

John-Paul HIMKA

**THE ORGANIZATION OF UKRAINIAN NATIONALISTS
AND THE UKRAINIAN INSURGENT ARMY:
UNWELCOME ELEMENTS OF AN IDENTITY
PROJECT**

Introduction

What follows below are four polemical texts that aim to repudiate the legacy of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and of its armed force, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). They were motivated by the, unfortunately largely successful, campaign of former president Viktor Yushchenko in Ukraine and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) in the North American diaspora to put the glorification of these radical right nationalists at the very center of the Ukrainian national identity project.¹

¹ On the most recent Remembrance Day in Canada (November 11, 2010), the UCC issued a statement containing this passage: “As Ukrainian Canadians we also remember and pay tribute to the millions of men and women who perished fighting for the freedom of their ancestral Ukrainian homeland. The men and women of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen, the 1st Ukrainian Division of the Ukrainian National Army, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists.” The Ukrainian Sich Riflemen fought for an independent Ukraine after World War I, and the 1st Ukrainian Division was a Waffen-SS unit in World War II.

It is my conviction that building an identity around these organizations, with their heavy history of war crimes and ethnic cleansing, is misguided, and in the texts below I attempt to explain why.

The first two texts engaged with a colleague of mine at the University of Alberta, Zenon Kohut, director of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies and a prominent historian of Ukraine in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The debate had begun in a local newspaper, the *Edmonton Journal*, but could not be continued there. I felt that the need to protest was urgent, especially now that a leading figure in Ukrainian studies had leapt to the defense of OUN-UPA. I decided to write an open letter, which I circulated to colleagues in Ukrainian, East European, and Holocaust studies. This produced a reply from Kohut, and a final response from me. The texts circulated far and wide among scholars in the several fields on which they impinged. They also circulated in the Ukrainian community, and one angry Ukrainian donor to the University of Alberta wrote to my dean to express displeasure about my texts.² The debate over the legacy of OUN soon drew in many other participants. Their texts, as well as Kohut's and my original texts, were assembled by Dominique Arel and circulated on his electronic Ukraine List.³ Tarik Cyril Amar, then of the Center for Urban History in Lviv, followed the debate and suggested that it be translated into Ukrainian. At his suggestion, I wrote to the editor of *Ukraina Moderna*, the historian Andrii Portnov, inquiring whether his journal would be interesting in publishing the texts in Ukrainian. Portnov wrote back: "Unfortunately, it seems that 'Ukrainian-based' and Ukrainian-language historians are not really interested in the issue." Nonetheless, Amar, Yaroslav Hrytsak, and Ihor Balynsky decided to put together a Ukrainian-language anthology of the debate over OUN and the leader of its most important faction, Stepan Bandera.⁴ Before that volume came out, Kyiv's *Krytyka* had published Kohut's and my texts in a different Ukrainian translation.⁵ A Russian translation has also appeared.⁶

The third text is a response to an attack on my scholarship by Askold Lozynskyj, immediate past president of the World Congress of Ukrainians.

² This was the Petro Jacyk Educational Foundation.

³ The Ukraine List (UKL). 2010. No. 441. February 16.

⁴ *Strasti za Banderou: staty ta essey / Pid red. Ya. Grytsaka, T. S. Amar, I. Balyns'kogo*. Kyiv, 2010. I have only seen the page proofs.

⁵ *Krytyka*. 2010. March-April. Pp. 10-12, also: http://krytyka.com/cms/front_content.php?idart=208.

⁶ *Zhurnal rossiiskikh i vostochnoevropeiskikh istoricheskikh issledovani*. 2010. No. 2-3. July-December. Pp. 128-133.

The main thrust of his argument was that OUN had nothing to do with the persecution of the Jews during the Holocaust, but the Jews may have deserved what they received because of their role in communist crimes. Since I had received a fellowship at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Lozynskyj portrayed me as being in the pay of the Jews, charged with producing “demons” for them. The Ukrainian community did not seem bothered by the anti-Semitic tone of Lozynskyj’s article; indeed, it was widely circulated in various diaspora Ukrainian electronic lists after it appeared on February 16 in the ex-pat newspaper *Kyiv Post*.⁷ Later Lozynskyj would publish another article in *Kyiv Post* arguing that newspapers in Canada that paid attention to my critiques were controlled by Jews.⁸ I used the occasion of the response to Lozynskyj to do two things: to present some of the evidence for OUN-UPA participation in the Holocaust and to suggest identity possibilities other than one deriving from the radical nationalist heritage. I sent my reply to *Kyiv Post* on February 16. It was eventually published there on September 20.⁹ (David Marples’s defense of my reputation was only published November 21.)¹⁰ In the meantime, Dominique Arel had circulated my text in his Ukraine List,¹¹ and *Krytyka* published it in Ukrainian translation.¹² In the version published below, I corrected two inadvertent errors that had crept into the original text.

The final text appeared in *Krytyka*¹³ in Ukrainian translation and has never been published in English previously. Here I replied to Portnov, who now himself had joined the debate over the heritage of Bandera and

⁷ Askold S. Lozynskyj. *Rewriting History: An Evidentiary Perspective* // *Kyiv Post*. 2010. February 16 http://www.kyivpost.com/news/opinion/op_ed/detail/59650/ (accessed 7 October 2010).

