

12 The Return of the Ukrainian Far Right

The Case of VO Svoboda

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Ukraine, one of the youngest states in Europe, received its current borders between 1939 and 1954. The country remains divided between east and west, a division that is discernible in language, culture, religion and, not the least, historical memory. Whereas Ukrainian nationalism in the 1990s was described in terms of “a minority faith,” over the past half-decade there has been a significant upswing in far-right activity (Wilson, 1997: 117–146). The far-right tradition is particularly strong in western Ukraine. Today a significant ultra-nationalist party, the All-Ukrainian Association (*Vseukrains’ke Ob’iednanne*, VO) Svoboda, appears to be on the verge of a political breakthrough at the national level. This article is a survey, not only of its ideology and the political tradition to which it belongs but also of the political climate which facilitated its growth. It contextualizes the current turn to the right in western Ukraine against the backdrop of instrumentalization of history and the official rehabilitation of the ultra-nationalists of the 1930s and 1940s.

MEMORIES OF A VIOLENT 20TH CENTURY

Swept to power by the Orange Revolution, the third president of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko (2005–2010), put in substantial efforts into the production of historical myths. He tasked a set of nationalistically minded historians to produce and disseminate an edifying national history as well as a new set of national heroes. Given Yushchenko’s aim to unify the country around a new set of historical myths, his legitimizing historians ironically sought their heroes in the interwar period, during which the Ukrainian-speaking lands were divided, and had very different historical experiences. In Soviet Ukraine, a decade of intense promotion of Ukrainian language and culture was reversed with Stalin’s “revolution from above” and replaced by harsh repression of the Ukrainian intellectual elite. The political terror was accompanied by forced industrialization and collectivization of agriculture. Draconian enforcement of grain requisitions led to famine in many parts of the Soviet Union. The estimated 3.3 million excess deaths in the Ukrainian SSR in 1932–1933 constituted

one of the worst atrocities in European history and Stalin's greatest crime against his own citizens.¹

The establishment of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), in 1929, brought together war veterans, student fraternities and far-right groups into the most significant Ukrainian ultra-nationalist movement (Shekhovtsov, 2007: 273). The former Marxist Dmytro Dontsov created an indigenous Ukrainian fascism based upon Friedrich Nietzsche, Georges Sorel and Charles Maurras and translated the works of Hitler and Mussolini into Ukrainian (Shekhovtsov, 2011a: 208). OUN relied on terrorism, violence and assassinations, not least against other Ukrainians, to achieve its goal of a totalitarian and ethnically homogenous Ukrainian nation-state. The OUN was met with repression from the Polish state, something which further radicalized its positions (Bruder, 2007: 77–112). Strongly oriented towards the Axis powers, the OUN was committed to ethnic purity. OUN founder Evhen Konovalts' (1891–1938) stated that his movement was “waging war against mixed marriages” with Poles, Russians and Jews, the latter of whom he described as “foes of our national rebirth” (Carynyk, 2011: 315). After Konovalts' was himself assassinated by the Soviet secret police, in 1938, the movement split into two wings, the followers of Andrii Melnyk (1890–1964) and Stepan Bandera (1909–1959), known as Melnykites, OUN(m), and Banderites, OUN(b). Both wings enthusiastically committed to the new fascist Europe. In June 1941, the OUN(b) made an attempt to establish a Ukrainian state as a loyal satellite of Nazi Germany (Rossoliński-Liebe, 2011: 99). Stepan Lenkavs'kyi (1904–1977), the chief propagandist of the 1941 OUN(b) “government,” advocated the physical destruction of Ukrainian Jewry. Yaroslav Stets'ko, the OUN(b) “Prime Minister,” and Bandera's deputy, supported “the destruction of the Jews and the expedience of bringing German methods of exterminating Jewry to Ukraine, barring their assimilation and the like” (Finder and Prusin, 2004: 102; Berkhoff and Carynyk, 1999: 171). During the first days of the war, there were up to 140 pogroms in western Ukraine, claiming the lives of 13,000–35,000 people (Struve, 2012: 268). In 1943–1944, OUN(b) and its armed wing, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), carried out large-scale ethnic cleansing, resulting in the deaths of more than 90,000 Poles and thousands of Jews. After the war, the UPA continued a hopeless struggle against the Soviet authorities until 1953, in which they killed 20,000 Ukrainians. The Soviet authorities killed 153,000 people, arrested 134,000 and deported 203,000 UPA members, sympathizers and their families (Siemaszko, 2010: 93; Motyka, 2006: 649).

IMPORTED HEROISM—REDISCOVERED HEROES

The OUN was dominant among the Ukrainian Displaced Persons who settled in the West after the war. The OUN(b) went through yet another split in 1948, as a smaller group, which came to be known as OUN *zakordonnyi*, or OUN abroad, OUN(z), around Mykola Lebed,² declared themselves to have

accepted democratic principles. During the Cold War, US, West German, and British intelligence utilized various OUN wings in ideological warfare and covert actions against the Soviet Union (Breitman and Goda, 2010: 73–98; Breitman, Goda, Naftali and Wolfe, 2005). Funded by the CIA, which sponsored Lebed's immigration to the United States and protected him from prosecution for war crimes, OUN(z) activists formed the core of the Proloh Research and Publishing Association, a pro-nationalist semiacademic publisher. The United States was repelled by the radicalism of the OUN(b), by far the largest Ukrainian émigré political party, and did not support their aim of a violent, possibly nuclear, confrontation with the Soviet Union, aiming at its breakup into a galaxy of successor states. The aim of rolling back Soviet communism did not translate into US support for the establishment of an authoritarian, nuclear Ukraine under OUN rule. As committed totalitarians, the OUN(b) cooperated mostly with Franco's Spain, Chiang Kai-Shek's Taiwan and with other eastern European far-right émigré groups, including former ministers of Tiso's Slovakia, the successors of the Ustasha, the Romanian Legionnaires, and former Nazis.³

The OUN wings disagreed on strategy and ideology but shared a commitment to the manufacture of a historical past based on victimization and heroism. The émigrés developed an entire literature that denied the OUN's fascism, its collaboration with Nazi Germany, and its participation in atrocities, instead presenting the organization as composed of democrats and pluralists who had rescued Jews during the Holocaust. The diaspora narrative was contradictory, combining celebrations of the supposedly anti-Nazi resistance struggle of the OUN-UPA with celebrations of the *Waffen-SS Galizien*, a Ukrainian collaborationist formation established by Heinrich Himmler in 1943 (Rudling, 2011a, 2011c, 2012a). Thus, Ukrainian *Waffen-SS* veterans could celebrate the UPA as “anti-Nazi resistance fighters” while belonging to the same war veterans' organizations (Bairak, 1978). Unlike their counterparts in some other post-Soviet states, Ukrainian “nationalizing” historians did not have to invent new nationalist myths but re-imported a narrative developed by the émigrés (Dietsch, 2006: 111–146; Rudling, 2011a: 751–753). This narrative was well received in western Ukraine but was received coldly or met open hostility in the eastern and southern parts of the country.

