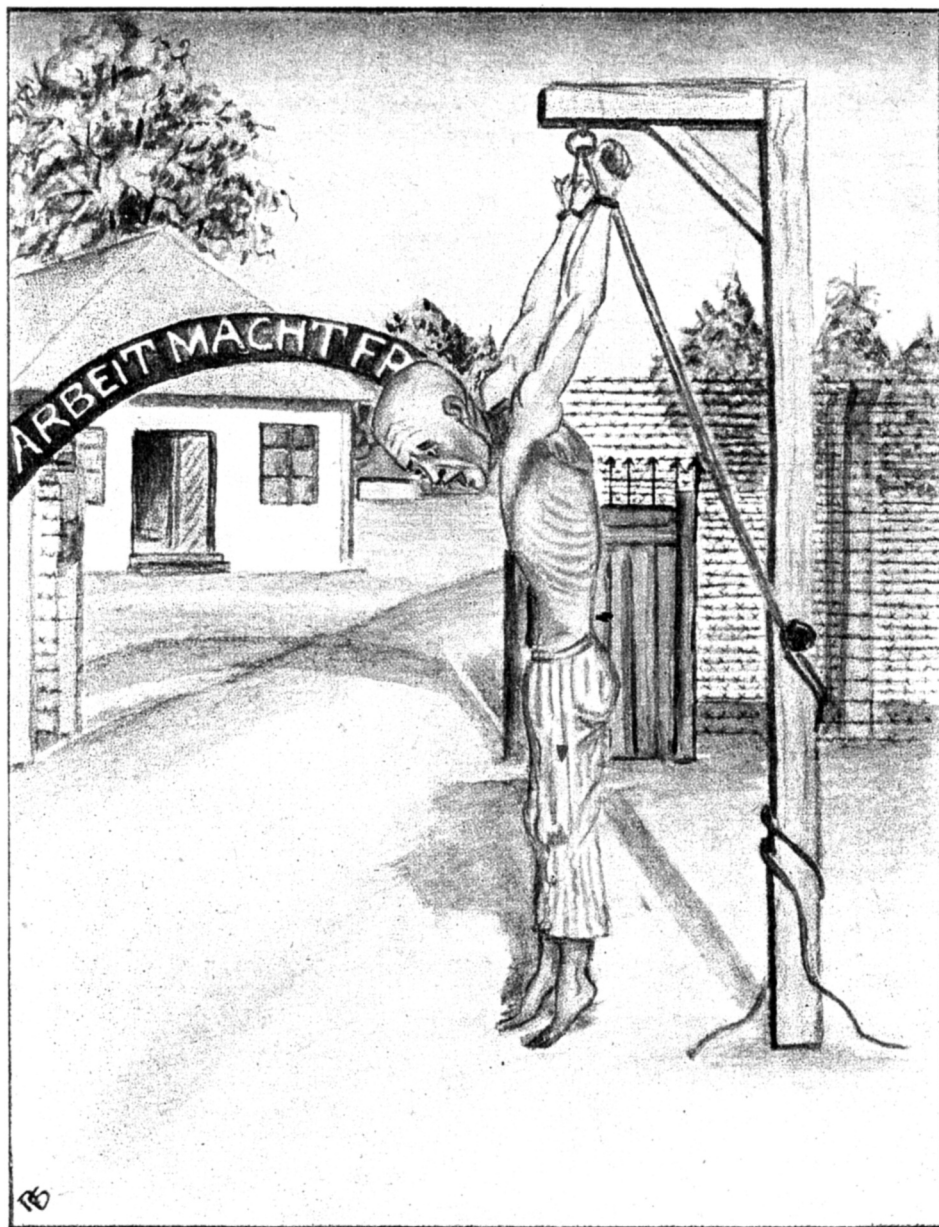


Into Auschwitz,



For Ukraine

Stefan Petelycky



*“The Nazis murdered millions of Ukrainians. Many more Ukrainians fought against the Nazi regime than collaborated with it. Yet a prejudiced stereotype persists of Ukrainians as persecutors rather than victims. The Soviets and others opposed to Ukraine’s independence saw to that. This memoir will help to reverse that great lie. Written by a Ukrainian nationalist and Holocaust survivor it recalls for posterity the fate of some of those Ukrainians who dared to fight for Ukraine’s freedom.”*

*Dr Mykhailo H Marunchak  
Auschwitz tattoo number 120482*





**Into Auschwitz, for Ukraine**  
**Stefan Petelycky**

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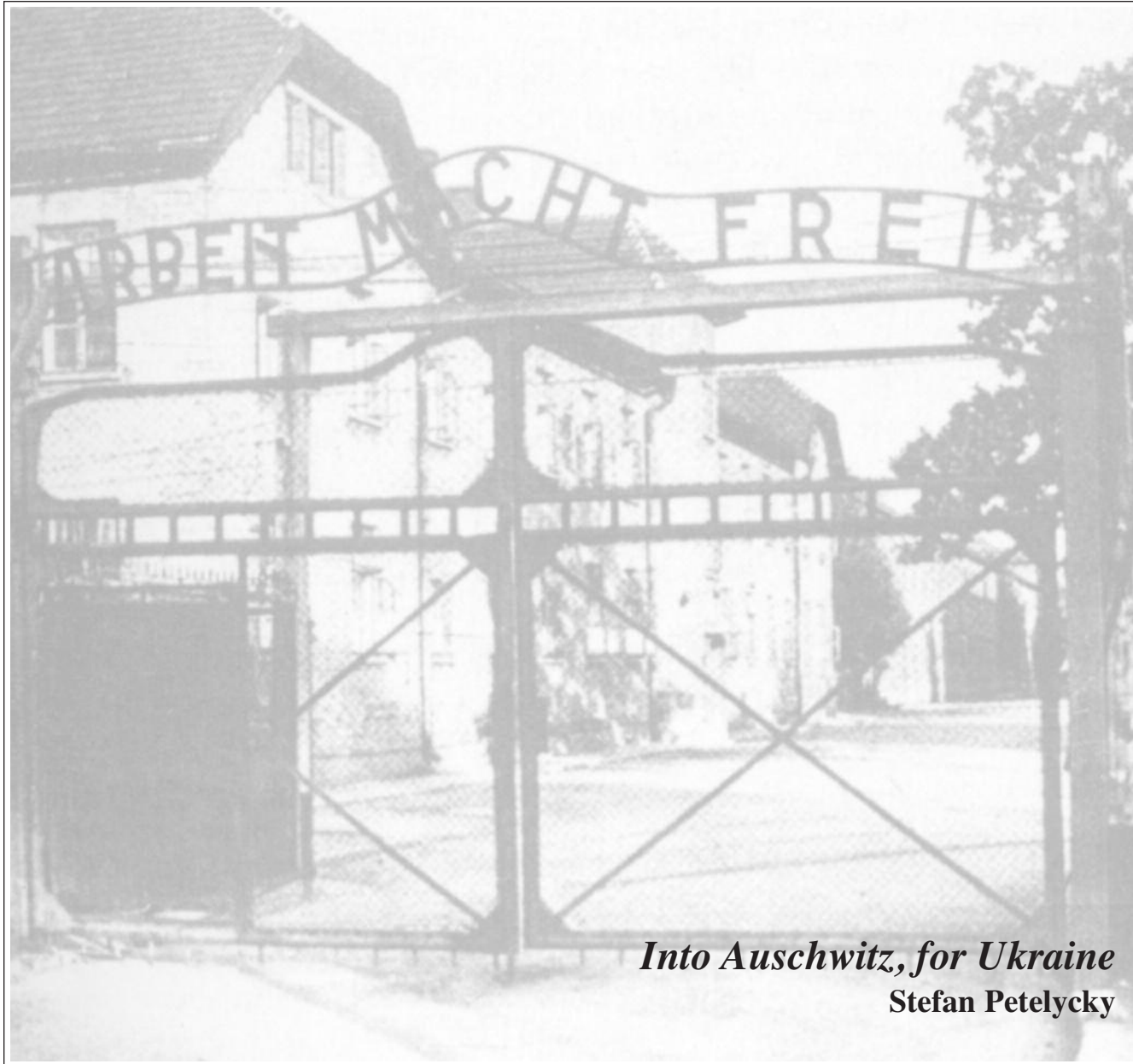
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*To the millions of Ukrainian victims of the Holocaust*



*Into Auschwitz, for Ukraine*  
Stefan Petelycky



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This account describes what happened to me and other Ukrainians in the Nazi concentration camps where we were imprisoned. I recognize that the passage of time has an effect on what one recalls. That is why I was determined to put this account on the record, before the last of the Ukrainian victims of the Holocaust fade away. Our sufferings have been ignored or denied far too often.

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## Foreword

The number 154922 is tattooed on my forearm. I got the tattoo at Auschwitz. I spent more than sixteen months in the most infamous of the Nazi concentration camps. Then I was sent to Mauthausen and from there to Ebensee. I saw things I can never forget. Even if I wanted, that faded blue tattoo won't let me. I survived the Holocaust. I know all that I need to know about it. I was there, I remember, I can never forget. No one should ever doubt that the Nazis exterminated millions of Jews and many millions of non-Jews.

My marked flesh empowers me. Those who were not in the Nazi death camps do not have the same right as survivors to speak about the Holocaust. So although I welcome the attempts of those scholars who study what happened and recognize that some reliable accounts of this great murder have been written, I believe that those who were not there can never truly understand the Holocaust.<sup>1</sup> They interpret. I remember. Two very different endeavours.

To my great grief I find that many of those who claim to speak in the name of the dead millions present very partial accounts of what happened. They corrupt memory. I

first wrote of my experiences just after the war ended, in 1946-7. Yet I put those papers away. I did not want to forget those who had suffered in the Nazi death camps with me, and most especially those who had perished. But I also wanted to get on with my life. I had survived Auschwitz. Now I wanted a chance to live. I think I can be forgiven for that.

But I have been forced to take my notes out of the drawer I consigned them to decades ago. I have had to reread them. I have made myself remember the indignities, the pain of Gestapo imprisonment, the humiliation of being beaten and degraded to the point where one almost ceases to exist as a human being. How one becomes a frightened animal, instinctively doing anything one has to in order to survive. Robbing the dead to cheat death. That's how many survived. By the war's end the Nazis had all but transformed me into a *musulman*, the term we inmates used for those who remained barely alive, no longer capable of arresting their own physical, psychological, and spiritual disintegration.

Why have I compelled myself to call up this horrible past? Because I am convinced

that if I do not take up this burden then once the Ukrainian survivors of the Holocaust and the Soviet Great Terror pass away their experiences will be forgotten or misrepresented. We must not, I believe, allow the understanding of future generations to be shaped by half-truths and distortions penned and promoted by those who have historically done much to suppress the Ukrainian nation's struggle for independence, by those who would still do so, if only they could.

Ukraine lost more of its people than any other European country during the Second World War.<sup>2</sup> This has been all but forgotten. Ukrainians and other Slavs were described in Nazi propaganda as *untermenschen*, subhumans slated for enslavement or extermination. For most Jews it was undoubtedly worse. No matter where they lived in Europe they were, almost without exception, targeted for extermination and murdered in the millions. While that was being done, Ukraine was also being depopulated, its citizens killed or carted away as slave labourers, its rich natural resources exploited for the benefit of the Third Reich, all in preparation for

colonization by the allegedly superior Aryan race of Nazi imagining. Millions of Ukrainians were murdered. I saw some of this with my own eyes.

Some of what I witnessed is what many now want to forget. That there were millions of victims in all the countries under the Nazi jackboot is well understood. But many millions more wanted only to survive. Those men and women, of all creeds and nationalities, and throughout occupied Europe, made very difficult and often very wrong choices in the war years. There weren't many heroes, myself included.

Were there collaborators? Yes. No European country was without its Judases, just as no people were without their blessed martyrs. I remember how, in 1943, it was a Pole collaborating with the Gestapo who denounced me to the Nazis for aiding the Ukrainian resistance. He personally started me on my descent through the many layers of the Nazi hell. But in 1945 another Pole pulled me away from the open doors of the crematorium in Ebensee, from the oven that only days earlier had burned up the mortal remains of my best friends. So when I think back to those years I think of the one Pole as a Judas and of the other Pole as a saviour. I can not think of all Poles as my enemies, or of all Poles as my friends. Some

were good, some were bad, most just wanted to survive.

I won't deny that there were tensions between the nationalities in the concentration camps. But I wish it were more fully appreciated today that most of us, no matter who we were, just wanted to muster the food necessary to have the strength to go on, a day longer, to do so one day at a time, and, perhaps, to survive to the war's end. That is the way it truly was. And that is why I reject those accounts of the Holocaust that seem to be intent on vilifying entire nationalities as evildoers or collaborators while portraying other peoples only as victims. It wasn't like that. I remember, for example, Jacob, a Jewish inmate in Block 11 at Auschwitz, a *kat*, a hangman. He killed his own people and others day after day, just to survive. And he was not the only Jew who did that. Villainy of this sort did not necessarily save such turncoats. Many of them ended up in the gas chambers too. But I know that Jacob survived and that he did so by murdering others. He got to Israel and has lived there ever since, unpunished except perhaps by his own conscience. I sometimes wonder where the many others like him are now living. Here in Canada, neighbours perhaps?

Because I am a Holocaust survivor I am often asked what we should do about

bringing to justice the Nazi war criminals who are supposed to be hiding here in Canada. My answer is always the same. If there is compelling evidence that a person committed a war crime or a crime against humanity that person should be brought to trial in Canada under Canadian criminal law, regardless of his or her nationality, creed, or race, or the time or place where the offence took place. I believe we should try to locate and prosecute *any* war criminals found in Canada, and not just those alleged to have been Nazis. But I am not convinced that any Nazi war criminals are hiding in Canada. The government has certainly not been able to prove that in court. Nor am I convinced that Ottawa has made a genuine effort to track down and prosecute the communist war criminals who some say are also in our midst.

But we must always keep in mind that any such person, even if found to be a war criminal, is an individual, *not* a representative of any people or faith or nation. I did not think of the fiends that I saw torturing or killing my friends in the Nazi mills of death as Jews, Poles, Germans, or as anything but foul murderers. To this day I insist that we must judge the horrific deeds of these individuals, never their homelands or the nations they sprang from. I was anti-Nazi, and still am. Yet even

though I am a Holocaust survivor I have never been anti-German. Not all Germans were Nazis. And we must never hold the Germans of today responsible for the sins of their forefathers. We must remember everything that happened, not just some part of it.<sup>3</sup>

I have now lived most of my life in Canada as a free man. As a Christian, I thank God for sparing my life, for allowing me to know the many satisfactions that come to a man blessed with a good wife with whom I have raised a fine family. I sometimes wonder why I survived the Nazis when so many of my friends did not. Was I able to contribute more to the struggle that we Ukrainian nationalists continued to wage against the Soviet occupation of our homeland than some of them might have? I don't know, and I never will. For some unknowable reason, I lived. Since then I have had a life that has allowed me many opportunities to help liberate Ukraine from a tyranny that was no less destructive than that of the Nazis. I have, thankfully, lived long enough to see the Soviet Empire crumble, as completely and finally, one hopes, as the Third Reich did. Ukraine has re-emerged as an internationally recognized state in Europe. Yet scarcely a day goes by when I do not think of my comrades-in-arms in the uneven struggle we conducted against the Soviet and Nazi

dictatorships. What would have become of my friends, what would they have accomplished, if it were not for the cataclysm brought to Ukrainian lands by fascists, red and brown? Why were we all plunged into the hell on earth called Auschwitz? No matter how many times I ask myself such simple questions I can only come up with one reply. We suffered and died because we identified ourselves as Ukrainian nationalists who were willing to fight for Ukraine's independence and, if need be, to die in the struggle. Many were sent into Auschwitz, for Ukraine. Few survived. This is my story. It is also theirs.

*S P*  
*Richmond, British Columbia*  
*1 July 1999*



## For Ukraine

When I was born, in the village of Ushnia, near the town of Zolochiv, on 24 May 1923, western Ukraine (also called, according to one's geopolitical preferences, eastern Poland or eastern Galicia) was under Polish occupation. Eastern Ukraine was constituted as the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic within the USSR. It was, of course, nothing more than a Soviet fiction, a Potemkin facade created to make it appear as if Lenin and his Bolsheviks intended to foster independent national societies. They did not. That became obvious to me when I was not quite ten years old. We began hearing reports about what was happening in Soviet Ukraine. Stalin and his henchmen had engineered a widespread famine there, their intention being to liquidate Ukrainian resistance to Soviet tyranny. The primitive tool used by the communists was the confiscation of all foodstuffs. It was a crude technique for mass murder, especially compared with the almost industrial quality of the Nazi death camps, but it achieved similar effects. Between 1932 and 1933 millions of Ukraine's people were murdered. The Great Famine was 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe's greatest genocide.<sup>1</sup>

I remember how people in our part of Ukraine tried to organize famine relief for our compatriots to the east. All the food we shipped was turned back at the border. Moscow denied there was a famine in Ukraine. The Soviet government said it didn't need our food. How many Ukrainians died of hunger and disease in those years has never been precisely calculated. But with the exception of a lunatic fringe of Great Famine deniers everyone agrees that the famine was intentional, that it was centred on Ukrainian lands, and that the victims of this genocide numbered in the several millions. Once encouraged and possibly even subsidized by the Soviet Union, the Famine deniers have always struck me as being little different from the equally mendacious Holocaust deniers.<sup>2</sup>

The rural population in my region was largely Ukrainian, although there were clusters of Polish settlement. Most of the paper-mill workers near my village were Poles who had migrated from central Poland. The Poles were generally better off than the Ukrainians. There were few Jews in our immediate area and only one Jewish farming

family. The rest lived in the village and were mainly involved in the trades. One fellow, Haina by name, was the local tavern-keeper. He was a good man. Once, during the Soviet occupation, he even saved a few of us lads when we got into our cups and cursed Klimentii Voroshilov, one of Stalin's creatures. If we had been reported, we would have been taken away. Haina saved our lives by getting us out of the tavern's main room before we could compromise ourselves. He knew what our fate would be if someone heard us that night. There was a larger Jewish community in Sasiv, about two kilometres away, where there were even a Jewish school and a synagogue, but we Ukrainians didn't have much to do with the Jews or the Poles. All of the nationalities more or less kept to their own communities.

My father, Mykhailo, was a farmer, and my grandfather was the deacon in the local parish. My mother, Yulia, kept a good home for all of us, even after my father died, when I was just six. I had one older brother, Safron. I will always remember him as a strong lad. He perished at the age of forty-four in May 1959, when the NKVD caught him hiding

members of the UPA, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. They beat him to death. My mother lived out the war and died peacefully in Ukraine in 1987, just over ninety-eight years old.

I don't remember having any particular problems with the Poles when I was young. As I have already recalled, we kept pretty much apart. Added to this was my mother's attitude. She became very careful with us, very protective, after my father died. She insisted on keeping us at home, out of harm's way. This was more or less agreeable to my brother, who wanted to carry on as a farmer. He was especially good with horses and enjoyed working the land. I was different. I didn't want to be a farmer and wasn't interested in staying in the village. But Mother didn't even want me to go past grade school, for that would have meant leaving our village to attend the nearby *gymnasium* or high school. So I only finished six grades.

All our lessons, even religion, were taught in Polish, and so I barely spoke Ukrainian. Occasionally there would be friction between the Ukrainian and Polish schoolboys. If we wore anything that distinguished us as Ukrainians they would pick a fight and we'd oblige. It was sometimes rough, but I always had my older brother to turn to, and he was a strong, tough

guy. That helped settle most of the disputes I got into, which tended to be between me and the Polish cadets from the training academy near the town of Bilyi Kamin. They often picked on me. I was healthy enough, but small, not robust or rough and tough, so it certainly helped to have a big brother.

I became involved in the national movement through the Ukrainian Catholic Church. Ukrainian nationalists moved in a very covert world in those days.<sup>3</sup> The Reverend Father Dr Stepan Sviatoslav Sas, who became our parish priest in 1937, must have been one of them or at least a sympathizer. He had been a personal secretary to Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi and was a dogged and resourceful man who was almost always at odds with the Polish authorities, especially their gendarmerie.<sup>4</sup>

Father Sas could be provocative. I remember a particularly powerful sermon with a decidedly nationalist bent that he once gave. The Polish authorities were furious because he came right out and condemned their brutal behaviour and their attempts to destroy Ukrainian Catholic churches in the Kholm region. They came to arrest him at his house, but he got away. Although they gave chase, he made it into the church, and as they respected the principle of sanctuary, the Poles couldn't enter the church to arrest him.

We parishioners spent several weeks visiting him to keep him company and bring him food. Later, when the authorities had relaxed their vigilance, he escaped to Ternopil.

The Poles could be quite destructive. When a special police team was sent out to get Father Sas, but didn't catch him at the rectory, they broke into his home and ransacked his large library, tossing his books and papers all over the floor, leaving his residence in ruins. When he came back from Lviv and found out what had happened, he took photographs of the damage and, I believe, used them later as evidence when he made a claim against the Polish authorities in court.

On another occasion, on the Feast of Jordan, Father Sas sprinkled some Polish gendarmes who happened to be passing by with holy water, explaining that he was trying to drive the demons out of them. He was really a firebrand, and he infected me with his passion for the cause of Ukrainian independence. He was a profoundly religious man, but he also cared deeply for his flock. If anyone can be said to have taught me why I should be a patriotic Ukrainian and how to live that kind of life it was Father Sas. I would see him almost every day, and we would talk about many issues, and all the while I was imbibing his patriotism. In many ways he

became a father to me, replacing the one I had lost so early in my life and could only vaguely remember. Father Sas was unique. Most of the other priests we had in our parish were not especially political and tended to stick to church affairs. When I try to think now about who they were and what they accomplished I don't remember much about them at all. They simply weren't memorable.