⁸ Askold S. Lozynskyj. *How Insensitive Bigots Continue to Play Ukrainians and Jews against Each Other* // *Kyiv Post*. 2010. November 8 http://www.kyivpost.com/news/opinion/op_ed/detail/89252/ (accessed December 2, 2010). See also Peter O’Neill. *My Role in a Dark Conspiracy. Letter from Paris*. Posted November 10, 2010, <http://communities.canada.com/shareit/blogs/letterfromparis/default.aspx> (accessed December 2, 2010).

⁹ *Kyiv Post*. 2010. September 20 http://www.kyivpost.com/news/opinion/op_ed/detail/83019/ (accessed December 2, 2010).

¹⁰ David R. Marples. *Let’s Put Civility Back into Historical Debates* // *Kyiv Post*. 2010. November 21 http://www.kyivpost.com/news/opinion/op_ed/detail/90781/ (accessed December 2, 2010).

¹¹ The Ukraine List (UKL). 2010. No. 442. Item 4 (March 15, 2010).

¹² *Krytyka*. 2010. July-August.

¹³ *Ibid.*

OUN,¹⁴ as well as to Volodymyr Kulyk.¹⁵ After the appearance, Portnov wrote privately to me to say that I had misinterpreted his position. I will accept his view that I misread him. As in all these texts, however, I was less interested in particular opponents than in particular ideas.

1.

Should Ukrainian Studies Defend the Heritage of OUN-UPA?

I am moved to write this because of disputes that have erupted in Edmonton, where I live, over the heritage of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and its armed forces (UPA). A colleague, David Marples, wrote an op-ed piece in the *Edmonton Journal* responding to Viktor Yushchenko's heroization of Stepan Bandera and OUN-UPA as he left office in crushing defeat. Dr. Marples explained why this was controversial and why the Canadian government should not endorse it, as the Ukrainian Canadian Congress has called upon the government to do.

Marples's article provoked letters to the *Journal* from pro-OUN elements in and outside of our community. One letter also came from Zenon Kohut, who signed himself as director of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Alberta (<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/news/Ukrainian+nationalism/2544645/story.html>).

There are a number of problems with Zenon's letter, but here I will focus only on two that speak to the responsibility of intellectuals and scholars to their communities and to the public at large.

The first is the issue of the OUN's fascism. Dr. Kohut wrote that Dr. Marples's characterization of OUN as "a typically fascist movement" is "not correct." "It was," he writes, "a national liberation movement whose ideology may have been influenced by fascism, but it was characterized as 'integral nationalist' by John A. Armstrong, whose study, *Ukrainian Nationalism* remains the best on the subject."

This deliberate minimization of the fascism in OUN's legacy is misleading, especially when advanced in the context of whether this is a legacy we should be embracing or not.

¹⁴ Andrii Portnov. Kontekstualizatsiia Stepana Bandery // Krytyka. 2010. March-April http://krytyka.com/cms/upload/Okremi_statti/2010/2010-03-04/14-2010_3-4.pdf (accessed December 2, 2010).

¹⁵ Volodymyr Kulyk. Neunyknyni Bandera // Krytyka. 2010. March-April http://krytyka.com/cms/upload/Okremi_statti/2010/2010-03-04/13-14-2010_3-4.pdf (accessed December 2, 2010).

OUN was indeed a typical fascist organization as shown by many of its features: its leader principle (*Führerprinzip*), its aspiration to ban all other political parties and movements, its fascist-style slogan (*Slava Ukraini! Heroiam slava!*), its red and black flag, its raised-arm salute, its xenophobia and anti-Semitism, its cult of violence, and its admiration of Hitler, Mussolini, and other leaders of fascist Europe. What's not fascist here?

A graduate student in my department, Grzegorz Rossolinski-Liebe, has found in the archives in Kyiv letters that Yaroslav Stetsko wrote on July 3, 1941, to Mussolini, Pavelić, Franco, and Hitler, introducing himself as part of the New Europe. Numerous documents in unimpeachable collections link OUN with the Hitlerites in June and July 1941.

Does the fact that OUN was also a national liberation movement make it not fascist? The Ustashe was also a national liberation movement – was it too not fascist? The Viet Cong was a national liberation movement – was it therefore not communist? What kind of logic is being used here? More peculiar logic: Dr. Kohut attempts to exculpate Bandera for responsibility for the 1941 pogroms by pointing out he was not even in Western Ukraine when they happened. Amazing. That kind of logic would also get Stalin off the hook for the Ukrainian famine.

Dr. Kohut defers to the authority of John A. Armstrong, who called OUN an integral nationalist movement. Armstrong wrote his book long before the archives were open and before the information revolution. He also based his study primarily on interviews with the leaders of OUN themselves. Is it too much to suspect that their interviews might have been self-serving? Armstrong admired the OUN leaders, as he admitted in his reminiscences of them published later. Armstrong was also very much a product of his time, which was the Cold War. The mood then was to downplay the crimes of all anti-Soviet forces. He never interviewed the victims of OUN-UPA, nor did he examine Polish-language sources.