YUSHCHENKOISM

As president, Yushchenko initiated substantial government propaganda initiatives. In July 2005, he established an Institute of National Memory, assigned the archives of the former KGB (now the SBU, *Sluzhba Bezpeki Ukrainy*, the Ukrainian Security Service) formal propagandistic duties and supported the creation of a “Museum of Soviet Occupation” in Kyiv (Jilge, 2008: 174). Yushchenko appointed the young activist Volodymyr V”iatrovych (b. 1977) director of the SBU archives. V”iatrovych

combined his position as government-appointed memory manager with ultra-nationalist activism; he was simultaneously director of an OUN(b) front organization, the Center for the Study for the Liberation Movement. State institutions disseminated a sanitized, edifyingly patriotic version of the history of the “Ukrainian national liberation movement,” the leaders of which were presented in iconographic form as heroic and saintly figures, martyrs of the nation (Rasevych, 2010; Rudling, 2011c: 26–33, 2012b).

Yushchenko’s mythmaking had two central components. The first was the presentation of the 1932–1933 famine as “the genocide of the Ukrainian nation,” a deliberate attempt to exterminate the Ukrainians which, his myth-makers claimed, resulted in the death of 10 million people in the republic.⁴ The other component was a heroic cult of the OUN(b), the UPA and their leaders. The “memory managers” juxtaposed the genocidal Soviet rule with the self-sacrificial heroism of the OUN-UPA, producing a teleological narrative of suffering (the famine) and resistance (the OUN-UPA) leading to redemption (independence, 1991). Curiously, Yushchenko’s legitimizing historians presented their instrumentalized use of history as “truth,” which they juxtaposed to “Soviet myths.” Wilfried Jilge, a historian at the University of Leipzig, writes that “[i]t takes place by means of discourse, rituals, and symbols and uses the past to provide legitimization and to mobilize the population for political purposes. . . . A reconstructed historical memory is created as ‘true memory’ and then contrasted with ‘false Soviet history’” (Jilge, 2007: 104–105). Thus, Valentyn Nalyvaichenko, SBU director under Yushchenko, described the task of his agency as being to disseminate “the historical truth of the past of the Ukrainian people,” to “liberate Ukrainian history from lies and falsifications and to work with truthful documents only” (Jilge, 2008: 179). Ignoring the OUN’s antisemitism, denying its participation in anti-Jewish violence, and overlooking its fascist ideology, Nalyvaichenko and his agency presented the OUN as democrats, pluralists, even righteous rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust (Rudling, 2011c: 26–33).

NATIONAL ESSENTIALIZATION AND OTHERING

The hegemonic nationalist narrative is reflected also in academia, where the line between “legitimate” scholarship and ultra-nationalist propaganda often is blurred. Mainstream bookstores often carry Holocaust denial and antisemitic literature, some of which finds its way into the academic mainstream (Rudling, 2006). So too, for instance, can academic works on World War II by reputable historians integrate the works of Holocaust deniers⁵ and cite the former KKK Grand Wizard David Duke as a “expert” on the “Jewish Question.”⁶

The institutionalized “nationalizing” is partly based on simplistic binaries, which sometimes take essentialist and biologist forms. V”iatrovykh asserts that “For Russians it is normal to subordinate to a leader, for Ukrainians it

is not” (Vakula, 2011). The National Lviv Ivan Franko University, a partner of V”iatrovych’s Center (“Partnery”), is explicitly committed to ethnicizing its student body and to producing a nationally conscious elite. In its mission statement, the university declares its commitment to install

national consciousness, the forming of Ukrainian national self-consciousness and national dignity, love for the native soil and Ukrainian traditions, the training of a conscious intelligentsia, and safeguarding the intellectual gene pool of the nation [*zberezhennia intellektual’noho henofondu natsii*]. It trains [its students] in love for the native land, her history, the renewal and retention of historical memory; the cultivation of the best character traits of Ukrainian mentality (love of labor, individual freedom, deep connection with nature, and so on). . . . Physical, spiritual and physical tempering. (“Kontseptsiiia natsional’noho vykhovannia”, n.d.)

The culmination of Yushchenko’s *Geschichtspolitik* was his designation, a few days before leaving office, of Bandera as a hero of Ukraine. Again, there was little protest from intellectuals who identify themselves as liberals. More concerned with the bad PR Yushchenko’s policies brought Ukraine, some disputed the OUN’s antisemitism and collaboration with the Nazis, instead emphasizing the OUN-UPA’s “patriotism, national solidarity, self-sacrifice, idealistic commitment to common goals and values” (Riabchuk, 2010). Others dismissed the OUN’s fascism as a “Soviet stereotype” (Ponomar’ov, 2010, but see also the review by Rossoliński-Liebe and Rudling, 2011), or that it simply did not matter. One leading liberal historian argued that, “In the case of Bandera, the issue is not whether he was a fascist, but whether the majority who celebrate him celebrate him as a such” (Hrytsak, 2010). Whereas the interpretations of Yushchenko’s legitimizing historians had seemingly unlimited access to the “national democratic” venues, alternative interpretations were often excluded (Amar, 2008; Katchanovski, 2011).

ULTRA-NATIONALIST ENJOYMENT

Slavoj Žižek argues that nationalism is about enjoyment: “A nation exists only as long as its specific enjoyment continues to be materialized in a set of social practices and transmitted through national myths that structure these practices. . . . Nationalism thus presents a privileged domain of the eruption of enjoyment into the social field. The national Cause is ultimately nothing but the way subjects of a given ethnic community organize their enjoyment through national myths” (Žižek, 1993: 202).