In 1937 I began working in the local Ukrainian agricultural co-operative, known as *Yednist*, or Unity. There were about 440 families in our village. Most of them were Polish, but about 70 families were Ukrainian and another 10 or so of mixed Polish and Ukrainian nationality. I was attracted to those who had set up a distinctly Ukrainian co-operative in our area, providing employment opportunities for our people and husbanding resources for the Ukrainian cause. The Poles tended to refuse a higher education, good jobs, or other opportunities to Ukrainians and Jews who would not polonize. So Ukrainians responded by setting up their own co-operatives. This co-operative movement took root just before the First World War and spread throughout Western Ukraine. At first we had a building near the church, not far from the local theatre and the *Prosvita*, or Enlightenment,

hall. When the Soviets came, we moved into the much larger Polish co-operative building, and then during the Nazi occupation, when it was given back to the Poles, we moved back to our own facility.

I remember how angry the local Jewish merchants and the Poles were when we Ukrainians set up our own co-operative. They had monopolized the local economy. Now we had challenged their control, and they began to lose business. Much of the friction that emerged later between Ukrainians, Poles, and Jews was a direct result of economic competition among the three communities. The Poles wanted to lord it over everyone. The Jews had traditionally been the local businessmen and wanted to remain economically dominant. When we began challenging them, preaching temperance and self-reliance, we undercut their livelihoods, their financial power over us. Later some claimed that Ukrainians were anti-Semitic because they wanted to have their own co-operatives. That's nonsense. We wanted to be masters in our own home. The Poles had occupied Western Ukraine. We owed them no allegiance. As for the Jews, they had lived among us peacefully although generally apart. We had no particular antipathy towards them even if, often enough, they preyed upon the ignorance and

misery of the peasantry for financial gain and also served the Polish *pans*, forgetting that the latter were occupying Ukraine and were destined, we hoped, to be thrown out.

We sold everything at our co-operative, from household goods to building supplies to groceries. Since we were dealing with our own people and had their economic well-being at heart, the co-operative movement tended to be fair and competitive and soon spread throughout Western Ukraine. At the same time as it focussed our people's economic energies it also raised their national consciousness, helping put into place a network for Ukrainians to use to their national ends. We created jobs for our people. We accumulated capital and provided loans to our own people. We made it possible for them to help themselves. No wonder then that the co-operative movement, which outwardly had only an economic purpose, actually served as a hearth from which many Ukrainian patriots emerged later to serve the nation under arms.

By 1938 my political ideas, and the ideals that would guide my life, were set. Not quite sixteen years old, I enthusiastically joined the youth wing of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, the OUN. There was no other choice for me. I could see that Ukraine was

under occupation. Some Poles did not behave very well towards us, and this was in our country, not theirs. And then there were all the emotions that went along with becoming a member of a militant underground, the sense of shared risk, self-sacrifice, being part of a movement that intended to act rather than just talk. We were pledging our lives to freeing Ukraine and setting up an independent country. It was heady stuff for a teenager.

But although I was enthralled by the credo of the nationalist movement, I was not, even then, entirely convinced of all of its tenets. I agreed that our goal was to free Ukraine. We Ukrainian nationalists had no intention of trying to occupy anyone else's land. Still, even at the time, I remember that I quarrelled with those nationalists (they were not a majority, but they were influential) who spoke of building a Ukraine that would be only for Ukrainians. I argued against that. If we ever tried to set up a state that excluded Poles, Jews, or the other minorities who lived among us, all of them would have no choice but to band together and try to liquidate us. And they might well succeed. We had to build a free Ukraine, I said, but a country that would be a home for everyone prepared to be a loyal citizen. States that try to set themselves up as the exclusive

preserve of one tribe or people are racist and doomed to fail, for by discriminating against others they make themselves inherently offensive to everyone else and invite attack.

Ivan Stelmakhovych, the local OUN leader, formally brought me into the organization. Three boys were inducted into the OUN that day, swearing allegiance on a Ukrainian flag, reciting the OUN's *Decalogue*, pledging to defend the organization, to struggle for the independence of Ukraine, and to die, if necessary, for that cause. Our swearing-in ceremony took place on a late afternoon in early September 1938 in the presence of two OUN leaders at the cross in memory of Father Markiiian Shashkevych, the reawakener of Ukraine, found on Pidlyska Mountain. The other two lads were Iosyf Kharkiv and Ivan Hranychka. The latter died in the ranks of the UPA. I heard that Kharkiv survived and made it to England after the war.

Like any underground group, the OUN was organized into cells. We did not know more than a few other members, making it virtually impossible for the Poles to eliminate the organization even if they caught some of its members and forced them to name their contacts. We were told only what we had to know in order to perform our duties for the

cause. It was very conspiratorial, as it had to be, given the Polish occupation.

At first my activities were limited. Sometimes I'd scatter propaganda leaflets at night or serve as a courier and carry documents or messages between villages. Sometimes I'd distribute our nationalist journal or sell blue, yellow, white, and gold fund-raising coupons in support of the movement. Generally speaking, I worked for the Ukrainian co-operative during the day and for the OUN after work and at night, moving from place to place by bicycle and developing quite a good network of contacts. Most of the seventy Ukrainian families in the immediate area were sympathetic to the OUN. I remember how even some of the poorer families bought the gold coupons. That represented a serious contribution to the cause, but people gave willingly. They believed that Ukraine should be free.

Some Ukrainians did not want to get involved in our politics, of course, but I would estimate that no less than 75 per cent of the local community supported us. This worried the Poles, once they learned how widespread the resistance movement had become in the countryside. They had been dealing with the nationalist movement before that, of course, but it had been confined primarily to the *intelligentsia* and

veterans of the Ukrainian National Republic. By the time I was a teenager Ukrainian nationalism was far more ubiquitous, and that alarmed the Poles. As for the Jews, I don't remember them being interested in what the Ukrainian nationalists were up to, not at that time. They weren't usually in favour or against. Instead, they concentrated their attention on doing business or on their faith. Because of that they were, in the main, of no interest or bother to us or the Poles.

One event that I do recall from that time, which involved some Jews and my grandfather Mykhailo, took place just before the war. My grandfather was a cantor and was adept at woodworking. He was a convivial man and had many friends. There was a large *yeshiva* in Sasiv, and the rabbis who taught there often visited my grandfather. They liked him and enjoyed stopping by to talk. Their favourite meeting place was under a linden tree. I would bring them water and would overhear their conversations. The rabbis would tell my grandfather the latest news and sometimes share their prophecies with him. I recall him describing how one day some of the rabbis explained that their divinations were coming true. They had foretold how two devils would be set at large in Europe, one lording over the East, the other the West.

Soon, they forecast, one of those two demons would come to terrorize the Jews. Then there would be no place for them to hide, no shelter anywhere. They said they would find themselves even worse off than mice, which at least had a hole to hide in. Who could have known how true that prophesy would be?

The same Jewish traders and rabbis also gave us information about what was happening in Stalin's domains. They were remarkably well informed, much more aware of what was happening than most people. I remember how they spoke about the famine in Ukraine, about how millions were going hungry and dying, and about how tens of thousands of people were being deported to Siberia, especially the most patriotic Ukrainians. And they certainly knew, even then, before the war broke out, that Hitler hated them. But what could one do about it? Besides, it all seemed so far away. So even though my grandfather had a short-wave radio, as did many of his Jewish friends, none of them had any idea of what would happen to us all when the Nazis came. We were all quite naïve. We listened and sometimes wondered about what we heard, but it didn't seem to matter much. We did not know that we were all like lambs about to be led to the slaughter.

A few Poles weren't antagonistic to us. Some of them had married into Ukrainian families; others understood that we weren't anti-Polish in our politics, just in favour of Ukrainian independence. Some Poles remembered that their republic was only a few years old at the time and knew what it was like to have their country dismembered and occupied by foreigners. Most of the problems that flared up were between Ukrainian and Polish students or between patriotic Ukrainians and agents of the Polish state, some of whom were truly pigheaded in their arrogance and indifference to Ukrainian matters.

The OUN had as one of its main goals the building-up of national consciousness in the countryside. Our cadres worked especially hard to educate the youth, to create a network of informed patriots, and to ensure continuity into the next generation. We started from the principle that we must organize from the lowest level to the next higher one, patterning ourselves on the cell structure of the OUN, ensuring that each village could be counted upon to support the movement. We worked like that, from the smallest cell in a village, networking to bring the entire area and then the region under our influence, stabilizing it all as we built the organization up, in effect setting up a



government parallel to the existing Polish administration. In time we came to have an effective and reliable apparatus working throughout western Ukraine, capable of protecting Ukrainian interests and reminding the Poles that we had every intention of securing independence. From the Polish point of view we were terrorists. We thought of ourselves as freedom fighters.

In June 1938, the Poles decided to build a new *gymnasium*, or high school, near a timber mill on the Buh river. They were just about ready to hold the opening ceremony when Father Sas and his friend Iosyf Khiborob went to the site one night. Khiborob, who was a strong fellow, climbed to the roof and planted a blue-and-yellow national Ukrainian flag there in protest over how the Poles had failed to invite Father Sas to the opening ceremony to bless this school. Unfortunately, someone saw Iosyf that night. Within hours the Polish gendarmie had arrested him and another young man, Volodymyr Pavlushko. They tortured Khiborob and Pavlushko, crushing their fingers in a door jam and burning their feet with hot irons. Iosyf never broke, even after they let Pavlushko go and concentrated their interrogation on him. He admitted nothing, though they kept him jailed for a month. Finally they let him go. Ironically, when the

Soviets came to our area in late September 1939, they finished building that school, only to tear it down just before they retreated from the advancing *Wehrmacht*, the German army, in June 1941.

Quite a few Ukrainians still thought that they could win justice for themselves by reference to the courts, relying on the protection afforded to minorities by Poland's Constitution. They believed that they could achieve cultural and perhaps even limited political autonomy within the Polish state. I think these people were well intentioned and patriotic. They abhorred violence and sought to secure cultural, religious, and political rights for our people by peaceful means. We nationalists, by contrast, believed that the Poles, the Soviets, and any of the other neighbouring states that occupied or had claims to Ukrainian lands, would not give them up without a fight. We wanted to achieve independence through an armed and revolutionary struggle against the political *status quo* in interwar Eastern Europe. Certainly, this was a somewhat desperate philosophy, infused with heroic notions of self-sacrifice and action. Yet it was an ideology crafted to appeal to those young men and women who railed against the obvious injustices around them and were determined to rectify them.

Who knows if the more moderate Ukrainians might not have eventually achieved cultural autonomy within Poland, reaching some form of accommodation with the moderates in the Polish government and public? Who can say if the nationalists would have been able to muster sufficient support for their goal of destabilizing Poland and creating a Ukrainian state, as some of our number had tried to do, repeatedly, between 1917 and 1921, only to fail? Neither side was given a chance to prove itself. For, as the rabbis had predicted, two devils fell upon us on 1 September 1939. I had become a nationalist for Ukraine. I would soon learn the true price that one pays for declaring such an allegiance.



## Into Auschwitz

In the early hours of 1 September 1939, German forces launched their *blitzkrieg*, or lightning war, against Poland. From the perspective of most scholars in the Anglo-American world, that is how the Second World War began. All too often they overlook the fact that on 17 September 1939 Soviet forces also invaded Poland, with Moscow camouflaging its aggression by insisting that it was coming to the aid of the Ukrainian and Belarusian minorities. By mid-June 1940 the Soviets had also gobbled up the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and launched a reign of terror and deportations there.<sup>1</sup>

I remember that when the Soviet army arrived in our area I was quite astonished at how poor and ramshackle it was. The troops were ragged and ill-equipped, in contrast to the splendid gentleman's army that we had lived under during the Polish occupation. We found it doubly strange when, despite their obvious destitution, the Soviets persisted in telling everyone how in the USSR all citizens had full employment, medical care, education, food, housing, and paid vacations.

The Soviets wasted no time in disarming the Poles. Poland was to be eliminated as a state. That is what the Nazis and the Soviets had decided, and that is what they set about doing. This represented an opportunity for those of us who were in the nationalist underground. We decided to pinch as much of the weaponry and supplies being taken away from the Poles as we could. Since there was a great deal of chaos and uncertainty in those first few days of the Soviet occupation, opportunities for scavenging supplies came our way. I remember one occasion when my friend Iosyf Khlaborob and I were standing by a bridge that crossed the river Buh. Soviet troops were hurriedly disarming the local Polish constabulary and paying little attention to what was happening to the weapons. A crowd of people was watching. Iosyf managed to steal a few pistols that had fallen off the bridge. We scrambled to pick up as many of those weapons as we could and hide them for the future use of the OUN. We got quite a few weapons in those early days of the Soviet occupation.

Some people in our area, primarily the poor, warmly greeted the Soviet invaders.

They believed that the demise of capitalist Poland and the installation of a Soviet government would improve their lot in life. They would find out how naïve that expectation was soon enough. Members of the OUN thought that Ukrainians who welcomed the Soviets were traitors. There was also a fear that Soviet agents might infiltrate the OUN. Since they could reveal the secret OUN cells and endanger the lives of members, they were shot when they were discovered. We were at war.

Many Jews, and not just poor ones, also welcomed the Soviets at first. They had seen the Poles as their oppressors, and more than a few of them were communist sympathizers. Lots of the poorer folk were given positions of authority in the new Soviet administration, as were many Jews.<sup>2</sup> I also noticed that a lot of Jews served in the Red Army and as political propagandists. It must be said that some of the local Jews, people who had lived beside us for years, who knew us and who could at least guess where our political sympathies lay, betrayed us to the Soviets. Whether they did so out of pro-communist convictions or in order to

ingratiate themselves to their new masters I can't say. But that some Jews betrayed Ukrainian nationalists to the Soviet secret police is something I know happened, for I was there. And the Poles experienced the same thing. They remembered the names of those Jews and others who they felt with some justification, had betrayed them and their state to the Soviets. Later they, too, would take their revenge.

Many of the younger Jews in our area quickly organized a Soviet-style *Komsomol* youth group. They held meetings, praised Lenin and Stalin, and distributed leaflets. Some young Jews whom I knew from Sasiv came and urged me and other Ukrainians to join the *Komsomol*. I refused. For that refusal I lost my job at the co-operative in the autumn of 1940. I was not the only one who refused to join. Most of the people of my age also refused. Only three Ukrainians I knew became *Komsomol* members, namely Iosyf Sviderskyi, Pavlo Lonhryn, and the older Stelmakhovych. Jews may not wish to remember this today, but in those days many of them were given preferential treatment by the Soviet regime. It wasn't just a question of being afforded equality with Poles or Ukrainians. Many Jews willingly took part in the Soviet administration of Western Ukraine. And, since the Soviet

regime eventually began taking ever more active measures to root out Ukrainian and Polish nationalists, to do away with the priests and *intelligentsia*, and to liquidate the better-off classes, Jews were seen as the principal beneficiaries of the communist regime.

As for the Soviets, although they spoke at first of having come to liberate us from the Poles, they soon began arresting, deporting, and executing all those whom they saw as opposed to their regime, Poles, Ukrainians, and even some of the wealthier Jews. Rather than stick around where I might be easily arrested, I went to live and work in the nearby forests. It was safer to stay where the Soviets didn't dare go. If I returned home they might catch me. That is how I managed to avoid the fate of so many others. After being fired from the co-operative, I worked for a while at a quarry but, by the spring of 1941, I was off in the forests, unpaid, stripping bark from oak and fir trees. The bark was used in the nearby factories in the treatment of leather.

The OUN still enjoyed the support of a wide cross-section of the population. Its opposition came from socialists and the UNDO. There were ten to fifteen OUN members in the Zolochiv area, including those who would occasionally visit from

outside the region. With the Soviet invasion, first came the Red Army and then the administration, comprised of political commissars and NKVD officials, who started building their own network of informants and collaborators. The task for the OUN was to hide from the Soviet administration while continuing to build up its own network. This required the OUN to have very strict discipline. For example, one could be hit a few times for being late for a meeting, slapped for talking too much, and even beaten for revealing information. All types of people joined the OUN. One of my tasks was to monitor our local group's members, looking out for stool pigeons. Reports were prepared providing information on who met with whom, and who went to the NKVD. I remember watching one of the OUN members, Hryhorii Sviderskyi. He had left the Polish army and worked as a tailor. He was also engaged to a girl who was often visited by a communist named Panas, who was beginning to suspect Sviderskyi's loyalties. Panas would often meet the girl after church, and I would hide in the bushes and listen to their conversations. We had to be very careful about what the Soviets were up to. I was glad to report that Hryhorii was not a traitor.

My primary assignment however was as a courier for the OUN. Since the organization was based on secret cells whose members never met the members of other cells, a way had to be devised to communicate between them. A person who had to deliver a message to a member of another cell would say a password, and the other person would have to respond with another word or phrase. Passwords were often changed, every few days or more often in case of emergencies. This communication network was vital to the proper functioning of the OUN. It was based upon a hierarchy, with all messages and instructions having to be delivered from person to person by couriers. The higher one's level in the Organization, the more territory one was responsible for. At the base was the secret cell comprised of just a few people from a village and headed by a *royovyi*. Several *royovyis* in turn reported to the *stanychnyi*, who was in charge of a number of villages. He reported to the *rayonovyi*, who reported to the *povitovyi*, who reported to the *oblasnyi* and from there up to the OUN's executive council. The functions carried out by the leaders at various levels included organizing our secret service, promoting our nationalist ideology, spreading OUN propaganda, press, and publications and of

course overseeing military matters and recruitment. The communications network facilitated the information flow for the various functions. After becoming a courier, I met about fifteen people repeatedly. But by 1940 and 1941 I was meeting over a hundred people in various locations.

Despite the propaganda about how much better life would be for the Ukrainians who had been oppressed by Poland, Soviet rule was much worse. First the Soviets rounded up the Polish officials, then they went after the *intelligentsia*, clergy, landlords, better-off peasants, anyone who might be a threat to their power. Eventually they took anyone about whom they had any suspicions.<sup>3</sup> We all suffered. We also all remembered who had done what and to whom. Poles saw Ukrainians as insurgents and Jews as communists and traitors. Ukrainians felt little remorse at the collapse of interwar Poland and witnessed the greeting that many Jews gave to the Soviet forces. When, shortly thereafter, NKVD units began hunting down Ukrainian nationalists and Polish patriots, sometimes with Jewish collusion, the stage was set for future tragedies. Some Jews certainly saw the Soviets as liberators and welcomed them, but others saw in them only new oppressors. No one at that time could foresee accurately

what was to come. Yet all of us had to make choices about which side we would take, what we needed to do in order to survive. As often as not the decisions we came to were poor ones. We were deliberately misled and misinformed. We were all afraid. None of us was truly free, none of us. That is too often forgotten now. It is easy today to say that you should have known better, that you should have been braver, or that you should have risked yourself and your family to save the lives of strangers. People who talk like that today have no idea of what living under a brutal occupation regime is like.

Some of the Soviets brought us the truth about what had happened in Soviet Ukraine. I remember a captain who stumbled upon my parents' home one night in late February 1940. It was dark, he was lost, and it was snowing. He needed shelter for the night and came to our door. We invited him in, put his horse in the stable, and let him spend the night. I remember how, soon after he came into the house, he realized he was among Ukrainians and became nervous. But when we learned that he was a Ukrainian, we tried to make him feel at home. He soon calmed down and began to talk. He was cautious at first, but before the night was over he told us about what had really happened in Soviet Ukraine.

About the deportations of hundreds of thousands of innocents to Siberia, about the Great Famine, the terror, the executions. I remember that the last thing he said to us in the morning before he left was that we must never speak to anyone about what he had said, unless we wanted to go east on a vacation to see the polar bears. We got the message.

In the forest where I stayed there were already Ukrainian nationalists who had been in the OUN and who had been exposed after the Soviet invasion, leaving them with no alternative but to take to the woods to organize an anti-Soviet resistance. And there were those, like me, who knew what fate awaited them if they were denounced to the Soviets. Many went off into the woods, to wait and see what would happen. At first there were six of us together, using a forester's hut from time to time and otherwise moving from village to village doing odd jobs. With the onset of winter, around November 1940, when it got tougher to stay there, three of my companions went back to the village. I stayed put.

The OUN was facing a crisis at this time. We were, naturally, pleased that the Polish state had fallen apart, but we also knew that the Soviets had no intention of freeing Ukraine or doing anything other than

eradicating all traces of Ukrainian nationalism, which meant our annihilation. The collapse of Poland had, in effect, left us to the mercies of an even more powerful and vicious enemy of Ukrainian independence. The movement did what it could. There were some assassinations of NKVD operatives in Lviv, and when the war started there were uprisings in some of the remoter districts, where Soviet security units could be attacked effectively. We stockpiled weapons and ammunition, tried to rebuild our covert networks to prepare a revolutionary war against the Soviet regime, and looked for allies to help us. It was a very frightening time. The Soviets did not play this game by Polish rules. Although they claimed that they had come to liberate us and the Belarusians from the Poles, they tolerated no opposition and liquidated anyone who stood in their way. We were not prepared for such a foe. It took time to toughen up. But intend to fight we did. As for toughening up, we had to.

I remember an odd incident in May 1941. One evening Hryhorii Sviderskyi and I crossed paths with Franko, the head of the village council. He was on his way home from the office. Now this Franko was a communist who had lived in France and had a French wife. He had come home to build

communism. He was afraid when he saw Hryhorii because he suspected him of being part of the OUN underground. On the other hand, Hryhorii was afraid that his family would be sent to Siberia. Franko stopped. It was obvious that he afraid that someone might see him talking to a person who was probably an OUN member. Hryhorii sensed that Franko was more afraid than he was and simply said, "If you promise that my family won't be sent to Siberia, you won't get hurt." Franko agreed and quickly walked away. As far as I know, both Franko and Hryhorii kept their promises to each other.

