

How Pre-World War II Ukrainian Fascists Pioneered Brutal Terror Techniques; Later Improved By CIA, Now Ironically Taught to Descendants

Part I of a 3-Part Series on Ukrainian Fascism and the U.S.

By [Evan Reif](#)

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The history of Ukraine is long and rich. For millennia, the fertile lands of Ukraine with their black earth and rich seas have been highly contested. From the Scythians of antiquity, the Varangians who would eventually become the Rurikids and the first Tsars, to the Mongols, the Hetmanate and the Ukrainian SSR, it is impossible to truly understand the situation in Ukraine today without some historical background.

Out of all those who have lived, fought and died in Ukraine, one group stands out for their importance to the events of today. The fascist terrorists, bandits and collaborators known as the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN).

I do not intend for this to be a comprehensive history of the OUN. Rather, I want to pull on one thread that directly links the terrorists of the past to those of the present. For this, some background is needed.

The beginning: Yevhen and the UVO

“Terror will be not only a means of self-defense, but also a form of agitation, which will affect friend and foe alike, regardless of whether they desire it or not.” -UVO brochure from 1929

Yevhen Konovalts, a former Austro-Hungarian Army Lieutenant, founded the OUN in 1929 in Vienna, Austria, from the ashes of his previous organization, the [Ukrainian Military Organization](#) (UVO). The UVO emerged in 1920 from groups of right-wing Austro-Hungarian veterans of WWI who had fought for the short-lived Ukrainian People’s Republic in the early interwar period. The UVO operated mostly in western Ukraine, at the time occupied by Poland, and waged an extensive terrorist campaign against the Polish and Soviets.

Here, in the interest of fairness, it should be mentioned that the Polish regime at the time was a [far-right government](#) which had implemented an unpopular series of land reform and language laws. That said, the UVO's genocidal response to that cannot be justified. The UVO attacked and killed far more innocent Polish civilians than it ever did soldiers or police. The group carried out numerous bombings, assassinations (both attempted and successful) and in 1921 even invaded the Ukrainian SSR, in an ultimately failed "[liberation raid](#)."

The same year, Konovalets would begin official collaboration with German intelligence, meeting with Weimar military intelligence commander [Friedrich Gempp](#). From 1921 to 1928, the UVO would receive several million marks in aid from Weimar Germany. Pressure from the Polish and Soviet governments led to the relocation of UVO leaders to Berlin, where Weimar intelligence would begin their training. After the Nazis came to power, nothing changed, with Konovalets and the Abwehr continuing their collaboration.

The UVO viewed terrorism as an integral part of their struggle to such an extent that they even killed moderate nationalists such as [Ivan Babij](#) for not being extreme enough. They operated mostly as bandits, a tactic which they would never abandon. For example, in 1922, the UVO launched about 2,300 attacks on Polish farms, and only 17 on Polish military and police. The UVO would raid farms for supplies, kill the owners and workers if present, and burn the crops when they were finished. Later, flying brigades were founded to "expropriate" Polish property, often turning to bank robbing to finance the organization.

The UVO would continue along the same lines for years, carrying out terrorist attacks and bandit raids with varying levels of success (they were nearly wiped out by Polish police on several occasions) until, in 1929, a merger of five Ukrainian nationalist groups led to the foundation of the OUN.

