

# The Ukrainian Insurgent Army:

A History  
of Ukraine's  
Unvanquished  
Freedom Fighters

## *Introduction*

The history of Ukraine is a story of its people's struggle for national independence. The aspirations of Ukrainians to establish their own sovereign state blossomed in the nineteenth century and reached a critical mass in the twentieth. Following the short-lived existence of the Ukrainian National Republic in 1917–20, success was finally achieved on 24 August 1991, and a new state was added to the world's map. However, even after fifteen years of independence, the world knows little about the Ukrainians' heroic striving for freedom. The consequences of colonial times still weigh heavily on the newly independent state, affecting the discourse on its past, and the current government has not yet mustered the courage to pay fitting tribute to all the Ukrainian patriots who made possible the founding of the Ukrainian state. To this day, disputes rage both in Ukraine and abroad concerning the period of the armed struggle mounted by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), whose members resisted both totalitarian regimes—Nazi Germany and the Communist USSR—for over a decade during and after the Second World War. Various political forces still seek to manipulate this question in order to divide the Ukrainian people, even though the fight for national independence should be a consolidating factor.

In the areas of Ukraine where the UPA maintained its field of operations, Ukrainians did not forget the insurgents, and moved unhesitatingly to formally commemorate them immediately after state independence was gained. With privately raised funds, the residents of practically every village in

Western Ukraine (Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, Volyn, and Rivne oblasts) have erected monuments to their fighting sons, whose names they remember with pride, and both the young and old are once again singing the inspiring and patriotic songs of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. Meanwhile, in other areas of Ukraine cautious or even openly hostile attitudes to the UPA prevail, very likely originating not on the basis of direct dealings with the insurgency but as a result of decades of Soviet propaganda.

Therefore, we recognize a burning need to publicize information about the UPA, the sources of its emergence, and the history of its development and of the people who created it. The easiest way to do this is through photographs. After gazing into the faces of the young men and women who shed their blood for our future more than half a century ago, viewers can arrive at their own conclusions and decide who these individuals were and what kind of commemoration they deserve. Ultimately, we trust that these photographs will help viewers to grasp the truth about the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the history of our unvanquished freedom fighters.

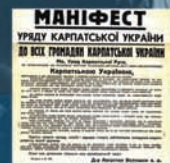
Volodymyr Viatrovykh, Director  
Centre for Research on the Liberation Movement



Ukr. abbrev.	Transliterated Ukrainian (or Russian) name	English name
DUN	Druzhyny ukrains'kykh natsionalistiv	Legion of Ukrainian Nationalists
GULAG	Glavnoe Upravlenie ispravitel'no-trudovykh LAGerei –R	Central Administration of Forced-Labour Camps
HVO	Heneral'na voienna okruha	General Military District
HVSh	Holovnyi viis'kovyi shtab	Supreme Military Headquarters
KGB	Komitet gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti –R	Committee for State Security (est. 1954)
MGB	Ministerstvo gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti –R	Ministry of State Security (precursor to KGB)
MVD	Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del –R	Ministry of Internal Affairs (est. 1946 as a successor to the NKVD)
NKVD	Narodnyi komissariat vnutrennikh del –R	People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (to 1946)
OUN	Orhanizatsiia Ukrains'kykh Natsionalistiv	Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists
SB	Sluzhba bezpeky	Security Service
SMERSH	SMERT' SHpionam	Death to Spies
UChKh	Ukrains'kyi chervonyi khrest	Ukrainian Red Cross
UHVR	Ukrains'ka Holovna Vyzvol'na Rada	Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council



UNR	Ukraïns'ka Narodnia Respublika	Ukrainian National Republic
UNS	Ukraïns'ka narodnia samooborona	Ukrainian People's Self-Defense
UPA	Ukraïns'ka Povstans'ka Armiia	Ukrainian Insurgent Army
UVO	Ukraïns'ka Viis'kova Orhanizatsiia	Ukrainian Military Organization
VO	Voienna okruha	Military District



The struggle of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army was a manifestation of the Ukrainian liberation movement in the twentieth century. As was the case with other enslaved nations, this movement had several developmental stages. In the early part of the twentieth century it began as a political movement, which in the years 1917–20 became part of the national revolution that culminated in the creation of an independent Ukrainian National Republic (UNR).

However, the restored Ukrainian state was unable to withstand external pressure and was partitioned among four occupying countries. But the defeat did not halt the momentum of the fight for freedom, which then acquired the forms of an armed, clandestine movement. Veterans of the Soviet-Ukrainian War of 1917–20 formed the basis of the Ukrainian Military Organization (UVO), which launched its activities on the territory of Polish-ruled Western Ukraine. The main goal of this organization was to prevent—by means of combat actions and propaganda—the occupation from becoming entrenched. Various youth groups began emerging parallel to the UVO, and opted for nationalism as their ideological platform. In 1929, both these currents united to form the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). The OUN was headed by Supreme Commander Yevhen Konovalets, who was a former leader of the UVO and a colonel of the Sich Riflemen, until his assassination in 1938. Nevertheless, during the 1930s there was a continuous shift in focus from the veteran freedom fighters of 1917–20 towards young people. Ultimately, these young nationalists not only formed the main body of OUN cadres in Western Ukraine but also became its most influential members.

During the 1930s the OUN steadily expanded to become the leading political force among Ukrainians. In March 1939, members of the organization took an active part in the defence of the newly proclaimed republic of Carpatho-Ukraine, which existed for only a few days before being occupied by Hungarian troops. The years 1939–41, when Western Ukraine was annexed to the USSR, were some of the most difficult in the history of the OUN. For the first time, the organization was obliged to deal with the Soviet Union's instrument of terror—the NKVD. This confrontation resulted in numerous losses to the organization's membership; according to various sources, the OUN lost between 16,000 and 35,000 members, who were arrested and executed.

Despite this pressure, the OUN stood its ground and was even able to launch a massive anti-Soviet uprising in the first days of the German-Soviet war. The renewal of Ukrainian statehood was officially



proclaimed by the National Assembly in Lviv in its Act of 30 June 1941, and a Ukrainian government was formed under Yaroslav Stetsko. The OUN's state-building policy clashed with the intentions of the German occupying authority, which demanded that the Act be annulled. The nationalists' refusal led to widespread retaliatory measures by the Germans; hundreds of OUN members ended up behind bars or in concentration camps, and in September 1941 the Gestapo carried out orders to execute them as dangerous political criminals.

The OUN then commenced its covert anti-German activity, which initially consisted of propaganda. Later, in 1942, the organization began forming detachments to protect the local population from rampages by the German occupying forces. In late 1942 these detachments coalesced into a single structure, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, whose symbolic founding day became Pokrova, the Feast of the Protection of the Most Holy Mother of God, celebrated on 14 October (Old Style).







The fact that the Ukrainian Insurgent Army emerged in the region of Volyn may be explained by a number of reasons. First, this region had a favourable terrain, including large tracts of impenetrable forests. Second, a special political situation existed in Volyn, whose population had a strongly developed national identity, and whose underground OUN network numbered several thousand. Third, the Soviets regarded Volyn as an important base for launching their own partisan operations.