I still remember when I heard the first German bombs drop. Several of us were in a wheat field, near a stream not far from town. We had spent the night there since the wheat was already tall in the fields and provided good cover. The first bombs landed near the train station in Zolochiv at about four o'clock in the morning on 22 June 1941. We cheered. We already knew that a war was likely between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. For months the Germans had been parachuting their own agents, and sometimes Ukrainians too, into our area. Throughout 1940 and into 1941, these agents had been gathering intelligence, preparing the way for an attack on their ally, the Soviet Union, code-named "Operation

Barbarossa.” The Soviets had tried to catch these agents, twice staging round-ups to snare them. Sometimes these security sweeps lasted for days and involved hundreds of Soviet troops. But they never caught any of the agents who were in our area. We hid them. We had begun to believe that the Germans were coming to liberate us from Soviet rule. That’s what their propaganda claimed. That’s what their agents told us. We were delighted that the Soviets might be forced out. Their occupation of our lands was brutal. We had no idea that the Germans would prove to be just as brutal. Neither for that matter did many of the Jews in our area, quite a few of whom had also come to despise the communists. Some of them were so put off by the Soviet administration that they changed their names and escaped to the German-occupied western regions of Poland with the hope of going on to Western Europe or North America. Most of them thus unwittingly joined the ranks of the victims of the Nazis.

Several days after the first bombing raid, as the *Wehrmacht* advanced, the Soviets fled in panic. They abandoned arms and munitions everywhere. One particularly

large stockpile was located near our pulp and paper factory, where they also had a vehicle park. Here was another chance for the OUN. We stocked up on anything that we could cart off and hide. We got lots of grenades, more than we could easily remove. So we went around and used grenades to



blow up tanks and other vehicles that the Soviets had abandoned in their hurry to escape from the German *Wehrmacht*. I myself used grenades to blow up about fifteen Soviet tanks and vehicles. The OUN was a guerrilla force and had no use for tanks. Furthermore, unattended tanks were

a danger to children and civilians because they were loaded with ammunition. So we destroyed them.

Within a few hours of the first German bombing, I made my way to Zolochiv to check things out. The people were in panic and were running every which way. I was wondering if the *Wehrmacht* had arrived, but there was no indication that it had, and I went back to the fields. The next day I returned to Zolochiv. Troubling stories were going around about how there had been a massacre at the old Polish prison, a big two- or three-storied building on a small hill that rose up from Ternopil Street. We now know that the NKVD murdered thousands of people just before and during their retreat from the Germans in western Ukraine and western Belarus in June and July 1941. I can’t speak to the exact numbers, but I do know what I saw at the Zolochiv prison.

After independence was proclaimed in Lviv on 30 June and after the Germans arrived in Zolochiv on 1 July, I went to the prison with my friend Hryhorii Sviderskyi and his mother and sister to identify corpses. They found Iosyf Sviderskyi, a distant cousin of Hryhorii who had been

arrested less than two weeks before. His head had been smashed in and his body was so badly beaten that they identified him only by his clothes. He was not alone. Several rows of corpses were lined up in a pit in the prison yard. The yard itself was encrusted with blood and bits of human flesh. People from Zolochiv were saying that the NKVD had been running tractor engines during the massacre to mute the screams of the prisoners who were being murdered inside the prison. I helped Hryhorii and his mother and sister prepare what was left of Iosyf for burial in a mass grave at the local cemetery. We had to work quickly because the bodies were decomposing in the summer heat and there was a danger of epidemic disease.

Inside the prison cells I saw what had been done to our priests. Crude crosses had been carved into their chests before they were done in. The walls of the cells were spattered with dried blood, and there were holes in the walls as if from bullets. In one cell there was a large pool of coagulated blood on the floor. This was a place where many people had been slaughtered. The corpses we uncovered were already decomposing, but we could see that some of these victims had

their eyes torn out or their sexual organs mutilated, had their faces and bones crushed with rifle butts, men and women alike. There are no words to describe the carnage we saw. These innocents had been dismembered, butchered, mutilated. The stench from their putrefying corpses was



Відкопані трупи замордованих в золочівській тюрмі в'язнів  
*Exhumed bodies of murdered prisoners at Zolochiv prison*

intolerable. I could not eat for three days.

One of the local Jews, whom we called Shmulko and who had worked in the flour mill before the war, had joined the NKVD and worked at this prison. He was captured near Sasiv and forced to show people the corpses of their family members, relatives,

and friends. Then he was tied to a stake and stoned to death. He who lives by the sword dies by the sword. He was a strong man and so took a long time to die. I couldn't look at what was left of him. But I also couldn't feel sorry for him. Before he died, he confessed to a second burial pit that people had suspected but had not been able to find.

The Germans forced many of the local Jews to dig up and clean the corpses and then place them outside for identification. After that SS troops executed these Jews. No Ukrainians participated in that massacre, but when we saw what was happening to them we did nothing. We remembered all the Jews who had participated in the Soviet administration and had betrayed Ukrainian nationalists to the NKVD. We also held some of the Jews partly responsible for what had happened in that prison in the final weeks of the Soviet occupation. Local

Jewish collaborators had helped the Soviets.

It was not fair to blame all the Jews for what had happened to our people. But you cannot imagine today what we saw in that prison yard. Think how you would feel to see the naked bodies of your loved ones, rotting in the heat, how you would react

upon seeing how their flesh had been torn in chunks from their bodies by torture instruments. Imagine their agonies. We did. It was not hard. We only had to look down at the corpses at our feet. To cope with the stench we held handkerchiefs tightly over our noses and mouths. We tried to keep our minds focussed on what we were looking at, people whom we had known for years, grown up with, now disfigured and defiled, lying before us like so many butchered pigs.

We buried our victims together in a mass grave on the following Sunday at the Ukrainian cemetery. We paid no heed to the deaths of their murderers or to the murder of the innocent Jews who were killed alongside the guilty ones. Some of them had been our neighbours, even friends. But now they were consigned to the ranks of our enemies. It was not entirely rational. It was not just or fair. But war was already hardening us, stripping away such basic human instincts as empathy, understanding, and forgiveness.<sup>4</sup>

I remember exactly how I felt when I heard on the radio the proclamation of Ukraine's independence, which happened in Lviv on 30 June 1941. Senior members and supporters of the OUN announced the

renewal of an independent Ukrainian state. I was overjoyed, and so was everyone I knew. None of us had any inkling of how the Germans would react. The first Germans we had met, the soldiers of the *Wehrmacht*, had kept on moving east, chasing the retreating Soviets. They were disciplined soldiers, well-

“It has been established beyond doubt that the Bandera movement is preparing an insurrection in the Reichskommissariat which has as its ultimate aim the establishment of an independent Ukraine. All activists of the Bandera movement must be arrested immediately and, after thorough interrogation, are to be secretly liquidated as brigands. Once these instructions have been read, they must be immediately destroyed by commanders.”

Einsatzkommando C5,  
25 November 1941

equipped, generally proper in their treatment of civilians. The occupation authorities that followed in their wake were proving to be something else. They were Nazis. They weren't interested in freeing Ukraine. Ukraine was to be one of their colonies in the East, a *lebensraum*, or living

space, for their own supposed Aryan master race. We were to be their helots, disposed of as needed.

Meanwhile the German military moved out of our region. As they advanced they netted tens of thousands of Soviet POWs in their vast encirclement actions and battles, including many Red Army men who surrendered voluntarily, expecting humane treatment and perhaps even a chance to fight alongside the Germans against the despised Stalin. They were sadly mistaken. The Nazis murdered most of them, many a good Ukrainian among them. We, too, had been beguiled by German propaganda. The Germans, we soon found, had not come as liberators. They had come only to exploit Ukraine for their own ends. For the Nazis, we Ukrainians, indeed all Slavs, were *untermenschen*, subhumans, destined to be enslaved or exterminated once the mobile killing squads known as the *Einsatzgruppen* had first eliminated their priority targets—Jews, Gypsies, and Soviet commissars.

The Nazis also soon began arresting and executing Ukrainian nationalists, especially after the latter refused to recant their proclamation of independence. That the Nazis tried to wipe out the Ukrainian



nationalist movement is often forgotten although it is a matter of record for those who care to look.<sup>5</sup> And the movement suffered considerably. For example, Vasyl and Oleksander Bandera, the brothers of Stepan Bandera, the leader of the OUN, were murdered in Auschwitz in 1942. He himself, along with Yaroslav Stetsko, the premier of Ukraine, was incarcerated for most of the war in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. So was Colonel Andrii Melnyk, the leader of the rival OUN faction. We were shocked. None of us had expected that the Germans would bother much with us while the war was on. But within days Ukrainians were being told that they must prepare shipments of grain and other foodstuffs for transport to the Reich. Later the Nazis would come for our young men and women, turning them into slave labourers in the war economy. Some 2.3 million Ukrainians became *Ostarbeiter* (East Workers) during the war. Many of these slaves died far from home.<sup>6</sup> There were mass round-ups and executions of known and suspected Ukrainian nationalists. By mid-September 1941 Bandera's faction of the OUN had announced that the Nazis were enemies of Ukrainian aspirations for independence, exploiters of the Ukrainian

people, and yet another occupation to be resisted.<sup>7</sup>

At this point I must say that among our people, as among the Jews, Poles, and *Volksdeutsche* (ethnic Germans), there were elements that I can only refer to as human garbage. These people were prepared to take advantage of the suffering and misery of others for their own gain. Although I never saw any Ukrainians participating in the killing of Jews, I do know that some Ukrainians served as guards, for example at the gates outside the Jewish ghetto in Zolochiv. There was a brewery inside that ghetto, and so when you went to get beer you had to go past those guards. I saw them with my own eyes. But there were Jewish police there too. I saw them beating and abusing their own people in that ghetto.

Some of these people, whether they were Ukrainians, Jews, Poles, or *Volksdeutsche*, did what they did for personal profit; some were sadists; a few were cowards and were forced to do what they did. The war brought out some of the best and worst traits in people. But the situation for everyone was quite abnormal. We had been under the Soviet commissars for nearly two years. Now we were under the Nazi jackboot. Scores were soon being settled. Those who had been on top suddenly found themselves fleeing for

their lives, or caught, and as helpless as their victims of the previous day. Lots of innocents of all nationalities and faiths were swept up and slaughtered, often without even understanding what was happening to them. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. All too often that was the guiding rule, far more so than the Christian principle of loving thy neighbour as thyself or turning the other cheek.

Still, I do remember acts of incredible bravery. My neighbour, Yarchuk by name, tried to save a Jewish family by hiding them in his home. I saw them sometimes at night, coming out to refresh themselves after spending the day hiding inside. I don't know what happened to them in the end, for I was no longer at home to learn their fate. But I do know that many other Ukrainians did what they could to save their Jewish neighbours. There was a grave risk in doing so. In Ukraine and Poland under the Nazi occupation, if you were caught sheltering a Jew, you were killed. Yet many took that risk upon themselves and their families. Why more of them are not recognized by Israel as "Righteous Gentiles" is something I do not understand.

In November 1942 I learned from the secretary of the Polish mayor of our village that the Gestapo was looking for me, so I

# Bekanntmachung

Wegen Verbrechens nach §§ 1 und 2 der Verordnung zur Bekämpfung von Angriffen gegen das deutsche Aufbauwerk im Generalgouvernement vom 2. 10. 1943 (VOBl. 1. d. GG. Nr. 82/43) wurden vom Standgericht beim Kommandeur der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD für den Distrikt Galizien am 20. 1. 1944

## zum Tode verurteilt:

- 1) **Kundreck Paul**, geb. am 14. 6. 1912 in Urycz, Ukrainer, Arbeiter, ledig, wohnhaft in Urycz Nr. 68, wegen Bandenzugehörigkeit,
- 2) **Dmytryszyn Anna**, geb. Kaczor, geb. im Jahre 1890 in Kruszelnica, Ukrainerin, verh., wohnhaft in Kruszelnica, wegen Bandenbegünstigung,
- 3) **Kindratyszyn Wladimir**, geb. am 9. 8. 1912 in Podhorodce, Ukrainer, verh., Landwirt, wohnhaft in Podhorodce Nr. 285, wegen Bandenbegünstigung,
- 4) **Zazulnec Nikolaus**, geb. am 25. 2. 1912 in Podhorodce, Ukrainer, Landwirt, wohnhaft in Podhorodce, wegen Bandenbegünstigung,
- 5) **Maletyn Olens**, geb. Sawczin, geb. im Jahre 1896 in Rakow, Ukrainerin, verh., wohnhaft in Rakow Nr. 62, wegen Bandenbegünstigung,
- 6) **Lawrlw Theodor**, geb. am 16. 2. 1911, in Rakow, Ukrainer, verh., Ostbahnarbeiter, wohnhaft in Rakow Nr. 62, wegen Bandenbegünstigung,
- 7) **Peczenyj Theodor**, geb. am 1. 2. 1915 in Suchrow, Ukrainer, verh., Bäuer, wohnhaft in Suchrow, wegen Bandenzugehörigkeit,
- 8) **Choms Kornelia**, geb. Stehnicka, geb. im Jahre 1906 in Ottyniowice, Ukrainerin, verh., wohnhaft in Suchrow, wegen Bandenbegünstigung,
- 9) **Katola Petro**, geb. am 10. 7. 1900 in Suchrow, Ukrainer, Landwirt, verh., wohnhaft in Suchrow Nr. 173, wegen Bandenzugehörigkeit,
- 10) **Maslaga Anna**, geb. im Jahre 1901 in Dowszka, Krs. Turka, Ukrainerin, ledig, Arbeiterin, wohnhaft in Stryj, Schloßstrasse Nr. 8, wegen Judenbegünstigung,
- 11) **Peczenyj Oleksa**, geb. am 26. 3. 1907 in Suchrow, Ukrainer, verh., wohnhaft in Suchrow Nr. 120, Landwirt, wegen Bandenzugehörigkeit,
- 12) **Peczenyj Dimitro**, geb. am 26. 10. 1911 in Suchrow, Ukrainer, verh., wohnhaft in Suchrow Nr. 37, Landwirt, wegen Bandenzugehörigkeit,
- 13) **Sloboda Oleksa**, geb. am 27. 3. 1912 in Suchrow, Ukrainer, Landwirt, verh., wohnhaft in Suchrow Nr. 128, wegen Bandenzugehörigkeit,
- 14) **Kaszczynec Wladimir**, geb. am 22. 12. 1904 in Skole, Ukrainer, verh., Magaziner, wohnhaft in Skole, Sered-Sala Nr. 25, wegen OUN-Organisationszugehörigkeit,
- 15) **Dyrkawec Michael**, geb. am 20. 11. 1923 in Korostow, Ukrainer, ledig, Waldarbeiter, wohnhaft in Korostow, Krs. Stryj, wegen OUN-Organisationszugehörigkeit,
- 16) **Swistun Michael**, geb. am 1. 10. 1923 in Korostow, Ukrainer, ledig, Waldarbeiter, wohnhaft in Korostow, Krs. Stryj, wegen OUN-Organisationszugehörigkeit,
- 17) **Jaksz Theodor**, geb. am 16. 4. 1889 in Rozanka-Wyzne, Ukrainer, verh., Förster, wohnhaft in Korostow, Krs. Stryj, wegen OUN-Organisationszugehörigkeit, Mord an dem volksdeutschen Förster B a b i j und Überfall auf das Baudienstlager in Swietoslaw,
- 18) **Uszniewicz Ewa**, geb. Pankiw, geb. am 20. 7. 1905 in Korostow, Ukrainerin, verwitwet, wohnhaft in Korostow, Krs. Stryj, wegen OUN-Organisationszugehörigkeit,
- 19) **Sawczyn Wasyl**, geb. am 27. 8. 1910 in Korostow, Ukrainer, verh., Heger, wohnhaft in Korostow, Krs. Stryj, wegen OUN-Organisationszugehörigkeit,
- 20) **Iwaszkiewicz Nikolaus**, geb. am 1. 12. 1892 in Suchrow, Ukrainer, verh., Dorfschulze, wohnhaft in Suchrow, wegen Bandenbegünstigung.

Das Urteil an den zu Ziffer 1) bis 10) Genannten ist am 21. 1. 1944 in Stryj vollstreckt worden, als Sühnmaßnahme für den am 14. 1. 1944 von ukrainischen Banditen erschossenen ukrainischen Polizeimeister

**Hiadki Wladimir**, in Daszawa, Krs. Stryj.

Die Verurteilten zu Ziffer 11) bis 20) sind für einen Gnadenerweis in Aussicht genommen.

Freigesprochen wurde:

**Maletyn Oleksa**, geb. im Jahre 1881 in Rakow, Ukrainer, verh., Landwirt, wohnhaft in Rakow Nr. 62.

Sollten in den nächsten 3 Monaten im Bereiche der Kreishauptmannschaft Drohobycz und Stryj Gewalttaten, insbesondere auf Deutsche, Angehörige der mit dem Großdeutschen Reich verbündeten Staaten oder im Interesse des Aufbauwerkes im Generalgouvernement arbeitenden Nichtdeutschen begangen werden, so wird, sofern die Täter nicht sofort ergriffen werden, das Urteil auch an den für den Gnadenerweis in Aussicht genommenen Verurteilten vollstreckt werden, und zwar in der Form, daß für jede Gewalttat an einem der Schutzbefohlenen des Großdeutschen Reiches, der beabsichtigte Gnadenerweis für mindestens 10 der Verurteilten hinfällig wird.

Ist die Tat von kommunistischen Elementen begangen, so werden aus dem Kreise der oben angeführten Personen Kommunisten, ist die Tat von sonstigen irregulierten Elementen begangen, so werden von den oben angeführten diejenigen, die diesen politisch nahestanden, von dem Gnadenerweis ausgeschlossen.

Es liegt deshalb in der Hand der nichtdeutschen Bevölkerung durch sofortige Festnahme

oder Veranlassung der Festnahme des oder der Täter oder durch Einwirkung auf ihnen bekannte, irreguliere Elemente, oder durch Anzeigen verdächtiger Personen dafür zu sorgen, daß das Urteil an den für den Gnadenerweis in Aussicht genommenen Verurteilten nicht vollstreckt wird.

Stryj, den 21. 1. 1944.

**Der SS- und Polizeiführer  
im Distrikt Galizien.**

*Proclamation by the SS and Police Leader of Galicia, 21 January 1944, informing the population of the death sentences imposed on prisoners convicted of being members of the OUN or UPA and for sheltering Jews*

*[Archives of the ZP-UHVR - Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council].*

immediately left my job at the co-operative where I had gone back to work after the German occupation. They had learned of my OUN connection and probably realized that I was involved with the smuggling of supplies to the UPA, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, which was just starting an armed struggle against the Nazi occupation. Ukrainian partisans were, by the autumn of 1942, becoming ever more adept at derailing trains, blowing up bridges, and, in general, challenging the Nazi occupation. The Nazis responded with ever more arrests and executions of OUN members and supporters. The UPA became one of the largest and most active anti-Nazi resistance movements in occupied Europe. After the Nazis were driven out of Ukraine by the Red Army, the Ukrainian liberation movement continued to struggle against the Soviet re-occupation of Ukraine well into the 1950s.

There were reprisals against traitors. Ukrainians and others who had collaborated with the communists between the fall of 1939 and the end of June 1941 were dealt with summarily. Others who had collaborated with the Nazis received the same justice. One night I went by the home of Przyjemski, the Pole who had told the Gestapo about me. I had three grenades with me. It was two o'clock, and no one was

about. I could have thrown the grenades into his house and so repaid his treachery. But I knew that he had a young son. How could I live with myself if I hurt or killed that boy? So I kept going. Others were not as forgiving.

On another night, in May 1943, I came into Zolochiv from the nearby woods. I had been coming to town from time to time to meet a friend who was a committed nationalist. In the spring of 1942, when the Germans were rounding up our livestock for transport to the Reich, he had ambushed a group of these confiscators and had killed one or more of them. There were immediate reprisals, including major round-ups of suspects. The Germans didn't get him, but they knew who he was and were looking for him. In general, the Gestapo always focussed on eliminating the OUN and especially members of the Bandera faction, which was the most active force in the anti-Nazi resistance. Someone must have spotted us at a previous meeting in the local park, because when I came into town this time the Gestapo were on alert. I didn't see them. They were in nondescript civilian clothes. Without warning they jumped me, yelling "Halt!" I ran. They fired after me. People scattered. I was running for my life, but they had sealed the town. Within a few hundred

metres they caught me, slapped handcuffs on my wrists, and took me off to Gestapo headquarters. I was very frightened. I was only twenty years old.

I was interrogated immediately. They ripped open my clothing and discovered OUN materials that I was carrying. Their Polish interpreter, a woman, told them that the literature referred to the Gestapo's murder of the OUN leader Ivan Klymiv in December 1942 and the mass execution of fifty-two Ukrainians near Chortkiv. "So, you are from the Bandera gang!" they yelled. "We'll soon show you how we treat that kind of scum." They began to beat me, first with their fists and then with whips. I tried to keep silent, but the pain was intense. I could not protect myself. They kept me handcuffed. Finally, mercifully, I passed out. When I awoke, I was in a crowded cell. Other prisoners were cleaning the blood off my face. It was very hot in that room. We were packed in on top of each other. There was no privacy.

I was interrogated three more times after that. These were not gentle talks. They beat me, often so furiously that the handcuffs dug deep into my wrists.



Where had I been for the past seven months? I told them I had been living in the forest. Where? In an abandoned forester's hut. What had I lived on? I said my grandparents had brought me food. They wanted to know about the OUN. I told them I knew nothing. They didn't believe me. They just beat me and beat me and beat me. I began to think that they did not care what I said, so long as they could beat me into submission. I kept silent. I admitted to nothing. I spent almost three weeks in handcuffs at the Zolochiv prison, some two months there in total. For much of that time my two friends, Ivan Lahola and Bohdan Kachur, tended to me. When I was in handcuffs they would even have to help me on and off the toilet.