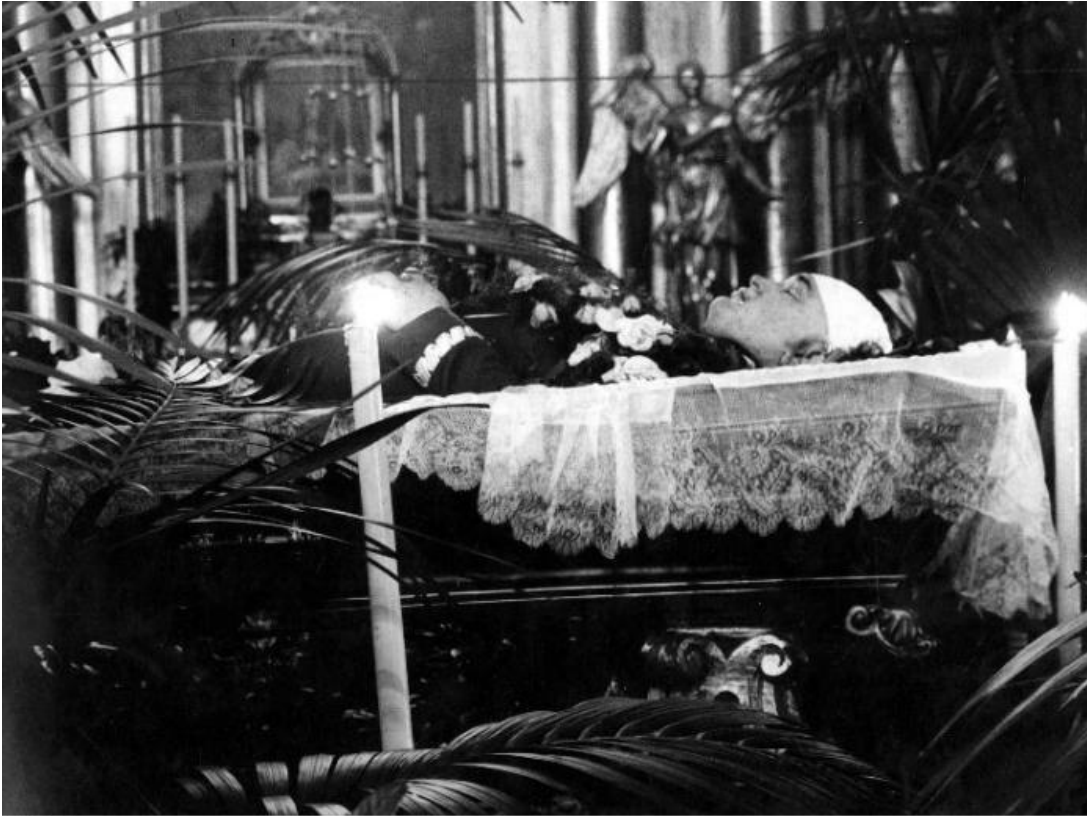
Stepan Bandera takes charge: How the OUN got its B

"The OUN values the life of its members, values it highly; but—our idea in our understanding is so grand, that when we talk about its realization, not single individuals, nor hundreds, but millions of victims have to be sacrificed in order to realize it." -Stepan Bandera

After the merger, Konovalets would fall to the wayside as younger, more radical members would take the reins of the OUN. The UVO would technically continue to exist, but its role was drastically diminished in the new organization. One of these young leaders was Stepan Bandera. Bandera was the son of a Catholic priest from Lviv and a long-time fascist, starting as a boy in the Plast movement (a fascist scouting group) before moving on to the OUN.

Bandera would quickly climb the ranks and become chief propaganda officer in 1931, before being named head of the national executive in 1933.

Bandera was a dedicated yet psychotic fascist who tortured himself from a young age to build up resilience and a rabid, violent anti-Semite, anti-communist, anti-Hungarian and anti-Polish. He was also a revanchist, seeking to reclaim even lands Ukrainians had not held for centuries, and purge them of all non-Ukrainians. Bandera would quickly radicalize the OUN even further, and his eye for talent meant the OUN could become both larger and more effective. This would become apparent in 1934, when the OUN-B carried out its most brazen attack yet, assassinating Polish foreign minister [Bronisław Pieracki](#) at close range with a pistol.



Pieracki lying in state. [Source: [Polish National Archives](#)]

The Polish authorities eventually caught Bandera and sentenced him to death along with other OUN leaders. The death sentence was commuted to life, and Bandera would remain in prison until he was released in 1939 when the Nazis invaded Poland. It is unclear who exactly released him, the Nazis themselves, or his comrades after the jailers fled the invading Nazis. I do not believe the distinction is important: His release was because of the Nazis even if not by them.

After his release, the Nazis would begin to prepare for Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the USSR with Bandera and the OUN set to play a major role.

On the instructions of top Nazi brass, including Hitler, Abwehr Chief Wilhelm Canaris and Generals Wilhelm Keitel and Alfred Jodl, the Abwehr would actively employ Bandera and the OUN starting in 1940. The goal of this collaboration was not only to attack the Soviets, but also to have a brutal and efficient force to carry out reprisals and atrocities against civilians.



German tanks advancing toward a Soviet village during Operation Barbarossa. [Source: coffeordie.com]

To quote from the testimony of [General Erwin von Lahousen](#) at the Nuremburg trials:

“COL. AMEN: In order that the record may be perfectly clear, exactly what measures did Keitel say had already been agreed upon?”

LAHOUSEN: According to the Chief of the OKW, the bombardment of Warsaw and the shooting of the categories of people which I mentioned before had been agreed upon already.

COL. AMEN: And what were they?