In the mid-1980s the Solidarity underground in Poland wanted to publish texts about Ukrainian nationalism and requested through an intermediary, the late Janusz Radziejowski, that I convey to them copies of Armstrong's book as well as Alex Motyl's *Turn to the Right*.¹⁶ After reading them in Polish translation, Janusz wrote to me in 1988 that for all the scholarly value of these books, he was very disappointed that they took no cognizance of the tremendous tragedy of the Jews. I was incensed and wrote back to Janusz

¹⁶ Alexander Motyl. *The Turn to the Right: The Ideological Origins and Development of Ukrainian Nationalism, 1919-1929*. Boulder, 1980.

that UPA had nothing to do with the Holocaust. His responses got me thinking, however, and I slowly embarked on the path of research that has led me now to attempt to settle the question of OUN-UPA involvement in the Holocaust. I have only been horrified by what I have discovered.

So that is the first thing: OUN was fascist. True, after Stalingrad and after Kursk, OUN began to distance itself from fascism, particularly at its Third Extraordinary Grand Assembly in August 1943. (Bandera himself, however, remained true to the old ideology to the end.) OUN-UPA's words changed, but its practice remained fascist. July and August 1943 were the months of UPA's most intense murder of Poles in Volhynia, and in the following winter UPA and OUN security units systematically murdered Jewish survivors.

The second point in Dr. Kohut's letter that deserves discussion is his conclusion: "The history of the Ukrainian nationalist movement in the Second World War is not without its dark pages, but we have to be careful about our allegations or inferences, especially as they may encourage the stereotyping of entire ethnic groups."

My basic issue is this: Which creates more of a stereotype – isolating and identifying the Ukrainian political movement which is responsible for the image of Ukrainians as fascist murderers or, in the name of Ukrainian studies, attempting to defend that movement with totally threadbare arguments? Or put another way: who discredits Ukraine – mass murderers of Poles, Jews, and others or those who condemn them and their deeds? I would think this is what is commonly called a no-brainer, but obviously it is not, so I will elaborate.

In late June and July 1941 OUN militias and "Sich" organizations went on a rampage in Galicia, Northern Bukovina, and Volhynia, killing Jews primarily, but also some Poles and communists. Sometimes these militias did not do the killing themselves, but rounded up the victims for Germans and Romanians to execute by firing squad. These murders only occurred in territories that had two things in common: they were invaded in June–July 1941 and OUN was active there. That OUN militias were the culprits are proven by all manner of evidence – German reports, Jewish survivors' testimonies, photographs and films, and postwar trials of former policemen in German service. To disprove the weight of this evidence, one would have to explain how all this evidence came into being and who actually did organize the pogroms and executions if not OUN.

In any case, many of the Jewish survivor testimonies, especially in cities and bigger towns where the perpetrators could enjoy some anonymity,

just blame “the Ukrainians,” without being able to identify precisely which Ukrainians were persecuting them. Naturally, the victims were not privy to the inner workings of Ukrainian nationalist politics. They knew that they were being attacked by Ukrainian-speakers in the name of something Ukrainian. For them their attackers were “the Ukrainians.” I happen to know that these actions were put in motion by a certain group of Ukrainians, OUN. Why not make that differentiation? Why let the blame fall on the nation as a whole?

Why would anyone want to embrace the heritage of that group? Why would I, a person of Ukrainian ancestry and someone devoted to Ukrainian studies for forty years, not want to distance myself and my vision of Ukraine and Ukrainians from that of OUN? Why do I have to be shamed by the thoughtless statements of an official representative of Ukrainian studies? Dr. Kohut here certainly does not speak as my representative.

I understand that OUN has been a dominant force in the Ukrainian overseas diaspora. I know that many of us, I too, have family members in the older generation who were members or sympathizers of OUN. But shouldn't we put paid to their legacy? Shouldn't we understand that that generation made a bad choice? Shouldn't we stop defending the indefensible? Shouldn't we at least leave it aside and not treat it as some kind of sacred trust?

It is not as if the crimes and nature of OUN-UPA will remain hidden. The archives are not completely open, but many, many new documents are now available to researchers. In them you can find UPA internal reports on its murders of Poles and Jews, OUN leaflets from 1941 calling upon the population to murder Jews and other non-Ukrainians, films of *boievky* beating Jews on the streets of Lviv at the end of June 1941, and much more.

Also, documentary evidence is accessible in a way it never was before. Seventy-two hundred Jewish survivor testimonies fit nicely on four disks. Holocaust researchers are beginning to learn the languages and history necessary to find out what happened in Western Ukraine. Some historians of Ukraine are also looking objectively at the Holocaust. Soon there will be no secrets, and flippant, superficial answers on the order of “Armstrong says” will not suffice. Instead, statements like Dr. Kohut's will make Ukrainian studies look foolish at best, complicit in war crime and Holocaust denial at worst.

Scholars in Ukrainian studies should not pander to the keepers of OUN's flame within Ukraine and the Ukrainian community in North America. They should not mislead the public at large. Instead, they should have the civil courage and leadership necessary to educate those communities.