One day the guards brought a young Jew, a dentist's son, into my cell. He had been found hiding with a Ukrainian family. He was with me for only a few days before the Germans moved us from Zolochiv to the Łacki prison in Lviv. The Gestapo didn't bother taking him with us. They just shot him and some other Jews. The rest of us, about twenty inmates, were herded to the road and ordered to climb into a waiting truck. A crowd of men and women stood nearby trying to catch a glimpse of us, trying to learn who was still alive, who was being

moved. Hungry, dirty, tattered, our faces and limbs swollen from the beatings, we must have been almost unrecognizable. I managed to see my brother and his wife in the crowd. He was crying, but he saw me and raised his hand in farewell. I could not respond. My hands were chained behind my back. That was the last time I saw him alive.

It was dusk by the time we got to Lviv. The setting sun poured light on the high grey walls of the prison in Łacki Street. I remember thinking that there would be no escape from this place. Within minutes we were pushed off the truck and moved into the prison's registration area. The last of our personal possessions were taken there. We had no right to anything. Henceforth we were no longer humans, we would be what the Germans called *figuren*, ciphers.

We were moved into a holding cell for the night. None of us could sleep although we were all exhausted. We tried to reach the window to see what was going on outside, but it had angled shades on the outside that allowed in light but blocked the view. Just as some of us started to doze, the Gestapo came in and took us for disinfecting. After that we were put in another cell, so small that we were packed into it like herrings in a barrel, each man lying on his side beside the next, so close that if one of us wanted to

move everybody else had to change sides too. It was so hot that the sweat flowed off our bodies. We were clammy with the heat and filth.

The next morning we were told about the prison routines. We would be inspected and counted every morning. We had to snap to attention whenever a German appeared. If we were weak and fainted we would be beaten where we lay. We would get our main meal at noon, when a cauldron of something resembling soup would be doled out to us. From time to time the guards would herd everyone into the corridor and yell out the names of prisoners who were to be taken away for interrogation. The fortunate ones who were not called were then allowed to return to their cells. Those taken away often never returned.

Weeks went by for some of us without interrogations. We began to wonder if they had forgotten we were even there. I spent two months in the Łacki prison. I got to meet some of the other Ukrainian prisoners. Father Yurii Kovalskyi was being held there for what the Nazis considered to be a crime, aiding fugitive Jews. He had been caught in the act of feeding Jews who had come to his door begging for food. For that he was sent to Auschwitz and then, in November 1944, to Dachau. Later I remember thinking how

ironic it was that his greatest tormentor in Birkenau was a Jewish *kapo* in Block 4 who beat him mercilessly whenever he caught him praying. That man hated Father Kovalskyi because he was a Ukrainian and a priest. He did not care that Kovalskyi was there because he had tried to help Jews.

When my turn came, the interrogation followed the usual course, except that these Gestapo men didn't seem to know why I was there. "Why are you here?" they asked. I said I didn't know. They started to whip me. "Why are you here?" they asked again. "Tell us, or we will beat you to death!" When I fainted, they threw cold water on me to bring me back to consciousness. Then they applied electrodes to my hands. I don't remember how long I was unconscious after that. I came to when they turned off the electric current. Then they asked the same questions. For my part, I asked them to be done with it and kill me. "You won't be that lucky," my torturers replied, "you're going to a camp. There you will be finished off, but slowly."

I was dragged back to my cell. I don't remember much about those days. I spent several of them in a delirium, my buttocks and back all black and blue, scraps of flesh peeling off my body. I was told later that in my ravings I had babbled about how we

were all fated to be sent to the concentration camps and burned in the crematoria. The older inmates were more philosophical. They had survived Bereza Kartuska, the Polish internment camp that had held many Ukrainian nationalists between 1933 and 1939, and so they assured me that we would all survive the German concentration camps. They had no idea of what they were talking about.

One day our guards began preparing us for transport. On 1 October, about twelve hundred of us were sent away, under Gestapo supervision.<sup>8</sup> They came and sorted us out, a hundred men or more into each boxcar. We were crammed in. The younger men stood; the older prisoners and the ill could sit. All suffered. Many lost consciousness from the heat and the lack of air. Whenever we stopped at a railway siding we begged for water and a chance to relieve ourselves. Only a few brave souls dared to approach the train and bring us something to eat or drink. Most of us had nothing to eat or drink for the entire trip.

Worse than the physical torments we endured was the uncertainty about where we were being taken. We had all heard about the concentration camps, but these were hazy and often contradictory rumours. When I think back now, I remember that we

both believed and didn't believe what we heard. Some of those who were convinced that we were being taken to our deaths tried to escape during the night, tearing up the floorboards of the boxcars and then leaping out. They were crushed under the train. The boxcars would shudder as the wheels tore into human flesh. We could hear the screams. When our guards found out what was happening, they stopped the train, near Demnicz, Poland, and warned that if anyone else attempted to escape everyone would be executed.

On 1 October 1943 I entered Birkenau, sometimes known as Auschwitz II. That was the day on which I stopped being Stefan Petelycky and became number 154922.



***“The Lviv Transport“ of  
Ukrainian nationalists to  
Auschwitz***

Dmytro Arsenych  
Ivan Artem  
Volodomyr Bachynsky  
Petro Bashuk  
Pavlo Betsa  
Volodomyr Bybyk  
Ivan Boyko  
Vasyl Boychuk  
Petro Bolechivsky  
Mykhailo Borys  
? Budurovych  
Ilia Vakulovsky  
? Vatahovych  
Julian Volchuk  
Roman Halasa  
Mykola Hoshovsky  
Reverend Father Hermasiuk  
Mykhailo Dmytriv  
? Drohomiretsky  
? Dubey  
Ostap Dudar  
? Zhmur  
Tymko Zarichansky  
Mykola Zacuchny  
Ivan Ivanets  
Roman Ivanets  
Vasyl Ivan  
Ivan Iviv  
Bohdan Kachor  
Ivan Katsuba

Mykhailo Kardash  
Vasyl Kardash  
Ivan Kardash  
Mykhailo Kiyko  
Ivan Kiyko  
Ivan Klymko  
Volodomyr Klymko  
Reverend Mykhailo Klymchak  
Oleksa Kliuk  
Ivan Klufinsky  
Mykhailo Koval  
Vasyl Koval  
Reverend Father Yuriy Kovalsky  
Petro Kowalsky  
? Kolomijchuk  
Franko Korchmaryk  
Roman Kostiuk  
Teodor Krochak  
? Kryzhanivsky  
Bohdan Krynycky  
? Kurylo  
Stepan Kurtiak  
Mykola Kuchyk  
Ivan Lahola  
? Lazaruk  
Mykhailo Laska  
? Leshko  
Semen Levytsky  
Vasyl Lesiuk  
? Livshun  
Ivan Lypka  
Volodomyr Lobay  
Hryts Loboda  
Fedir Lytsyshyn

Ivan Luchyn  
Yuriy Marshytsky  
Ivan Maruschak  
Hryhorij Maruschak  
Petro Masleyovych  
? Masenets  
Vasyl Makuch  
Zenon Matla  
Volodomyr Malymuka  
Tymish Melnyk  
Mykhailo Musikevych  
? Nakonachney  
Hryts Naniak  
Yaroslav Olijnyk  
? Omelian  
? Omelian (brothers)  
Volodomyr Orenchuk  
Yaroslav Pavlyshyn  
T Pelech  
Hryts Pelenychka  
Yurko Pasternak  
Stefan Petelycky  
Volodomyr Prokuda  
Stepan Procyk  
Vasyl Roman  
Mykhailo Rovenchuk  
Hryhori Rovenchuk  
Ivan Rovenchuk  
Vasyl Ryndiak  
Estahij Rudakevych  
Volodomyr Sawchak  
Mykhailo Sekreta  
Petro Senchak  
? Slennevych

? Skorobohaty  
Yaroslav Skura  
Bohdan Sobkiv  
Hryts Sosna  
Mykhailo Solomiany  
Mykhailo Stashko  
Mykhailo Stronstitsky  
Myroslav Tatsiy  
Nykyfor Tatsiy  
Mykola Frey  
Osyp Fedoryka  
Mykola Ceber  
Vasyl Ciuman  
Ivan Cherneha  
Mykhailo Chuiko (elder)  
Mykhailo Chuiko  
Ivan Chorney (elder)  
Ivan Chorney  
Mykola Chorney  
Volodomyr Sharko  
Ivan Shevchuk (elder)  
Ivan Shevchuk  
Mykola Shevchuk  
Mykhailo Shevchuk  
Pavlo Shevchuk  
Vasyl Shtokalo  
Volodomyr Shtokalo  
? Yavorivsky  
? Yavorsky



## The Many Circles of Hell

The sun was setting when our transport arrived. I stepped out of a boxcar and into hell. Stretched out before us, as far as I could see, were weedy fields, and everywhere barking guard dogs. We were ordered to form ranks, then stand at attention while guards armed with sub-machine-guns stood watch over us. An officer, the Death's Head insignia on his cap, came over and said to us that the sick, cripples, and anyone who was weak from the trip could take a ride by truck. Some poor souls took up the offer. That was the last we saw of them.

As we moved further into the compound I could see in the distance clusters of wooden barracks and above them, silhouetted against the evening sky, what appeared to be smoke stacks rising up out of a brick buildings. Dark smoke was curling out of them. I gave no thought to them.

None of us knew what the Nazis were doing in Birkenau. I was half-dead when I got there, having been held for some four months by the Gestapo, starved and tortured by my interrogators. I had not had anything to eat or drink for many hours. I had just got

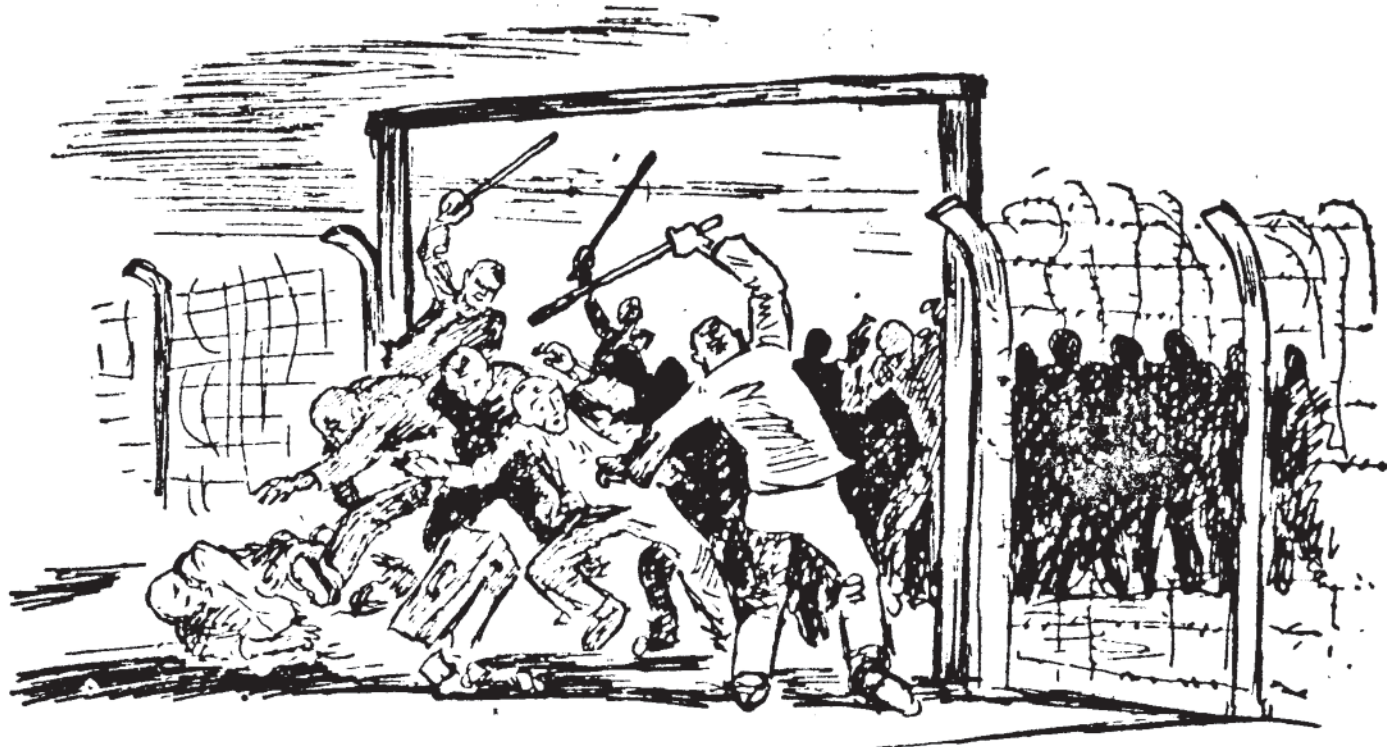
out of a boxcar filled with many other men who were in similarly bad shape or worse. Some were dead. We were all in terror. I took a look around and knew this was the end. Why complain when they herded us off that cattle car and roughly tattooed me, like all the others? I saw one fellow, Petro Boian, who resisted. They just beat him senseless and did him anyway. So he ended up being number 154415 despite his protest and he got a beating on top of that, all within minutes of detraining.

I became a number without a whimper. By this point doing so seemed normal, given where we were. I had just about abandoned all hope of survival by the time I got there. So you could say that I was truly indifferent when I got the tattoo that would, in so many ways, further define my life. I was dazed, hungry, exhausted, and it was almost dark. We had heard about the camps, but nothing, as I have said, was certain, nothing was clear. Of course we had seen that the Jews were forced to live in ghettos. We had heard there had been killings in the ghettos. Still, before I got to Birkenau, I had no real idea of what was going on in the camps. When I finally

got there and took one look at the smoke stacks, the electrified barbed-wire fences, the watch-towers, the barracks, and the thousands of people being lined up, many of them barely clothed, and forced to stand in the cold autumn air, I felt certain that I was coming to the end of my life.

We were led along the fence and could see inside the death camp. Just then a group of prisoners staggered by. They were emaciated and exhausted. All were wearing striped uniforms. I remember noticing that one prisoner's head was covered with blood. When I saw that I was suddenly and utterly overcome with fear. To my astonishment, a little further on, we passed by a small group of Gypsies, playing on musical instruments. They looked healthy by comparison with the other inmates. Some of them, men and women, were even dancing around; others were fighting among themselves. Large black crosses were painted on the backs of their fatigues.

Just after we marched through the main gate some SS men counted us. Behind them stood a row of strong, healthy prisoners who wore red-and-yellow armbands and green



**Перше привітання при входовій брамі.**

*First welcome at the concentration camp gates*





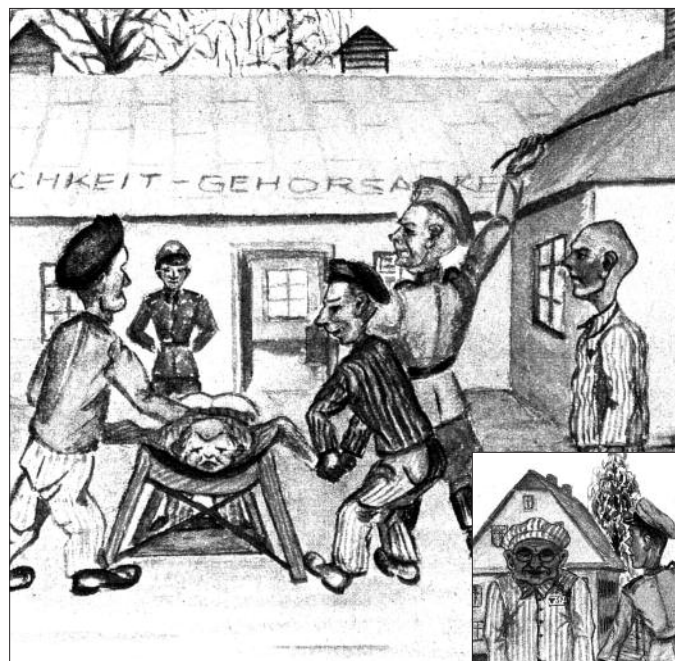
*Appell of Block 6*

triangles on their fatigues. They had thick clubs in their hands and were rushing us along on the double. “*Tempo! Tempo! Los! Los!*” They beat anyone who failed to move quickly. They targeted for more blows anyone who showed even the slightest defiance or pride. Their intention was to crush our will from the outset. That’s how we *zugänge*, or newcomers, were welcomed into hell and taught how we would exist there.

We were also searched. Anyone found hiding something of value was punished with twenty-five strokes. We were shepherded by the lackeys, who clubbed us through the registration process, taunting us, making these first few hours of our introduction to Birkenau a torment. I did notice that some of them were adept at pocketing the valuables they found in our ranks and trading a piece of bread for a piece of jewellery or gold that a prisoner had kept hidden against a future day of need. Some newcomers were so hungry by then that it seemed fair to give up a piece of gold for a chunk of stale bread.

By this point we were all numbers, and that is all that we would ever be in Auschwitz. We were being systematically stripped of our possessions, our identities,

and our hope. Everyone tried to save some small thing, some personal item that could remind him of a different existence and cheer him up. But we were allowed to keep nothing. I remember how malicious they were about it, grinning and joking as they



stripped us bare. They laughed as they told us that it was their job to get us acquainted with our new home, which we would only leave through the crematoria chimneys.

We were driven into a cramped space between two lines of barbed wire, crowded

together and then sorted out and sent to different barracks. I could see that other Ukrainians, other members of the OUN, were there with me. Later I learned that at least a hundred fifty Ukrainian political prisoners were already in Auschwitz. Now they were joined by me and Bohdan Kachur, Ivan Lahola, Mykhailo Lahola, Vasyl Lesiuk, Lohyn, Myroslav Tatsii, and Mykhailo Yaremko.

I was assigned to Barracks 4. A Jewish *kapo* greeted us by bellowing out that he knew we Ukrainians were all policemen from Lviv. He yelled out that he and the other Jews would soon make certain that we were all dead. We were then turned out into the cold night and forced until two o’clock to carry soil over rough ground to an area near the kitchen, where we filled in a hole. Since we were given no tools to work with, we had to use our jackets to carry the earth. Our bare feet were soon bloody. Finally, exhausted, we were allowed back into the barracks, four men to share



a bed. I was with Bohdan Kryzhanivskyi. He had worked for the Basilians, in their press, printing underground literature until they were caught. Later he tried to escape by jumping into one of the ditches that

surrounded part of our compound. But he was discovered and beaten to death.<sup>1</sup> The next morning I saw that several dozen other newcomers had died during the night.

We were herded into the morning cold like sheep and taken to a bathhouse where our heads and faces were shaved. After that we got some threadbare underwear and tin plates and spoons. These utensils became precious possessions. Then we were lined up for soup made from turnips. I had barely eaten for some three days, and so I remember that soup tasted delicious. After that we were moved to another barracks, under quarantine. That is where we were supposed to learn the rules of camp life and adapt to our new circumstances or die. Some of those who came with me to Auschwitz died in the quarantine compound.

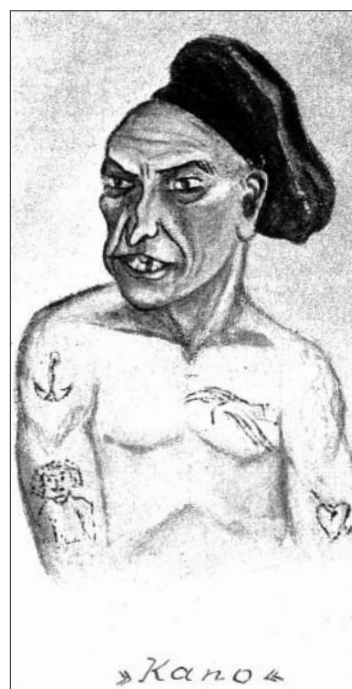
For five days we were housed in Barracks 4. I doubt I would have survived if I had been left there. But we were moved to Barracks 7, thanks to the intervention of another Ukrainian, Bohdan Komarnytskyi. He was one of the old-timers, with Auschwitz tattoo number 33. He knew the ropes. He was a survivor. He had friends among the German *kapos* and knew the block leader. Komarnytskyi told the Nazis he

was a Pole, but we knew he was a Ukrainian. They had picked him up in Cracow. So he had been one of the builders of Auschwitz, erecting the barbed-wire fences that would imprison him and so many others. At any rate, he realized that if we remained in

we were no longer individual human beings. We were all numbers. We had to memorize our numbers, which were stitched onto our jackets and pants and, of course, tattooed on our forearms. We must be humble and self-effacing and do only what everyone else did.

We must not dwell on what the next day might bring. We must live for the moment, take every opportunity to scrounge for food, and never attract the attention of the *kapos* or the SS men. He didn't hold out much hope for any of us, he said, but if we did everything he had told us we might live at least a little longer. Some of us learned these rules and survived. Komarnytskyi did too.

I remember the first *appell*, or roll-call. The gong rang out, and we had to rush to the parade square, being clubbed all the way by the lackeys. One older man fell behind and arrived late. The guards beat him senseless. Then they bound his hands and feet, tied him to a stake, and lifted him up and dropped him to the ground, torturing him for all of us to see, wracking his limbs. The sight was too much for us newcomers. Some tried to run away and jumped up on to the barbed-wire fences. They were electrocuted on the spot. One prisoner, an amazingly



Barracks 4 we would suffer a lot, for the Jewish *kapo* there was a bully who hated Ukrainians and who would have ensured that we were brutalized.

As an old hand, Komarnytskyi also taught us the skills we needed in order to have a chance of survival. He explained that

strong man, grabbed the wires and vaulted over the fence. The SS guards shot at him, and an SS woman in the field outside the wire finally killed him. In the panic of these events the crowd of newcomers had scattered every which way. The SS restored order by threatening to continue shooting until we were all dead.