LAHOUSEN: Mainly the Polish intelligentsia, the nobility, the clergy, and, of course, the Jews.

COL. AMEN: What, if anything, was said about possible cooperation with a Ukrainian group?

LAHOUSEN: Canaris was ordered by the Chief of the OKW, who stated that he was transmitting a directive which he had apparently received from Ribbentrop since he spoke of it in connection with the political plans of the Foreign Minister, to instigate in the Galician Ukraine an uprising aimed at the extermination of Jews and Poles.

COL. AMEN: At what point did Hitler and Jodl enter this meeting?

LAHOUSEN: Hitler and Jodl entered either after the discussions I have just described or towards the conclusion of the whole discussion of this subject, when Canaris had already begun his report on the situation in the West; that is, on the news which had meanwhile come in on the reaction of the French Army at the West Wall.

COL. AMEN: And what further discussions took place then?

LAHOUSEN: After this discussion in the private carriage of the Chief of the OKW, Canaris left the coach and had another short talk with Ribbentrop, who, returning to the subject of the Ukraine, told him once more that the uprising should be so staged that all farms and dwellings of the Poles should go up in flames, and all Jews be killed.

COL. AMEN: Who said that?

LAHOUSEN: The Foreign Minister of that time, Ribbentrop, said that to Canaris. I was standing next to him.

COL. AMEN: Is there any slightest doubt in your mind about that?

LAHOUSEN: No. I have not the slightest doubt about that. I remember with particular clarity the somewhat new phrasing that "all farms and dwellings should go up in flames." Previously there had only been talk of "liquidation" and "elimination."

Abwehr Col. [Erwin Stolz](#) would clarify who Lahousen was talking about:

"In carrying out the above-mentioned instructions of Keitel and Jodl, I contacted Ukrainian National Socialists who were in the German Intelligence Service and other members of the nationalist fascist groups, whom I roped in to carry out the tasks as set out above.

"In particular, instructions were given by me personally to the leaders of the Ukrainian Nationalists, Melnik (code name 'Consul I' and Bandera, to organize immediately upon Germany's attack on the Soviet Union, and to provoke demonstrations in the Ukraine in order to disrupt the immediate rear of the Soviet armies, and also to convince international public opinion of alleged disintegration of the Soviet rear.

We also prepared special diversionist groups by Abwehr II for subversive activities in the Baltic republics of the Soviet Union."

While there were no objections to collaboration with the Nazis, the OUN was deeply divided about what to do after. The leader of the OUN at this time, Andriy Melnyk, favored a more moderate stance, remaining more subservient to the Nazis.

Bandera disagreed, favoring a revolutionary stance and a declaration of Ukrainian independence. The disagreement turned into a violent schism, with Bandera taking the most radical members to form the OUN-B. Melnyk's group, diminished by splits and now under attack from Bandera, was quickly overtaken. OUN-M survived the war, but from this point on, Bandera controlled the Ukrainian fascist movement with little dissent.

Soon, the collaboration with the Abwehr would begin to bear its terrible fruit. Under the aegis of the Abwehr's commando battalion "Brandenburg" but under OUN command, two OUN units were formed, "Roland" and "Nightingale." The latter was under command of the infamous [Roman Shukhevych](#), a mass murderer who would later plan some of the worst OUN atrocities. There were also other OUN forces attached to both Wehrmacht and Gestapo units, mostly serving as interpreters and guides. Nightingale and Roland, along with Nazi forces, were sent to Lviv to carry out their bloody mission in 1941.

The Bloody Nightingale

“We are all UPA soldiers and all underground fighters in particular, and I am aware that sooner or later we will have to die in the fight against brutal force. But I assure you, we will not be afraid to die, because when we die, we will be aware that we will become a fertilizer of the Ukrainian land. This is our native land that needs a lot of fertilizer so that in the future a new Ukrainian generation will grow up on it, which will complete what we were not destined to complete.” – [Roman Shukhevych](#)



Roman Shukhevych on a Ukrainian postage stamp. [Source: wikipedia.org]

By 1943, Lviv had been under Polish or Austrian control since the 1300s. It was a city of around 500,000, over half of them Polish Catholics with a sizable Jewish minority of 100-160,000, with tens of thousands of those being refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe. The Ukrainian population was about 20%. The OUN wasted little time in changing that.