2.

Continuing the Debate

Important issues of principle deserve thorough discussion, so I return here to the exchange among David Marples, Zenon Kohut, and myself by answering Zenon's letter of February 12, 2010, to this mailing group.

To begin with, Zenon denies that he is trying to speak in the name of Ukrainian studies more generally and states instead that he is just voicing his opinion as an individual scholar. If this is indeed the case, then I will explain what has misled me about his contributions to the current debates over twentieth-century Ukrainian history. Zenon's letter to the *Edmonton Journal* follows closely on the heels of his letter to the *Literary Review of Canada* (<http://reviewcanada.ca/magazine/letters/2009/12/>) in which he takes it upon himself to "correct" Myrna Kostash about the Holodomor. I had the distinct impression that Zenon is setting himself up as a kind of ideological watchdog, nipping at those who stray from the flock. This impression is reinforced by the circumstance that Zenon's sole claim to authority in these issues is his position as director of CIUS (Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies), since he has not, to my knowledge, independently researched either the famine or the Holocaust.

He also takes *me* to task for using the term "OUN-UPA." In fact, this was the term that was introduced by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) at the very beginning of this public discussion. In its press release of February 1, 2010, the UCC called upon "the government of Canada to make changes to Canada's War Veterans Allowance Act by expanding eligibility to include designated resistance groups such as OUN-UPA." This usage goes back to pronationalist circles in Ukraine itself. I actually do know that there were two OUNs. Both were antidemocratic, anti-Semitic, xenophobic, and admirers of the Italian fascists and German national socialists. Both were involved in atrocities, though the Bandera wing was much more deeply involved. Prof. Peter Potichnyj has been arguing for years that we should not use the term "OUN-UPA" because he would like to divorce the heritage of UPA from that of OUN. In fact, however, UPA remained under OUN command until it was dissolved.

Zenon would like me to see the positive sides of the OUNs and UPA, not just their mass murder of Poles and Jews.

One, he says, is that they fought for Ukrainian independence. This they did. But in their thinking, the Ukrainian state they fought for was not simply "independent," it was a "Ukraine for Ukrainians," an ethnically

homogeneous state. That kind of independence, I submit, is problematic. The Red Army also posed as liberator of Ukraine from German occupation and restorer of the statehood of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. In fact, the Stalinist regime had some of the same ideals as OUN-UPA: it was for Ukrainian *sobornist*' and also for ethnically cleansing Ukrainian territory. The Soviets did indeed forge a large Ukraine and removed almost the entire Polish, German, and Tatar populations. I certainly cannot think, and I doubt that Zenon thinks, that the Soviets' contribution toward Ukrainian state-making means we can now downplay Stalinist crimes in Ukraine. Perhaps whenever someone brings up the repression of the Ukrainian cultural renaissance of the 1920s, we should add: Well, we got Crimea out of it. Or if they talk about the Holodomor, we should say: Transcarpathia was united to Ukraine by Stalin just twelve years later.

Second, I should recognize that OUN-UPA had exceptional courage and dedication. I do not deny it. But I also remember what the historian Janusz Radziejowski wrote to me in 1988 when I raised exactly the same point to him: "For the evaluation of an ideological or national movement it is not military virtues that are decisive, but programmatic and political aspects. They say that the best soldiers were the Germans. They fought against a world that surpassed them many times in the number of soldiers and in equipment." Brave Hans fighting street by street in the bitter cold of Stalingrad cannot improve the ideological visage of German national socialism.

Third, OUN-UPA had substantial popular support. So did Hitler in Germany in 1941, so did Stalin in Eastern Ukraine in 1944, so did the Confederacy in the American South in 1861, and so on – this particular argument does not speak at all to the evaluation of a movement. OUN-UPA had substantial popular support among ethnic Ukrainians in Western Ukraine, but it was not popular among non-Ukrainians in Western Ukraine nor in the rest of Ukraine. The differential of its popularity is a direct result of the ideology it espoused and practiced.

As to integral nationalism versus fascism. I normally do not myself write about OUN-UPA as fascists or integral nationalists because in my historical writings I tend to make linguistically conservative choices. In almost all my writings I use the same term for OUN-UPA as they used for themselves, that is, "nationalists." But David Marples in his article classified them as fascists. When in response Zenon argued that it would be better to call them "integral nationalists," then this was an attempt to downplay their fascism. That was my objection. Armstrong's classification of OUN-UPA as integral nationalist is not a problem for me, especially since he also classified the

Nazis as integral nationalists. My objection, I repeat, is to resorting to semantic tricks in an effort to downplay the negative heritage of OUN-UPA.

Zenon feels I do not take into account the evolution of OUN into a more pluralist organization. I explained in my original letter to him that this change was simply on paper in 1943–1944. Much of that “evolution” was aimed at gaining Allied, especially American, support. Even the most liberal wing of OUN, that grouped around Mykola Lebed in emigration, regularly falsified documents to whitewash the OUN and UPA past, and every once in a while Zenon’s and my mutual friend, the late Ivan L. Rudnytsky, had to take them to task for totalitarian slippage. I think *Suchasnist’* and many Prolog publications made excellent contributions to Ukrainian intellectual and political life. If Zenon wanted to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of *Suchasnist’* next year, I would not object in the least. But when he takes the part of the UCC’s endorsement of OUN-UPA as a wider heritage and when he tries to downplay OUN-UPA’s responsibility for war crimes, then I have to object.