When we were assembled again, it became obvious that two of our fellow inmates were now missing. We were forced back into our barracks, and a search was held. No sooner had we settled in than a shout came, "Get up!" and out we went again to the square. The Nazis counted us again, comparing the numbers on our badges to the tattoos on our flesh, trying to determine which numbers had gone missing. Then we were sent back into the barracks again.

Just as many of us were beginning to get to sleep, exhausted after our long journey and the terrors we had already witnessed, the command came again, "Get up!" and we ran out to the parade square. Covered in blood, frightened, cowering before us, were the two prisoners who had tried to escape. They had been hiding in a canal. Now, in front of all of us, they were tied up, fixed to a flogging stool, and beaten

to death. A young man standing beside me watched and wept, "They are killing my brother!" he cried. That poor lad was also a Ukrainian, from Berezhany.

I stayed in Barracks 7 at Birkenau for about another week. It was a mixed barracks,



housing Jews, Poles, and Ukrainians, all of them trying to survive. After that first week we were marched over to Block 11 in old Auschwitz. There were twenty-nine of these blocks in all. They had been used as housing for Polish border troops before the war. Each one had two accommodation levels and a

small storage attic above. We were on the top floor, which was almost entirely populated by Ukrainians. I noticed that there were quite a few more SS men here guarding us.

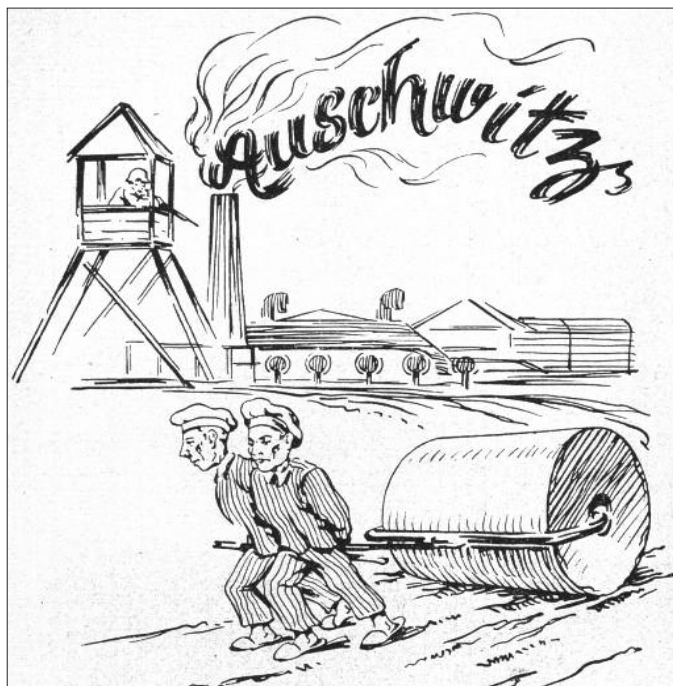
There were also quite a few Jewish *kapos*, dressed in black outfits, better fed than the rest of us, who did a lot of killing. Many of them belonged to a special formation known as the "Canada Commando" which sorted out the belongings of incoming prisoners, taking everything that was of value to the Third Reich's war economy, leaving only the naked men, women, and children, many of whom were then gassed. That task gave those *kapos* many opportunities to steal, which they did, not that it helped most of them in the long run.

I remember that there were at this time a lot of Soviet POWs in the camp, including a large group of Ukrainian women. They were housed in Block 11, two floors below us. We could sometimes hear them singing Ukrainian songs at night. That went on for about three weeks, and then one night their singing abruptly stopped. We heard the next day that they had all been taken away and shot. Only the empty cellar floor and an echo of their songs were left in our minds.

After three weeks we were moved again, this time to Block 17 in the central compound. We marched in our clogs through the gate that was crowned with an iron sign, *Arbeit Macht Frei*, "Work Shall Set You Free." By now I knew what that message meant. The only way to set yourself free was to let them work you to death. That way you could escape through the chimney of the crematorium.

Even so we all tried to survive. We *Banderivtsi*, as we were known because of our allegiance to Bandera's faction of the OUN, got together. We found each other and began trying to take care of each other and other Ukrainians as much as possible. For example, we tried to get our comrades jobs in the camp laundry, for that wasn't as hard a job as being assigned to a gang involved with the construction of a road called *Sola Brücke*. I worked at that heavy labour site and so I know what it was like. We were forced to work fast; the food was bad and scarce, and many fell ill and died every day. Our guards would march us out of the camp in the early morning, and we would spend the day building the road, which we worked on almost to the end of January 1944. You can imagine how difficult it was

for men without proper tools, barely clothed and malnourished, to build a road in the late fall and early winter. We did anything we could to survive. We even stole empty cement bags to line our clothes for insulation. Those who were caught doing



that would get a beating. Imagine, a bad beating just for stealing a paper bag. Even so we built that road, and we did a pretty good job of it.

At the end of a long day we marched back to camp, passing under the *Arbeit Macht Frei* sign, and were checked by the SS

guards at the gate to make sure that no one was smuggling anything into the camp and that we were all there. If the figures didn't match, we would be called out on parade and counted, over and over again, until all discrepancies were accounted for. We were ciphers, numbers. The numbers had to add up twice a day, at roll-call in the morning and at roll-call at night. The Nazis, I learned, were accountants of flesh, counters of corpses, and we were nothing to them but so many work units, to be used up as they needed and then burned like trash.

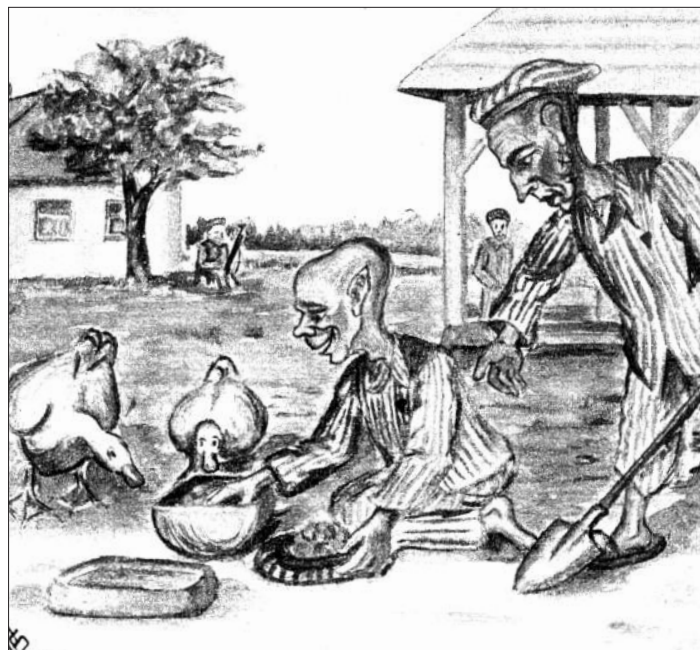
My next job was in the SS kitchen. That was a good place to work. Most of the men who worked there were *Volksdeutsche*, although there were a few Russians and Ukrainians. No Jews worked there. My job was to move foodstuffs by cart from a storage area to the kitchen, as needed. I thought I finally had a chance to survive. If you were lucky enough to work near food there was always a chance of swallowing an extra morsel to keep yourself going. But I wasn't there very long before one of the *Volksdeutsche* was caught trying to escape, with the assistance of the Polish underground, we were told. When that attempt was discovered they immediately

dispersed all of us. I ended up working in the laundry's washing room. At least it was warm and sheltered. There were Jews working there. They were from Poznań and were quite friendly. I worked with them until I was evacuated from Auschwitz, on 19 January 1945. The Soviets overran the camp on 27 January 1945.

I never participated in anything having to do with the mass murder of Jews or others at Auschwitz or anywhere else. But I did catch a glimpse of a particularly vile corner of the inferno I had been cast into on a day in the fall of 1944. The SS took me and six other men into the woods. When they told us to move out I thought it was all over for me, that they were taking us to the woods to execute us. Instead they made us load cut wood onto trucks and drive it to Birkenau, where the bodies of Jews who had been transported in from Hungary were being burned. I had no idea of what they wanted to do with that wood until we got there.

We came to a large cement-lined trench into which liquid fuel had been poured. Other prisoners then threw into that maw the bodies of Hungarian Jews who had been gassed soon after their transport arrived.

The stench of roasting flesh was incredible. We could see that these were the same Hungarian Jews who had arrived in Auschwitz in September or October 1944, most of whom were executed immediately or shortly after their arrival. I remember



*“Organizing” extra nutrition*

seeing thousands of pieces of luggage, piles of clothing and other personal items, pyramids of possessions that made me think that I was a witness to the Final Judgement. I know this may sound strange today. But that is how people existed in Auschwitz. We often found ourselves thinking that we were

no longer in this world, that we had somehow moved into a place that was closer to Hades than to Heaven, that the world we dimly remembered no longer existed. Yet, at almost the same time, we would try to focus on the essential business of getting a little more bread, another ladle of what passed for soup, a scrap of anything that could keep us alive. We survived as scavengers. We ate whatever came our way. We took food and clothing from those who had died, to give ourselves an extra chance to live. It is remarkable how strong the will to live is.

But the death all around and the brutality of it were soul-destroying. How long can a man or woman watch others die and remain unmoved? No one can steel themselves completely against the reality of what they are living, unless they give up and become, in effect, disembodied. When that happened to a person we knew they had no will to live left. They lapsed into a kind of non-existence and usually soon gave up and died or were killed. We called anyone who had reached that state a *musulman*. These lost souls were still walking among us, but they had the vacant look of someone who was already gone. To watch these zombies fading away, dissipating

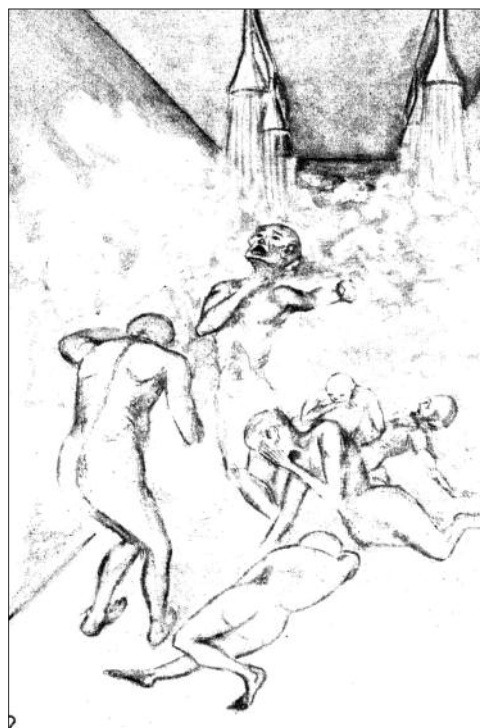
like shadows, was perhaps the most unnerving sight of all. You would get to know someone and learn something about who he was, and then, sometimes for no reason that you could understand, the new-found friend would just give up and start to

dissolve as a human being. There was nothing we could do to save such people. They simply lost the will to live and died. Before Auschwitz I did not believe that a person could give up hope and die. Yet that happened. People died because deep inside they had come to believe that life had no meaning, no purpose, that there was nothing to life except the horrors that the Nazis imposed on us. I was, and am, a man of faith, a

Ukrainian Catholic. I believed in God and in a personal Saviour, Jesus Christ. I know that my faith in God helped me survive, as did the mutual aid that each OUN comrade offered the others. When I think back today I thank Father Sas for saving my life and my

soul by teaching me to be a Ukrainian nationalist and by instilling in me a profound faith in a better world.

On 7 January 1945, a group of us decided that we would celebrate Ukrainian Christmas properly. Accordingly, I tried to



“organize” (that meant steal in camp slang) some vegetables so that we could make *borshch*, the traditional Ukrainian beet soup. I actually managed to scrounge a few beets and potatoes, giving us all the basic ingredients needed. My friend Petro

Mirchuk, number 49734, another one of the *Banderivtsi* at Auschwitz, was then working in the laundry, running the boiler. He was quite well liked by the other inmates, especially some of the younger Jews, who often referred affectionately to him as

Father. He had worked as a lawyer and knew Yiddish well and so had an understanding and sympathy for the Jews in Auschwitz.<sup>2</sup> I got to know him there, and we helped each other when we could. So, when I got these precious potatoes and beets I passed them to him so that he could cook them in the steam. He did that.

As I was carrying this soup to Block 17, I was stopped by an assistant *rapportführer* by the name of Kaduck. He was a real sadist. As far as I knew, his only skill in life was knowing how to murder people. He saw that I was carrying a pail and ran over to take it away. At that moment one of the *Volksdeutsche*, a *rapportführer* by the name of Hartswing, saw us. He yelled at Kaduck to halt and came over to investigate what was happening. I told him that I was a member of the *Banderabewegung*, or

Bandera movement, as the Nazis called Ukrainian nationalists, and explained that we celebrated Christmas on 7 January, according to the Julian calendar. I said that I had found the ingredients for soup in the garbage outside the kitchen and claimed that I had made it myself, without anyone's help, that my plan was to take it to the barracks and share it with my friends. Hartswing checked my tattoo number and asked me why I wasn't wearing a badge on my jacket. I said that I was a Ukrainian, and so he took out a scrap of cloth and wrote a big *U* on it. I said that if I wore such a badge I'd be identified as an *Ungar*, or Hungarian, and so he took it back and changed it to *Ur* for *Ukrainer*. I think that badge was unique. He then let me go. I am quite sure that if he hadn't intervened Kaduck would have killed me right then and there, claiming that I was a thief.

We were marched out of Auschwitz on the Feast of Jordan, 19 January 1945. I had fallen quite ill by that time and was so weak that I couldn't really walk. If it had not been for two of my friends, Yaroslav Pavlyshyn and Roman Kostiuk, who survived the war only to die in 1952 on an OUN mission to Ukraine, I would have been

killed. They half-carried and half-dragged me with them. We left at night. The rumours were that the Red Army was already at Cracow. So, between ten and eleven o'clock that evening we were told to get ready to go, and at about one we were paraded and



counted up. I walked through the *Arbeit Macht Frei* gate one last time. I was free of Auschwitz, but gave it no thought. I was almost a *musulman*.

The night was cold and snowy, and we went stretched out in a long column, five prisoners abreast. We were marched to a

large barn and from there were loaded onto a train, just open platforms with no protection against the elements. From there we were evacuated to Mauthausen, in Austria, where we arrived in the afternoon of 21 January.

Mauthausen, at first impression, was even worse than Auschwitz. It was very cold. There were huge numbers of people, all forced into a very small space between two barbed-wire fences. If you fell there you would be trampled to death, that's how many people were being pushed into that cordoned area. And once we got in there they just let us stand there, for hours, until the early evening. Then they moved us into a shower room where we were sprayed with hot water and disinfectants. Since there was not enough clothing to go around we were forced naked out into the night, then taken into a cold barracks, assigned bunks, and left like that, most of us stark naked, for four days.

This was January. It was freezing cold. I was on a bunk with Petro Mirchuk and Danylo Chaikivskyi, number 57373. We huddled together on the bare boards and rotated positions so that everyone had a chance to warm up. The middle man would





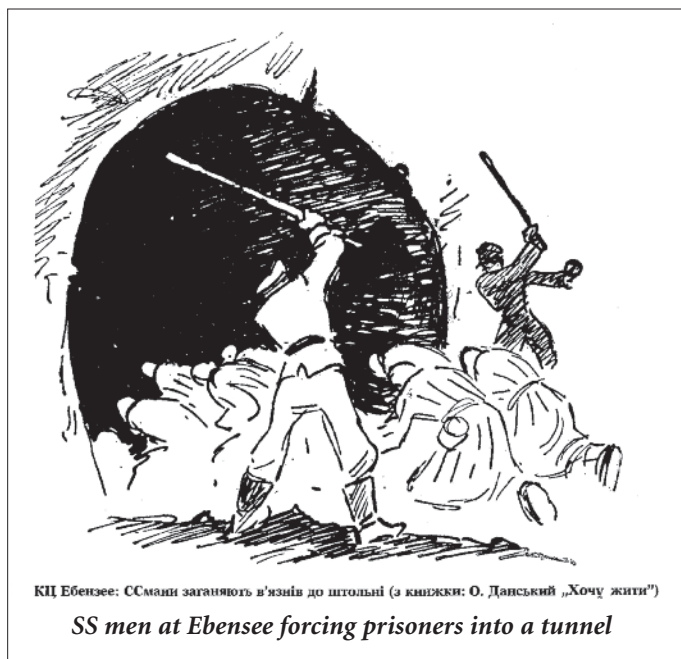
*Punishment for being caught “organizing” some extra food*

have the most benefit from being warmed by the two men on either side of him. Once he had revived he would move to the outer position, closest to the window, and the man who had been nearest the window would take his place, and so on. Our body heat was all we had to keep us from freezing to death.

Finally they came and began sorting us out. I got a new number at Mauthausen, number 120169, although this one was not tattooed on my body. We got clothes to wear. Some of the Ukrainians, like Mirchuk, were then sent to another concentration camp near Melk. It was part of the Mauthausen complex, but the prisoners there were a little better off. I was not lucky enough to be sent to Melk. Instead I was again transported, on 29 January 1945, to become part of a slave-labour group at the sub-camp at Ebensee. I remained in that part of Austria until the end of the war.

Ebensee was a killing field. There were enormous stone quarries there, and we laboured at that site, building great tunnel complexes that were to be used to manufacture V-2 rockets. It was backbreaking work done by men who had little food and

inadequate tools, who had to march more than a kilometre over very rough terrain just to get to the main work sites. It was very frightening, murderous. We worked twelve hours a day. The tunnels were damp. Sometimes water would punch through and



soak us, or huge stones would calve off the rock face and crush the limbs or heads of those working below. Little could be done for the seriously injured because there was no doctor or medicine. The guards finished off those who were unable to work. As we marched to and from work, the SS guards

would beat anyone who fell out of line or faltered, sometimes just beat them to death. Many Italians perished there, as did many Soviet Ukrainians. I also saw some of the Jews who had worked in the *sonderkommando* in Auschwitz at Ebensee.

The *sonderkommando* had performed such tasks as removing gold teeth and other valuables and transporting corpses. These Jews survived the war, but I do not know where they went after that. I have never heard of any of them being punished for their crimes.

I avoided the back-breaking work as much as I could, although the penalty for shirking was death. I remember being caught once by the block senior. He demanded to know why I was not at work. I explained that I was cleaning our barracks. He threw me to the ground and beat me so badly that I couldn't get up. I had to crawl on all fours to get to my bunk. Just then the block supervisor came by. Seeing me in my bunk, he began to beat me even harder than the block senior had. I would have died then and there if my tormentor had not been called away. I spent the next half-hour or so lying in a daze on the floor until my vision cleared. Then I somehow managed to crawl under the bunk and tuck

myself out of sight. I wanted to sleep, but I knew that if I missed roll-call that evening I'd be hunted down and killed. I lay there shivering and bleeding, little more than a cowering animal, until my friends came back from work. When they saw that I was not in my bunk, they concluded that I had been killed. "He's ash by now," someone said. When I heard that, I moved and got my head out from under the bunk. That was as far as I could crawl with what remained of my strength. My friend Vasyl Lesiuk saw me and could see that I had been badly beaten.

"Get up," he said. "Roll-call is about to be sounded. If you don't show up for roll-call they'll kill you."

"Let them kill me," I replied. I had given up. I did not even try to get up. The fellows pulled me from under the bunk and tried to stand me on my feet. I couldn't manage, so they took me under the arms and hauled me out with them to the *appellplatz*. These roll-calls often took up to two hours, and that night it was raining. Everyone was soaked, and I could not stand. Sitting was not allowed. In despair I searched for a place to rest. Spotting a bench near the chief supervisor's block, I asked my friends to take me there. They refused. I persisted until they said they'd let me go if I could walk to the bench myself. I tried and fell flat on my face

in the mud. They quickly lifted me up and held me like that until roll-call was over, then got me back to our barracks and into my bunk. I just lay there, moaning, unable even to rise up to go and get my supper.

Inmates were supposed to have their hair cut very short. Many wanted to keep it as long as possible because it provided some warmth for the head. Once the hair got too long, the guards would cut a cross pattern on the head as a sign that one should get a haircut very soon. When the barracks boss came by the next morning and saw that I had not been shaved, he began to beat me even though I protested that I had been too ill to go. He asked what was wrong with me. I replied I had an acute case of diarrhoea. My friends intervened at that point and told him that I was sick and asked him to leave me alone. Surprisingly, he did.

I did many different jobs while I was with the slave-labour group at Ebensee. For about a week I worked with the team that kept the surrounding roads clear of snow and carried railway ties. It was hard work because of the damp and cold, and I was all the more miserable for the fact that my boots had fallen apart, so that I was working with no footwear. When I reported to my supervisor, respectfully begging (as we were obliged to) for a new pair of boots, he began

yelling at me, insisting that I had deliberately lost my pair. I denied that and so was given a new pair in the morning. But they were soaking wet. So I had to go out into the cold and work all day in wet boots. That lasted two days. My feet were so swollen by the time I returned that I asked for permission to see the camp medic. This enraged the supervisor. He screamed that he was sick and tired of malingerers like me who didn't want to work. We were marched out for work, but when the call went out, "Work teams, form into groups!" I stood aside and joined the group of those going for a medical exam. When the numbers of those permitted to see the doctor were called out mine was not one of them. I was reported and forced to go to work that day. I don't know how I managed it, but by the next day it was so obvious that I could barely walk that I was given permission to see the medic.