OUN forces entered the city with [specific orders](#) to exterminate the Jewish, Polish and Russian populations, a task that they would carry out with aplomb. First blood would go to the interpreters in the late hours of June 30th. Theirs was the dubious honor of the first massacre after the fall of Lviv. Namely, the abduction, torture and murder of suspected anti-Nazi Polish professors.

Working off OUN hit lists, Nazi and Ukrainian forces arrested the professors and their families, holding them in the dorms under torture for hours. All but one of them were executed, and after their deaths, their apartments were looted and occupied by SS and OUN officers.

Not to be shown up, [Nightingale would get to work](#) soon after. What happened in Lviv starting on June 30, 1941, should not be understood as *one* massacre but rather a series of them lasting over a month. Nightingale was one of the first two units to enter Lviv. Accompanied by elite Nazi mountain troops, Nightingale seized the hilltop castle, set up a headquarters and began to round up the local Jews, at first forcing them to clear the streets of bodies and bomb damage. Random murders and looting of Jewish homes and property accompanied this work on the first night.

In the morning, OUN infiltrators, defectors and sympathizers were mobilized and began the systematic violence against Jews alongside the Nazis. In the days preceding the attack, OUN propaganda leaflets were widely proliferated in Lviv telling the residents:

“Don’t throw away your weapons yet. Take them up. Destroy the enemy. ... Moscow, the Hungarians, the Jews—these are your enemies. [Destroy them.](#)”

It would seem many of them took that advice to heart. In the resulting pogrom, the Ukrainian nationalists brutalized thousands of Jews in broad daylight throughout the city.

They would force many women into the streets, where nationalists would strip them naked, rape and murder them. The men got off only a little better; many were savagely beaten in the streets with clubs and fists, as the throngs taunted and threw trash at them. Nazi reporters filmed and photographed much of this violence as it happened.

A Wehrmacht propaganda company took this image of a local man beating a Jew in the streets, for example. It served the purpose in papers and film broadcasts throughout Germany as evidence that the Nazis would and could carry out their long-planned and well-known extermination plans. On this day, anywhere from 2,000 to 5,000 Jews were wantonly slaughtered, virtually all of them by OUN and affiliated forces.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 1011-186-0180-12
Foto: Franke | Juni 1941

Jew being beaten in the streets. [Source: [wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1941_in_Poland)]

The Einsatzgruppen would arrive soon after. These were the professional killers, the elite squad of fascist executioners who had already “cleansed” countless cities, towns and villages throughout Poland and the USSR.

Going door to door, the Einsatzgruppen hunted and found their priority targets. In a somewhat orderly fashion, Einsatzgruppen men would march them to pre-dug pits, force them to their knees and execute them via gunshot. They would repeat the process for hours until approximately 3,000 Jews were dead. [Nightingale](#), the OUN militias and various other fascist collaborators were involved in every aspect of this massacre. Functioning as police, they would assist in loading Jews into trucks and driving them to stadiums to face mass

execution via machine gun.

These extermination operations would continue over days, along with systematically pillaging anything of value from the Jewish population. The Nazi accountants in Berlin demanded that subjugated people be economically exploited to the maximum extent, going so far as to remove fillings from their teeth, with much of the money going directly to German industrialists, who profited enormously from the Nazi labor and extermination programs.

Throughout this process, more than 4,000 were killed, many of them beaten to death with clubs. The value of everything stolen from the victims of this massacre and the many others like it will never be known.

Sadly, Nightingale and company were not yet finished.



Nightingale's victims during the Lviv pogrom. [Source: vintage.es]

On the 25th of July, Ukrainian forces would start another pogrom lasting about three days. Called the Pelitura days, after an assassinated Ukrainian leader, Ukrainian nationalists from the countryside marched into Lviv under the command of the OUN. Working off lists provided by the Ukrainian auxiliary police, nationalist forces would ferret out remaining Jews, Poles, Communists and other "undesirables."

In three days of bloodletting, about 2,000 were murdered, most of them hacked to pieces with farming tools. This sort of brutality would remain the calling card of Shukhevych and the OUN for its entire existence.

When the Red Army liberated Lviv in 1944, only 150,000 people remained and of those, only 800 were Jews. The OUN, Ukrainian auxiliaries and Nazis either killed the rest or arrested and deported them to Belzec concentration camp. There the Nazis would murder them all as part of "[Operation Reinhard](#)." Belzec was so efficient that fewer than a dozen survivors have

ever been identified.

From high above in the castle, the OUN leadership was not idle. As the slaughter continued in Lviv, Yaroslav Stetsko, the second in command of the OUN, a Lviv native and a militant fascist in his own right, declared an independent, Nazi-aligned [Ukrainian government](#). This would lay the groundwork for a more complicated chapter in the OUN's history.