Nationalism has dominated the political life in post-Soviet western Ukraine. Political rituals, processions, re-enactments and sacralization of memory are characteristic features of the intellectual life in contemporary Lviv. On June 30, 2011, the 70th anniversary of the German invasion and Stets’ko’s “renewal of



Figure 12.1 “Bandera—Our Hero,” giant portrait of the OUN(b) leader displayed by far-right football fans, the “Banderstadt ultras,” during a game between Karpaty Lviv and Shakhtar Donetsk. Spring 2010. Image Copyright Lucyna Kulińska.

Ukrainian statehood” was re-enacted in Lviv as a popular festival, where parents with small children waved flags to re-enactors in SS uniforms (“U Lvovi vidtvoryly podii 1941-ho roku,” 2011). Extremist football supporters, so-called *ultras*, promote Lviv as *Banderstadt* at football games and other events.

The enjoyment in the many nationalist rituals and processions in post-Soviet Lviv is partly commercial. Ultra-nationalist ideologues have found both effective and lucrative ways to work with entrepreneurs to popularize and disseminate their narrative to the youth. The OUN-UPA theme restaurant *Kryivka* [Hideout or Lurking Hole] in Lviv is but one example of this. Its guests have a choice of dishes like “Cold boiled pork ‘*Hände Hoch*,’” “Kosher *Haidamaky*-style *saló* (pork lard),” and “Combat serenade” *saló*. *Kryivka*’s dining room walls are decorated with larger-than-life portraits of Bandera, the toilet with Russian and Jewish anecdotes. The same Lviv entrepreneur also runs the Jewish theme restaurant *Pid Zolotoiu Rozoiu* (Beneath the Golden Rose), where guests are offered black hats of the sort worn by Hasidim, along with *payot*. The menu lists no prices for the dishes; instead, one is required to haggle over highly inflated prices “in the Jewish fashion.” Behind these restaurants stands Iurii Nazaruk, a Lviv entrepreneur and a graduate of the Ivan Franko University. Nazaruk argues that “Our cafes confirm myths. People need this. . . . It is a transmission of

a piece of history, . . . a piece of Lviv” (Nazaruk, 2008). Not everyone finds these theme restaurants equally pleasant. Efraim Zuroff, of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, describes these restaurants as “only the tip of the racism and anti-Semitic iceberg in Lviv” and has called for a boycott of these restaurants (Zuroff, 2012).

Figure 12.2 “Territory: Banderstadt,” Ultra-nationalist event for adolescents, sponsored by the OUN(b) front organization the Center for the Study of the Liberation Movement and by the OUN(b)-affiliated Ukrainian Youth Movement, Kyiv, January 2012. A nationalist salute was required by the door, the dress code stipulated “folk costumes and UPA uniforms,” and the party featured anti-immigrant activities, OUN-UPA reenactments and games and the presentation of V’iatrovych’s calendar *UPA: People and Weapons*. Top right, the OUN(m) symbol. Image Copyright Lucyna Kulińska.

Whereas Lviv is the undisputed centre of these activities, commercialized ultra-nationalist enjoyment is expanding into other parts of Ukraine. In a December 2011 event that targeted teenagers and adolescents, V”iatrovych’s Center for the Study of the Liberation Movement declared a popular Kyiv nightclub, *Territoriiia Bandershtadtu*, an ultra-nationalist event “in the spirit of the insurgents, with corresponding UPA attributes: UPA uniforms, shot-guns, songs, historical photographs of UPA warriors on the walls . . . the intellectual game *Kryivka*, showcasing of the UPA calendar [*UPA: People and Weapons*], the display of authentic, historical UPA uniforms, and the presentation of the book *UPA—the Army of the Undeclared* by the Center for the Study of the Liberation Movement” (“21 hrudnia,” 2011).

Ironically, the presentation of the OUN as resistance fighters against Nazi Germany coexists with an elaborate cult of the *Waffen-SS Galizien* (Rudling, 2012a). Lviv streets have been renamed after Nazi collaborators like Roman Shukhevych and Volodymyr Kubijovyč. In the Lviv city hall, Svoboda is currently working to have the Lviv airport renamed after Bandera. Svoboda deputy Iuryi Mykahl’chyshyn stated, “We should have the airport named after Stepan Bandera. I don’t want to point any fingers. . . . But we will have a Bandera airport, a Bandera stadium, and the entire city will be carrying Bandera’s name, because he is its most living symbol” (“U L’vovi budut’ stadion,” 2012). In the fall of 2011, Svoboda deputies in a municipality in the Lviv district renamed a street from the Soviet-era name Peace Street (*Vulytsia Myru*) to instead carry the name of the Nachtigall Battalion, a Ukrainian nationalist formation involved in the mass murder of Jews in 1941, arguing that “‘Peace’ is a holdover from Soviet stereotypes” (“Vulytsiu myru,” 2011).

“SOCIAL-NATIONALISM” AND VO SVOBODA

After 1991, the OUN faced considerable difficulties re-establishing itself in independent Ukraine. It split between the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (KUN) in Ukraine and the émigré OUN(b), led by second-generation émigrés in Germany and Australia. Today, no fewer than four organizations claim to be the heirs to Stepan Bandera—KUN and the émigré OUN(b), the clandestine “*Tryzub imeni Bandery*” (“Trident”), and VO Svoboda (Kuzio, 2011). The latter was initially founded in Lviv in 1991 as the Social-National Party of Ukraine through the merger of a number of ultra-nationalist organizations and student fraternities. Its ideology was inspired by Stets’ko’s ideology of “two revolutions,” one national and one social.

As party symbol, it chose a mirror image of the so-called *Wolfsangel*, or Wolf’s hook, which was used by several SS divisions and, after the war, by neo-Nazi organizations. It organized a paramilitary guard and recruited skinheads and football hooligans into its ranks. Its appeal to Ukrainian voters was limited.



Figures 12.3 and 12.4 Torchlight parade on the anniversary of the 1918 Battle of Kruty, Lviv, January 29, 2011, organized by Svoboda deputy Iuryi Mykhal'chyshyn and "autonomous nationalists." The banner with the *Wolfsangel* reads "For the dead. For the living. And the unborn." The red and black "revolutionary" banners of the OUN(b) and UPA represent *Blut und Boden*, blood and soil. Image Copyright Lucyna Kulińska.

