’s Bandera faction, on the other hand, resented its creation. The division’s top commanders were German, while the troops wore German uniforms with the coat of arms of Galicia (a yellow heraldic lion) and blue-and-yellow insignia. The troops took an oath of allegiance to Ukraine, which, Bondarenko believed, later saved the division’s soldiers and officers from retribution: they were found not guilty of war crimes after the conflict. In 1944 the division was almost completely destroyed, and its remnants were transferred to southern Poland and subsequently to Slovakia and Yugoslavia, where they were merged with the Volhynian Self-Defense Legion in the spring of 1945. In April of that year the division’s soldiers surrendered to the British in Austria. They were not subject to repatriation because the Western Allies, unlike the the USSR, considered them Polish subjects.

Conclusion

At the time of writing, there have been no serious attempts to revise thinking on the question of the Division Galizien in Ukraine. It remains the most controversial of all the ethnic formations of the interwar and war years, not least because historians, as well as members of the OUN and UPA, insist that the recruits had an alternative. The division was undoubtedly part of the German war effort, whether or not members joined with other motives. The SS appellation would already have had sinister connotations among the population. It seems fair to say that the situation for the young recruits was extremely problematic, with none of the possible options offering any prospect of easy existence. Before long a new option—joining the Red Army—would also become a possibility. On the other hand, the severe criticism emanating from some veterans of the

²⁴ Bondarenko, “Istoriia, kotoruiu ne znaem.”

UPA also seems unjustified, since UPA insurgents were also prepared eventually to reach a new *modus vivendi* with the retreating Germans as they faced the advancing Red Army.²⁵ However, it could be argued that the UPA did not operate as a military formation on the German side and always maintained its independence.

Thus the Division Galizien represented more of a last hope of cooperation with the Germans on the part of the Ukrainian Central Committee and the OUN-M, both of which had favored collaboration and continued to work with the Germans even after the nature of the Nazi occupation had become evident.²⁶ Undoubtedly, life for Ukrainians under the Generalgouvernement was much more tolerable than in the Reichskommissariat Ukraine. The question, though, is whether such relative moderation could justify the establishment of a Ukrainian military formation on the German side and on the Germans' initiative, particularly at such a late stage of the war, when it appeared to most observers that a German defeat was simply a question of time. It represented poor judgment and naiveté on the part of Kubijovyč and others, and after more than sixty years the motives of the Ukrainian Central Committee, in particular, seem just as inexplicable as they did at the time. No doubt the debates will continue, but for the present, independent Ukraine, which has recognized a genocidal famine in 1932–33 but failed to reach a consensus on the status of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, is unlikely to embrace the Waffen SS Division Galizien.

²⁵ According to a former UPA soldier, Professor Emeritus Peter J. Potichnyj, commenting during the discussion at the Symposium on Ukraine in World War II on 29 November 2006 (cf. n. * above), this decision represented a logical choice since the Germans were clearly retreating from Ukrainian territory, whereas the Red Army was regarded as the future and more dangerous occupying power.

²⁶ On this issue, see, e.g., John-Paul Himka, "Krakivski visti and the Jews," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 21, nos. 1–2 (summer–winter 1996): 81–96.

National Identity: Subcarpathian Rus', 1848–1948 (1978), *Galicia: A Historical Survey and Bibliographic Guide* (1983), *Ukraine: A Historical Atlas* (1985), *A History of Ukraine* (1996, revised ed. forthcoming 2010), *Historical Atlas of Central Europe* (2002), *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture* (co-editor, 2002), *The Roots of Ukrainian Nationalism: Galicia as Ukraine's Piedmont* (2002), and *Ukraine: An Illustrated History* (2007).

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