Western Media Failures Regarding Ukraine. An Irish Historical Perspective

By Shane Quinn
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Relating to the situation in Ukraine, it can be revealing to look at perceptions of its ongoing developments from abroad. Even to non-military observers located hundreds of miles away, it has become increasingly clear as the current conflict continues unabated that this heavily favours the Russian military, with its much greater reserves of manpower and equipment than the NATO-supplied AFU.

In the western European state of the Republic of Ireland, where the author lives beside the capital city Dublin, this island nation has traditionally had friendly ties with the United States; in large part because of Ireland's position on the map, at the very edge of western Europe where begins the Atlantic Ocean.

Across the Atlantic, the next countries within reach of Ireland are the US and Canada. In the not too distant past hundreds of thousands of Irish people, out of feelings of necessity, emigrated in ships to North America. Often it was those faced with difficult choices such as in the Great Famine years, 1845–52, during which more than 1 million Irish citizens perished out of a total population in 1845 of 8.5 million. (1)

Famine Memorial in Dublin (Licensed under the Public Domain)

For many the scenario was either starvation or moving overseas. The Irish population has still not fully recovered from the Great Famine, and today on the whole island (Republic and Northern Ireland) there is 7 million people.

The self-serving policies of Ireland's powerful neighbour, Britain, made worse the effects of the famine, in which the Irish public was overly reliant on a single food source, the potato, whose crops in Ireland were failing in the mid-19th century. This was because of an airborne fungus-like microorganism that had originated in Latin America, and which was transported in vessels over the Atlantic to Europe (2). London could have reduced some of the suffering by importing food products to Ireland, but chose to act in a different manner.

The British authorities were obviously not the direct cause of the famine itself. A previous famine, that struck Ireland in the early 1740s, killed up to 20% of the country's population, which was caused mainly by prolonged extreme cold which wiped out crops; per capita the "Great Frost Famine" killed more Irish residents than the later disaster.

Famines occur regularly in human history and have affected various nations, including major powers like Russia. The Irish and Russians may have more in common than they realise. The two countries have experienced hardships through famines and the actions of expansionist forces – Russia being subjected to invasion from the armies of conquerors such as Napoleon and Hitler, and Ireland suffering from the actions of British monarchies.

With present day events while the British, like the Americans and some other NATO states, have been fervent in providing military and technical assistance to Kiev, most Irish people prefer their country to maintain its normal position of strict neutrality. A survey from April

2022 revealed that 66% of Irish voters want the country to preserve its neutrality, and to resist joining entities like NATO. (3)

A majority of Irish (55%) also do not want the country to send military aid to Kiev, a policy which has continued. There have not been concerted displays of public support for the Zelensky regime, or for the Western-backed AFU. The absence of Ukrainian flags along Irish streets, including in Dublin's many suburbs, tells its own story.

Having said that, the Irish on occasion have voiced considerable sympathy for Ukrainians, including majority support (70%) for Western sanctions (4). This can at least partially be explained by lack of historical awareness of the Ukraine crisis, and mainstream media bias.

The Irish press is concentrated mostly in the hands of a few liberal elites, who by their nature have positive attitudes towards US hegemony. There is little media criticism and scrutiny of NATO expansion to Russia's frontiers, which has been an overwhelming cause behind the tensions regarding Ukraine, along with the Ukrainian army's assaults against the Donbass region which have been taking place for years. The long-standing media failures relate to Irish and Western media in general.

The media censorship ensures that Irish citizens are poorly informed of Ukraine's actual history, which must be the case in other western European countries and in North America. Ukraine is of course historically a Russian territory, dating back many generations into Russia's long history as a state. The mass media in Ireland, supported by the liberals and globalists, also avoid encouraging debate concerning the neo-Nazi ideology present in Ukraine, along with the terrorist activities relating for example to far-right Ukrainian units such as the Azov, Aidar, Dnipro and Donbas battalions, etc.