The structure of the Ukrainian underground army took shape during the winter of 1942–43. The ranks of the army were notably strengthened by the absorption of between 3,000 and 5,000 Ukrainian policemen who had been ordered by the OUN to abandon German service. The expansion of the UPA took place against the background of perpetual confrontations with enemy forces on three fronts: anti-German (fighting the agencies of the government of occupation), anti-Soviet (fighting Red partisans), and anti-Polish (fighting Polish underground units that considered Western Ukraine part of the Polish



state). Nonetheless, the Ukrainian insurgents succeeded in liberating substantial territories from the various occupying forces, and Ukrainian governments were installed in these so-called insurgent republics. At this time, another difficult problem was overcome—that of the disconnectedness of the various loci of the struggle for freedom—by uniting the diverse units under a single political leadership and military command.

By the end of 1943, the armed insurgency of the UPA also encompassed large territories in Galicia (Halychyna), and by 1944 the UPA's combat actions had spread to the Sian River and Kholm (Chełm) regions. At the apogee of the UPA's territorial structure, the freedom fighters had a presence in what today are Volyn, Rivne, Zhytomyr, Khmelnytsky, Vinnytsia, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, and Transcarpathia oblasts, as well as the eastern parts of the Subcarpathia (Podkarpacie) and Lublin voivodeships in Poland. In 1944, the Ukrainian insurgent movement covered an area of up to 150,000 sq. km, with a population of nearly 15 million people. This corresponds to roughly one-quarter of the territory of today's Ukrainian state—an area larger than modern-day Greece with a population equal to that of the Netherlands.







Головне  
командування



УПА - "Північ"

УПА - "Південь"

УПА - "Захід"



ВО II  
"Буг"

ВО III  
"Лисони"

ВО IV  
"Говерля"

ВО VI  
"Смі"



ТВ 26 "Лемко"

ТВ 27 "Бастіон"

ТВ 28 "Данієл"



Перемиський курінь

Львівський курінь



сотня "Ударник - 2"

сотня "Ударник - 4"

сотня "Ударник - 6"

сотня "Ударник - 7"



From the outset, the UPA considered itself to be an offshoot of the armed forces of the independent and sovereign Ukrainian state, and therefore modeled its structure on that of a regular army. The UPA's organizational structure was simple and linear, but at the same time it was flexible enough to allow for effective deployment of personnel and materiel while adapting to the changeable circumstances of war, and to achieve important combat victories. Its leaders paid close attention to the need for control from above and at the same time encouraged initiative from below.

The military structure of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army was ultimately stabilized in November 1943, when Roman Shukhevych became UPA Supreme Commander and the Supreme Military Headquarters (HVSh) was created. The UPA's field of operations was then subdivided into three General Military Districts (HVO): UPA-North (the original UPA, based in the northwestern Ukrainian regions Polissia and Volyn), UPA-South (insurgent units in Podillia), and UPA-West (the former Ukrainian People's Self-Defence [UNS] in Galicia). Each General Military District had its own regional commander with a Regional Military Headquarters (KVSh), and was divided into smaller territorial units called Military Districts (VO). The Supreme Military Headquarters and the Regional Military Headquarters were strategic coordinating centres, but direct control over combat operations took place at the level of the Military Districts.

The basic tactical unit in the UPA was the company (sotnia), which usually comprised three platoons (choty), made up of three, sometimes four, squads (roï). In trained combat companies, a squad

usually numbered between ten and twelve soldiers, each armed with a light machine gun, two or three submachine guns, and rifles. The UPA had a functional system of command designations (Squad Leader, Platoon Leader, Company Commander, Battalion Commander, Brigade (or Tactical Sector-TV) Commander, Division-VO Commander, Corps Commander, Supreme Army Commander). This system arose because of the critical lack of qualified and politically reliable officers during the initial stage of forming combat units and headquarters, and it







remained in place thereafter, with formal approval passed in January 1944.

From the outset, the UPA made use of traditional military ranks (rank-and-file soldiers: Private, Private First Class; NCOs: Sergeant, Staff Sergeant, Sergeant First Class, Master Sergeant; and officers: Second Lieutenant, First Lieutenant, Captain, Major, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel, Brigadier General). A high percentage of promotions in rank were posthumous; to illustrate, seven out of nine promoted generals were awarded this title posthumously.



## Великий збір УГВР

### ПРЕЗИДЕНТ



Карпос Демченко



Коваленко М. П.



Демченко

### ПРЕЗИДІЯ

#### НАДПРЕЗИДЕНТ



Григорук М. П.



М. П. Васильченко



Васильченко

#### ЧЛЕНИ ПРЕЗИДІА



Васильченко



Васильченко



Васильченко



Васильченко

### ГЕНЕРАЛЬНИЙ СЕКРЕТАРІАТ

#### голова генерального секретаріату, секретар відомства торгів



Роман Шулеч

#### секретар фінансово-господарської торгів



Михайло Лобель

#### секретар культури, торгів



Олександр Ніколенко

#### голова бюро інформації



Николай Попович

#### генеральний секретар



Ярослав Білошицький

#### секретар фінансово-господарської торгів



Михайло Лобель

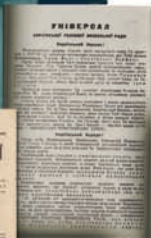
#### генеральний секретар



Ярослав Білошицький



Роман Шулеч



The Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council (UHVR) was established in July 1944 as the highest political authority of the Ukrainian insurgency. Its goals were to consolidate those Ukrainian political forces that recognized the necessity of an armed struggle for freedom, and to serve as the external representative of the liberation movement. The Grand Assembly of the UHVR, which took place under the chairmanship of Rostyslav Voloshyn (head) and Mykola Duzhy (secretary), formulated and adopted the main legislative documents of the UHVR—the “Regulations,” “Platform,” and “Universal,” and elected the council’s executive bodies.

The president became Kyrylo Osmak, a native of the Poltava region, who was active in the Ukrainian Central Rada in 1917–18. The posts of first, second, and third vice-president were held, respectively, by Vasyl Mudry, a distinguished political figure of the interwar period and deputy speaker of the Polish Sejm, Rev-Dr. Ivan Hryniokh, and Ivan Vovchuk, a native of the Kharkiv region. Professor Yaroslav Bilenky was elected auditor general, General Roman Shukhevych became head of the General Secretariat and held its military affairs portfolio, Mykola Lebed was assigned to foreign affairs, and Rostyslav Voloshyn to internal affairs. A clandestine Ukrainian parliament was thus established and for ten years—until the capture of the last general secretary of the UHVR, Vasyl Kuk—it spearheaded the Ukrainians’ struggle for freedom.

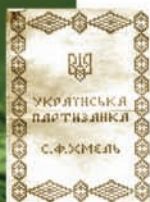




From the beginning of its existence, units of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army created teams to provide ongoing medical care. When the structure of the UPA was unified in the spring of 1943, a dedicated medical service was formed—the Ukrainian Red Cross. Its objectives were to treat sick and injured UPA soldiers, recruit qualified doctors, arrange for the supply and production of medicines, equip underground hospitals, train new medics and soldiers for the UPA, and produce medical textbooks.