I am puzzled furthermore by Zenon’s insistence near the end of his response that the proper forum for this discussion is in academic venues, particularly publications and conferences. I must be missing something. I thought that outgoing President Yushchenko in Ukraine and the UCC in Canada were bringing the legacy of OUN-UPA into the public arena. I also thought that the current discussion began in a newspaper opinion piece by David Marples and in a letter to the editor by Zenon Kohut. So why should it not be continued as a public discussion?

As to scholarly conferences, not only I have been raising these issues at conferences in North America and Europe, but so have Omer Bartov, Marco Carynnyk, Sofia Grachova, Per Anders Rudling, Kai Struve, and others. I myself have a number of scholarly publications referring to the issue of the OUN-UPA heritage in relation to the Holocaust, including most recently *Ukrainians, Jews and the Holocaust: Divergent Memories* published by Heritage Press in Saskatoon at the end of last year. Many other scholars have pointed out the role of OUN-UPA in atrocities against Poles and Jews, including Karel C. Berkhoff, Franziska Bruder, Jeffrey Burds, Aleksandr Diukov, Gabriel Finder, Frank Golczewski, Ihor Iliushyn, Dieter Pohl, Alexander Prusin, Ewa Siemaszko, and Władysław Siemaszko. It is not as if this issue is terra incognita.

Finally, I have to respond to Zenon’s parting shot, that I have engaged in “partisan moralizing.” In my original response to Zenon’s letter, I included no moral arguments whatsoever. Instead, I emphasized a pragmatic or strategic matter: It is not good for the Ukrainian community or for the

Ukrainian-studies community to encumber itself with the legacy of the Ukrainian nationalists of the 1940s because this legacy has such negative aspects permeating it.

But as they say, if you've got the name, you may as well have the game. There are compelling moral arguments for critically distancing oneself from the legacy of OUN-UPA. It is wrong to take part in the cover up or minimization of crimes of this nature. The murders themselves were horrible. I have nightmares from my research. These crimes can never be undone. The most that can be offered in compensation is to recognize them and regret them. Instead, we frequently encounter as justifications the very same way of thinking that set off the murders in the first place. Thus in his letter to the *Edmonton Journal* of February 9, 2010, also in response to David Marples's article, the editor of the *Ukrainian News*, Marco Levytsky, wrote that "prior to the German invasion, the Soviet NKVD, in which Jews had disproportionate membership, was involved in the killing of 4,000 to 8,000 civilian prisoners." Peter Potichnyj told a correspondent of the *Washington Post* that Jews who managed to survive until 1943 in Ukraine had a choice of working for UPA or for the Soviet partisans. Viacheslav Viatrovych told an interviewer that UPA should not be condemned for killing civilians because it is hard to tell civilians apart from partisans. Such argumentation only continues the crimes. Then, too, there is the issue of making heroes out of people who have such crimes on their hands – certainly one should draw the line here. And what about the hypocrisy of demanding that the world recognize the famine of 1932–33 as a genocide at the same time as one refuses to give adequate recognition to what OUN and UPA did to Poles and Jews?

3.

Ukrainian Past and Ukrainian Future

Askold S. Lozynskyj's "Rewriting History: An Evidentiary Perspective" (*Kyiv Post*, February 16, 2010) criticizes my historical research, but also raises the important question of how we should deal with the negative aspects of the OUN-UPA heritage.

Some years back there was a lively interchange between Polish and Ukrainian historians over the massacres that occurred in Volhynia and Galicia in 1943-1944. Yaroslav Hrytsak characterizes it as the Ukrainian *Historikerstreit*, referring to an important debate among German historians over the place of the Holocaust in German history. He meant that it was a coming to terms with the dark aspects of the past.

One of the things that emerged clearly from this discussion was that UPA and OUN were responsible for the murder of tens of thousands of Poles in Western Ukraine. (Another was that, when possible, armed Poles took ferocious revenge.) Although the facts as established would seem to me to have meant that one could not make heroes out of OUN, UPA, or their leaders, this did not seem so to President Yushchenko or to many in Western Ukraine or to many in the overseas diaspora.

I was never a participant in the Polish-Ukrainian debate, but a few years ago I began to work on the role of Ukrainian nationalists in the destruction of Ukraine's Jewish population, that is, in the Holocaust. This is what Lozynskyj responded to so vehemently in his article.

He misrepresents my research on UPA and the Holocaust in fundamental ways. He says that "without exception" the eyewitness accounts I cite are hearsay on the order of "my friend told me that in the village the UPA murdered Jews, and so on." It is true that I do include such accounts, because every large historical action leaves waves of evidence in its wake, some closer to the action, some more distant, but all reflecting the action itself. I also, however, cited a number of more direct cases, such as the ten-year-old boy whose father had been killed by Banderites just two months before he testified to the Jewish Historical Commission.