The lack of discussion on these issues has meant that the neo-Nazism/terrorism, linked to the regime in Kiev, is not forefront in the public mind. However, **Paul Murphy**, an Irish member of parliament (MP) with the political alliance People Before Profit–Solidarity, has publicly criticised neo-Nazism in Ukraine, specifically the Azov Battalion which he described as "an openly racist fascist regiment" (5). Murphy refused to applaud Zelensky when the latter spoke online to the Irish parliament (the Dáil) in April 2022.

Also remaining silent when Zelensky appeared on the screen were the **MPs Richard Boyd Barrett, Gino Kenny and Bríd Smith** (6). Another Irish politician, Clare Daly, a member of the European parliament (MEP) for the Dublin constituency, has been critical of NATO and EU policies. Last summer, Daly was blacklisted by Kiev's secret service who say she is favourable to Russia.

In February 2023 a Ukrainian "Edelweiss" unit was named by Zelensky, which again evokes images of Nazi Germany. In the first year (1933) of Hitler's rule, an opera song was created with the dictator's personal approval titled, "Adolf Hitler's favourite flower is the simple Edelweiss" (German translation, Adolf Hitler's Lieblingsblume ist das schlichte Edelweiss).

The song was sung by Harry Steier, a well-known, pro-Nazi opera tenor; it was a hit in Nazi Germany and popular among Hitler's inner circle. Albert Speer, the Third Reich's former Minister for Armaments, recalled how "From then on [1933] the edelweiss was officially 'the Führer's flower'" (7). While the edelweiss has been closely linked to Hitler, this flower was further used as a symbol by Wehrmacht and SS mountain regiments, like the Gebirgsjäger, light infantry Nazi mountain troops. Zelensky's "Edelweiss" unit happens to be a mountain

regiment as well.

Nazism in Ukraine is not a recent phenomenon, and even predates World War II. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), a terrorist militant group, was very closely aligned to Nazi ideology. The OUN had been founded in 1929, four years before Hitler came to power in Germany and when the German Nazi Party was a small organization. **Stepan Bandera**, a supporter of Nazism and himself a terrorist, joined the OUN at its outset in 1929. Upon the OUN's establishment that year, it was headed by Yevhen Konovalets, a far-right military commander.

Bandera's OUN and Nazi officials at joint Celebration dedicated to the establishment of Ukrainian Statehood in Western Ukraine, 7 July 1941. Occupied Eastern Poland. (Licensed under the Public Domain)

The Soviet leader **Joseph Stalin** said in November 1937 that Konovalets was "an agent of German fascism". This was accurate because Konovalets was working for the Wehrmacht intelligence agency, the Abwehr (8). From the early 1920s, Konovalets had led a paramilitary terrorist faction called the Ukrainian Military Organization.

Bandera was rising rapidly through the OUN ranks, and had become its chief propaganda officer as far back as 1931. A decade later as the Third Reich was preparing its invasion of the USSR, Bandera, now the OUN's leader, convened meetings with Nazi agencies (the Gestapo and Abwehr) relating to the development of Nazi Ukrainian brigades to fight against the Soviet Army. In the spring of 1941, Bandera's OUN was receiving funding from the Third Reich and personal protection from the Gestapo and Abwehr.

The day after Nazi Germany's attack on the Soviet Union began, 23 June 1941, Bandera wrote a letter to Hitler outlining his desire for an "independent Ukraine" under the Third Reich's protection. A week later, 30 June, as German troops were invading the western USSR, Bandera declared Ukrainian independence and the OUN proclamation stated, "Glory to the heroic German army and its Führer, Adolf Hitler". The OUN assisted in spreading Nazi propaganda among the local people, depicting Hitler as the "liberator" of Ukraine. Bandera's "Minister of Foreign Affairs" **Volodymyr Stakhiv** also wrote a letter to Hitler, asking him to support "our ethnic struggle". (9)

Bandera, along with his fellow Nazis and nationalists, participated in the genocidal activities of the SS death squads, killing many tens of thousands of civilians and prisoners-of-war (10).