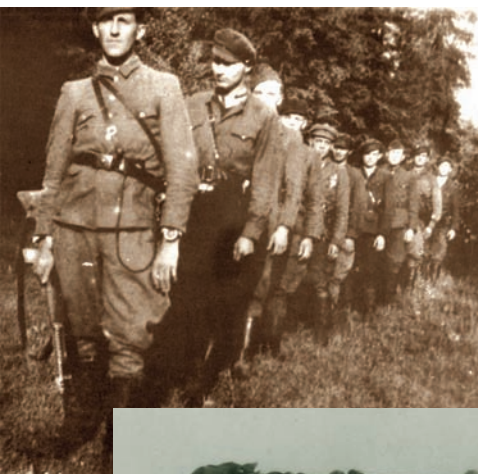
The insurgent doctors were assigned to work in two different areas. Some were seconded to UPA units and operated in field conditions of the armed struggle, providing first aid to the wounded and frequently retrieving them from enemy fire or transporting them to hospitals. Other doctors were assigned to county-level military hospitals, where the heavily wounded soldiers were treated. These doctors treated not only insurgents but also civilian victims of acts of terror inflicted by German, Soviet, and Polish punitive detachments. Among the insurgent doctors were many Jews who had been rescued from German repressions by Ukrainian freedom fighters. To date, researchers have identified the names or pseudonyms of hundreds of doctors who, in the face of the Stalinist regime's systematic persecution and repressions, valiantly carried out their duties by aiding the insurgents.





One of the most difficult problems faced by leaders of the UPA during its early stages was the shortage of senior (officer) cadres. The absence of a Ukrainian state in the prewar period resulted in a shortage of experienced Ukrainian army commanders. Thus, among UPA officers were soldiers who had acquired this experience in foreign armies (Polish, German, and Soviet), and older officers who had served in the army of the UNR in 1917–20. However, there were not enough such officer ranks to satisfy the insurgent army's growing needs. Therefore, the UPA began establishing its own schools for NCOs and officers, clandestinely training command personnel for the army. The four officer training academies—

Druzhynnyky (Legionnaires), Lisovi chorty (Forest Devils), Hrehit (name of a Carpathian mountain), and Oleni (Stags)—graduated several hundred officers.







The history of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army is inextricably tied to the name of Roman Shukhevych, the man who created this army and led it for seven years until his death in a shootout with special forces of the Soviet interior ministry (MVD). He was born on 30 June 1907 in Lviv into a distinguished family of Ukrainian intellectuals. In his youth he was active in civic affairs, particularly in the Ukrainian scouting organization Plast. He studied at the Lviv Polytechnic and the conservatory. In 1925, when he was eighteen, Shukhevych joined the Ukrainian Military Organization, and in 1929 he became a member of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists. In 1930–34 he headed the Combat Section of the OUN's Regional Executive. Under his direct leadership, OUN members carried out a series of effective combat missions, for which he was arrested by the Polish police and imprisoned.

After his release in 1937, Shukhevych founded and headed Fama, the first and best-known Ukrainian advertising firm in Galicia. In 1939 he was one of the champions of the newly-founded republic of Car-



patho-Ukraine. Together with other leading members of the OUN, he became a staff member of Karpats'ka Sich (Carpathian Sich), a paramilitary self-defence organization. After the Sich forces were



overwhelmed by the Hungarian army, Shukhevych took an active part in preparing the OUN for the impending war.

During the Second World War, the priority focus of Ukrainian nationalists was to create their own armed forces. Therefore, they resolved to capitalize on opportunities offered by the Germans and create two battalions, Nachtigall and Roland, which in Ukrainian were also known as the Legion of Ukrainian Nationalists (DUN). These were intended to become the nucleus of a future Ukrainian army.

Roman Shukhevych became one of the commanders of the DUN and led the soldiers of Nachtigall into Lviv on 30 June 1941. That day, the OUN issued an Act proclaiming the restoration of the Ukrainian state and created the Ukrainian State

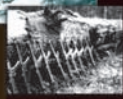
Administration. Shukhevych was appointed deputy minister of military affairs, and the formation of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army began in the fall of 1942, with a policy of opposing both the German and Soviet totalitarian regimes. Shukhevych, codenamed "Taras Chuprynka," was appointed Supreme Commander of the UPA in November 1943.

Just prior to the return of the Soviets, Ukrainian political forces unified in July 1944, which resulted in the creation of the clandestine parliament, the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council



(UHVR). The Secretariat of the UHVR was headed by Shukhevych. When the UPA went underground in 1949, resistance to the Soviet totalitarian regime acquired new forms and necessitated considerable ingenuity, especially on the part of the leaders of the liberation movement. Despite the titanic efforts of the NKVD, Shukhevych even managed to travel to health resorts in the south for medical treatment. On 5 March 1950, Brigadier General Roman Shukhevych—"Taras Chuprynka," the Supreme Commander of the Army of Immortals, was killed in a battle with the Soviet occupiers in the village of Bilohorshcha, near Lviv.







The life of a soldier in the Ukrainian Insurgent Army followed a strict schedule, with reveille, activities, meals, and lights out taking place at specific times. Of course, in combat conditions—during battles or marches—it was not always possible to maintain such a strict timetable, but discipline remained the basis of relations in the insurgent army.

The UPA paid considerable attention to the moral upbringing of its rank-and-file soldiers and the cultivation of Ukrainian army traditions. One of the methods that served this goal was the celebration of state holidays, including Unification Day (22 January, marking the unification of the Ukrainian National Republic and the Western Ukrainian National Republic), the November Uprising (1 November, marking the proclamation of the Western Ukrainian National Republic), and the anniversary



of the Act proclaiming the restoration of the Ukrainian State (30 June). There were also special insurgent holidays: Heroes Day (last Sunday in May) and Arms Day (initially marked on 31 August, in honour of the UNR's liberation of Kyiv in 1919, and later on 14 October, the feast of the Holy Protectress, the symbolic date of the founding of the UPA).

For the most part, holiday celebrations were attended by representatives of the OUN leadership from the district level and up. A political educator always gave a speech to the insurgents, and the chaplain would celebrate a Divine Liturgy. After the solemn part of the festivities, the insurgents would attend concert performances by a choir, or sing themselves. One of the most solemn holidays for the freedom fighters was the day they took their Military Oath. Of course, the most important religious holidays, Christmas and Easter, were always celebrated, often together with the civilian population.





**ПРИСЯГА ВОЯНА**  
**Української Повстанчої Армії**

Я, воїн Української Повстанчої Армії, взявши в руки зброю, урочисто клянуся своєю честю і совістю перед Великим Народом Українським, перед Святою Землею Українською, перед татою кров'ю всіх Найкращих Синів України та перед Найвищим Політичним Проводом Народу Українського:

Боротись за повне визволення всіх українських земель і українського народу, від загарибні-  
ти здобути Українську Самостійну Собор-  
Державу. В цій боротьбі не пожаємо ні кро-  
в, ні життя і будемо битись до останнього відді-  
лу і остаточної перемоги над усіма ворогами  
України.

Буду мужим, видажним і хоробрим у бо-  
та нещадним до ворогів землі української.  
Буду чесним, дисциплінованим і революцій-  
но-пильним воїном.

Буду виконувати всі накази керівників.  
Суворо зберігати військову і державну таємницю.

Буду гідним побратимом у бою та в бойово-  
му житті всім своїм товаришам по зброї.  
Коли я порушу, або відступаю від цієї присяги,  
то хай мене покарає суворий закон Української  
Національної Революції і спадє на мене зневага  
Українського Народу.







Although the UPA was not a regular army, it sought to outfit its soldiers in military uniforms with a characteristic cut, gear, and distinguishing marks. A special design for an insurgent uniform was developed in 1943, but production was impossible owing to the extreme conditions. Therefore, the Ukrainian freedom fighters dressed in civilian or pseudo-military clothing, captured military uniforms, or home-made uniforms, and wore distinguishing marks germane to the UPA. Captured uniforms came from the German, Czech, Polish, Hungarian, Slovak, or Soviet armies. Civilian clothing was often worn under the uniform. UPA soldiers commonly wore a combination uniform consisting of a German jacket and Soviet riding-breeches, etc. Trousers were of various cuts, and footwear styles also varied. For the most part, UPA soldiers wore Soviet tarpaulin boots, German boots with horse-shoe heel irons, and—rarely—dress shoes. In winter they wore greatcoats, sheepskin coats, and jackets; and during combat assignments they wore white camouflage cloaks.