He also says that my paper on UPA "relies strictly on eyewitness testimony. No documentation is offered." This is also untrue. I quote from the book of reports of UPA's Kolodzinsky division, for example, about how they stumbled upon ten Hungarian Jews hiding in the forest in Volhynia and "dispatched them to the bosom of Abraham." I quote a German report about how their own forces could not reach a gang of a hundred Jews near Stryi, but fortunately UPA was on the spot killing them.

My main evidence, however, is that many Jewish testimonies, taken in different places, in different languages, and over a span of sixty years tell the same basic story: that UPA killed Jews at the same time as they killed Poles and that in the winter of 1943-1944, as the Red Army approached Volhynia, UPA lured survivors out of hiding in the forests, enrolled them in labor camps, and then killed them. If all this eyewitness testimony is false, then it is incumbent upon those who claim this to explain how all this false testimony came into being.

Lozynskyj also misrepresents another of my works, an article about the Lviv pogrom in which I tested a piece of oral testimony from 1945 against photographs from 1941. It was an exploration of the validity and limits of testimony, but Lozynskyj characterizes it as "written for the purpose of showing that . . . the OUN spearheaded" the Lviv pogrom.

It is an undeniable fact, though, that OUN organized pogroms and mass violence against Jews and others throughout Western Ukraine in July 1941. German documentation and Jewish testimony are unanimous that Ukrainians were the pogromists. The pattern of the violence exhibits many features of coordination over the whole territory. For example, in many localities in Galicia during the first few days the pogromists threw their victims into rivers. This was an error, since the stink of decomposing bodies soon became unbearable. How did so many dispersed groups do the same wrong thing at once? Who was coordinating this?

Many of the German documents and Jewish testimonies indicate that OUN militias were behind the violence. OUN leaders in July communicated among themselves and to the Ukrainian public about the need to exterminate the Jews. Postwar Soviet trials of policemen in German service contain a number of eyewitness testimonies from 1944 that identify OUN militias and Sich organizations as perpetrators of the mass violence. What historical circumstances could have produced this particular historical record if OUN was not behind the pogroms?

For political reasons, the Soviets decided in 1959-1960 to blame the Lviv pogrom on the nationalist battalion Nachtigall. This deception left a huge paper trail, which the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) revealed in early 2008. Why is there no paper trail showing similar falsification of evidence about OUN militias?

Actually, there *was* a falsification, but not by the KGB. Shortly after SBU disclosed the documentation on Nachtigall, it published part of what it presented to the public as an OUN chronicle of events from July 1941. The document related that the Germans invited OUN leaders to stage a pogrom in Lviv, which they refused. But this document had the dates of the pogrom wrong. Moreover, examining portions sent to me by the Canadian embassy in Canada, I found that it had been written after the war. Marco Carynnyk later found even more evidence that this was a postwar fabrication produced by OUN itself. Why would Yushchenko's SBU resort to propagating this falsification if it had anything in its archives that truly exculpated OUN from the pogroms?

Lozynskyj also tries to discredit my research by stating that my award of a fellowship from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum shows that I am working for the Jews. But it is not about Jews. There are plenty of Ukrainian Jews who are quite happy with the legend of the heroic and democratic OUN-UPA, friends of the Jews – Moisei Fishbein, Vitalii Nakhmanovych, and Yosyf Zisels, for example.

This debate is not about Jews at all, it is about Ukrainians. It is about who Ukrainians imagine they are, how they evaluate their past, and who they want to be in the future.

There were Ukrainian spokesmen during the war who were deeply concerned about the impact of OUN's war crimes.

Just as soon as OUN began murdering Poles in Volhynia, the original founder of UPA, Taras Bulba-Borovets wrote:

The axe and the flail have gone into motion. Whole families are butchered and hanged, and Polish settlements are set on fire. The "hatchet men," to their shame, butcher and hang defenceless women and children.... By such work Ukrainians not only do a favor for the SD [German security service], but also present themselves in the eyes of the world as barbarians. We must take into account that England will surely win this war, and it will treat these "hatchet men" and lynchers and incendiaries as agents in the service of Hitlerite cannibalism, not as honest fighters for their freedom, not as state-builders.¹⁷

Five months later, after the murder of Poles spread to Galicia, the head of the Greek Catholic church, Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky, appealed to the elders of communities to save those in danger of death. He addressed himself as follows to the nationalist youth:

Do not let yourselves be provoked to commit any iniquitous acts. It is only, after all, in the interests of our enemies to urge our people to take unwise steps that could in the future bring, and even must bring, great damage to our people. Do not let yourselves be deceived by people who present as a necessity acts against God's law. Remember that you will achieve nothing good through actions that are opposed to God's law.¹⁸

Ukrainians need not adopt the heritage of OUN as the basis of their identity. There are other strands also in the legacy that our ancestors bequeathed to us.

This is also a question of what kind of intellect and morality we want to be characteristic of the nation. Do we want to examine the complexity

¹⁷ Letter of Taras Bul'ba-Borovets' to the Home Leadership (Kraiovyi provid) of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists under the leadership of Stepan Bandera // Derzhavnyi arkhiv Rivnens'koi oblasti. F. R-30. Op. 2. Spr. 113, 103-05. Cited in: Viktor Polishchuk. *Rik 1943: OUN Bandery na Volyni*. Toronto, 2005. P. 17.

