

# OPPOSING NAZI GLORIFICATION AT HOME AND ABROAD

## INTRODUCTION

Seventy-five years after the liberation of Nazi death camps by the Allied Forces, combating Nazism remains an essential issue. In the interests of confronting antisemitism and promoting the Canadian values of human rights and personal dignity, we must remain steadfast in our commitment to wipe out expressions of Nazism wherever it takes root. Seeing that the frightful memories of the Holocaust endure among its survivors and in our collective memory, we should by the same token collectively aim to confront Nazism's enduring legacy.

**With this in mind, there are three areas that Canadian authorities should take decisive action on:**

- **The glorification of Nazism abroad**, including memorials and parades in celebration of Nazi collaborators.
- **The glorification of Nazism at home**, including monuments in honour of Nazi collaborators.
- **The investigation and deportation of all Nazi war criminals and collaborators in Canada**, including granting public access to filed-away historical records and the expulsion of Helmut Oberlander from Canadian soil.

These concerns are not confined to Jewish Canadians; they are shared by every Canadian who cares about justice. The threat of Nazi glorification gives rise to Holocaust distortion and a revival of antisemitism. Just as Canada played a meaningful role, together with the Allied Forces, fighting Nazism during World War II, it is imperative that we once again take leadership on this issue on the world stage.

## THE CONTEXT

### THE GLORIFICATION OF NAZISM ABROAD

In 2018, B'nai Brith Canada asked Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to speak out publicly to condemn all attempts to glorify Nazi sympathizers or collaborators, whether governments, military units, fascist organizations or individuals.<sup>1</sup> This has become an urgent issue in Europe during recent years, particularly within Ukraine and the Baltic states—countries which have overlooked or ignored certain military units, groups, and individuals' roles as Nazi collaborators.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/mostyn-as-holocaust-memories-fade-nazi-glorification-must-be-resisted>

Parades are routinely held in Ukraine to honour Stepan Bandera, a Ukrainian nationalist figure who is credibly accused of leading groups responsible for the slaughter of thousands of Jews and Poles during World War II.<sup>2</sup> Ukraine also recently renamed a major boulevard in honour of Bandera, and the Lviv regional council declared 2019 the “*Year of Bandera.*”<sup>3</sup> In Latvia, parades are held to honour the Latvian Legion army brigade—the Latvian branch of the German SS, created on direct orders from Adolf Hitler.<sup>4</sup> In Lithuania meanwhile, local Nazi collaborators are also openly commemorated. Nazi Puppet Prime Minister Juozas Ambrazevicius-Brazaitis has a lecture hall and sculpture named in his memory,<sup>5</sup> while nationalist army figure Jonas Noreika has had a plaque created and street named in his honour.<sup>6</sup> This is despite each of these individuals playing an active role in perpetuating the Holocaust in Lithuania.

The fact that these figures are glorified for their nationalistic efforts against the Soviet Army does not change the reality of their involvement in the atrocities of the Holocaust. Sadly, rather than heed to that message, officials in these countries have dismissed research about Nazi collaborators as slanderous Russian disinformation campaigns designed to show their countries in a bad light.<sup>7</sup> This is why B'nai Brith has urged our political leaders to speak out more forthrightly with our NATO allies when we see troubling instances of the glorification of governments, military units, or individuals who sympathized and supported the Nazis.

*“We must challenge all those who distort the historical record on governments, military units or organizations that fought with, supported or sympathized with the Nazis during World War II,”* B'nai Brith Canada CEO Michael Mostyn wrote in his 2018 letter to Prime Minister Trudeau. *“This includes government leaders who acquiesce in, or fail to condemn, a process of Nazi glorification that amounts to Holocaust distortion.”*

## THE GLORIFICATION OF NAZISM AT HOME

Canada is not immune to grappling with instances of Nazi glorification. There are several disturbing examples of monuments here at home that either ignore or obfuscate their subjects' roles as Nazi collaborators.