Following a few years of decline, in 2004 the movement chose as its leader Oleh Tiahnybok (b. 1968).⁷ He undertook significant efforts to remove the extremist image. Modelling itself after their Austrian Freedom Party, in 2004 the party changed its name to the All-Ukrainian Association Svoboda, or Freedom, replacing the *Wolfsangel* with an image, in the national colours, of a hand with three raised fingers. By recruiting Tiahnybok, who had run as an independent candidate, into the *Nasha Ukraina* faction of the *Verkhovna Rada*, Yushchenko provided Svoboda a certain legitimacy. A few months later, Tiahnybok gave an inflammatory speech in which he celebrated the OUN-UPA for having “fought against the Muscovite [*moskali*], Germans, Jews [*zhydy*] and other scum, who wanted to take away our Ukrainian state!” and asserted that Ukraine was ruled by a “Muscovite-Jewish [*moskal’s’ko-zhydivs’ka*] mafia.” Tiahnybok’s speech was used by political opponents to embarrass Yushchenko, who expelled Tiahnybok from the *Nasha Ukraina* parliamentary faction. As a member of the *Rada*, Tiahnybok petitioned Yushchenko to “stop the criminal activity of organized Jewry,” allegedly aiming at undermining Ukrainian sovereignty (Shekhovtsov, 2011a: 213–217; Umland and Shekhovtsov, 2010: 13). Svoboda also attempted to build up a popular base by addressing a variety of social issues, not all of which related to far-right ideology. The strategy of addressing a variety of social issues unrelated to far-right ideology follows the strategy of the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD) on the state level in Germany.

Svoboda’s claims to the OUN legacy are based upon ideological continuity, as well as organization and political culture (Shekhovtsov, 2011b: 13–14). Presenting Svoboda as the successor of Dontsov and the OUN, Tiahnybok regards Svoboda as “an Order-party which constitutes the true elite of the nation” (Tiahnybok, 2011).

Like those of many other far-right movements, Svoboda’s official policy documents are relatively cautious and differ from its daily activities and internal jargon, which are much more radical and racist (Olszański, 2011). Svoboda subscribes to the OUN tradition of national segregation and demands the re-introduction of the Soviet “nationality” category into Ukrainian passports. “We are not America, a mishmash of all sorts of people,” the Svoboda website states. “The Ukrainian needs to stay Ukrainian, the Pole—Polish, the Gagauz—Gagauz, the Uzbek—Uzbek” (“Hrafa ‘natsional’nost’ v pasporti,” 2005). Svoboda’s ultra-nationalism is supplemented with more traditional “white racism” (Shekhovtsov, 2011b: 15).

ANTI-JEWISH, ANTI-POLISH ATTITUDES

Conspiracy theory is integral to Svoboda Weltanschauung, particularly conspiracies with anti-Semitic undertones. In August 2011, in an apparent attempt to distance themselves from the Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring

Breivik, Svoboda claimed that he was a Jewish Mason (Redkolehiia chasopysu “Svoboda,” 2011). In September 2011, Svoboda activists mobilized from several parts of Ukraine to organize rallies against Hasidic pilgrims to Uman.⁸ Following violent clashes, the police detained more than 50 Svoboda activists, armed with gas canisters, smoke bombs and catapults. The Cherkasy branch of Svoboda criticized the police for their alleged failure “to stop and avert aggression by Hasidic Jews to Ukrainians” (“Uman: Right-wing activists detained,” 2011).

Svoboda’s anti-Russian and anti-Jewish rhetoric is accompanied by an anti-Polish message. Svoboda maintains that Poland has played a negative historical role in Ukrainian lands. The party demands an official apology from Poland for five hundred years of Polonization, from the 15th to the 20th centuries, and indemnities for “the Polish terror and occupation of Ukrainian lands in the 20th century” (“Zaiava VO ‘Svoboda’ shchodo proiaviv ukrainofobii,” 2010).

Focusing on divisive and sensitive issues, Svoboda provocatively denies any involvement of the *Waffen-SS Galizien* in atrocities against the Polish



Figure 12.5 Denial of war crimes: Bi-lingual Svoboda billboard on the site of the Polish village Huta Pieniacka, burnt along with more than 700 of its residents by the Fourth Police Regiment of the *Waffen-SS Galizien* and a detachment of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army on February 29, 1944. Svoboda categorically denies the conclusions of the Polish and Ukrainian historical commissions. Image Copyright Lucyna Kulińska.

minority in Galicia. For instance, on the site of Huta Pieniacka, Svoboda has placed a huge billboard denying the conclusion of both Polish and Ukrainian historical commissions that the fourth police regiment, which was later adjoined to the *Waffen-SS Galizien*, burnt this Polish village and slaughtered most of its residents on February 28, 1944.⁹

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

Despite its anti-Polish and anti-Western ideology, Svoboda actively collaborates with *Narodowego Odrodzenia Polski* (NOP) and other European ultra-nationalist and neo-fascist movements (Pankowski, “Polsko-ukraińska współpraca neofaszystów,” 2011). Svoboda is a member of the so-called Alliance of European National Movements, a network which includes the British National Party, *Nationaldemokraterna* of Sweden, the *Front National* in France, *Fiamma Tricolore* in Italy, the Belgian National Front, and the Hungarian *Jobbik* (Umland, 2011).

This seemingly unlikely cooperation is partly facilitated by a joint fascination with ethnic purity, inspired by Alain de Benoist, the ideologue of the French *Nouvelle Droite*. De Benoist fears the disappearance of pluralism and the reduction of all cultures into a world civilization and argues that each ethnos should be allowed to develop independently on its given territory, without the admixture of other cultures. *Nationaldemokraterna*, their Swedish sister party, advocates a form of ethnic segregation, which they refer to as “ethnopluralism” (Dahl, 1999: 68, 136).