¹⁸ Mieczysław Adamezyk, Janusz Gmitruk, and Adam Koseski (Eds.). *Ziemia Wschodnie. Raporty Biura Wschodniego Delegatury Rządu na Kraj 1943-1944*. Warsaw and Pułtusk, 2005. P. 104.

of the Ukrainian past, or do we want to live the unexamined national life? Do we want to begin the deconstruction of myths that divide us east and west, or would we prefer to continue to battle over events that occurred nearly seventy years ago? Do we want to work out a historical discourse that serves all Ukrainian citizens, regardless of ethnicity, or do we want to hunker down in our nationalism? Do we value sophistication and tolerance, or are we happy with anti-Semitism and xenophobia?

It is difficult to rethink our history when it has become such a battleground between Orangists and Regionists and when critical thinking has to take place against the background noise of hostile, anti-Ukrainian polemics. But regional differences and an uncomfortable neighborhood are going to be with Ukraine for a long, long time yet. We cannot let these circumstances stifle our development into the kind of people we deserve and want to be.

4.

Reply to Volodymyr Kulyk and Andrii Portnov

There are a number of points on which Volodymyr Kulyk and Andrii Portnov, on the one hand, and I, on the other, disagree. Some of these are simply choices about values and have already been brought up in the course of the debates over OUN-UPA. Kulyk and Portnov, for example, believe that the *жертвовність* (willingness for self-sacrifice) and valor in battle of OUN-UPA count for a great deal in evaluating their political and moral legacy, while I do not. They also believe that the nationalists' fight for a Ukrainian state, even an ethnically cleansed, authoritarian state within Hitler's New Order, remains an adequate symbol of the aspirations of today's Ukrainians, while I hope it does not.

Here I will just raise two questions that have received little attention so far: (1) Is it possible to adopt the heritage of OUN-UPA selectively? (2) Do we have the requisite knowledge to evaluate that heritage properly?

Both Kulyk and Portnov believe that it is possible to accept only the positive aspects of the Banderite movement, namely, its self-sacrifice on the altar of Ukrainian statehood, without bringing along the additional nationalist baggage of xenophobia, anti-Semitism, war crimes denial, and antipathy toward open debate and critical thinking. My experience since this debate started in February 2010 convinces me otherwise.

Let me offer an example. In response to my texts, Askold Lozynskyj, the former president of the World Congress of Ukrainians, published an article in *Kyiv Post* on February 16, that denied that Ukrainian nationalists were

complicit in the Holocaust and also suggested that the persecution of the Jews was perhaps justified because of their participation in Communist crimes. Several other of my critics, notably Marko Levytsky (editor of *Українські вісники* in Edmonton), also brought up the issue of Jewish overrepresentation in Soviet organs of repression. Stepan Velychenko, a historian of Ukraine from Toronto, countered my arguments by putting together an anthology of ugly anti-Arab statements made by David Ben Gurion. Unfortunately, in many Ukrainian circles, their texts seemed to be perfectly normal. However, these topoi, in this context at least, are anti-Semitic. I wrote about how a particular Ukrainian political organization engaged in the mass murder of Jews. They responded using an essentialized notion of “the Jews,” whom they characterized by the murderous actions and ideas of Jewish communists and Zionists. Their thinking, in a nutshell, was: We did not do it, but the Jews certainly deserved what they got.

I wrote a response to Lozynskyj, a response I considered measured and to the point. Readers can judge for themselves, since it is printed above. *Kyiv Post* refused to publish it. I tried then to publish it in the most liberal forum among Ukrainians in North America, the Internet news service Brama. Even Brama would not publish it. My texts on issues of twentieth-century Ukrainian history and historical memory are now excluded from the entire Ukrainian-American and Ukrainian-Canadian press. Critical discussion is closed off. On the other hand, Lozynskyj’s attack on me has been widely circulated and reprinted. Perhaps this also seems perfectly normal in many Ukrainian circles. It is very characteristic of the way such ideologies as OUN-UPA-style nationalism deal with dissident thought. Does not the nationalist mindset, which is a genuine legacy of OUN in the diaspora, work against such democratic values as freedom of expression? The problem is that ideologies breed closed minds.

Even the very obsession with Bandera and OUN-UPA as heroes and symbols is characteristic of the ideological, and in this case nationalistic, mindset. In my native America George Washington is not the kind of “hero” that Bandera is in Ukrainian nationalist thinking. In my adopted homeland, Canada, I do not think there even are any heroes – at least I am at a loss to name one. I do not think it is an accident that the slogan that the OUN adopted in 1941 has as its response: “Героям слава” (Glory to the heroes). The cult of martyred heroes was an integral part of the so-called integral nationalism of the radical right at that time. Do we really need heroes and symbols? Or should we be working up a more present- and future-oriented, more pragmatic and less symbolic Ukrainian idea?