The question of collaboration

"The newly formed Ukrainian state will work closely with the National-Socialist Greater Germany, under the leadership of its leader Adolf Hitler which is forming a new order in Europe and the world and is helping the Ukrainian People to free itself from Moscovite occupation.

The Ukrainian People's Revolutionary Army which has been formed on the Ukrainian lands, will continue to fight with the Allied German Army against Moscovite occupation for a sovereign and united State and a new order in the whole world.

Long live the Ukrainian Sovereign United Ukraine! Long live the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists! Long live the leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian people - STEPAN BANDERA. [GLORY TO UKRAINE!](#)"

-Yaroslav Stetsko, from the ["Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian State"](#)

Around here the nationalists will shoot back: Bandera was arrested! He went to the camps! He wasn't a fascist, or a Nazi! OUN fought the Nazis!



Heil Hitler! Heil Bandera! On the central gate of a town outside Lviv. [Source: [wikimedia.org](https://www.wikimedia.org)]

I do not find those arguments convincing for a number of reasons. First, Bandera and the OUN can stand on their own as [fascists](#). They were violently and militantly anti-Semitic, anti-Pole, anti-communist and ethno-nationalist. Even if they were not Nazi collaborators, their own terrible atrocities would leave a permanent black mark on their reputation.

Perhaps the most shocking of these was in [Volynia](#), an ethnic-cleansing campaign carried out over two years' fighting between Polish and OUN forces, reaching its crescendo with "Bloody Sunday." On July 11, 1943, an attack was launched by Roman Shukhevych on about 100 Polish settlements simultaneously. The UPA murdered some 8,000 Polish civilians that day, many of them shot or burned alive inside their churches while attending mass. The UPA would then spread out into the countryside to hunt down and kill—with axes, hammers and

knives—any who had escaped. The OUN would continue to slaughter the local population for more than two years, resulting in around 100,000 deaths, most of them women and children.



Exhumed remains of OUN victims, Poland, 1990s. [Source: kresky.pl]

This sort of brutality was very typical for the OUN. Moshe Maltz, a Ukrainian Jew in hiding from the Banderites would make note of it in his journal, later [published](#) as his memoir.

“Bandera men ... are not discriminating about who they kill; they are gunning down the populations of entire villages.... Since there are hardly any Jews left to kill, the Bandera gangs have turned on the Poles. They are literally hacking Poles to pieces. Every day ... you can see the bodies of Poles, with wires around their necks, floating down the river Bug.”

Therefore, the OUN does not need Hitler to make them look bad. Secondly, they were Nazi collaborators.

Several months after the declaration of independence, which the Nazis did not accept, tensions would rise to such an extent that the Nazis arrested Bandera, Stetsko and other leaders. After a period of house arrest, they were transferred to Sachsenhausen concentration camp in 1943.

Bandera’s stay was not typical, [however](#). Bandera had a two-room suite with paintings and rugs, was allowed to have conjugal visits with his wife, performed no forced labor, wore no uniform, was exempt from roll call, ate with the guards and did not lock his cell door [at night](#).

The Nazis [released](#) Bandera in 1944 after a meeting with Otto Skorzeny, Hitler’s top commando, to carry out a campaign of terrorism against the advancing Red Army. The Nazis could have killed Bandera and Stetsko at any time in the interim, but they did not. Rather,

they made a great and successful effort to recruit them.

While the OUN would take some action against the Nazis, they would do so only briefly and half-heartedly. In 1942 there was virtually no fighting at all.

In early 1943 that would change, and there was some fighting in western Ukraine. In keeping with their reputation as bandits, OUN would mostly raid farms and small settlements, burning and murdering as they went. Most of these attacks, carried out with the OUN's typical brutality, resulted in more civilian dead than military.

In the year of fighting the OUN killed around 12,000 "Germans." Only 700-1,000 of them were [Wehrmacht](#); the remainder were civilians, either in Nazi administration or simply farmers and peasants in territory under Nazi control. Indeed, according to Soviet partisan reports of the time, the OUN only engaged with Nazi soldiers when necessary: *"Nationalists do not engage in sabotage activities; they only engage in battle with the Germans where the Germans mock the Ukrainian population and when the Germans attack them."*

The Nazis, planning to exterminate both groups eventually, would capitalize on the situation by transferring Polish collaborator units to the region. These, along with Hungarian auxiliaries, did the bulk of the fighting against the OUN.