At Ebensee conditions were rough for everyone. Even the SS men who guarded us did not have enough food, not that we cared if they were suffering. We ate a kind of soup made of weeds and potato peels, sometimes with tree bark mixed in, anything that was even remotely edible. It was not a diet that men who were expected to work long and hard hours digging tunnels and quarrying rock could survive on. My friends started to

die off. Volodymyr Klymko, a lawyer who had studied in Prague, died right in front of my eyes, as we were stumbling along the path to the quarry for another day's work. One moment he was shuffling along; the next he was near my feet, dead. We had to drag his body back to the camp so that it could be counted. The figures, you must remember, had to add up. Then they dumped his body into the crematorium, and he was gone. Off the roll-call, off earth. Danylo Chaikivskiy, a journalist, tried to encourage us by saying that the war would soon end and that we must not give up hope.

By then we suspected that the war was coming to an end. But what would happen to us? That became a nagging question. Would the Nazis exterminate us, bury our bodies, hide the evidence of their mass murder and slave labour camps? Added to our deteriorating physical condition, this psychological strain further debilitated us. We worried constantly. But we also tried to maintain our solidarity. I will always remember how we Ukrainians gathered together for Latin Easter, towards the end of March 1945. We had been given the day off. That would be the last time that the ten or so of us who still survived in Ebensee would be together, at least on this earth. We took that time to try and give each other a little hope,

telling each other that the war would soon be over, that if we endured just a little longer we would survive our persecutors. Most of my comrades didn't.

One day as I was walking back from the quarry a *kapo* yelled at me, saying that I was not moving fast enough. He hit me, forcing me to the ground. I barely managed to get up. I had given up. The next day I went to the camp medic. He could see the state that I was in and so put me off work for a few days. I knew that I could no longer take the heavy work in the quarries or tunnels. I said so and was assigned to clean-up duties around the camp, aided by another Ukrainian, Volodia, from the region of Volhynia. By this time there was virtually nothing left for any of us to eat. Supplies were not getting through; the Third Reich was collapsing. So we ate coal and more tree bark, anything to fill our bellies, anything that might give us at least the illusion of having something to eat. Obviously, what we consumed had little, if any, nutritional value. We were dying on our feet.

Volodia went first. Meanwhile my diarrhoea became acute. No one bothered to treat me. It was just a matter of time before I would die. So they took me and laid me in a room adjacent to the ovens of the crematorium. They wouldn't have to carry

my corpse far that way. I lay there on tar paper on a dirty concrete floor, fouled by my own excrement, puss, and blood. My sores became badly infected, and parts of my buttocks were bruised because of the lack of circulation. I have dark spots on my body to this day that remind me of those festering wounds.

As I lay there waiting to die they brought in my friends, one by one. Nykyfor Tatsii came to lie beside me, then Volodia Savchuk. Nykyfor died first and from there went right into the oven. We could see them burn him. Then Vasyl died, and his body went into the same oven. Finally only Volodia and I were left. We had no clothes at all, and we huddled together, trying to stay warm and alive. I knew Volodia had died when the warmth of life went out of him. I pushed myself away from him. The last of my Ukrainian comrades from Auschwitz went into the crematorium at Ebensee, for Ukraine. There's no other way to describe what was done to us, and why.

A Pole who had been assigned to be a medic came by and discovered that I was still alive. He had been one of those magnificently defiant heroes who had dared to fight the Nazis in the Warsaw uprising. He asked me, in Polish, where I was from. For no reason that I have ever been able to

explain I replied, in Polish, that I was from the city of Tarnów and had lived on Sanguszką Street. I'd never been there, but I just blurted these details out. He was stunned. He too had lived in Tarnów on Sanguszką Street when he had been attending medical school. Thankfully he didn't ask me for a street number. Thinking that I was a compatriot, he told me not to drink the lime concoction we had been given because it was intended only to speed us on to our Maker. He gave me some pills to swallow and later came back and helped move me to a barracks room, placing me in a lower bunk and giving me a blanket and telling the barracks senior not to bother me because I was very sick and under his personal care. Despite his kindness, I was so ill by this time that I don't recall much of what happened. But I do remember that he said he was from Piotrków. I am still looking for him so that I can thank him for saving my life. I was moved and left unmolested. This was in late April. After that I lapsed into semi-consciousness. I was dying.

The war for those who survived Ebensee ended on 8 May 1945 when the Americans arrived. I don't remember the day. Somehow, and I have no recollection of how, I had been taken for dead just a few days before and had been thrown onto a pile of corpses awaiting

cremation. That is where I lay, in the cold embrace of other men who had been brought to this place and worked to death, men whom I had never known and never will, not in this world. I lay there and would have been shoved into the oven that had already consumed so many others if it had not been for my OUN comrades from the Melk camp. On Ukrainian Easter, 6 May 1945, Hryhorii Naniak and Oleksa Vintoniak had come over to the Ebensee enclosure to look for me and other survivors. They had just about given up and were leaving when they saw me twitching on a pile of corpses, atop my own Golgotha, near the crematorium building, ready to be burned alive. They pulled me down from the pile, saved me from those all-consuming flames. And that is how I came back to the world of the living, on the very day when Ukrainians celebrate the Resurrection of Christ.

The next few days are not clear in my mind. The Americans liberated us. I know that I slept for hours after we were taken out of Ebensee and moved to a nearby field, where we were stripped naked by American army medics and German nurses, washed, deloused, had our wounds treated, and were then given blankets and left to sleep.<sup>3</sup> The war in Europe ended on 8 May 1945, V-E

Day. But I knew nothing of this. I remained in a half-conscious world for nearly three weeks. Recovery was very gradual. Many perished even though we no longer had to work and were getting better rations and medical attention. Those men had held on long enough to see Nazi Germany die. They could now die with some semblance of peace, knowing at least that their tormentors had been utterly vanquished.

Another survivor I met at the time, a Yugoslav doctor named Alex, told me that the French had set up facilities near Neukirchen, in a villa that had served as a Gestapo spa during the war. As he knew French and had established an understanding with some of the French Red Cross workers, we went to that villa. I could barely walk. In fact I more or less crawled up to the gates, like a baby on all fours. But I made it there. And every day for several weeks I would go out slowly and sit in the nearby pine forest in the sun. I began to come back to myself. We were almost all like that, half-dead men trying to rebuild our bodies and minds after an ordeal that nothing could have prepared us for.

One day, I remember it was a Sunday, and very sunny, Alex and two Frenchmen who had also been prisoners came to get me. They wanted me to go with them to a

nearby farm, where they insisted that a *bauer*, German farmer, feed us. They wanted to celebrate our survival, and they intended to make that German feed us. So they ate and drank their fill. I said no, I would not join them. I had nothing against this German, and I did not want to take what was not mine. The Germans were now under occupation and it was a harsh one. They may have deserved it, but I was not going to play the role of their master.

It was a good thing that I took this view. For Alex and his two friends overate and the next day were dead. Their bodies, after years of deprivation, could not take all the food they had gorged on in their pleasure at being able to eat good food again. You had to be very careful about what you ate, how much and how often, or you would die. How ironic I found that simple truth that the food you craved for so many years could kill you.

Since I did not know a word of French and my friend Alex was dead, I was not really welcome to stay. The French were not prepared to take me with them to France, and so I had to do something for myself. I had heard that the Ukrainians at Ebensee were establishing some kind of

community, and so I decided to go back there. Sure enough, when I returned, I found that Petro Mirchuk and Milena Rudnytska had set up a group of Ukrainians who were already receiving relief supplies from the Americans. I stayed with the group for



*“Freedom! May 1945”*

nearly two months, as my strength returned. The American occupation authorities gave me an official document that confirmed that I had been a political prisoner at Auschwitz. That document helped get extra rations, a very important consideration in postwar

Germany. There were acute shortages of just about everything except rubble. Without the proper documents you’d starve or become a criminal. Black marketeering became a way of life for many people.

Finally, I felt well enough to strike out on my own. I had not seen much of the world outside of Ukraine and the concentration camps. I was twenty-two years old and wanted to see a little of the world before I decided what to do next. So, protected by my American document, I left Ebensee and spent about a month meandering around Austria, like the proverbial Gypsy. I’d come into a town, go to the office of the *bürgermeister*, and show my document, and he would arrange a room, extra rations, and anything else I needed. I took this time to explore Austria and recuperate.

When I next got back to Ebensee, in September 1945, I found out that most of the Ukrainians who had been there had moved on to Munich. They had managed to get the German authorities to assign them a building there, for they could demonstrate that they had been victims of the Nazi regime. So, as Holocaust survivors, they enjoyed some privileges in this postwar period although, ironically,

none of us, even those with Auschwitz tattoos, have ever received compensation like that given to Jewish survivors. To this day people like me are still defined as political prisoners who allegedly fought against the state. Because we took up arms against Nazi Germany we have been told that we are not eligible for redress. They forget that we sat in the same concentration camps as the Jews, many of whom had not resisted Nazi tyranny, but all of whom, if they survived, get compensation. Only a bureaucrat could come up with such a convoluted argument for avoiding what I still believe is the moral duty of Germany to compensate all Holocaust survivors, Jews and non-Jews alike.

Ukraine, which was so utterly devastated by Nazi Germany, never received adequate reparations, although in recent years Berlin has thrown a few token marks at Kyiv. It is estimated that more than ten million of Ukraine's people died or vanished in the war. The country was completely overrun, exploited, and many of the major battles of the Eastern Front were fought there. The ruin was almost complete. Yet compare what Israel has received in reparations with what Ukraine has and a continuing injustice is exposed. I would like to believe that, some day, the Jews who suffered alongside me in

Auschwitz will raise an outcry over this discrimination, but there seems to be little sympathy in Israel or within the Jewish diaspora for remembering Ukrainian losses during the Holocaust.<sup>4</sup>

By October 1945, capably pulled together by Petro Mirchuk, quite a few members of the OUN were housed in our own quarters just outside Munich. The building had once been a hostel. Many of the nationalist movement's elite lived there at the time. All of us were trying to find out what had happened to our families and friends. We were also waiting to learn what our tasks would be in the wake of Nazi Germany's defeat and the Soviet reoccupation of all of Ukraine. While V-E Day had been an ecstatically happy day for most Europeans, and we too were overjoyed at Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender, we knew that our war was not over. Ukraine is part of Europe, and Ukraine was not free. Victory still had to be achieved. We had no idea how long we would have to wait, but we knew that we had no choice but to take up the struggle against our foes. Too many of the best and bravest of our men and women had already made the ultimate sacrifice for the cause of Ukraine's independence. We did not even think about giving up.

## The Struggle Continued

Although I had survived and regained much of my strength, I was still far from fully recovered. But the OUN needed me, needed all of those who had got through the war and found themselves in the West. I got my orders to move on to Augsburg, where there was a major Displaced Persons camp for Ukrainians and other Eastern European refugees, particularly Lithuanians. But I did not want to live in a camp ever again and so found lodgings privately, although I took many of my meals in the DP camp kitchen. Augsburg was close enough to Munich for me to return nearly every day to work for the OUN. The *Banderivtsi* set up their major base in that city after the war.

That was where I met Stepan Bandera, twice in 1946 and once in 1947, when he spoke with me about returning on a covert mission to Ukraine. I can't say he made much of an impression on me from a physical point of view, but he did radiate an undeniable authority and presence. He was, I knew just by speaking with him, ready to give his own life for Ukraine, for our cause. That could not be feigned. And, finally, he did give his life for Ukraine,

murdered in cold blood by a Soviet agent in Munich in 1959.<sup>1</sup>

My principal activity in the immediate postwar period was to locate other members of the OUN who had found themselves in the emigration and to get them to report to our Munich headquarters on Zeppelinerstrasse. I travelled quite a bit throughout Germany, Austria, and even Italy, where I made the acquaintance of Bishop Ivan Buchko. His influence with the Vatican was critical in helping to save members of the Ukrainian Galicia Division, which had surrendered to the British at the war's end and was interned near Rimini in north eastern Italy. Eventually, after they were screened by British, Canadian, American, and even Soviet investigators, most of these soldiers were moved to Britain as "Surrendered Enemy Personnel" and were finally civilianized in the late 1940s. Many then moved on to Canada, the United States, and Australia. During the war I never heard anyone in Ukraine claim that these men had participated in war crimes. At first the Bandera faction of the OUN was not sympathetic to the formation of this

division, for it wanted nothing to do with the Germans after they demonstrated how they had come to enslave Ukraine. But later, when it became obvious that most of the men who had joined the division were patriots, intent on getting the military training and equipment that a Ukrainian state would need to protect itself, we began to send our own men into its ranks. The division fought only against the Soviets and, despite the forces that were ranged against it, acquitted itself rather well at the battle of Brody.<sup>2</sup>

Often covertly, I made my way into the American, British and French occupation zones of Germany and Austria, finding our people and picking up valuable information for our leaders about conditions in various parts of Ukraine. A few people were still being sent out of Ukraine as late as 1950. It was very dangerous, but they could get out and bring us news about the struggle of the UPA against the Soviets. We knew that an armed struggle was going on and that it was as brutal as any partisan war is, but we had only limited information about what was really going on.



One of my other jobs was to purchase foreign currencies for the use of those whom we were sending into Ukraine through various Eastern European countries. We also tried to collect as much money as we could from our people who had found themselves in the West. None of them had much money, obviously, but what little they accumulated had to be husbanded in order to sustain the OUN in exile. We needed our own sources of funds so that we could remain independent of the intelligence agencies of the West. Destitute as our people were, they were nevertheless generous in their support of the movement.

The British and the Americans were very interested in what we were doing. They had penetrated our organization for their own intelligence-gathering purposes and wanted us to work for them on both sides of the Iron Curtain. And it must be admitted that some former members of both factions of the OUN sold out to the Americans and British. Free enterprise at work. At the same time, it became obvious that the NKVD, which was doing everything it could to wipe out the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council (UHVR) and its political and military arms, the OUN and UPA, had also infiltrated our ranks. Seven men whom I knew personally were sent on missions to

Ukraine. All of them were caught or killed as they tried to cross the border. That kind of failure rate lets you know that something is badly wrong with your operation. One of my friends, Hrynkiw, was killed in his very own mother's front yard. Imagine how she must have felt, standing there over his body, having to deny to the NKVD that she knew the identity of the corpse, just to save herself. These brave men were all betrayed by turncoats in our midst and traitors in the ranks of our American and British supporters. Because of them the OUN suffered great casualties. The Soviets caught some of our agents and turned them against us, thus further exposing the underground network and causing us irreplaceable losses.

Yet we kept trying to find out what was happening in Ukraine. There were all sorts of stories going around in those days, especially about an impending war between the West and the Soviets. We had no way of checking on the truth of much of what we heard. We also suspected that some of the news we got was deliberate disinformation, planted so as to confuse us, expose our agents, and roll up our network. Practically everyone had some kind of story to tell, some kind of information to sell. People would often come and say that they knew the truth about the UPA and the UHVR and

the armed struggle still going on against the Soviets. It became obvious that the only way we were going to get to the truth was by sending in our own most trusted men. We had to re-establish ties with the movement in Ukraine or find ourselves doomed to the irrelevancy that is the fate of most exiles.

I met all sorts of people in those years immediately after the war, some of whom may well have been genuine supporters, others who were provocateurs. I remember how, on one occasion in May 1946, when I was on a train from Frankfurt to Munich, I was approached by a young man. It was quite warm that spring, and I was wearing a short-sleeved shirt. He saw my Auschwitz tattoo and asked if I was a Jew. I said no, I was a Pole. So he sat down with me and began to talk. He explained that he was Jewish and had just left the USSR, which was allowing Jews to leave. He was on his way to Munich from where he was emigrating to the United States. During the course of our journey he told me that he had been in the Ukrainian underground, the UPA. He was very knowledgeable about its tactics and described at length how the insurgents had developed extensive bunker complexes for the storage of munitions, foodstuffs, and other supplies.

*“The USSR - Prison of Nations  
Freedom for Nations!  
Freedom for the Individual!”*

An UPA woodcut, 1949



I already knew that quite a few Jews had served as doctors in the UPA. Intrigued by my travelling companion's account, I asked him how it was that he had managed to get out of Soviet Ukraine if he had been in the UPA. He told me, quite candidly, that the UPA had allowed Jews to leave its ranks in 1945 when it reconfigured itself for what was obviously going to be a win-or-die struggle against the Soviet regime. He had then gone to Lviv and begun working for the Soviet internal security forces! I didn't pursue the subject, but I have always wondered whether that young man betrayed his former comrades-in-arms in order to secure his own exit to the promised land. I met more than one such Jew in the years just after the war. Quite a few of them were moving to Canada, the United States, and Palestine. I even met a few Jews whom I remembered from Auschwitz. But I didn't stay in touch with them. I had my own agenda and cause. Freeing Ukraine took top priority.

When I finally got my marching orders I was told to go to Czechoslovakia, then still an independent country. I was to wait near the border of that country with Soviet Ukraine for what we called an UPA "raid."

We had received news that Roman Shukhevych, the commander of the UPA, who used the *nom de guerre* Taras Chuprynka, had decided to send a large UPA force to the West, to prove the existence of an ongoing armed struggle against the



*Stepan Bandera, leader of the Bandera faction of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN-B)*

*Roman Shukhevych, commander of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, 1943*

Soviet occupation and to secure the West's support for Ukraine's liberation.<sup>3</sup> If we could intercept those insurgents as they emerged from behind the Iron Curtain and get accurate information from them about the nature, extent, and potential of this insurgency, then we would be able to

support their armed struggle through our political work in the diaspora. Such UPA units would certainly have untainted information about the state of the struggle in Ukraine. For this mission I was ready to go. It was an important job. And I must say the OUN had tried to prepare me, and many others, for clandestine work of this sort. We had our own intelligence and security school, which offered courses to our men and women, in a building near Augsburg. We were trained in Morse code, underground tactics, winter manoeuvres, survival techniques, and foreign languages. I had learned some Czech and Slovak, in addition to which I already knew Polish, Ukrainian, and some Russian and German.

My first trip east was in the spring of 1947. Mykola Lastovych went with me. We made our way to Cracow, where our contact was an official in the Polish government. He was a Ukrainian, but by not making much of that fact he had found himself a good job in the government. Still, he was very nervous, frightened that if we were uncovered both he and his family would suffer. He was so afraid of being discovered that he wouldn't even let us stay overnight in his home.

Realizing that there was nothing to be gained in Cracow, we went back to Munich through Slovakia.

That first experience was not untypical of what the OUN faced in the postwar period. Many of our cells had disappeared in the war years. Many people had been killed or deported as slave labourers or prisoners; others had simply disappeared. The OUN network was in tatters. Rebuilding it while trying to figure out whom we could still trust, who was still prepared to risk everything for the cause of Ukraine's independence, these were issues that could involve life or death, more often than not our own. Mykola and two others, Sverstiuk and Romaniv, made it to Ukraine in 1948 but were caught and exiled to the Siberian Gulag. Romaniv got twenty years. He survived, for he was a strong man, with an iron self-discipline. But he was never allowed to return to Ukraine. I read that he died recently, still in Siberia.

In July 1947 I got my second chance to go back. A student by the surname of Vityk came to me in Munich. He was from Prešov and claimed to be sympathetic to the nationalist movement. Some of my superiors in the OUN thought he would be a good contact, but I suspected from the moment that I saw him, for no particular

reason that I can describe, that he was a NKVD informer. There was just something about him that I did not trust. You learn to trust your gut feelings when you are part of an underground movement. You have to if you want to survive.

Even so I went along with the organization's plans. Word had again come in about a major UPA "raid" heading west. Rather naïvely we still believed that if only the West knew that Ukrainians were engaged in an armed struggle with the Soviets we would obtain political and military aid against Stalin.<sup>4</sup> In reality our hope was betrayed. But what else could we do but hope? We needed to try everything we could to get reliable information from our people in Ukraine. I knew that I would be sacrificed if necessary. Still, I went with Vityk. Perhaps we would finally make contact with the UPA.

The OUN gave me false documents. We made our way to the home of a German-Czech family in Passau. They lived very close to the border, making it easy for us to hide there during the day and then enter Czechoslovakia. One night, around midnight, we crossed into Czechoslovakia, taking a suitcase full of anti-Communist leaflets prepared by the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (ABN) and a grenade. I was

prepared to use that grenade to die rather than be captured. Luckily, we made it across the border without incident, Vityk having timed it so that we went over just as the guards changed shifts. From there we took a train to Prague and then to Bratislava. We spent some time in that city with a Czechoslovak general who knew who we were but was sympathetic to our cause.

Vityk went on from Bratislava to Prešov, but I remained behind for about three weeks. I was isolated, and the assignment to get in touch with the UPA was a challenge. Since Moscow now controlled Poland and Czechoslovakia, their militaries and security forces were enemies of the UPA as well. My strategy for getting in touch with the UPA consisted of watching the movements of the Czechoslovak army, which was positioning itself to head off the UPA break-out. While I collected information on the Czechoslovak army, I distributed some of the anti-communist literature I had brought but spent most of my time awaiting the UPA. It was supposed to be making its way west in the area around Dolný Kubín. But it never came that way. Instead news came of a supposed break-out taking place in the Tatra Mountains, near a place known as Babiya Hora. Lots of UPA soldiers were said to be moving through that region. It had always

been quite popular as a resort, and a lot of Frenchmen were recuperating there. So off we went, with me claiming to be French. That disguise couldn't bear much scrutiny, and so we had to leave the area quickly. I went to the Nishki Tatry mountains and ended up in Dolny Kubín, where I had a contact by the name of Hrabovskiy. I spent nights in the woods on watch for an anticipated UPA force, hiding out by day in the attic of a former supporter of the Tiso regime in Slovakia. He was very uncomfortable about my staying there.

After waiting for three days and three nights I realized that no one was coming that way. So I decided to return to Bratislava. At the train station, I was mistaken for a Czechoslovak officer because I was carrying a small attaché case and was wearing a greenish-grey military-style coat. The ticket agent gave me an officer's ticket, and I didn't notice his mistake. Unluckily for me, the military police did. They immediately questioned me about how I came to have a ticket that was reserved for officers. I explained that a mistake had been made. The police weren't entirely convinced, but they weren't very strict either. They told me to report to their office when I got to Bratislava. I promised to do so, but I had no intention of following their orders.