Svoboda has opened an office in Toronto, which has been visited by several of its leading figures (“Diial’nist Kanads’koho predstavnytstva ‘Svobody,’” 2009). In Canada, in May 2010, Tiahnybok received the golden cross “for his service to Ukraine” from the Brotherhood of the Veterans of the First Ukrainian Division of the Ukrainian National Army, as the veterans of the *Waffen-SS Galizien* call themselves (“Esesovtsy nagradil lidera ukrainskikh natsionalistov,” 2010). Following the conviction and sentencing of the death camp guard John Demjanjuk to five years of jail for his role as an accessory to the murder of 27,900 people at the Sobibór death camp, Tiahnybok traveled to Germany and met up with Demjanjuk’s lawyer, Ulrich Busch, presenting the death camp guard as a hero, a victim of persecution, who is “fighting for truth” (“Oleh Tiahnybok iz dvodennym vizyotom vidvidav Nimechynu,” 2010).¹⁰

SVOBODA AND THE “AUTONOMOUS NATIONALISTS”

Tiahnybok’s heroization of the *Waffen-SS Galizien* and other Nazi collaborators is accompanied by ideological claims that the OUN-UPA conducted an anti-Nazi resistance struggle against Hitler (Rudling, 2011c: 40).

Yurii Mykhal'chyshyn (b. 1982), Tiahnybok's adviser on ideological matters, Svoboda's top name in the election to the Lviv city council and its candidate for mayor in 2010, represents a more radical current in the movement. Proudly confessing himself part of the fascist tradition, Mykhal'chyshyn relishes the harshness, extremism and uncompromising radicalism of his idols of the 1930s and 1940s. Constantly reiterating that "We consider tolerance a crime" and that "We value the truth of the spirit and blood over all success and wealth" (*Nasha Vatra*, n.d.), Mykhal'chyshyn takes pride in the label "extremist," which he proudly shares with "Stepan Bandera, who created an underground terrorist-revolutionary army, the shadow of which still stirs up horrible fear in the hearts of the enemies of our Nation" (Mykhal'chyshyn, "Orientyry", n.d.).

Mykhal'chyshyn serves as a link between VO Svoboda and the so-called autonomous nationalists. Mirroring the "autonomous anarchists" of the extreme left, which they resemble in terms of dress code, lifestyle, aesthetics, symbolism and organization, the "autonomous nationalists" attract particularly militant and extremely violent "event-oriented" young fascists.

Mykhal'chyshyn has combined the attributes of various stands of the extra-parliamentary extreme right: Doc Martens shoes, buzz cuts and bomber jackets are in the tradition of the skinheads, while the nightly torchlight parades under black banners with SS symbols resemble the political rituals

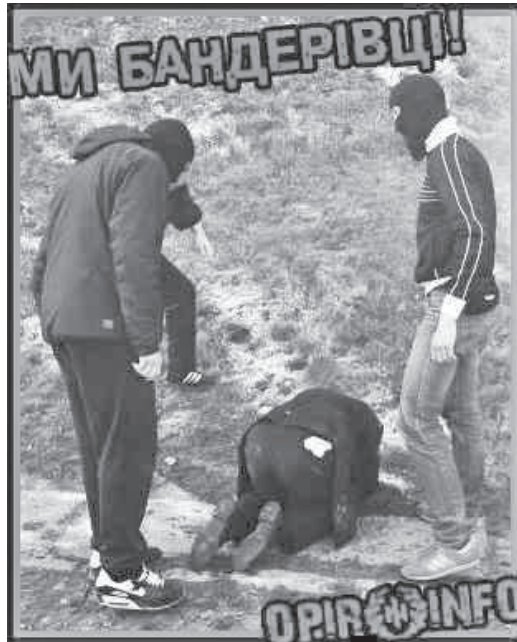


Figure 12.6 "We are Banderites!" Political propaganda of the autonomous nationalists, glorifying assaults on perceived enemies. Image Copyright Lucyna Kulińska.

and *Aufmärsche* in Nazi Germany. The glorification of street violence is a key component of this political subculture: in an extra session with the Lviv regional *Rada* in front of the Bandera memorial in Lviv, Mykhal'chyshyn boasted that "Our Banderite army will cross the Dnipro and throw that blue-ass gang, which today usurps the power, out of Ukraine. . . . That will make those Asiatic dogs shut their ugly mouths."¹¹

While hardly a typical man of the *belles-lettres*, Mykhal'chyshyn, is actually a student of fascism. In April 2009, VO Svoboda congratulated Mykhal'chyshyn on his successful defence of his *kandidat nauk* thesis, a post-Soviet academic degree, roughly equal to a PhD ("Vitaemo Iuryia Mykhal'chyshyna z zakhystom dysertatsii!," 2009). Titled "Transformation of a Political Movement into a Mass Political Party of a New Type: The Case of NSDAP and PNF (Comparative Analysis)," it was written under the supervision of Mykola Polishchuk of the department of political science at the Ivan Franko University in 2009.¹² Mykhal'chyshyn has published a handful of academic articles in the journals of the Ivan Franko National University, focused on the strategy of fascist "anti-system" movements (Mykhal'chyshyn, 2007, 2008). His interest is not exclusively academic; under the pseudonym *Nachtigall88*,¹³ Mykhal'chyshyn promotes fascist ideology with the purpose of promoting a fascist transformation of society in Web forums linked to Svoboda and "autonomous nationalists." In 2005, he organized a political think tank, originally called "the Joseph Goebbels Political Research Center" but later re-named after the German conservative revolutionary Ernst Jünger¹⁴ (Olszański, 2011).

Explicitly endorsing Hamas, Mykhal'chyshyn regards the Holocaust as "a bright episode in European civilization" which "strongly warms the hearts of the Palestinian population. . . . They hope it will be all repeated" ("Mikhal'chyshyn schitaet Kholokost," 2011; "Ukrainskii natsist," 2011).

The Ukrainian autonomous nationalists explicitly model themselves after the German example. Much like the NPD in Germany, the autonomous nationalists coordinate their activities with the extreme-right parties while retaining significant autonomy. Under the slogan "A healthy spirit in a healthy body," it attracts young followers through sport activities, boxing, martial arts and football tournaments, conducted within the framework of a campaign "against degeneration." Healthy young nationalists are to have healthy bodies and to reject TV watching, junk food, alcohol and cigarettes ("V zdorovomu tili—zdorovy dukh!," 2011). According to Mykhal'chyshyn's journal *Vatra*, nationalists are to be driven by fanaticism and hatred of their enemies, live spartan lives and abstain from decadent clubbing, drinking and idleness ("Sotsial-natsionalizm i osobiste zhyttia," 2010).