Bandera's dream was of a fascist Ukraine which could act according to its own wishes.

After World War II, Bandera and the OUN were supported by the Anglo-American intelligence services, the CIA and MI6. The MI6 admitted that Bandera had "a terrorist background" and possessed "ruthless notions" but continued to assist him. In 1949, the MI6 flew some of Bandera's agents into western Ukraine. The MI6 first contacted Bandera in April 1948 through Gerhard von Mende, a Baltic German and unrepentant Nazi (11). Von Mende was collaborating too with the CIA. US army intelligence (the Counterintelligence Corps) had already shown an interest in working with Bandera in September 1945. (12)

In the 21st century, Bandera's name has undergone continued rehabilitation in Kiev. On 22 January 2010, president **Viktor Yushchenko** awarded Bandera the title "Hero of Ukraine".

Petro Poroshenko, another former leader in Kiev, is likewise a supporter of Bandera. Poroshenko did his best to distort history on 20 June 2022 when he said, *"Stepan Bandera never was a Nazi collaborator"*.

This is not altogether surprising, when considering that the far-right had paved the way for Poroshenko to enter office in the first place. During mid-February 2014, neo-Nazi forces from organizations like Right Sector, Svoboda and Patriot of Ukraine occupied important buildings in Kiev, such as the Central Post Office and the State Committee for Television and Radio (13). Among them were militants wearing uniforms of the SS Galicia division, which had fought alongside the Nazis against the Soviet Union during World War II.

The above far-right groups then joined forces in Kiev – they were placed under the command of **Dmytro Yarosh** of the neo-Nazi Right Sector (14); and they subsequently stormed Kiev's parliament building (Verkhovna Rada) on the night of 21 February 2014, forcing the legally elected president **Viktor Yanukovych**, whose life was in danger, to depart Kiev. A former professor at Columbia University in New York, Tarik Cyril Amar, acknowledged that the "extreme right" in Kiev had performed a "highly effective" role in the coup. (15)

Zelensky, who succeeded Poroshenko in May 2019, is also an admirer of Bandera and went so far as to place him in the bracket of Ukraine's "indisputable heroes". Zelensky said in April 2019, "There are indisputable heroes. Stepan Bandera is a hero for a certain part of Ukrainians, and this is a normal and cool thing. He was one of those who defended the freedom of Ukraine" (16). During his election campaign in early 2019, Zelensky said he wanted Ukraine to join both NATO and the EU, and he has held the same opinions throughout his time in Kiev.

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Shane Quinn *obtained an honors journalism degree and he writes primarily on foreign affairs and historical subjects. He is a Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG).*

Notes

1 "Scientists finally pinpoint the pathogen that caused the Irish Potato Famine", Smithsonian Magazine, [21 May 2013](#)

2 Ibid.

3 "Two thirds of voters support keeping Ireland's neutrality in new poll", The Irish News, [16 April 2022](#)

4 Ibid.

5 "Paul Murphy TD condemns 'openly racist' battalion as he defends not applauding Ukraine leader", Sunday World, [7 April 2022](#)

6 Ibid.

7 Albert Speer, Inside the Third Reich (Simon & Schuster; Reissue edition, 1 June 1997) p. 47

8 Christopher Hale, Hitler's Foreign Executioners: Europe's Dirty Secret (The History Press, 11 April 2011) p. 143

9 Luiz Alberto Moniz Bandeira, The World Disorder: US Hegemony, Proxy Wars, Terrorism and Humanitarian Catastrophes (Springer; 1st edition, 4 February 2019) p. 157

10 Ibid., p. 156

11 Richard Breitman, Norman J. W. Goda, Hitler's Shadow: Nazi War Criminals, U.S. Intelligence and the Cold War (National Archives and Records Administration [2010]) p. 81

12 Ibid., p. 78

13 Bandeira, The World Disorder, p. 207

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 "Volodymyr Zelensky on Stepan Bandera: 'He was one of those who defended the freedom of Ukraine'", Le Canard Républicain, 13 March 2022

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