A few hours after the train left Dolny Kubín, as it slowed to make a sharp curve, I jumped off the train near Piest'any. I had the address of a friendly doctor in Piest'any and immediately made my way to his home. His pseudonym was Yuzyk. But when I got to his home I could tell he was very frightened. Although he confirmed that some UPA soldiers had got out and were hiding in the area, he also told me that the security forces were on to me and that he was expecting them to come to his home within the half-hour. He gave me some money and sent me on my way. I didn't ask him how he knew what the security services were up to. I believed him instinctively. He seemed to be a good man but under real duress. So I ran towards the train station and hid in bushes until night-time, when I took the train back to Bratislava. I made no attempt to get in touch with any of the other people whose names the OUN had given me. I could see that it would be almost impossible for anyone to intercept any UPA group fighting its way west.

A few days after I got to Bratislava word came that a major UPA "raid" was in fact going on. So I rushed back to Dolny Kubín. An UPA column pushing west and Czechoslovak soldiers from an officers' school in Prague were fighting a major

battle. The UPA was apparently trying to make its way west between two mountains, after which it expected to cross a river and get into Austria. My contact and local guide was a woman. Together we made our way to the ridges overlooking that valley and waited. We carried a milk can with us so that we could pretend that we were going to her grandmother's place for milk. That was the best cover story we could dream up on such short notice. I doubt it would have held up under interrogation, but we were so anxious to get in touch with the UPA that we felt the risk was worth it.

That UPA battle group was very disciplined. We learned later that they had done their best to avoid Czechoslovak forces since they had no cause to fight them. They also tried to avoid fighting when civilians might become casualties. Indeed, they were more determined to break out to Western Europe, to serve as living witnesses to Ukraine's struggle against the communists, than they were interested in fighting the Czechoslovak forces put into the field to block them. But they did fight hard when they had to. Still, they tried to behave like a national army. When they requisitioned food from villagers on the way they even went to the trouble of leaving the farmers promissory notes, explaining that some day

an independent Ukrainian government would pay for that food. I was not able to contact them as they made their way west although we could hear the sounds of distant battles. It was probably just as well. In their situation they would have been unable to determine whether I was a genuine member of the OUN or an agent sent to infiltrate and mislead them. I might not have survived an encounter with my own comrades if I had met them on the battlefield.

Unable to get in touch with the UPA, I returned to Bratislava and waited for Vityk, who was to escort me to Passau, Germany. He never showed up. In his place, a student who was on his way to study in Paris appeared. He said he was the son of the railway director. I was very suspicious of his story and therefore didn't answer any of the many questions he asked me while we were travelling together by train towards the border. We arrived at the last station, got out together, and started to walk to the border a few kilometres away. Along the way, the student disappeared. Shortly thereafter, I saw that the Czechoslovak police, guns drawn, were waiting to arrest me. My only choice was to jump straight

into the river. When I did that, they began to shoot. I swam for my life, right into the waiting arms of an American army patrol. The Czechoslovaks said I was a bandit fleeing from arrest, but the Americans knew better. I was carted off to Passau for



***Members of UPA Company No. 67***

*(Photo credit: Their Just War: Images of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, Kashtan Press, 2007)*

my first encounter with the CIA, which had come into existence in May 1947.

It didn't take the CIA agents long to strip-search me and to discover the counterfeit dollars I had concealed in my clothing. Then they began to question me. They weren't gentle, but unlike the Gestapo

they used psychological threats instead of their fists. My choices were two, they said. I could either tell them the truth about who I was and what I was doing or be handed over to the Czechoslovaks, who, they reminded me, said that I was a bandit. That meant being handed over, ultimately, to the NKVD, and that was a death sentence. So I told them what I was fairly certain they already knew, namely, that I was an UHVR courier.

As their questioning continued it became increasingly obvious to me that they knew a great deal about the OUN. They knew we were fighting the Soviets. What they wanted were details. How did we get counterfeit money? Who was who in the OUN, the UPA, and the UHVR? How much was I paid for my services? Where had I been? What had I seen? Who were my contacts? I didn't tell them much, and, oddly enough, I think my silence impressed them more than anything else did.

Then they surprised me with a question. How much, they asked, would it cost them to send me back to Ukraine via Yugoslavia? I said I wasn't for hire. That also seems to have impressed them. So I went on to say that I had gone to Czechoslovakia to link up with

the UPA only because of my allegiance to the Ukrainian nationalist movement. I would not work for any other power. I was not for sale.

After a few hours of questioning, during which they used a Slovak interpreter, they took me to a room in another part of the building. You can imagine how astonished I was to find myself with about twenty others, all detainees. Many of them were agents like me who had been apprehended by the Americans when they were going to or coming back from the East. I didn't recognize any of them, but even if I had I would not have spoken up. What did become obvious was that some of them were prepared to work for the CIA.

I was held for several days until finally the OUN's own security chief, Mykola Lebed, came to get me. Lebed was working for the CIA already, and so they trusted him.<sup>5</sup> He and Yurko Lopatynskyi, another member of the nationalist security service and a veteran of the OUN and UPA, got me released. But now I found myself without any identity documents. My own had been left with the family at the border, just before I crossed into Czechoslovakia. So I made my way back to Munich and reported that my identity card had been stolen. On the strength of the number on my forearm I was

able to get a new card, which was essential for survival in postwar Germany. Rations, accommodations, everything you needed to live on was in short supply unless you could prove who you were. Ironically, the tattoo the Nazis had embossed on my forearm saved me from want.

I got to Munich in September 1947. Once there, I actually met some UPA soldiers and confirmed what I already suspected, namely, that it was probably a good thing that I hadn't encountered the UPA on my own. They were under such intense pressure as they made their way west that they might have killed me, for they were in no position to take prisoners and would not have had any way of confirming who I was. They would have been deeply suspicious if they had encountered someone who claimed to be a member of the OUN and wanted to know who they were, where they had come from, what their intentions were. We had been cut off from them, but they knew very little about us as well. There was war at the most basic level. They would have taken no chances. They had no choice.

When I finally did get to meet some of these men, that autumn in Munich, I could see how very suspicious they were of everyone. Few of their comrades had survived in the underground to start with.

That made them wary. Even fewer of them made it to the West. They had made many sacrifices doing so. Now they hoped that they would be acknowledged as participants in an armed struggle against Soviet imperialism and re-equipped and reinforced by the Western powers. Instead, the Americans and the British disarmed and debriefed them and put them with the rest of us in Displaced Persons camps in places like Regensburg, Augsburg, and Munich. We may have seen them as heroes, but the rest of the world paid them scant attention. We thought that a Third World War was imminent, that soon there would be a European crusade against Bolshevism and the USSR, which we portrayed as a prison house of nations, but we did not see the big picture.

The Western powers were more than willing to use us for their own intelligence missions, but they had no intention of liberating Eastern Europe from the Soviets or of helping any of the nations enslaved by the communists to free themselves. Their words were one thing, their deeds another. The West betrayed Ukraine. Many good men and women died because they were deceived. Now I realize that we were fools to believe that the West would help us. Bandera was one of the few who said that no one was

going to give us Ukraine. We would have to fight for Ukraine's independence by ourselves, and we would win only if we deserved to, he said. He was right.<sup>6</sup>

Obviously, most of us were very naïve in those days. We had no idea just how dangerous it was for us to try to get in behind the Iron Curtain. We had no appreciation of how unprepared we were for taking on the might of the Soviet Union, to say nothing of avoiding capture by its Eastern European allies or of being compromised by traitors in the West. We were certainly idealistic and determined. There was many a brave man and woman in our ranks. But we had few resources, no allies, and virtually no sympathy or understanding in the world arena. No one wanted to know about us. I don't think that anyone wanted a free Ukraine, despite all the rhetoric we were regularly treated to then and for many years thereafter. About the only thing you can say to explain our naïveté was that many other Europeans, Asians, Latin Americans, and Africans were fed the same pap about the Western democracies and their alleged support for the right of captive nations to independence and self-determination. They swallowed it just as we did, and some still do.

I did not go back to Ukraine or to the Eastern bloc after that. We still had stalwart agents there who were resourceful and willing to take risks, and more than a few would be lost in trying to penetrate the border. We did what we could. But as the years went by, it became obvious to everyone that the links between the diaspora and those who remained in Ukraine, there engaged in a military and political struggle against the Reds, had been severed by the building of the Iron Curtain. Our understanding of what was going on at home became increasingly dated, incomplete, and uncertain. Our role therefore had to change with our circumstances. By the 1950s we understood that we should focus our efforts on keeping alive the memory of what we had tried to achieve, schooling the next generation to follow in our footsteps and carry on the fight if need be.

It is also true that most of us wanted to get on with our own lives. We were all strangers in strange lands. We had to find jobs and to rebuild our lives. It is one thing to be a revolutionary or an insurgent when you are a young man or woman. Most of us were able to sustain our dedication to the cause for many years, but finally we had to settle down. We were living on the

sufferance of both the Allied occupation authorities and the people in whose countries we had found ourselves at the war's end. The refugee camps were slowly being closed down. Most of their inhabitants were moving on to the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Belgium, and France. The pool from which we drew our moral and financial strength was emptying. We, too, had to move out into the emigration and recreate our network there, perpetuate our vision, keep hope alive.

I remained a member of OUN. Not everyone did. There were splits in our ranks, perhaps inevitable given the strains of not knowing who to believe, not knowing what is true, not even knowing if there was any purpose to our cause anymore. Nevertheless I stayed loyal to the *Banderivtsi*. I asked formally for permission from the OUN before I applied to emigrate, even though I had married Sofia Kawchuk in 1949 in Augsburg and wanted to start a family of my own. She had family in Winnipeg, and so we came to Canada in the fall of 1950. Within a week I had reestablished contact with fellow OUN members here, Petro Bashuk, number 154625 and Volodymyr Lobai, another tough revolutionary and Auschwitz survivor. I remember Lobai particularly well



because when the SS used to beat him he behaved like a man of steel. He never broke under interrogation. Men like him had come to Canada before me and had soon set up an underground here in order to keep us in readiness for any task that our leaders might call upon us to do.

There were also various public groups that were intended to rally our community and, in particular, keep our young people loyal to the nationalist cause. That's why we created our own newspaper, *Homin Ukrainy* (Echo of Ukraine), the Canadian League for Ukraine's Liberation, which is now known as the League of Ukrainian Canadians, and the Ukrainian Youth Association, CYM.

Unfortunately, in the emigration, our hopes were more often than not dashed against the realities of everyday life in foreign lands. Most of our neighbours were not interested in what we had endured. Governments everywhere were indifferent or even hostile to our anti-Soviet message. Our own people drifted away, especially as it became ever more obvious that even the Ukrainians who had established themselves in Canada and the United States before our arrival didn't always understand, or believe, what we told them about what had gone on in Ukraine before, during, and after the Second World War. On top of that we had

split up into competing factions, further weakening any prospects the nationalist movement may have had for influencing the course of events. Even though I remained with the *Banderivtsi* I won't say that everyone who was in another party or faction was bad, although in those days the rancour among us was intense. In truth, there were good people in every group, and some of them did good things for the cause regardless of their political outlook.

We also had the phenomenon of people coming here who had been leaders in the homeland, excellent men and women in the fight, but with no real status in Canada, the United States, or Western Europe. They became janitors, labourers, Saturday school teachers, community newspaper editors, that sort of thing, just to get by. No world leaders paid them much heed, and yet they still thought of themselves as leaders at the helm of an underground revolutionary movement. So we had leaders who were good for making patriotic speeches but little else. Their passion for the cause, which they sometimes tended to identify with their own needs, was alienating many people who might have been sympathetic to our cause.

Our leaders had little understanding of conditions in the West, little training or experience in the art of compromise or in

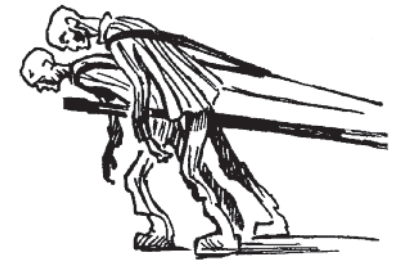
understanding other viewpoints. They had iron wills, they were self-disciplined, and they were generally honourable. They were also what you would call fish out of water. Their antics, combined with our diaspora's debilitating factionalism, just about neutralized our effectiveness throughout the West, although we did manage to erect quite a few fancy-sounding groups, none of which had much real influence. The best thing that can be said for what we did was that we *never* gave up the hope that someday there would be an independent Ukraine, something that we kept reminding governments and the public about. We kept that pledge and, in the end, we may have played a modest role in helping to ensure that Ukraine received international recognition as an independent state in 1991.

When I came to Canada I intended to stay with the OUN and I did. But I also knew that it was time for me to get on with my life. I had a wife, and soon we had a family. I came without being able to speak a word of English or French. But Canada was a country with potential, a place where even a DP like me, a political refugee, could raise a family in peace. Here I was free to think what I wanted and to support the cause that I thought deserved my help, without interference. The Nazis and the Soviets had

been able to drive me out of my homeland. They thought that they had taken everything away from me, that by destroying my comrades and forcing many of us into exile they had won. They were wrong. They displaced me, but I took my mind, my heart, and my cause with me to Canada. I remembered. And I spoke out. I was convinced Ukraine would be free one day because that is what the Ukrainian nation wanted. There were many who doubted it would ever happen, others who tried to make sure it never did. Even if Ukraine today is not the country I had hoped for, it is an independent, sovereign, internationally recognized state which, I am certain, Ukrainians will someday learn to run for themselves.

Was everything I suffered worth it? Were the sacrifices of all those friends of mine who died in the struggle equal to what we achieved? Yes, it was. We joined the OUN to raise our people's national consciousness, to teach our nation that freedom has to be earned, that we would have to pay a price if we wanted to live in a land of our own, without a foreigner's boot always in our backsides. Many joined the struggle. Most perished in places like Auschwitz or in the Soviet Gulag. I went into Auschwitz because I believed in a free Ukraine. Years later I

came out of that hell, as did others, and we helped to set the stage for the emergence of today's Ukraine. Our sacrifices may never be fully appreciated. That doesn't matter. What matters is that we fought to secure Ukraine's freedom and that today there is a Ukraine. Only a few years ago many said that there had never been an independent Ukraine and never would be. Those of us who went into Auschwitz for Ukraine proved them wrong. That's a good enough legacy for number 154922.





## Notes

### *Foreword: Into Auschwitz, for Ukraine*

1 That some nonsense is being written about the Holocaust is the subject of an insightful and critical essay by Gabriel Schoenfeld, senior editor of *Commentary*, “Auschwitz and the Professors,” *Commentary*, June 1998, pages 42-6.

2 Useful overviews of Ukrainian history are provided by Paul R Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988); and Bohdan Krawchenko, *Social Change and National Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Ukraine* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1985). On Ukraine during the Second World War see Lubomyr Luciuk, “Ukraine,” in *The Oxford Companion To The Second World War*, ed. I C B Dear and M R D Foot (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pages 1159-65; Yury Boshyk, ed., *Ukraine during World War II: History and Its Aftermath* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1986); Ihor Kamenetsky, *Hitler’s Occupation of Ukraine, 1941-1944: A Study of Totalitarian Imperialism* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1956); his *Secret Nazi Plans for Eastern Europe: A Study of Lebensraum Policies* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1962), and several of the papers in *German-Ukrainian Relations in Historical Perspective*, eds., Hans-Joachim Torke and John-Paul Himka (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1994). For Ukrainian-language accounts of the experiences of Ukrainian nationalists in Nazi concentration camps, including Auschwitz, see Mykhailo H Marunchak, ed., *V borot’bi za ukraïns’ku derzhavu* [In the Struggle for an Independent Ukraine] (Winnipeg: Svitova liga ukraïns’kykh politychnykh v’iazniv, 1990) and *Ukraiïns’ki politychni v’iazni v natsysts’kykh kontsentratsiïnykh taborakh* [Ukrainian Political Prisoners in Nazi Concentration Camps] (Winnipeg: Svitova liga ukraïns’kykh politychnykh v’iazniv, 1996). My own contribution to the first of these two volumes, “Zvidsy ne vtechesh” [“You Can’t Escape from Here”] is found on pages 518-41. Estimates of Ukraine’s population losses during the war are provided by Taras Hunczak, “The Ukrainian Losses during World War II,” in *A Mosaic of*

*Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis*, ed. Michael Berenbaum (New York: New York University Press, 1990), pages 116-27; Stephan G Prociuk, “Human Losses in the Ukraine in World War I and II,” *Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U.S.*, 13 (1973-7): pages 23-50; and Bohdan Wytwycky, *The Other Holocaust: Many Circles of Hell* (Washington: The Novak Report, 1982).

3 I have previously published articles dealing with my wartime experiences and the issue of bringing alleged war criminals in Canada to justice. See Steve Petelycky, “No. 154922 remembers,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 31 March 1997, page A12 (also published as “Bring war traitors to justice,” *Edmonton Journal*, 6 April 1997, page A10; for a positive response see Oksana Bashuk Hepburn, “Daughter of prisoner No. 154625 also remembers,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 12 April 1997, page B6), and Steve Petelycky, “True Holocaust story deserves to be heard,” *Toronto Star*, 29 December 1997, page A21. A longer version of this article was published as “About remembering victims of the Holocaust,” *Ukrainian Weekly*, 1 February 1998, page 11. Commenting by e-mail, on 6 February 1998, Bernie Farber of the Canadian Jewish Congress let Walter Halchuk of the Sudbury branch of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress know that he was quite upset by the article: “while it starts off well, it unfortunately becomes a sad and noxious attempt at delegitimizing Canada’s prosecution of nazi war criminals. If Mr. Petylycyk [*sic*] is truly a survivor of Hitler’s brutality, he should be ashamed of himself for not recognizing the fact that there are Nazi war criminals here that must be brought to justice.” Mr Halchuk responded, “I would have bet that you’d be the last one to be a denier. You are calling a holocaust survivor a liar? Shame on you. This survivor’s view may be different from yours but not any less real.”

I have *never* objected to the prosecution of Nazi (or any other) war criminals found in Canada. However, I have *never* seen any compelling evidence that there are any Nazis in our midst, despite the oft-repeated although never-substantiated claims made by some Jewish-Canadian spokespersons. I invite Mr Farber and his associates to publicly produce their evidence about these supposed Nazis in Canada before a judge in a

Canadian criminal court. I also remain concerned about the nature of the current denaturalization and deportation hearings, as do many other Canadians. On that theme see Olya Odynsky, "Canada plans to deport my father without a fair trial," *Globe and Mail*, 5 January 1998, page A15, the sympathetic editorial response, "Will Nazi hunters misfire?" *Globe and Mail*, 14 January 1998, and the telling indictment of the government's manoeuvrings in the case of Johann Dueck by Kirk Makin, "Witch Hunt: For crimes not committed," *Globe and Mail*, 29 February 1999, pages D1-2. Public disquiet over these proceedings is apparently growing. See the letters published under the title, "Inside the Johann Dueck file," *Globe and Mail*, 24 February 1999, and "Misplaced revenge is not so sweet," *Globe and Mail*, 3 March 1999. As for whether I am truly a survivor of Hitler's brutality, I am ready to have Mr Farber examine my Auschwitz tattoo.

On the war-crimes issue in general, and with respect to the Ukrainian Canadian community's position about bringing war criminals to justice in particular, I am indebted to John B Gregorovich, chairman of the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association, for providing me with two publications, *On The Record: The Debate over Alleged War Criminals in Canada* (Toronto: Justinian Press, 1987) and *War Crimes: A Submission to the Government of Ukraine on Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes* (Toronto and Kyiv: Justinian Press, 1992). I was also pleased to be part of an UCCLA delegation that appeared before the Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology on 4 February 1998 with respect to proposals for the installation of a Holocaust gallery in the Canadian War Museum. Our submission, *Acceptable Remembrance*, made the point that any publicly funded institution in the nation's capital dedicated to war crimes and crimes against humanity should be an *inclusive* Genocide Museum dealing with various episodes of mass murder and crimes against humanity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Europe and elsewhere. Any Holocaust exhibit, we further argued, must deal with *all* the victims of Nazi tyranny rather than focussing only on the Jews who perished during the Second World War. The final report of the subcommittee, *Guarding History: A Study into the Future, Funding, and Independence of the Canadian War Museum*, (Ottawa, May 1998), suggested (#12) that the Government of Canada "undertake a meaningful and thorough study as to the feasibility of a national holocaust and/or other acts of genocide gallery," a recommendation we hoped Ottawa would act upon. We certainly believe that the millions of victims of Soviet tyranny and communism before, during, and after the Second World War

must also be remembered. Some interesting articles have been written on this subject over the years. See, for example, Lubomyr Luciuk, "Where's the justice for gulag victims?" *Globe and Mail*, 10 September 1991, the editorial, "Holding communism to account," *Globe and Mail*, 30 August 1997, page D6, and Robert Harris, "The West prefers its dictators red," *National Post*, 1 December 1998. A public debate nevertheless continues over whether a new museum should deal exclusively with Jewish losses during the Holocaust (e.g. the *Shoah*) or be inclusive, recalling genocide elsewhere in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America before and during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. See Roman Serbyn, "Four Reasons why we need a Canadian Museum of Genocide," *Ukrainian Weekly*, 2-10 December 1998, page 6; Oksana Bashuk Hepburn, "All genocide victims deserve recognition," *Ottawa Citizen*, 10 December 1998, page A12; Andrij Kudla Wynnyckyj, "Genocide memorial in Ottawa gains support," 28 March 1999, *Ukrainian Weekly*, pages 1, 5; the rather misleading article by David Lazarus and Paul Lungen, "Holocaust museum may be derailed: Ukrainian-led effort could disrupt plans," *Canadian Jewish News*, 9 April 1999, pages 1, 21; and a responding media release by the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association, "Jewish group refuses to support plans for Genocide Museum," 11 April 1999. In part this controversy was further aggravated by Prime Minister Chrétien's ostensibly private visit to Auschwitz, on 24 January 1999, which included only Jewish survivors and community representatives, and was therefore widely perceived as an affront by non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Their requests for being included in this group were either denied or ignored by the Prime Minister's Office. See the *Globe and Mail* articles by Jeff Sallot, "PM must dance carefully in Europe," 22 January 1999; "Polish Canadians vent anger at PM," 23 January 1999, and "PM urged to set up genocide museum," 27 January 1997, as well as the letters published under the title "Whose symbol is Auschwitz?" *Globe and Mail*, 27 January 1999, page A11. My own commentary on the Prime Minister's visit to Auschwitz was published under the title "Hell on earth" in the *National Post*, 26 January 1999, along with a letter from a Polish Canadian, Christine Majta. See also the editorial, "Martyrs all," *National Post*, 28 January 1999 and the letters grouped under the title "All, indeed," *National Post*, 30 January 1999.