The insurgent uniform included various types of headgear: field caps, field kepis (caps with a flat circular top and a visor), forage caps, protective steel helmets (rarely), Petliura caps, triangular caps known as mazepynky (after the style worn by Hetman Ivan Mazepa), and civilian caps with cockades in various shapes of the trident (Ukraine's state emblem).

The uniform also included belts with buckles on which tridents occasionally figured; one or two shoulder-belts; and a map-case. Buckles were introduced early, in the first months of the army's existence. They were distinguished by their shape,

insignia, and manufacture. Some were remodelled German, Polish, or Soviet buckles from which the enemy symbol, e.g., the star or the swastika, was removed and replaced by the trident. The most common buckles were those fashioned from spent cannon cartridges. They were practically identical, with only small differences in size and detail. Some soldiers custom-designed their buckles, produced moulds, and cast them in metal.

The Ukrainian Insurgent Army had its own particular system of military decorations and awards that were introduced in early 1944 as a means of recognizing service and achievement. These included Gold (two classes), Silver (two classes), and Bronze Crosses of Combat Merit, while Gold, Silver, and Bronze Crosses of Merit were awarded to UPA soldiers as well as civilians. The actual decorations were manufactured at a significantly later date (in 1951), based on designs created by the well-known insurgent artist Nil Khasevych. In addition to these decorations, which were considered orders of the UPA, the army introduced its Medal for Combat under Circumstances of Extreme Difficulty in 1948. Four years later, in 1952, a medal to mark the 10th anniversary of the UPA was designed.







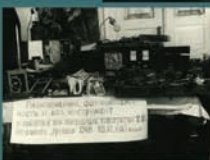




The all-encompassing scope of the Ukrainian insurgents' liberation struggle is attested by the mass participation of women in it. Ukrainian women were among the first to offer support to UPA soldiers by providing them with food, clothing, and shelter. For this assistance, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian women were arrested as "accomplices in banditry," deported, or killed. Women's participation was not restricted to external assistance to the liberation movement; many of them were active members. In 1943–44 the general structure even included a separate women's network, which was eliminated after the return of the Soviets. Certain activities of the freedom fighters were dominated first and foremost by women, who made excellent couriers and liaisons. Women also comprised the majority of medical personnel that tended the wounded. They were also valuable workers in the UPA's underground print shops, and ably carried out the functions of intelligence agents and informants reporting to the OUN Security Service (SB).

A few women occupied high posts in the underground. Kalyna Lukan ("Halyna") headed the OUN leadership of the Kosiv nadraion (superdistrict); Iryna Tymochko ("Khrystia") was the head of the Verkhovyna superdistrict in the Lemko region; and Daria Rebet was a member of the Supreme Leadership of the OUN and a member of the Presidium of the clandestine parliament, the UHVR. Perhaps above all, women distinguished themselves in the propaganda work of the underground. Alongside the men, female freedom fighters shared all the difficulties of insurgent life and served as a shining example of *amor patriae*.

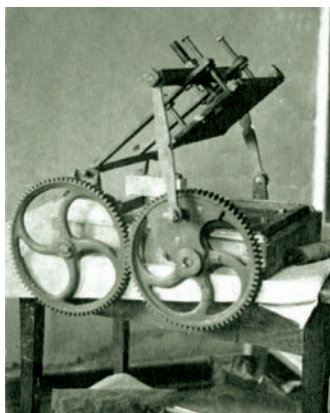
# ДО ЗБРОЇ



Publishing was a crucial component of the Ukrainian liberation movement. Its main objectives were to publish propaganda and ideological materials, textbooks on covert activity, and works on military theory, as well as journals and literary works. Among the first OUN and UPA publications were leaflets and addresses of the Supreme Command of the UPA, which were published in 1943–44. Producing these public statements was one of the most important tasks in the struggle of the Ukrainian national liberation movement; therefore it was an ongoing activity.

A priority focus of the OUN and UPA's publishing activity was ideological and sociopolitical works. During the 1940s, a large group of ideologists and journalists coalesced in the Ukrainian underground, including the distinguished Petro Fedun ("Poltava") Osyp Diakiv ("Hornovy"), and Dmytro Maivsky ("Petro Duma"). Their output focused mainly on three topics: the principles of the Ukrainian fight for freedom, the geopolitical situation in Europe and the world in the context of the Ukrainian question, and the problem of national transformations in the USSR and countries of the "socialist camp."

Since professional training of personnel for the underground and the army was crucial for the success of the OUN and UPA, textbooks and reference works on propaganda, military, and intelligence activities occupied an important place in underground publications. No less important were the periodical publications of the OUN and UPA. The newspapers and journals of the





Ukrainian underground reflected the main publication objectives of these organizations, and included ideological and journalistic articles, informational announcements and commands, essays on Ukrainian history, training materials, and poetry and prose written by Ukrainian freedom fighters.

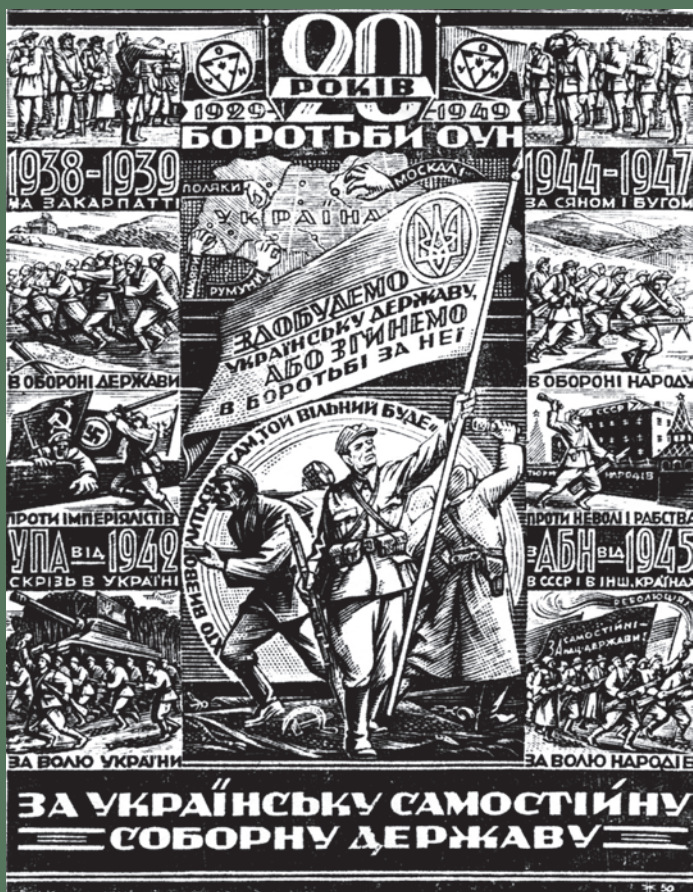
The periodical literature of the OUN and UPA is

characterized by a great variety of names and topics. This is partially connected to the fact that, owing to various circumstances, certain publications stopped appearing very quickly. Among the most important ones are the journals *Do zbroï* (To Arms), *Povstans' (Insurgent)*, *Ideia i chyn* (Idea and Action); the newspapers and information bulletins *Informator*, *Biuletyn' (Bulletin)*, *Biuro informatsii Ukraïns'koï Holovnoi Vyzvol'noi Rady* (Information Bureau of the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council), and *Oseredok propahandy ta informatsii pry Provodi Orhanizatsii Ukraïns'kykh Natsionalistiv* (Propaganda and Information Centre at the Leadership of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists).