The social-nationalists are convinced that Ukraine is involved in a spiritual and social war in which the Ukrainians are victims and need to fight back.

The situation in the contemporary world causes degenerates to conduct a constant struggle for the destruction of all normal people, which

takes place through the dissolution of nations, classes, and races. In other words, a total and permanent national, class, and racial war of destruction has been declared against the Ukrainians: they are trying to liquidate us as a community of blood and spirit, as the social type of worker-warrior and anthropological type. The social-nationalist Weltanschauung is based exclusively on positive values: Freedom. Totality. Force. Dedication. Justice. Hierarchy. Order. Authority. Discipline. Brotherhood. Faith. Sacrifice. Pride. Messianism[*Mesianstvo*]. Faithfulness. Passionate dedication. Equality. Non-conformity. Hatred. Passion. The desire for something greater than yourself. The impossible. At the same time, the social-nationalist Weltanschauung is formed through opposition to negative, anti-people, and anti-national phenomena of today, raising its battle banners against the land gains of the enemy spirit: Anti-bourgeoisism, anti-capitalism, anti-globalism, anti-democratism, anti-liberalism, anti-bureaucratism, anti-dogmatism. (“Aksiomy sotsial-natsionalizmu,” 2011)

Mykhal’chyshyn cultivates an idealized image of womanhood, based upon sexual purity, emphasizing that the prime duty of women is to produce new members of the nation. Reprinting the words of the OUN ideologue Iuryi Lypa (1900–1944), *Vatra* argues that women carry the “societal and racial morality. More so than the man, she is forming the race” (Lypa, 2010). “Marriage is the duty of the woman to her own gender. The duty of the state, in turn, is to assist her in this . . . the 300 ovulations of every Ukrainian woman, as well as the 1,500 ejaculations of every Ukrainian man are the same national treasures as, say, energy resources, or deposits of iron, coal, or oil” (Lypa, 2009).

We recognize the heavy emphasis on heroes and heroism from the narrative of the émigré OUN and from Yushchenko’s legitimizing historians. The difference is that, unlike these two influences, Mykhal’chyshyn does not deny Bandera and Stets’ko’s fascism. On the contrary, their fascist ideology constitutes the basis for his admiration.

Our banner carriers and heroes are Evhen’ Konovalets, Stepan Bandera, Roman Shukhevych, Horst Wessel and Walter Stennes, Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera and Leon Degrelle, Corneliu Codreanu and Oswald Mosley.

To these luminaries Mykhal’chyshyn adds

traditional Ukrainian integral nationalism (Dmytro Dontsov, Iuryi Lypa, Mykola Stsibors’kyi, Dmytro Myron-Orlyk, Stepan Bandera) Ukrainian social-nationalism (Mykola Mikhnovs’kyi, Yaroslav Stets’ko, Stepan Rudnyts’kyi, the platform of the journal *SNPU Orientyry* in the late 1990s); the conceptual arsenal of the German conservative revolution

(Ernst Jünger, Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, Oswald Spengler, Otto Strasser, Carl Schmitt); Italian integral corporativism (Giuseppe Bottai, Ugo Spirito, Sergio Panunzio). (*Nasha Vatra*, n.d.)

In 2010, Mykhal'chyshyn published a volume titled *Vatra 1.0*, a collection of some of the key ideological texts of his movement, bringing together Italian, German, and Ukrainian fascist thinkers (Mikhal'chyshyn, 2010). Most of the texts originated with the “leftist” wing of National Socialism, purged in the Night of the Long Knives in 1934, and with the intellectual fathers of Fascist corporativism in Italy and Spain but also with members of the Nazi leadership, who, like Alfred Rosenberg, were positively disposed to the idea of Ukrainian statehood. *Vatra 1.0* contains Olez Olzhych's musings about fascist culture (“Olez Olzhychstets,” 2010: 58–62); Stets'ko's “Without a National Revolution There Is No Social Revolution” (Stets'ko, 2010: 76–84); Joseph Goebbels's “The Little ABC of the National Socialist” (Goebbels, 2010: 124–127); Ernst Röhm's “What Is the SA?” (R'om [Röhm], 2010: 151–162); the Bamberg program of the brothers Otto and Greger Strasser (Strasser, 2010: 263–272); Alfred Rosenberg's “Nationalist Socialism or National Socialism?” (Rosenberg [Rozenberg], 2010: 261–262); the party programs of the National Socialist Workers' Party of Germany and the National Fascist Party of Italy in Mykhal'chyshyn's translation, accompanied by the Program of the Social-National Party of Ukraine (Mykhal'chyshyn 2010: 143–187). Mykhal'chyshyn complements these classical fascist ideological texts with antiuniversalism, cultural relativism, and general anti-Western strands.¹⁵ *Vatra 1.0* thus also contains Ernst Jünger's “The National Revolution” (Iunher, 2010: 97–100) and Oswald Spengler's “Socialism as a Form of Life” (Spengler, 2010: 301–306).

Not only the leader cult but also the condemnation of imagined intellectual enemies as wreckers and an academic fifth column are reminiscent of the 1930s. In highly charged language, Mykhal'chyshyn denounces Derrida and Habermas, Althusser and Marcuse, Gadamer and Buber, Fromm and Foucault, Adorno and Freud, Rawles and Nozick as canonical texts imposed on Ukrainian society by “Talmudist wreckers” (“*dyversanty-talmudisty*”) and the thinkers as “defective intellectual idols” (Mykhal'chyshyn, n.d.).

The rise of Svoboda and Mykhal'chyshyn appears to have disoriented some “national liberals,” who fail to see how state promotion of the OUN heritage has legitimized the ideology of Svoboda and other intellectual heirs of Bandera and Stets'ko. One liberal commentator described *Vatra 1.0* as a “manipulation” with Soviet undertones (Vozniak, 2011). This is symptomatic of the situation, as few people within the Lviv intellectual elite are ready to acknowledge the fact that Mykhal'chyshyn places the OUN ideology in a historically accurate context, in line not only with how both scholars of fascism and the OUN leadership perceived the OUN and their fascist contemporaries.