However, the Soviet victory at Stalingrad scared both the Nazis and the OUN, forcing negotiations and a cooling of tension. At their third council in late 1943, the OUN leadership reaffirmed the Soviets as their primary enemy and ended active efforts against the Nazis. Some skirmishes between the Nazis and OUN would continue until 1944, but it was no longer [significant fighting](#).

To quote historian [Russ Bellant](#):

"The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists in 1943 under German sponsorship organized a multinational force to fight on behalf of the retreating German army. After the battle of Stalingrad in '43 the Germans felt a heightened need to get more allies, and so the Romanian Iron Guard, the Hungarian Arrow Cross, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and others with military formations in place to assist came together and formed the united front called the Committee of Subjugated Nations and again worked on behalf of the German military. In 1946, they renamed it the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations, ABN. Stetsko was the leader of that until he died in 1986."



Ukrainian auxiliary police executing a mother and child in Miropol, USSR, 1941. [Source: [static01/nyt.com](http://static01.nyt.com)]

It is tempting to think of the OUN as only being its leaders, but the reality is the OUN was always comprised of thousands of mostly anonymous rank-and-file fighters. Many of these fighters would drift back and forth from nationalist militias to the Nazis and back.

It was [these “police” units](#) which would do most of the dirty work of what the Nazis called “security warfare.” This was little more than a euphemism for the terrorization and mass murder of any who opposed Nazi rule. Abwehr [commando](#) units also gave another outlet for OUN fighters to collaborate and were used almost entirely to pacify resistance movements.

The infamous SS Galicia Division was also formed in 1943, and the overlap between this division and the OUN was extensive. Despite extensive attempts to whitewash their reputation, Galicia was [as criminal](#) as you [would expect](#) for [SS](#). Marches and monuments in honor of this SS unit are common in western Ukraine today.



Ukrainian fascists marching under the logo of the SS Galicia Division, 2018. [Source: ria.ru]

“Russian Ukraine cannot be compared to Austrian Galicia... The Austrian-Galician Ruthenians are closely intertwined with the Austrian state. Therefore, in Galicia it is possible to allow the SS to form one division from the local population.”-Adolf Hitler, 1942.

Most of this debate is pointless, however, as the Ukrainians themselves decisively settled this question in 1993. Under the direction of the [Ukrainian government](#), led by then president [Leonid Kravchuk](#), the SBU (Ukrainian state security) was ordered to investigate the extent of the OUN’s collaboration with the Nazis. Kravchuk intended to begin the rehabilitation of the OUN, and wanted historical justification to do so.

He would not get it.

To quote from their findings:

“The archives contain materials, trophy documents of the OUN-UPA and German special services, which testify only to minor skirmishes between the UPA units and the Germans in 1943. No significant offensive or defensive operations, large-scale battles were recorded in the documents. The tactics of the struggle of the UPA units with the Germans in this period was reduced to attacks on posts, small military units, defense of their bases, ambushes on the road.” -[The Security Service of Ukraine, “On the activities of the OUN-UPA,” 7-3-1993](#)

As I have previously outlined, there was no fighting at all in 1942 and by 1944 the OUN had officially ended armed struggle against the Nazis. Therefore, since the OUN hardly fought the Nazis in 1943, that would mean they hardly fought the Nazis at all.

In light of this, perhaps the former comedian [Zelensky](#) needs better jokes.

The Trident and the Gladius:

“ABN were the best commercial hitmen you ever heard of.” -[L. Fletcher Prouty](#), Chief of

Special Operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Kennedy

Bandera and the OUN would remain [thralls of the Nazis](#) until the end of the war. The clearest evidence of this is that Yaroslav Stetsko was in a Nazi convoy American forces strafed in 1945, very nearly killing him.

The OUN would continue to carry out terrorist attacks in western Ukraine until the 1950s in some form or fashion; however, according to the KGB, the OUN was incapable of replenishing losses. Between this and active measures against it, the OUN was broken as a combat organization around 1954.

Roman Shukhevych's death in a 1950 raid by Soviet forces represented a major blow to the UPA from which they could not recover.

The OUN was in desperate need of new patrons, and they wasted little time in finding them. In 1944, the OUN along with other nationalist groups would form the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council, or UHVR. Its members were the usual suspects of OUN-affiliated organizations. The President was Ivan Hrinioch, a former chaplain for Nightingale.