Literary works were also published by the Ukrainian underground. The best-known insurgent



writers were Bohdana Svitlyk (“Maria Dmytrenko”), U. Levykh, and Mykhailo Diachenko (“Marko Boieslav”). These writers produced a considerable number of patriotic short stories and novels, as well as long poems and verses. The leitmotif in their creative output was the tragic fate and heroic deaths of Ukraine’s freedom fighters. In general, the publishing activity of the Ukrainian liberation movement was extraordinarily diverse in terms of form, theme, and goal, numbering 130 periodical issues, 500 booklets, dozens of training materials, reminiscences, and poetry collections, and thousands of leaflets, addresses, and appeals.





Raids were one of the best-known elements of the UPA's insurgency tactics. Thanks to their constant manoeuvring and billeting changes, UPA soldiers were able to carry out surprise and harassing attacks while not allowing the enemy the opportunity to strike them with force. Besides the broad use of raids as guerrilla tactics, the insurgents also used them to disseminate their ideas. With this goal in mind, they developed a special type of military-propaganda raid. During such raids, the insurgents did not restrict themselves to armed actions, but also distributed leaflets and clandestine literature, talked to local civilians, and organized clandestine meetings.

After the Second World War ended, the USSR was able to marshal all its forces in order to crush the Ukrainian national liberation movement. One of the methods of this struggle was to erect an information blockade around the bloody confrontation between the Soviet regime and the freedom fighters, as well as a concerted effort to discredit Ukrainian nationalists as collaborators and "remnants of German lackeys." In order to smash this blockade and expand its own anti-Soviet front, the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council—after recruiting representatives of the Central and Eastern European nations that had just been subjugated by the Soviet Union—issued an order to carry out military-propaganda raids into the countries bordering Ukraine. Between 1945 and 1950, Ukrainian insurgents carried out a number of such operations on the territory of the Belorussian SSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and







Romania. In 1950, UPA soldiers made an unsuccessful bid to carry out a raid into Lithuania in order to join their efforts with the Lithuanian insurgents, who were known as “forest brothers.”

One of the UPA’s most famous exploits was the 1947 Great Raid to the West. Led by Mykhailo Duda (“Hromenko”), Volodymyr Shchychelsky (“Burlaka”), and Roman Hrobelsky (“Brodych”), UPA companies marched through the Zakerzonnia region (eastern sections of the Western Ukrainian ethnographic lands, “beyond the Curzon Line,” that were annexed by Poland pursuant to the Soviet-Polish border agreements of 1944–45) and Czechoslovakia in order to reach Bavaria in Western Germany. Hromenko’s company reached its destination without dispersing, while the other companies advanced by splitting into small groups. Covering a distance of more than 1,500 km, the freedom fighters made their way from behind the Iron Curtain to the West, bringing the truth about the Ukrain-

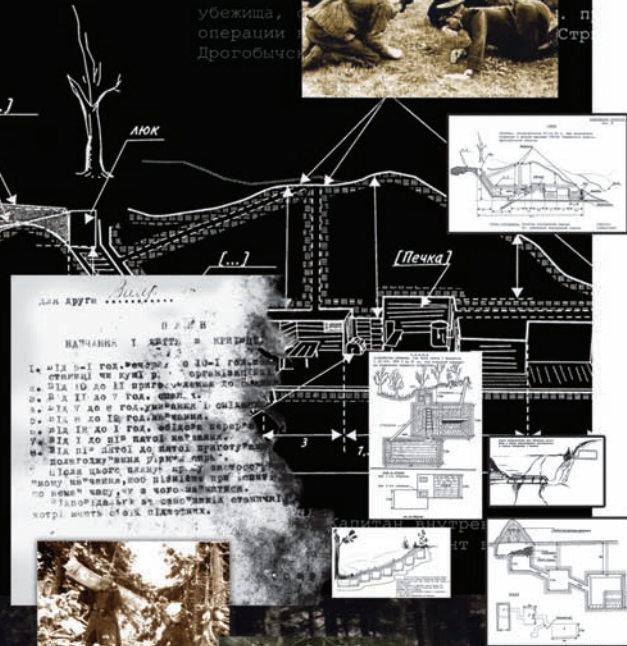




ians' liberation struggle to light in the West. Their arrival prompted an international sensation, and Western European and American newspapers began writing about the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

The UPA's last successful raid into a neighbouring country was an insurgent action in Romania. During a two-week period, an insurgent group succeeded in carrying out important propagandistic work among the Romanians by circulating appeals in leaflet form. After completing their assignment, the UPA soldiers managed to return home without any losses by manoeuvring around the specially deployed Soviet forces.

Although the UPA's raids did not lead to the creation of a coherent anti-Soviet front, to a significant degree they fostered local anti-Communist movements and helped inform the free world about the Ukrainians' valiant struggle for liberation against Stalinist totalitarianism.



One of the most striking phenomena of the Ukrainian insurgency in the 1940s and 1950s was the use of the *kryïvka* (hideout). The inventiveness behind the location, construction, and concealment of UPA hideouts—which created considerable difficulties for the enemies of the Ukrainian freedom fighters—still elicits amazement and awe among historians. After all, these incredible architectural structures were built in extremely unfavourable conditions, often without the requisite tools, and always within a very short period of time, so that the NKVD special forces did not have a chance to swoop down on the builders. The hideouts were used for various purposes. Initially, they were used to store articles needed by the insurgents, as well as food. In time, their functions were significantly broadened; they even served to house clandestine print-shops and hospitals for wounded insurgents. Indeed, after the UPA changed from insurgent to covert forms of war, the hideouts served primarily as shelters for the members of the underground movement.

The hideouts had begun to be used during the German occupation, but their broadest use coincided with the return of the Soviets, particularly after the late 1940s, when the larger UPA units were disbanded. These hideouts were a real salvation for the liberation movement during the winter season, when NKVD special forces blockaded the forests.

During the construction of the UPA hideouts it was crucial to abide by the rules of conspiracy. Each hideout was built by those underground members who were slated to live in it; thus, apart from them, no one else knew about its location. In order to conceal all traces of the excavated soil, it was either thrown into a river, if there was one nearby, or car-



ried into a freshly ploughed field. The criteria for selecting a site for a hideout were inconspicuousness, inaccessibility to the enemy, and good prospects for escape; these sites were chosen in forests or inhabited areas. There were many types of hideouts, ranging from small shelters for one or two insurgents to large, multi-roomed living quarters. The latter were mostly built according to the open method (timber-lined) rather than the mine method, in remote mountainous areas. It was in such places, inaccessible to NKVD detachments, where UPA hideouts functioned the longest—even until the mid-1950s.

Freedom fighters living in a hideout used their available time for intensive learning. They studied the fundamentals of military science and conspiracy, and devoted much attention to ideological and political subject matter. In specially equipped hideouts, they prepared and printed numerous clandestine



publications—journals, newspapers, and leaflets.