THE DEMISE OF *NASHA UKRAINA* AND THE RISE OF *SVOBODA*

During Yushchenko's last year in office, Ukrainian mainstream media gave Svoboda disproportionate attention, particularly following Svoboda's sensational performance in the elections for the Ternopil regional *Rada* in March 2009, where it received 34.69 per cent of votes cast. The most respected Ukrainian mass media, like TV Channel 5 and the popular talk shows, such as Evgenii Kiselev's *Velyka polityka* and Savik Shuster's *Shuster Live*, regularly featured not only Tiakhnybok but also Mykhal'chyshyn (Umland, 2011; Shekhovtsov, 2011b: 7, 12).

Yushchenko went down for a disastrous defeat in 2010, receiving 5.5 per cent of the popular vote, a historical record for an incumbent president (Kompanets, 2010). While he is no longer a serious political player, Yushchenko left behind a legacy of myths which helped legitimized Svoboda's ideology. Svoboda's appropriation of many rituals in honour of "national heroes" from more moderate nationalists is but one expression of its increased political strength in post-Yushchenko Western Ukraine. Svoboda has long been well represented at the annual commemoration of the birthday of Stepan Bandera, complete with torchlight parades. On January 29, 2011,



Figure 12.7 Lviv, April 2009. Svoboda poster: "The pride of the nation: The Ukrainian Division "Galicia." They defended Ukraine." Image Copyright Lucyna Kulińska.

in commemoration of the 1918 Battle of Kruty, Svoboda, accompanied by a substantial number of so-called autonomous nationalists, organized a huge torchlight parade, rife with Nazi symbolism (“Video zi smolosky-pnoho marshu,” 2011). On April 28, 2011, Svoboda celebrated the 68th anniversary of the establishment of the *Waffen-SS Galizien*. Octogenarian *Waffen-SS* veterans were treated as heroes in a mass rally, organized by Svoboda and the “autonomous nationalists.” Nearly 700 participants (the organizers claimed 2,000) marched down the streets of Lviv, from the massive socialist–realist style Bandera monument,¹⁶ to *Prospekt Svobody*, the main street, shouting slogans like “One race, one nation, one fatherland!,” “Melnyk, Bandera—Heroes of Ukraine, Shukhevych, Bandera—Heroes of Ukraine!” and “*Galizien*—Division of Heroes!” The demonstration was organized by Svoboda, since October 2010 the largest party in the Lviv city council, which had decorated the city with posters designating the unit as “the pride of the nation” and proudly declaring that “they defended Ukraine.”

The procession was led by Mykhal’chyshyn, who declared that “Truly, in deed, not in word, we prove that Lviv is *Banderstadt*, the capital of Ukrainian nationalism.” (“U L’vovi proishov marsh,” 2011; “Marsh Velychy Dukhu,” 2011).



Figure 12.8 Lviv, April 28, 2011; March in commemoration of the 68th anniversary of the establishment of the *Waffen-SS Galizien*. Yuriy Mykhal’chyshyn (far left) leads the procession. The black banners depict the *Wolfsangel*; the placards with the Galician lion and three crowns was the symbol of the *Waffen-SS Galizien*. Image Copyright Lucyna Kulińska.



Figure 12.9 “March in honor of the Heroes of UPA,” Lviv, October 16, 2011, leaflet by the Autonomous Nationalists, featuring the OUN and UPA slogan *Volia narodam, volia liudyny!* (Freedom to nations! Freedom for man!), featuring the *Wolfsangel*, in a radiant wreath of oak leaves, the OUN symbol, a trident with a sword (from 1940 the symbol of OUN(m)), and the red and black OUN(b) and UPA banner, symbolizing *Blut und Boden*. Image Copyright Lucyna Kulińska.

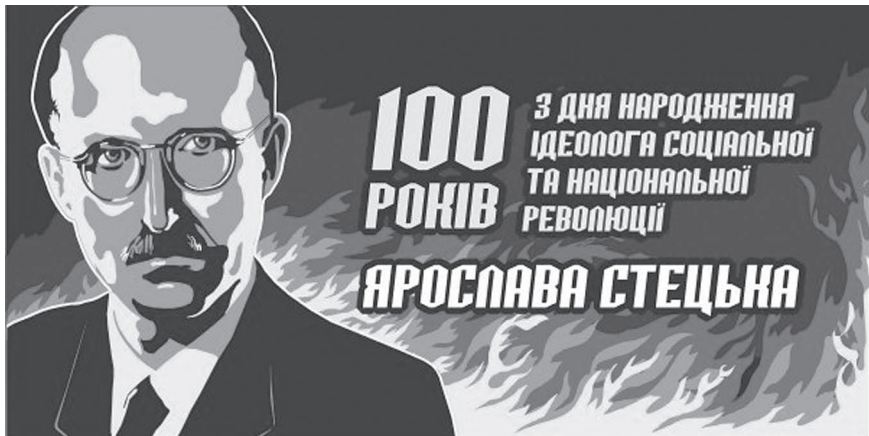


Figure 12.10 “100 years since the birth of the ideologue of the social and national revolutions, Yaroslav Stets’ko,” 2012 Svoboda poster. Image Copyright Lucyna Kulińska.

Similar demonstrations were held in October 2011 in the honour of the UPA.

The Svoboda-dominated Lviv oblast' council proclaimed the year 2012 the year of Stets'ko in honour of the centennial of his birth and also of the founding of UPA ("2012-i na L'vivshchyni," 2011).

The silence of the "liberals" turned criticism of the OUN heritage into a preserve of incumbent president Viktor Yanukovych's (2010–) Party of Regions and his allies and deepened internal divisions within the country.

By preventing *Blok Yulii Tymoshenko* (BYuT) from running in the Lviv local elections, and continuing the practice of granting Svoboda representatives disproportionate attention in the media, particularly TV, Yushchenko's successor, Viktor Yanukovych, has indirectly aided Svoboda. Some analysts suggest even deeper connections: the political scientist Andreas Umland highlights the similarities of Svoboda and Yanukovych's Party of Regions—the two parties share common authoritarian leanings and anti-Western attitudes—but points at "rumors that Tiahnybok's association—evidently for reasons of political strategy—secretly received support from the Party of Regions, perhaps including financial infusions" (Umland, 2011).¹⁷ Similarly, Tadeusz Olszański at the Polish Center for Eastern Studies suggests that Svoboda could be utilized as a sort of ultra-nationalist bogeyman to mobilize Yanukovych's electorate (Olszański, 2011). Tiahnybok, playing the role of Communist Party leader Symonenko in the 1998 elections in Ukraine or Le Pen in France in 2002, would help the political technologists of the Party of Regions to secure Yanukovych's re-election in 2015 in the second round of the presidential elections.