The foreign minister was Mykola Lebed, head of the infamous OUN [secret police](#) and a man the U.S. Army called a "well-known sadist and collaborator of the Germans" (he would later become a collaborator for the [CIA](#)).

These two, along with UPA liaison officer Yuri Lopatinski embarked on a mission to the Vatican that same year, seeking support from Western governments. It is unclear exactly what came of this meeting, but it [is proven](#) that the British began to support the group at around this time.

As he had done with the OUN before, Bandera would quickly cause a violent schism within the UHVR. This became open in 1947 between Bandera/Stetsko and Lebed/Hrinioch on the other over the issue of east Ukraine. East Ukraine is mostly Russian, and it had always been a major weakness for the violently anti-Russian OUN.

Bandera insisted upon not only a single-party dictatorship (which he would lead), but also a pure Ukrainian ethno state, purged of any Russian influence. Lebed and Hrinioch believed that in order for the movement to succeed, it was necessary to include eastern Ukrainians.

For this, Bandera would expel them in 1948. This would eventually lead to Bandera's downfall, as it led the CIA to believe he was far too extreme and too unwilling to compromise to be a useful agent.

Bandera had significant prestige in the fascist underground; however, his years of violently attacking rivals meant many would never work with him. The CIA wanted a united front and understood that could not happen with Bandera at the helm.

There are still some gaps in the timeline of the early post-war period. However, recent document declassifications have led to a better understanding of Bandera and the OUN's role as CIA and Western agents.



Plaque marking the former home of Yaroslav Stetsko in Munich. [Source: [wikimedia.org](https://www.wikimedia.org)]

What we can say [for sure](#) is this.

Very soon after the war, U.S. Army Counterintelligence found Bandera hiding from the Soviets in the American occupation zone. We know this due to declassified KGB documents detailing a failed special operation to kidnap Bandera in 1946. This was only attempted after a year of failed negotiations to have Bandera extradited for his crimes.

Bandera was living, from at least as early as 1946, in Munich. There, he worked under the protection of and in close collaboration with [Reinhard Gehlen](#), the Nazi spymaster turned [CIA agent](#) and future head of West German intelligence.

Gehlen was a totally unrepentant Nazi who covertly operated the infamous “ratlines” which would help countless Nazis escape justice to American-allied countries. He did this with the full support and backing of the CIA, which sought to use the men as assets. In 1946 alone, Gehlen was paid about [\\$3.5 million](#) and employed 50 people, 40 of whom were former SS. Among those Gehlen helped escape were [Adolf Eichmann](#) and Otto Skorzeny.

Early on, Bandera and the OUN (or rather, the SB, the secret police formed by Lebed) worked as assassins for MI6 inside the Displaced Persons camps. SB targeted Communists, rival fascists and anyone who knew too much about the OUN’s bloody past. Thousands of refugees met their end at OUN hands in what the West called “Operation Ohio.” They would earn a reputation as frighteningly efficient hitmen, and it was here Lebed earned his codename Devil.

In 1946, Bandera and Stetsko founded the Bloc of Anti-Bolshevik Nations (ABN) in Munich. A

sort of fascist international, it combined far-right anti-Communist terrorist groups from around the world into one, well-funded front. Yaroslav Stetsko was the leader; however, his close friendship with Bandera meant that he was [not acceptable](#) to the CIA at that time.

While Bandera had some initial contact with the OSS (precursor to the CIA), they quickly came to view him as far [too extreme](#), operationally dangerous (he would often refuse to use encrypted communications) and recalcitrant. Therefore, Bandera primarily worked with MI6 while the CIA backed Lebed. The situation between the two eventually became so tense that the CIA intervened to strong-arm MI6 into dropping Bandera as an agent in 1954.

He was removed from OUN leadership in the OUN conference of that year, to be replaced with “reformists.” That said, the CIA and Germans also protected Bandera against several assassination attempts. At various times he was guarded either by Americans from the Army CIC, or by Gehlen’s SS thugs. The CIA, on at least one occasion, radioed classified information to West German police in order to protect Bandera. While they were no longer willing to throw their full weight behind Bandera, they also did not want him to become a martyr.