For many, the hideout became their final resting place. After NKVD special forces located a hideout, they would instantly surround it. At first, they would urge the insurgents to surrender. After they refused, a battle would ensue. The NKVD would fire on the hideout and blanket it with grenades. Sometimes, in order to capture the insurgents, the Soviet forces would use a special gas. Most of the time, the shootout would end with the last bullet that the freedom fighter saved for himself or herself. In some cases, insurgents succeeded in escaping enemy encirclement. Thus, regardless of the losses, there was no question that hideouts not only helped many insurgents to survive, but also prolonged their struggle against the Soviet occupying regime.





In early 1944, the German-Soviet front reached the field of UPA operations. A new stage of the struggle began, which was connected to the need to cross the front lines with the least number of losses to insurgent fighters and members of the rear guard services and to the OUN's territorial network. This stage ended in October 1944, when the front receded beyond the borders of Ukrainian lands. At this point the UPA had an opportunity to restore order to its structure and increase the intensity of its combat operations.

During the front period, the insurgents sought to avoid battles with the Germans or Hungarians, in whom they did not perceive any real threat to their liberation movement. Against the Red Army they operated in keeping with a strategy established earlier; they fought only with words, by conducting active propaganda work among Red Army troops. The Soviet government threw tens of thousands of NKVD troops, as well as Soviet partisans, into its war against the Ukrainian freedom fighters. Heavy battles, sometimes lasting several days, erupted between UPA soldiers and NKVD troops in Volyn, Polissia, and Galicia.

However, it was not always possible to avoid clashes with the retreating Germans. The insurgents battled their way across the front lines, sometimes crossing them disguised as peasants or Soviet partisans, or bided their time in hideouts or places that were difficult for the enemy to access.

The Soviets did not expect an organized, large-scale resistance by the Ukrainians, which explains why the first Soviet operations against the UPA were unsuccessful. Meanwhile, the insurgents were inflicting considerable losses on the enemy. The largest



battle in the history of the UPA took place on 21–25 April 1944 in the vicinity of the village of Hurby in Volyn region. Nearly 30,000 NKVD troops tried to encircle and destroy an UPA formation numbering over 4,000 freedom fighters. In addition to the greater numbers of deployed Soviet troops, they also had tanks and artillery in this battle. Nevertheless, they failed to destroy the UPA insurgents. On the morning of 25 April, following fighting that had lasted four days, three groups of UPA soldiers broke through the encirclement. Unfortunately, despite their combat successes, the Ukrainian insurgents were subsequently decimated while crossing the battlefronts of the Axis–Allied line.

The next stage of the UPA's operations occurred under the





conditions of the new Soviet occupation, against the troops of its punitive-repressive system. It lasted from mid-1944 until the reorganization of the UPA in July 1945. The UPA carried out numerous attacks on Galician county towns between the second half of 1944 and mid-1945. Thus, for some time after the second invasion of the Soviets, the Ukrainian insurgents were still able to confine the Soviet forces to fortified population points, thereby preventing them from developing and consolidating an infrastructure in local areas.

The UPA operated with large-scale forces until the summer of 1945, when it was forced to reorganize because of heavy losses. Individual units were turned into smaller ones, and ailing, battle-fatigued, and elderly insurgents, as well as those with large families, were demobilized or assigned to the OUN regional network. The Ukrainian freedom fighters continued to operate in the conditions of the enemy's all-out offensive and blockade, which lasted from late 1945 until July 1946.

The most important UPA operation in this period was the anti-election campaign. The elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, aimed at legalizing the Soviet occupation, were slated to take place in February 1946. Opposed to this, Ukrainian freedom fighters circulated thousands of leaflets and other propaganda materials. They sought out and destroyed the data collected by enumeration commissions, as well as Soviet agitation material, carried out raids on electoral districts, and liquidated Communist Party activists. Thus, it cost the Soviet authorities a great deal of effort to complete the election campaign in Western Ukrainian territory. The population was coerced into voting by force and



threats, in order to fulfill the goal of having the election “attest to the democratic nature of the Communist system.”

In 1945–46, the Ukrainian insurgents gradually changed course from an active offensive to defensive methods; similarly, the scale of their operations was also gradually reduced. Significant numbers of freedom fighters had perished under the blockade conditions. The UPA commenced a process of disbanding companies and battalions, transferring them to the armed underground. After the blockade



ended in 1946, the UPA operated only in the Carpathian Mountains and the Zakerzonnia region. But by late 1949, pursuant to a resolution of the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council and on orders from the Supreme Command of the UPA, they too were disbanded or demobilized. Only OUN and Security Service fighting groups continued to engage in combat activity, organize subversive acts, ambushes,

and sabotage, and conduct propaganda work. Combat operations were aimed at weakening the influence of the occupying administration, fighting against the agentura (Soviet intelligence service), and opposing the nationalization of private property and establishment of collective farms.

Subsequently, the Ukrainian insurgency fundamentally converted the form of its struggle, from broad insurgent and partisan operations to covert resistance tactics by an armed

underground. The main task of the underground was to instill the idea of national independence in the Ukrainian population. Thus, the Propaganda Section, which was charged with championing the idea, and the Security Service, which was tasked with providing protection for this work, were given leading roles in the structure of the liberation movement. This change of emphasis proved to be strategically justified, for despite the fact that the juggernaut Soviet terror machine succeeded in crushing the armed Ukrainian freedom movement, it turned





out to be helpless in the face of its ideals, which ultimately vanquished the Soviet Communist system.

It is difficult to say precisely when the Ukrainian underground finally halted its activity, long after the war had ended. Clearly, the turning point came in 1954 with the capture of Vasyl Kuk, the last Supreme Commander of the UPA; he had been the coordi-

nator of a number of scattered UPA groups. However, the insurgency still continued for some time. In fact, the freedom fighters Petro Pasichny, Oleh Tsetnarsky, and Mariika Palchak clashed with the Soviet occupiers on 12 April 1960 in the Pidhaitsi area. The two men died in battle, and the wounded woman was captured. Moreover, some insurgents were able to hide from the Soviet government for several more decades, and left the underground only when Ukraine's independent statehood was restored in 1991.







З українським народом...  
...перемога...  
...наш український народ переживає величезну історичну добу. Подвиги мистецтва...





The dynamic activity of the Ukrainian national liberation movement provoked the occupying regimes to take decisive counteraction. The terror inflicted by the German occupying administration and punitive detachments against the Ukrainian underground in 1943–44 was a continuation of the repressions in 1941–42 that had targeted Ukrainian nationalists. The Germans' first clashes with organized Ukrainian military units took place in Volyn in October 1942. However, their anti-insurgent tactics did not acquire a systematic character until March 1943. By this time, the rapid escalation in Ukrainian partisan attacks on the German administration, guerrilla operations targeting the transportation network and active obstruction of food deliveries, deportation of Ukrainians to forced labour camps in Germany, and the creation of Ukrainian auxiliary police units forced the German authorities to plan and implement a serious operation against the Ukrainian underground.

The ultimate trigger for the launch of a large-scale German anti-insurgent operation was the assassination in May 1943 of SA-Obergruppenführer Viktor Lutze of the Sturmabteilung, who was ambushed by Ukrainian freedom fighters. That summer, a huge operation against the UPA was launched in Volyn, with the deployment of 10,000 soldiers and militia, 50 tanks, and 27 planes; it was headed by SS-Obergruppenführer Erich von dem Bach-Zalwski. The Germans fought a total of 75 large battles against UPA units, in which 1,237 Ukrainian soldiers and officers were killed, as well as nearly 5,000 civilians. German losses totalled more than 3,000 soldiers and officers. However, this operation did not produce the desired results for the attackers. On

the contrary, it served as a powerful stimulus for the rapid expansion of the UPA and dissemination of its goals among the Ukrainian populace.