In Edmonton, a bronze bust of Roman Shukhevych, a commander of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, stands outside a Ukrainian youth complex in Edmonton. He is venerated for fighting in support of Ukrainian independence, notwithstanding his shocking role in the slaughter of Ukrainian Jews during the Holocaust. Between 1940-1943 he was the commander of the Nazi-allied Nachtingall battalion in Ukraine and later the Schutzmannschaft battalion in Belarus, both of which rounded up and murdered

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<sup>2</sup> <https://torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/mostyn-as-holocaust-memories-fade-nazi-glorification-must-be-resisted>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> <http://espritdecorps.ca/perspectives-1/hitlers-foot-soldiers-latvias-nazis-are-the-pride-of-the-country-says-defence-minister>

<sup>5</sup> <https://torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/mostyn-as-holocaust-memories-fade-nazi-glorification-must-be-resisted>

<sup>6</sup> <http://defendinghistory.com/posthumous-remaking-of-a-holocaust-perpetrator-in-lithuania-why-is-jonas-noreika-a-national-hero-by-evaldas-balciunas/31531>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.saltwire.com/news/canada/jewish-groups-warn-about-nazi-glorification-in-eastern-european-nations-402696/>

members of the local Jewish population.<sup>8</sup> The Simon Wiesenthal Center estimates that his battalions were responsible for the murder of several thousand Jews under the guise of “*fighting partisans*”.<sup>9</sup> The fact that a monument in his honour has stood in Edmonton since the mid-1970s relatively unnoticed is a gross abdication of our national duty to condemn the glorification of Nazism and all forms of antisemitism.

Another monument in Edmonton at St. Michael's Cemetery and a monument in Oakville each memorialize the Ukrainian 14th SS Galizien Division. According to top Holocaust scholars, the unit was unquestionably responsible for the murder of wide swaths of Jews across different operations in Europe.<sup>10</sup> While the Galizien Division is positively viewed by some Ukrainians who see them as liberators fighting the Soviets, their active involvement in Nazi atrocities (including the murder of thousands of civilians) is unambiguous.<sup>11</sup> In light of this, the Simon Wiesenthal Center has warned about efforts by Ukraine and the Ukrainian community in Canada to deny or obfuscate Galizien Division's ties to the Nazis.<sup>12</sup>

These various monuments, and the reverence with which they are viewed by some, contribute to the distortion of the Holocaust. It is necessary that we correct the historical record with respect to this issue.

## THE INVESTIGATION AND DEPORTATION OF ALL NAZI WAR CRIMINALS AND COLLABORATORS IN CANADA

An estimated 2000-5000 Nazi war criminals successfully fled into Canada following World War II.<sup>13</sup> Yet, after a renewed effort to investigate and track down each remaining Nazi war criminal in Canada during the 1980s and 1990s, few have been deported.

This includes the last remaining known Nazi living in Canada: Helmut Oberlander. The now-96 year old was an interpreter for a Nazi death squad that murdered tens of thousands of Jewish civilians during World War II, and efforts have been under way for more than two decades to strip him of his Canadian citizenship because he lied about his past and gained entry to Canada illegally.<sup>14</sup> His case has been tied up in the legal system for over two decades, and despite the Supreme Court of Canada denying his appeal in 2019 of a court decision to strip him of his citizenship, he remains living in Canada.<sup>15</sup> Not only that, but he is engaged in another legal challenge at the Immigration and Refugee Board to stave off possible deportation.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [https://portal.research.lu.se/ws/files/17219693/22116257\\_005\\_01\\_S003\\_text.pdf](https://portal.research.lu.se/ws/files/17219693/22116257_005_01_S003_text.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <http://espritdecorps.ca/in-the-news/why-is-canada-defending-nazi-ss-atrocities-governments-can-re-visit-history-not-revise-it>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.friendsofsimonwiesenthalcenter.com/news/canada-maintains-disappointing-record-in-dealing-with-nazi-war-criminals>

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.bnaibrith.ca/supreme\\_court\\_denies\\_nazi\\_s\\_deportation\\_appeal](https://www.bnaibrith.ca/supreme_court_denies_nazi_s_deportation_appeal)

<sup>15</sup> <https://torontosun.com/news/local-news/mandel-enough-is-enough-deport-canadas-last-known-nazi>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

B'nai Brith has been at the forefront of efforts to remove this war criminal from Canada and has long advocated for the federal government to finally take decisive action against Mr. Oberlander and deport him back to Europe. At the same time, we believe that Mr. Oberlander may not be the last remaining Nazi in Canada, and it is critical that we examine the historical record to deal with any potential remaining war criminals.