To me, the legacy of the Bandera movement is an occasion for reflection, for thought. How did it happen and what did it mean? Even the later, “progressive” phase of OUN-UPA raises questions that should be the subject of intelligent debate. Was it correct to launch an insurgency against Soviet power at a moment when it was so strong militarily that it could even defeat the Wehrmacht? Did not the insurgency waste an entire generation of dedicated young Ukrainian patriots who could have contributed to building, even under Soviet conditions, a better Ukraine? This is the kind of debate other countries have had, notably Poland in regard to the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Probably these are insoluble issues, but they are important items on the discursive agenda. It is impossible, however, to discuss the OUN legacy objectively and fruitfully if we already place ourselves *within it*.

The second point I wish to raise is whether we know enough about OUN and UPA to justify our “positions.” I am struck that both Kulyk and Portnov think that we can embrace the nationalist legacy if we include in textbooks information about OUN-UPA’s massacres of Poles and Jews. Right now I am writing a monograph about the nationalists and the Holocaust, so I will stick to that aspect, where I am comfortable that I know both what happened and the literature on the subject. Normally when we include information in textbooks, this information is the distillation of the results of a certain body of scholarship. Where is the Ukrainian-language scholarly literature on OUN-UPA and the destruction of the Jewish population? Is not the only monograph Volodymyr Viatrovych’s one-sided study of “ставлення ОУН до євреїв” [OUN’s attitude towards the Jews]? My fear is that we will make a rhetorical gesture in the direction of the issue without ever having confronted it properly. By saying it, we make it disappear.

I also have in mind the *kind* of knowledge that is necessary. Ukrainian scholarship on the subject cannot limit itself to OUN-UPA documents alone. *It absolutely must take into consideration the testimonies and memoirs of OUN-UPA’s victims*. It cannot rely solely on the documentation prepared by the perpetrators themselves. This is a basic condition of objective research. We would not think otherwise in the case of the Holodomor, and we should not think otherwise in the case of the Holocaust. Moreover, it is not only a matter of acquiring a correct understanding of what actually happened. It is also a matter of confronting intimately what “taking part in the destruction of the Jewish population” really meant. The phrase, the formula, is not enough. One must read the firsthand accounts of those who were persecuted to understand how this played out on the experiential level. Someone needs to prepare a Ukrainian-language anthology of testimonies gathered by the

Jewish Historical Institute in 1945 from Jewish survivors in Western Ukraine. Sometimes I feel that the whole difference between my colleagues and me in the evaluation of OUN-UPA is that I have read hundreds of testimonies and memoirs of people targeted by the nationalists simply because they were of Jewish nationality. Their suffering defies description. I just no longer can reconcile myself with the idea that such crimes can somehow be bracketed, that the movement that inspired them was still basically good.

These were my most important points about the lack of adequate knowledge on which to base our judgments. I need, however, to add that I see a new tendency in the argumentation in defense of OUN-UPA, new at least for Ukraine – that is, to concentrate on the late phases of its struggle, a struggle against the Stalinist regime and a struggle whose rhetoric was sometimes anti-imperialist, democratic, and even leftist. I know the legend well, because I helped promote it in the 1980s as part of the “Diialoh” group of Ukrainian-Canadian anti-Soviet leftists. Today I am skeptical. But I need to study the matter more and think about it more. One of the ways we in the diaspora and we the Ukrainian intelligentsia suffer from the nationalist legacy is that we do not study and think enough.

SUMMARY

В настоящей подборке представлены оригиналы четырех полемических текстов Джона-Пола Химки, ранее выходявших либо в украинском переводе, либо в интернет-изданиях. Все они посвящены вопросу о возможности строительства современной украинской идентичности вокруг наследия ОУН-УПА. Первые два текста являются ответом Химки на выступления ведущего канадского историка Украины, Зенона Когута. Следующий текст представляет собой ответ Химки на обвинения бывшего председателя Всемирного конгресса украинцев Аскольда Лозинского. Суть претензий состояла в том, что Химка бездоказательно приписал ОУН участие в уничтожении украинских евреев. Химка, проводивший исследования в Музее Холокоста в Вашингтоне, обвинялся в обслуживании еврейских интересов. Последний текст ранее публиковался только по-украински. Он представляет дискуссию Химки с украинскими историками, Андреем Портновым и Владимиром Кулыком, которые допускали, что элементы украинского национального движения времен Второй мировой войны вполне могут

быть включены в комплекс постсоветской украинской идентичности (при критическом и правдивом освещении негативных и преступных аспектов этого движения). Дискуссия вращается вокруг таких тем, как фашизм и ОУН-УПА, образ независимого моноэтничного украинского государства, за которое эти организации вели борьбу; дефиниции национализма и фашизма; ответственность современных украинских интеллектуалов и политиков за политизацию прошлого; современный этап изучения Холокоста, а также польско-украинского противостояния в 1943–1944 гг., наконец – идеологическая позиция украинской диаспоры по вопросу о наследии ОУН-УПА. Химка подчеркивает, что для него эта дискуссия не о евреях и прочих “соседях” украинцев времен Второй мировой войны, а прежде всего о самих украинцах, и не только об их прошлом, но, что важнее, об их будущем.