In Galicia, the Ukrainian underground clashed with organized German forces only in the late summer and fall of 1943, when military detachments of the UNS carried out a number of guerrilla operations against the occupying administration and police units. The German retribution was launched primarily against UNS training camps based in the Ukrainian Carpathians, with the largest German operation occurring in the mountains near the city of Stanyslaviv (today Ivano-Frankivsk). However, the Germans' unfamiliarity with the difficult terrain and their lack of experience in opposing the Ukrainian freedom fighters resulted in failure. Their last organized attempts to crush the national liberation movement in Galicia were in October–December 1943,

and they were not successful.

As for the Soviet occupying government's struggle against the UPA, an early manifestation was the activity of Communist partisans in 1942–44. Soviet security detachments were tasked with destroying UPA units and establishing an intel-





ligence network in the Ukrainian underground in order to subvert it from within. The Soviets' large-scale actions against the Ukrainian underground began in 1944 and developed on various fronts: propaganda work among the population, military operations against members and sympathizers of the OUN and UPA, and terror measures targetting the freedom fighters and their families. Soviet anti-insurgent propaganda was focused primarily on discrediting and splitting the liberation movement. Key aspects of the Soviet propaganda included the notion of treason, the crimes of "Ukrainian-German nationalists," and their collaboration with the "Fascist occupiers."

A pivotal role in the Soviets' destruction of the Ukrainian underground was played by military operations and terror measures against the civilian population. During 1944–50, Soviet military leaders developed a number of organizational principles for their war against the Ukrainian insurgency. Initially, individual front-line units of the Red Army were deployed against the UPA, while SMERSH detach-

ments from its specialized counterintelligence department were deployed against the members and sympathizers of the Ukrainian underground. However, when the Allied–Axis front moved westward, these functions were transferred first to the rear units of the Red Army and eventually to the NKVD troops.

In 1944–45, the NKVD carried out 26,693 operations against the Ukrainian underground. According to NKVD data, they resulted in 22,474 Ukrainian freedom fighters killed and 62,142 captured. In order to liquidate the entire Ukrainian insurgency as quickly as possible, the notorious NKVD *spetsgruppy* (special forces) were established at this

time. Initially, the nucleus of these formations was comprised of Soviet partisan units, but eventually these grew to include members of the Ukrainian resistance who had been turned. In August 1944, Sydir (Sidor) Kovpak's partisan division was subordinated to the NKVD precisely for the organization of the *spetsgruppy*. In June 1945, 156 such groups were operating in the western oblasts of the Ukrainian SSR. The main task of the 1,783 agents in these special forces was to discredit and disorganize the OUN and UPA. Pre-





tending to be Ukrainian insurgents, the participants of these Soviet false flag operations perpetrated acts of terror and lawlessness against the population of Western Ukraine.

As part of its struggle to exterminate the Ukrainian liberation movement in 1944–45, the Soviet security bodies began to use terror battalions, called *strybky* by the local population (shortened Ukrainian form of the Russian *istrebitel'nye batal'ony*), as well as a network of spies and informers. The latter was a special priority for the NKVD. To collect information, the NKVD recruited and maintained informers in every single population point under its jurisdiction. At the same time, a powerful spy network was installed within the Ukrainian underground, with the NKVD seeking to place its agents at all the top levels of the OUN and UPA. The network was established by late 1945, and played a key role in the further measures of the Soviet totalitarian system against the Ukrainian freedom movement in 1946–50.

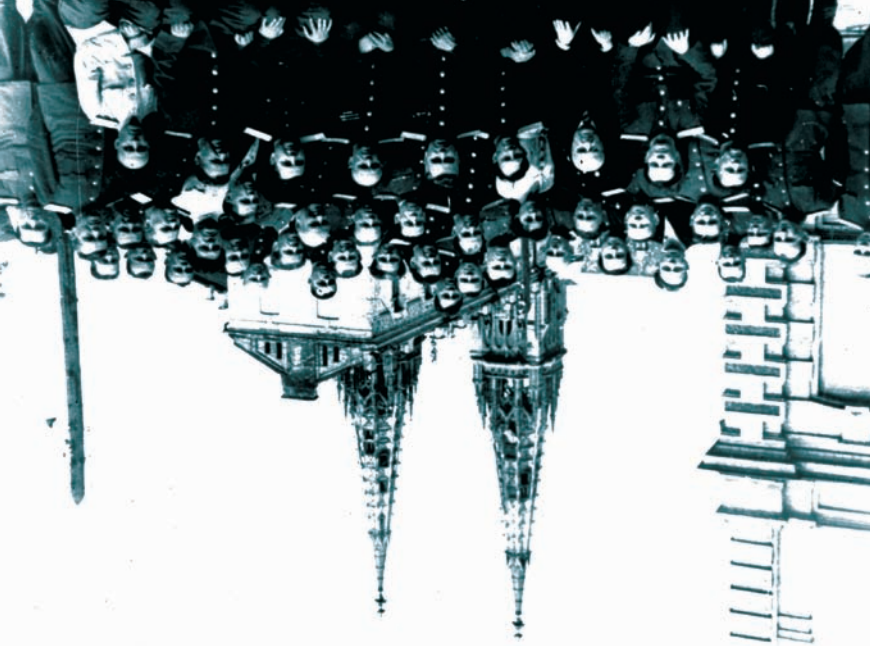
In mid-1945, the OUN and UPA tactical change to specific activity of small fighting groups triggered a corresponding reaction from the Soviet security bodies. The top-priority measures applied by the NKVD-MGB security machine then became systematic military-secret service operations. In the period from December 1945 to February 1946, 15,562 such operations took place during the so-called “Great Blockade.” As a result of these terror tactics, over 4,200 Ukrainian insurgents were killed, and more than 9,400 people were taken prisoner or arrested. A total of 130 armed formations of the Ukrainian underground were eliminated.

However, after this point the Soviet punitive

operations failed to produce the desired effect. The Ukrainian freedom movement adapted to the new conditions, and by early 1947 it had fully switched to covert methods. Thus, all the tactics of the NKVD-MGB and MVD were directed at the complete elimination of the “remnants” of the Ukrainian underground, with the liquidation or arrest of the leaders of the Ukrainian movement being the most urgent task. The Supreme Commander of the UPA, Brigadier General Roman Shukhevych, was killed during a special MGB operation on 5 March 1950, and his deputy, General Vasyl Kuk, was captured on 24 May 1954. Measures to liquidate Ukrainian freedom fighter units continued to take place for several years.

From 1944 to 1953, Soviet special forces killed 153,000 members and sympathizers of the Ukrainian underground, and arrested 134,000 more. At the same time, the totalitarian Communist system employed decisive steps to punish those civilians whose relatives were participants or sympathizers of the OUN and UPA. During this period, 66,000 families—approximately 204,000 people—were forcibly deported from western regions of the Ukrainian SSR to Siberia and the Far North in the Russian SFSR. Thus, practically half a million people were subjected to severe repressions for participating in the liberation movement, or supporting it.

Between 1944 and 1950, the terror against the Ukrainian national liberation movement was not limited to Western Ukraine under Soviet rule but was also implemented in the neighbouring Communist countries of Poland and Czechoslovakia. The anti-insurgent struggle that was launched by Poland in its Zakerzonnia region, however, had a somewhat



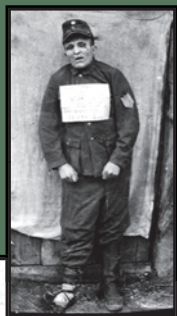
different character. Above all, it was linked to the national question, because the OUN and UPA were actively defending the local Ukrainian population against expulsion from its indigenous ethnic territory to the Ukrainian SSR, carried out in accordance with the Soviet-Polish border treaties of 1944–45.