This is why B'nai Brith has called for greater access to Canadian historical records and files dealing with war criminals in Canada, including the records of the Deschenes Commission (the Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals in Canada). The Commission investigated hundreds of possible war criminals in Canada and completed their inquiry with only 20 “*strong possibilities*”, eventually stripping around half of that list of their Canadian citizenship but deporting none.<sup>17</sup> At this late stage, we ask: why has the Commission’s report never been publicly released and what information is being withheld from the public? No matter how many years have passed, achieving justice for Holocaust war crimes remains a vital aim.

*“No matter how many years have passed since the Holocaust, what happened to the victims can never be forgotten or let go,”* said B'nai Brith CEO Michael Mostyn. *“As a beacon of human rights and morality in the world, Canada must demonstrate in no uncertain terms that Nazis are still not welcome here.”*

## B'NAI BRITH CANADA'S POSITION

### THE GLORIFICATION OF NAZIS

- **We condemn all attempts to glorify Nazi sympathizers or collaborators**, whether military units, fascist organizations or individuals. This is why we focus, in our work with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), on countering modern-day Holocaust distortion or ‘obfuscation’.
- **We are witness to parades and demonstrations in European cities today**, which glorify or gloss over the role of military units known to have supported or sympathized with the Nazis. We will continue to raise concerns over these manifestations and how they distort the events of the Holocaust.
- **We must challenge all those who distort the historical record** on governments, military units or organizations that fought with, supported or sympathized with the Nazis during World War II. The fact is that some organizations and their leaders, now glorified for their fight against the Soviet army, were also involved in atrocities against Jewish civilians or embraced ideologies that were deeply antisemitic and perpetuated social hostility towards their Jewish populations.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2018/08/23/handling-of-nazi-war-crimes-files-a-national-shame.html>

- **This is why we reject any efforts to constrain historians and the media** from researching what happened and publicly explaining it in an objective manner.
- **We do not believe the Canadian government is defending or denying the role** of those who sympathized with or collaborated with the Nazis. We do believe the government can speak out more forthrightly – both privately and publicly - with its partners and allies when they see efforts to glorify World War II military units, or individuals, who sympathized with or supported the Nazis. That is why we wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister in July, 2018.
- **There is no place for monuments that glorify military units, political organizations or individuals that sympathized with or collaborated with the** Nazis in World War II in our society. B'nai Brith Canada consistently will call for such monuments to be removed and for comprehensive education efforts to accurately portray the historical record of those individuals or organizations involved.
- **The key to combatting modern-day Holocaust distortion or obfuscation is education,** particularly on the dangers posed by modern day glorification of pro-Nazi sympathizers or supporters. That is why we support IHRA and why B'nai Brith Canada has its own Holocaust education programme. IHRA has just issued a special statement condemning attempts to rehabilitate the reputations of persons who were complicit in the crimes of the Holocaust and we will be encouraging awareness of this statement.

## THE INVESTIGATION AND DEPORTATION OF WAR CRIMINALS

- **B'nai Brith Canada believes it essential for the continual investigation and prosecution of Nazi war criminals** and, where circumstances require it, to strip such war criminals of their citizenship and immediately remove them from Canada.
- **We call on the federal government to delay no further** the immediate removal of Nazi Helmut Oberlander from Canada.
- **B'nai Brith Canada calls for greater access to Canadian historical records and files** dealing with war criminals in Canada, including the records of the Deschenes Commission. We ask for complete transparency in releasing these historical records related to such individuals in Canada.