The CIA would not get its wish. From 1954 on, their strategy appears to have been simply starving the beast. The Americans wanted Bandera gone, the idea being that he would be removed from leadership and cut off from funding,

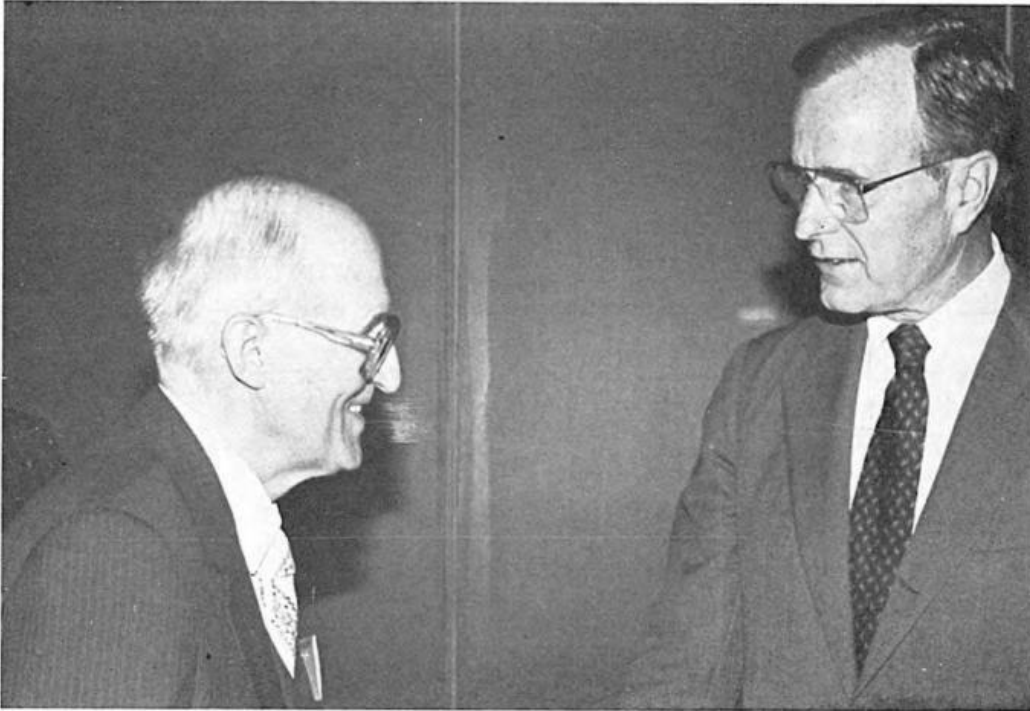
Bandera’s career would simply wither and die. Bandera would continue to work in some fashion for Gehlen for the rest of his life; however, his role and profile were intentionally diminished. Throughout all of this, the KGB had never given up. They had repeatedly asked the Americans to extradite Bandera as a war criminal since the end of the war, but were met with complete refusal. Therefore, the KGB made repeated attempts on Bandera’s life. We know of failed attempts in 1947, 1948, 1952 and 1959.

A second attempt in 1959 would finally succeed. On October 15, 1959, KGB agent Bohdan Stashynsky surreptitiously entered Bandera’s home in Munich and shot Bandera in the face using a specially designed poison spray gun.

Bandera collapsed, bleeding from the mouth, and cracked the base of his skull on some stairs. At first, the cause of death was ruled a stroke, resulting in a fall. Further investigation revealed traces of potassium cyanide in Bandera’s system; however, until the defection and arrest of Stashynsky in 1961, it was unclear who had poisoned him. A leading suspect was [Theodor Oberländer](#), a West German politician and ex-Nazi who had served as political officer for Nightingale in 1941.

With Bandera marginalized and then dead, CIA restrictions against ABN were lifted and Yaroslav Stetsko would move into a greatly expanded active role as a CIA collaborator. He would excel at the role for the rest of his life.

25TH OBSERVANCE OF CAPTIVE NATIONS WEEK
AND 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF ABN



Vice President George Bush and Yaroslav Stetsko, former Prime Minister of Ukraine.

Source: twitter.com

In future articles, I will elaborate on the history between Stetsko and the CIA at least as far as the events of the Maidan coup, where a clear link exists.

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Evan Reif was born in a small mining town in Western South Dakota as the son of a miner and a librarian. His father's struggles as a union organizer, and the community's struggles with de-industrialization, nurtured Evan's deep interest in left-wing politics. This, along with his love of history, made him a staunch anti-fascist. When not writing, researching or working, Evan enjoys fishing, shooting, and Chinese cooking. Evan can be reached at wharghoul@gmail.com.

Featured image: Meet the CIA's eager students—star pupils in the art of terrorizing civilian populations: Organization of Ukrainian Nationalist (OUN) partisans recruited by the CIA to fight against the Soviets. [Source: rbth.com]

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