Initially, until the summer of 1945, Polish Army detachments were deployed against UPA units; being untrained in anti-insurgent operations, however, they were unsuccessful. Then, starting in September 1945, the Polish government was assisted by the Soviet regime in revising its tactic when the main phase of the deportation of Ukrainians was launched. Specially trained detachments of the Polish Army, the Citizens' Militia (the police in Communist Poland), Internal Security Office, and Border Protection Troops were deployed against the Ukrainian freedom fighters. The first task of the Polish punitive detachments was to deport the Ukrainian population, thereby depriving the OUN and UPA of their base for further activity in the region. Between the fall of



1945 and summer of 1946, the Polish government deported more than 450,000 people. This expulsion was accompanied by constant battles with UPA units and local self-defence fighting groups. Finally, by the fall 1946, the Polish side succeeded in inflicting significant losses on the Ukrainian insurgents, and gained the upper hand.

Nevertheless, because the Ukrainian freedom fighters had switched to clandestine warfare, the Polish government could not rout them completely. Thus, in late 1946 the Polish Communist leadership drew up a plan to forcibly resettle those Ukrainians who had managed to evade deportation from their homelands to Poland's northern and western districts (the *Ziemie Odzyskane*—‘Recovered Territories’). At the same time, the Polish government resolved to liquidate the Ukrainian underground once and for all, and by April 1947 the anti-insurgent operation was fully prepared. The pretext for the speedy implementation of the plan was the death on 28 April 1947 of Colonel-General Karol Świerczewski, Poland's deputy





minister of defence, in an ambush organized by the UPA companies of “Khrin” and “Stakh.” That same day the decision was made to launch Operation Wisła, which was to be headed by General Stefan Mossor. The operation lasted officially from 28 April to 28 July 1947. It was carried out with the assistance of the Border Troops of the USSR and Czechoslovakia, who closed their borders with Poland to prevent any movement of UPA units. The main tactic of the operational detachments against the Ukrainian freedom fighters was to search and destroy UPA units. During this time, they expelled 140,575 Ukrainians from their native lands, killed 53, and captured 792 members of the OUN and UPA.

The Polish government finally succeeded in liquidating the Ukrainian underground in the fall of 1947. Yaroslav Starukh (“Stiah”), the OUN leader in Zakerzonnia, was killed during a dragnet operation in October, which led the commander of the “Sian” Military District, Myroslav Onyshkevych (“Orest”), to order the disbandment of surviving UPA units.

In conclusion, the terror operations against the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists conducted by both occupying totalitarian regimes in the 1940s and 1950s were scrupulously planned and extremely brutal. They used all possible repressions and violent means against the Ukrainian underground and its strivings for independence. The main principles of the anti-insurgent struggle in the Third Reich, the People’s Republic of Poland, and Czechoslovakia were collective responsibility and hostage-taking, applied to the entire population of Western Ukraine; the supremacy of violence and brutality; treacherous double agent activity; and a focus on destroying of the

Ukrainian political elite. Nevertheless, the crimes committed by the Nazi and Soviet regimes against the Ukrainian people and their drive for independence failed to prevent the dreams of millions of fighters for Ukraine's freedom from being realized. On the contrary, they proved it is impossible to destroy an idea that is sacred to an entire nation.









From the first years of its existence, the USSR used concentration camps as a way to crush anti-Soviet movements and sentiments. By the time Stalinist repressions reached their zenith in the 1920s and 1930s, a whole system of these punitive institutions, known as the GULAG, had been created. Captured insurgents and members of their families were invariably sentenced to long terms in the camps. Almost immediately after the reimposition of Soviet rule in Western Ukraine, a special document was issued in April 1944 regarding the procedure for deporting relatives of OUN members and active insurgents to distant corners of the USSR. During the period of the OUN and UPA's most concerted activity (1944–52), more than 203,000 people were deported from Ukraine.

The peak of the deportations was a special operation called Zakhid (West) which was carried out on 21 October 1947. During the course of that one day 76,192 people were forcibly deported from Western Ukraine. The goal of the mass deportations was to destroy the base of the insurgent movement. The totalitarian leaders hoped to break the freedom fighters by transforming them into “respectable Soviet citizens” or destroying them physically, and the conditions in the labour camps were fully geared to this task.

The apogee in the development of concentration camps in the USSR was reached in the years 1952–53, when the number of prisoners in





the GULAG exceeded all records, at 2.75 million. As a result of the NKVD-MVD-MGB's anti-UPA struggle on the territory of Western Ukraine and in the Baltic republics, particularly Lithuania, captured freedom fighters comprised the majority expanding the ranks of labour camp prisoners. Thus, an im-



mense number of implacable foes of Soviet authority were actually concentrated in the camps, all of them—Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Georgians, and Chechens—united by the idea of creating independent nation-states on the ruins of the USSR. This circumstance led to large-scale strikes that turned into huge prisoner uprisings. The largest uprisings took place in 1953 in Norilsk and Vorkuta, and in 1954 in Kingir. Although the upris-



ings were crushed, the first cracks appeared in the GULAG system, which eventually triggered the irrevocable process of its eventual collapse. A key role in this process was played by the Ukrainians, who continued their struggle for freedom even in the horrific conditions of the Soviet hard labour camps.





The Ukrainian insurgents fired off their last shots in the early 1960s, when their unequal armed struggle, which had lasted for more than 15 years, came to an end. However, the Ukrainians' constant drive for freedom was not extinguished. Most notably, the insurgents were replaced by the *Shistdesiatnyky* (Sixtiers), a generation of young Ukrainian dissident poets and prose writers, who began publishing during Khrushchev's "Thaw," and through different means pursued the cause of their predecessors. Finally, in the 1980s, the winds of change began blowing in Eastern Europe, and they did not bypass Ukraine. A powerful national-democratic movement arose like a Phoenix and united hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians around the slogans and ideals of freedom and independence. Under this pressure, the Soviet-Russian Empire tottered and ultimately fell, and on its ruins was resurrected the long-awaited independent Ukrainian state.

The Act proclaiming the independence of Ukraine on 24 August 1991 was not simply the result of voting by a requisite number of deputies of the single-party parliament of the Ukrainian SSR, the Verkhovna Rada (Supreme Soviet). Above all, it was a consequence of the long-term strivings of many generations of Ukrainians, among whom were hundreds of thousands of UPA soldiers and OUN members, who laid down their young lives on the altar of independence or paid for it with decades of imprisonment in the camps of the GULAG.

To this day, however, the Ukrainian government has not recognized the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. A prevailing post-Soviet imperialistic mentality is still preventing Ukraine's government leaders from condemning both Communism and

Nazism with equal fervour, calling the occupiers of Ukraine by their rightful names, and lauding the UPA and OUN freedom fighters as national heroes. The government still does not, in fact, understand that its recognition of the UPA is not necessary to legitimize that entity's existence and achievements, which long ago were acknowledged by History itself. Instead, this recognition is necessary for the sake of Ukraine's government, so that it becomes worthy of the right to call the state it has been entrusted to lead by the proud name **Ukraïna—Ukraine.**

*Translated from the Ukrainian by Marta Daria Olynyk  
and Ksenia Maryniak.*