CONCLUSION

Columbia University historian Tarik Cyril Amar describes the situation in western Ukraine as the "no-enemies-to-the-right syndrome." The ultra-nationalist activism is silently accepted by much of the intellectual establishment: "Certainly, far from everybody agrees with the Bandera personality cult, torches and marches, the uninhibited selling of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the far too frequent 'Jewish' (here usually meaning anti-Semitic) jokes, but nearly nobody speaks up and organizes against this disgrace" (Amar, 2011b; see also Amar 2011a).

The frantic nationalizing activities under Yushchenko were partly carried out by ultra-nationalist activists, who denied the fascist ideology of the OUN(b), obfuscated atrocities and rehabilitated perpetrators of mass ethnic violence against national minorities. By glorifying Shukhevych, Bandera and Stets'ko as national heroes, Yushchenko and his legitimizing historians helped mobilizing the neo-fascist hard right. With few exceptions, democratic Ukrainian politicians and intellectuals failed to speak up or quietly went along with a cult of the OUN that celebrated Bandera and Stets'ko out of context and treated them as the persons they would have *liked* them to be, rather than the ideologues and political activists they actually were.

Like the Hungarian Jobbik, Svoboda draws its powers from nationalist mythology of great heroes and self-victimization. As in the case of Svoboda's Hungarian sister party, these sentiments have grown out of right-wing, revisionist history departments. From its base in the western part of the country, Svoboda is now making inroads also into other regions of Ukraine. If current opinion polls are correct, Svoboda's breakthrough in the local elections will be followed by its entry into the *Verkhovna Rada* in 2012 ("U novii Radi," 2011).

NOTES

The author wishes thank Tarik Cyril Amar, Delphine Bechtel, Franziska Bruder, Roman Dubasevych, Ivan Katchanovski, Taras Kuzio, and Andreas Umland for critical comments on previous drafts. A special thanks to Lucyna Kulińska for generously sharing the visual material used in this chapter. The usual disclaimers apply.

1. On the historiography of the 1932–1933 famine, see Marples (2007: 35–77) and Snyder (2010: 53).
2. Lebed had been one of the leaders of the UPA in 1943–1944 at the time of its mass murder of Poles and Jews (Snyder, 2003: 166–173; Breitman and Goda, 2010: 94).
3. See, for instance, *ABN Correspondence*, 28 (2/3) (1977): 7; *ABN Correspondence*, 30(4) (1979): 14; *ABN Correspondence*, 18(1) (1967): 33.
4. Yushchenko's SBU director, Valentyn Nalyvaichenko, even claimed to have an exact number of victims—10,063,000 Ukrainians in the Ukrainian SSR ("SBU nazvala ostatochnu kil'kist' zhertv Holodomoru v Ukraini", 2009).
5. See Bolianovs'kyi, 2000: 230, citing *The Journal for Historical Review*; Landwehr, 1985; and Bolianovs'kyi, 2003: 10, 14, 152. On *The Journal for Historical Review* and Landwehr, see Lipstadt, 1994: 137–156.
6. Patryliak, 2004: 326, citing Duke [Diuk], 2002: 39, for the claim that, "of the 384 first commissars of Soviet Russia, over 300 were Jews and only 13 Russians." On the related phenomenon of mixing critical academic texts with far-right apologetics, see Bruder, 2011.
7. Oleh Tiahnybok's background during the last years of the Soviet Union is unclear. According to some reports, he may have been working as an agent for the KGB within the ultra-nationalist *Varta Rukhu*, a predecessor to the Social-National Party, between 1989 and 1991 (Kuzio 2010).
8. Since the late Soviet era, large numbers of followers of Rebbe Nachman from Uman, a charismatic strand of the Hasidic tradition, have organized annual pilgrimages to his grave, praying, dancing, and singing and clapping their hands (Novick, 2011).
9. For an image of the billboard, with its full text, see Rudling (2012a: 368).
10. During the trial, Busch equated the role of death camp guard Demjanjuk with that of the Jewish inmates of Sóbibor (Probst, 2011). On the Demjanjuk process, see Benz, 2011.
11. "L'vovskii deputat prognoziruie", 2011. Blue and white are the colors of Yanukovych's ruling Party of Regions.
12. Mykhal'chyshyn, 2009. PNF, *Partido Nazionale Fascista*, the National Fascist Party, was the political party of Benito Mussolini.

13. Olszański (2011): The number 88 is neo-Nazi code for the National Socialist salute *Heil Hitler*. Nachtigall was a OUN(b)-led Ukrainian battalion in German uniform which took part in mass shootings of Jews in the summer of 1941 (Rudling, 2011b: 191–212).
14. The elitist, self-defined *Intelligentzaristokrat* Ernst Jünger (1895–1998) is an unlikely role model for Mykhal'chyshyn's think tank, not at least because he abhorred the sort of rowdy, aggressive far-right street fighters Mykhal'chyshyn represents. When Goebbels in 1927 tried to enlist Jünger for the National Socialist project, he was sharply rebuked and criticized from the right (Neaman, 1999: 39, 118; Heidegren 1997: 94). Jünger also rejected Goebbels's 1927 offer to make him the Berlin member of the *Reichtag* for the NSDAP, arguing that "I rather write one single good poem than represent 60,000 idiots" (Hansegård, 1999).
15. On the conservative revolutionaries of 1920s and 1930s Weimar Germany, see Dahl, 1999: 56, 74–75; Heidegren, 1997.
16. On the Bandera monument, see Amar, 2011a; Rasevych, 2011.
17. There are also other indications of this. The pro-Yanukovich American Institute of Ukraine published two briefing papers condemning Party of Regions financial support for Svoboda (Jatras, 2011a, 2011b). Thanks to Taras Kuzio for these references.

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Analysing Fascist Discourse

European Fascism in Talk and Text

**Edited by Ruth Wodak and
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