More information on the debate over how alleged war criminals allegedly hiding in Canada should be brought to justice, including copies of most of the materials cited above, can be found at [www.uccla.ca](http://www.uccla.ca), the website of the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

## *Chapter Two: For Ukraine*

1 For more information on the politically engineered Great Famine of 1932-33 in Soviet Ukraine see Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko, eds., *Famine In Ukraine 1932-1933* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta Press, 1986); Miron Dolot, *Execution By Hunger: The Hidden Holocaust* (London: W W Norton and Company, 1985); and Marco Carynnyk, Lubomyr Y Luciuk, and Bohdan S Kordan, eds., *The Foreign Office and the Famine: British Documents on Ukraine and the Great Famine of 1932-1933* (Kingston: Limestone Press, 1988). Some recent commentaries on the Great Famine that I found interesting include Orysia Paszczak Tracz, "Denied, defiled, or ignored: Ukraine's genocide by famine of 1932-1933," *Ukrainian Weekly*, 30 July 1995, page 10; Christopher Guly, "We were always hungry; Stalin's victims recall," *Ottawa Citizen*, 15 June 1998, page C8; Eric Margolis, "Remembering Ukraine's Unknown Holocaust," *Sunday Sun*, 13 December 1998, and Monte Stewart, "Memorial a tribute to famine victims," *Calgary Herald*, 24 April 1999, page A8. On 27 January 1999 the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada, placed a memorial wreath at the National Famine Monument in Kyiv, Ukraine, becoming the first Western statesman to do so.

2 Great Famine-denial takes many forms. At the time of this genocide Walter Duranty, a *New York Times* correspondent, was especially useful to the Soviets in distorting the truth although he privately admitted to British Foreign Office officials that "as many as 10 million people may have died directly or indirectly from lack of food in the Soviet Union during the past year." See William Strang's report of September 1933 in Carynnyk, Luciuk, and Kordan, eds., *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, pages 309-13. For more on Duranty see S J Taylor, *Stalin's Apologist: Walter Duranty, the New York Times's Man in Moscow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). Two of the more odious examples of Great Famine-denial are Douglas Tottle, *Fraud, Famine and Fascism: The Ukrainian Genocide Myth from Hitler to Harvard* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1987), and Jeff Coplon, "In Search of a Soviet Holocaust: A 55-Year-Old Famine Feeds the Right," *Village Voice*, 12 January 1988, pages 28, 30-33.

The government of Ukraine has recently announced that henceforth

every fourth Saturday of November will be set aside as Ukraine's national Day of Remembrance of the Great Famine's victims. Making the announcement Ukraine's deputy prime minister, the Honourable Valerii Smolii, recalled how "Ukrainians abroad consistently...felt it a matter of honour and national dignity to let the world community know the truth about this unparalleled Stalinist crime. They put together titanic efforts so that all would realize—the Ukrainian Famine of 1933 stands on the level of the Armenian genocide and the Jewish Holocaust." See "UCCLA welcomes Ukraine's Day of Remembrance," *Ukrainian Weekly*, 10 January 1999, page 7.

3 The classic study of the Ukrainian nationalist movement remains John A Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Littleton, Colo.: Ukrainian Academic Press, 1990). See also Peter J Potichynyj and Yevhen Shtendera, eds., *Political Thought of the Ukrainian Underground 1943-1951* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta Press, 1986), and Alexander J Motyl, *The Turn to The Right: The Ideological Origins and Development of Ukrainian Nationalism, 1919-1929* (Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs, 1980).

4 On Metropolitan Andrei's life and works see Paul R Magocsi, ed., *Morality and Reality: The Life and Times of Andrei Sheptyts'kyi* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1989), and Cyril Korolevsky, *Metropolitan Andrew, 1865-1944* (Lviv: Stauropogion, 1993). Efforts to have the Metropolitan canonized continue. See, for example, Father Bohdan Lukie, "Catholic priest saved Jews in wartime Ukraine," *Toronto Star*, 22 April 1998, page A25.

### Chapter 3: Into Auschwitz

1 A copy of the Pact is reproduced as Appendix 1 in John Kolasky, *Partners in Tyranny: The Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, August 23, 1939* (Toronto: Mackenzie Institute, 1990). Other diplomatic documents are reproduced in Geoffrey Roberts, *The Unholy Alliance: Stalin's Pact With Hitler* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989). See also Anthony Read and David Fisher, *The Deadly Embrace: Hitler, Stalin, and the Nazi-Soviet Pact, 1939-1941* (New York: W W Norton, 1988).

2 See Jan T Gross, *Revolution From Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). Gross observes that there were proportionately more communist sympathizers among Jews than among any other nationality in the local population. See also Richard C Lukas, *Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles Under German Occupation, 1939-1944* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986). Lukas notes (page 128) that "Jews in cities and towns displayed Red flags to welcome Soviet troops, helped to disarm Polish soldiers, and filled administrative positions in Soviet-occupied Poland. One report estimated that 75 per cent of all the top administrative posts in the cities of Lwow, Bialystok, and Luck were in Jewish hands during the Soviet occupation. The Soviets with Jewish help shipped off the Polish intelligentsia to the depths of the Soviet Union. Some monasteries and convents were turned over to Jews. The entire character of the University of Lwow changed during the Soviet occupation. Prior to the war, the percentage of students broke down as follows: Poles, 70 percent; Ukrainians, 15 percent; Jews, 15 percent. Under the Soviets, the percentage changed to 3 percent, 12 percent, and 85 percent, respectively. Students were so enthusiastic about the Soviet Union they wore pictures of Stalin on their breasts. In Lwow, even a memorial tablet commemorating the students who fell in defence of the city in 1918-19 was blotted out by Jews. Jewish collaboration with the Soviets, more than any other factor, was responsible for increasing anti-Semitism in Poland during the war." For the personal reminiscences of one such Jewish communist, himself deported to Kolyma, see Janusz Bardach, *Man Is Wolf To Man: Surviving the Gulag* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). A very partisan account of this period is presented by Tadeuz Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife,*

*Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company Inc., 1998). On contemporary efforts to bring Soviet war criminals and communist collaborators to justice in Lithuania see Lubomyr Luciuk, "A man-made hell preserved for all to see," *National Post*, 15 April 1999.

3 Gross concludes that "the Soviets killed or drove to their deaths three or four times as many people as the Nazis from a population half the size of that under German jurisdiction. This comparison, I repeat, holds for the first two years of the Second World War, the period before the Nazis began systematic mass annihilation of the Jewish population" (*Revolution From Abroad*, page 229). It has been estimated that 1.5 million citizens of Poland were deported to the Soviet interior, of whom perhaps as many as 750,000 perished.

4 Nikolai Tolstoy describes the notorious massacre perpetrated by the Soviets in Lviv. Several thousand prisoners were killed in the city's four prisons. By the time the Germans entered the city, on 30 June, it stank of putrefying flesh. A German Field Police Group report was drawn up a week later. It read, in part: "Very soon, in advancing into the cellars, we found a layer, composed of a viscous mass, into which the corpses had congealed. In the first prison, bodies were stacked four or five deep on the cellar floor. Some of the cellar doors had already been bricked up by the Russians. A large number of the bodies must have been buried in this way already sometime before the war broke out, since putrefaction as stated had made great progress then. The number of people killed in the whole town of L'vov may be estimated at about 3,500. In the second of the prisons the impression gained on the first day after entering the city was: From the service wings of the prison, which were situated on the ground floor looking out on a courtyard surrounded by a wooden fence, one body after the other was carried into the yard. In this case, there was no doubt that the victims had been murdered only a few days before our capturing L'vov. The cellars in question had ceilings that were splashed with blood, and in a room which had apparently served for interrogations the floor was covered with a layer of dried blood that was 20 centimetres deep. The bolshevik hangmen had literally waded in blood." As cited by Tolstoy, a Polish woman who visited the prison on 30 June reported that she had seen "a table in a room covered with many corpses...The bodies

gave the impression that the persons on and by the table had been beaten to a pulp. One dead man was seated in a chair, with a Russian bayonet sticking out of his mouth, that must have been pushed in by force. I saw the dead body of a small girl, aged about eight years, hanging from the ceiling lamp. The body was unclothed, and the child had been hanged by a towel. The view was so terrible that I nearly fainted.” Another Polish witness described even more horrific scenes: “Among other bodies, I saw that of a woman, whose one breast had been cut off, whilst the other one was deeply lacerated. Another woman’s abdomen had been cut open, she had been pregnant. From the open wound the head of an unborn child stuck out. All the teeth had been broken from the mouth of a male corpse. A small girl was dressed on the upper part of her body, whilst the lower part was naked and smeared all over with blood, especially near her private parts, so that I had no doubt that a sexual crime had been committed against her.” Nikolai Tolstoy, *Stalin’s Secret War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981), pages 245-7.

5 See, for example, vol. 39 (Official Text, English Edition, Documents and Other Material in Evidence, Numbers 1218-RF to JN) of *The Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal*, at Nuremberg, 1949, Document 014-USSR, in which are found extracts from Operational Order No. 14 of the Reich Security Main Office, addressed to the *Einsatzgruppen* on 29 October 1941. Special commandos were to be assigned the task of “purging” POW camps of all Soviet commissars, Jews, and other leading personalities. An attached order by the *Einsatzkommando* C5 to its branch offices, dated 25 November 1941, stated explicitly: “It has been established beyond doubt that the Bandera movement is preparing an insurrection in the *Reichskommissariat* which has as its ultimate aim the establishment of an independent Ukraine. All activists of the Bandera movement must be arrested immediately and, after thorough interrogation, are to be secretly liquidated as brigands. Once these instructions have been read, they must be immediately destroyed by commanders.” The historian Robert Conquest, commenting on Jewish-Ukrainian relations in an essay titled “Stalin and the Jews,” *New York Review of Books*, 11 July 1996, pages 46-49, deplored how some authors have indicted the entire Ukrainian nation for the evildoings of a few: “Ukrainian nationalists were able to organize a major partisan army which, as Khrushchev complained, fought first against the Germans and

then against the Soviets. As in every country occupied by the Nazis, there were also active collaborators in Ukraine, and some were directly involved in the murders of the Jews...But the numbers of Ukrainian war criminals seem similar to those of other occupied territories—though there were, of course (as in all other territories) collaborators who cannot be accused of taking part in killing. In any case, the word ‘collaborator’ should remind us of those with whom they collaborated—the principals of whom they were the accomplices. The Holocaust was, after all, a German operation.” Conquest goes on to cite Raul Hilberg, who was himself excerpting captured German document, which reported that in Ukraine: “almost nowhere can the population be persuaded to take active steps against the Jews...truly spontaneous pogroms, free from *Einsatzgruppen* influence, did not take place. All outbreaks were either organized or inspired by the *Einsatzgruppe*. Second, all pogroms were implemented within a short time after the arrival of the killing units. They were not self-perpetuating, nor could new ones be started after things had settled down.”

6 On the *Ostarbeiter* see Ulrich Herbert, *Hitler’s Foreign Workers: Enforced Foreign Labor in Germany under the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

7 On the OUN’s resistance to the Nazi occupation and on Nazi arrests and executions of OUN-B members and their supporters see Taras Hunczak, “OUN-German Relations, 1941-5,” in Torke and Himka, eds., *German-Ukrainian Relations in Historical Perspective*, pages 178-86.

8 An incomplete list of those transported to Birkenau and Auschwitz on 1 October 1943 is found in Marunchak, *Ukrain’ski politychni v’iazni*, pages 111-3. Earlier transports of Ukrainian nationalists arrived on 20 July and 8 August 1942. The names of some of those *Banderivtsi* and others are found on pages 106-8.



#### *Chapter 4: The Many Circles of Hell*

1 The Ebensee memorial lists Bohdan Kryzhanivskyi as having survived Auschwitz only to perish there. Since I saw Bohdan Kryzhanivskyi beaten to death in Birkenau, the memorial inscription is in error, unless there was another Ukrainian with the same name in Ebensee.

2 For Mirchuk's description of his experiences see, *In the German Mills of Death* (New York: Vantage Press, 1976). He also wrote the provocative polemic, *My Meetings and Discussions in Israel: Are Ukrainians Traditionally "Anti-Semites?"* (New York: Ukrainian Survivors of the Holocaust, 1982). Mirchuk died in Philadelphia on 16 May 1999. See "Peter Mirchuk, member of liberation movement," *Ukrainian Weekly*, 30 May 1999, pages 4, 13.

3 The 30<sup>th</sup> Field Hospital of the United States Third Army arrived in Ebensee on 8 May 1945. According to a report by Lt Col Francis R Sandford, dated 17 May 1945, the sanitation at the camp was "very poor...the barracks were filthy, the inmates were terribly undernourished and filthy for the most part. The hospital area was also foul mainly because three to five men shared a single bed and most were too weak to get up to use the latrines. In many of the barracks men were found dead on the floors or in bunks with men who were still living but were too weak to get up to remove the dead. The death rate for several weeks before the Americans arrival was, on average, 300 to 350 men per day. On the day of the American Field Hospital's arrival 540 dead were found in the camp, some of whom had been dead for several days. By the time the 30<sup>th</sup> Field Hospital was relieved by the 139<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital, the death rate had been reduced to 18 in a 24 hour period." The full report is reproduced in Marunchak, *Ukrains'ki politychni v"iazni*, pages 298-9.

4 A monument in memory of the Ukrainian and Jewish victims of the Holocaust and of the Great Famine, unveiled on Mount Sinai in Jerusalem on 13 May 1985, was destroyed on 26 September. Although the culprits, allegedly former concentration camp inmates and veterans of various pro-Soviet partisan groups, were identified, they were never brought to justice nor has the monument been replaced. Similarly, in

1990, when Holocaust survivors, including the author, made efforts to have a memorial unveiled referring specifically to the Ukrainian inmates of Ebensee, the Austrian authorities were unsympathetic and had to be lobbied vigorously before such a marker was finally unveiled, on 6 May 1995, with the assistance of the government of Ukraine. A photograph of the monument is reproduced in Marunchak, *Ukrains'ki politychni v"iazni*, page 241. A copy of the agreement reached with the Chamber of the Holocaust in Jerusalem is reproduced on page 1223 of Marunchak, *V borot'bi za ukrains'ku derzhavu*, as is the press release of 3 November 1985 regarding its destruction (page 1224).

#### *Chapter 5: The Struggle Continued*

1 Soviet agents were actively engaged in the liquidation of members of the Ukrainian nationalist movement abroad. See Pavel Sudoplatov, *Special Tasks: The Memoirs of an Unwanted Witness-A Soviet Spymaster* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1994). Although his perspective is that of a willing agent of Soviet power, who by his own admission assassinated Colonel Yevhen Konovalets, the OUN's first leader, Sudoplatov nevertheless confirmed the strength of the nationalist movement in Western Ukraine during the Soviet occupation of 1939-41 and detailed the extensive efforts made by the Soviets to eradicate this underground, a campaign which went on into the early 1950s (pages 253-9). Born in Ukraine of mixed Ukrainian and Russian parentage, Sudoplatov fought in the ranks of the Red Army and Cheka against nationalist forces in Ukraine in 1918-23. His reminiscences make for fascinating reading, although his skills as an agent of misinformation should not be forgotten. His account also underscores what many Ukrainians have alleged, namely, that Jews were disproportionately represented in the Soviet administration and security forces. Sudoplatov wrote: "In the early 1920s, when the Bolshevik regime was first establishing itself, there was a preponderance of Jewish names in the administrative positions at all levels because they had the education to fill these jobs." Although he discusses a round-up of Zionists and a crackdown on Jewish political groups after 1922, Sudoplatov nevertheless recalls how, as late as 1933, Jews still held top positions in every major Soviet ministry (page 288). See also Louis Rapoport, *Stalin's War Against*

*the Jews* (New York: Free Press, 1990). Rapoport notes that “thousands of Jewish revolutionaries helped to spearhead the Terror machine with a messianic fervor. One of them, Matvei Berman, had helped to institutionalize slave labor as early as 1922. Other Jewish Chekists who rose to the top included Aron Soltz, long known as ‘the conscience of the Party,’ and Naftali Frenkel, a Turkish Jew whom Solzhenitsyn would characterize as ‘the nerve of the [Gulag] Archipelago, which stretched across the nine time zones of the vast country.’ It was Frenkel who refined Berman’s use of prisoners as slave labourers.” Although Jews were also victimized by the Soviets, as all of these writers underscore, and as I well appreciate, the fact remains that Ukrainians saw that many Jews were willingly serving a regime that was responsible for forced collectivization, the genocidal Great Famine that followed, the Terror, and other Soviet war crimes and crimes against humanity. Inevitably some Ukrainians and other Eastern Europeans, often as not incited further by Nazi propagandists, wrongly blamed all Jews for the horrors they had endured under the communists. That attitude is as pernicious as that of those Jews who accuse all Ukrainians of having been Nazi collaborators. My experience has been that individuals commit crimes in the service of regimes that can only be thought of as evil. Such political systems, be they of the Left or of the Right, deserve to be condemned unambiguously and eradicated. Anyone who committed a war crime or crime against humanity should be found and prosecuted. What should not be tolerated is the defamatory stereotyping of entire nations. There were bad Jewish men and women who served the communists, just as there were bad Ukrainian men and women who served the Nazis. Whoever denies either of these statements is nothing more than an apologist for the murderers who still live among us. That some communist war criminals can still be found in Canada and the United States was confirmed by the American journalist John Sack in *An Eye For An Eye: The Untold Story of Jewish Revenge Against Germans in 1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1993). For a telling riposte to one of the more blatant recent examples of Ukrainophobia in the media see Myron B Kuropas, *Scourging of a Nation: CBS and the Defamation of Ukraine* (Kingston and Kyiv: Kashtan Press, 1995). On 21 April 1999, Louis Briskman, vice president and general counsel for CBS-TV, signed a settlement with the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America: “I want to squarely address the suggestion that our broadcast intended to imply that Ukrainians are somehow genetically anti-Semitic. Nothing could be further from the truth.” See Roma Hadzewycz,

“CBS and Ukrainian Americans sign settlement agreement regarding ‘The Ugly Face,’” *Ukrainian Weekly*, 2 May 1999.

2 On the wartime activities of the Galicia Division see Richard Landwehr, *Fighting For Freedom: The Ukrainian Volunteer Division of the Waffen-SS* (Silver Spring, Md.: Bibliophile Legion Books, 1985); Pavlo Shandruk, *Arms of Valor* (New York: Speller Publishing, 1959); Roger Bender and Hugh Page Taylor, *Uniforms, Organization and History of the Waffen-SS* (California: Bender Publishing, 1975); Vasyl Veryha, *Dorohamy Druhoi svitovoi viiny: Legendy pro uchast' ukraintsiv u zdushuvanni varshavs'koho povstannia v 1944 r. ta pro Ukraïns'ku Dyviziiu Halychyna* [Along the Roads of World War II: Legends of Ukrainian Participation in the Crushing of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 and of the Ukrainian Galicia Division] (Toronto: Kanads'ke Naukove Tovarystvo im. Shevchenka, 1980); and Michael O Logusz, *Galicia Division: The Waffen-SS 14th Grenadier Division 1943 1945* (Atglen, Penn.: Schiffer Military History, 1997). A Ukrainian Canadian who helped screen members of the Division at Rimini and later worked with them in Great Britain has left an account of this period. See G R B Panchuk, *Heroes of their Day: The Reminiscences of Bohdan Panchuk* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1983), particularly the “Report on Ukrainians in SEP Camp No. 374, Italy,” by D Haldane Porter, 21 February 1947, pages 140-8. In 1950, L Scopes, of the British Foreign Office, reported to Canada House that “although Communist propaganda has constantly attempted to depict these, like so many other refugees, as ‘quislings’ and ‘war criminals’ it is interesting to note that no specific charges of war crimes have been made by the Soviet or any other Government against any member of this group.” See Document 51 in Lubomyr Y Luciuk and Bohdan S Kordan, eds., *Anglo-American Perspectives on the Ukrainian Question 1938-1951: A Documentary Collection* (Kingston: Limestone Press, 1987), pages 233-4. After reviewing the question of whether members of the Division could be dealt with as war criminals, the Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals, headed by Mr Justice Jules Deschênes, concluded: “The Galicia Division should not be indicted as a group...The members of the Galicia Division were individually screened for security purposes before admission to Canada...Charges of war crimes against members of the Galicia Division have never been substantiated, either in 1950 when they were first preferred, or in 1984

when they were renewed, or before this Commission. Further, in the absence of participation in or knowledge of specific war crimes, mere membership in the Galicia Division is insufficient to justify prosecution.” *Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals, Report, Part 1: Public* (Ottawa, 1986), page 261. More recently Canada’s Minister of Justice, the Honourable Anne McLellan, has observed that “the War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity Section of the Department of Justice has, in conjunction with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, investigated allegations against individual members of the Division. In particular, all archival and investigative records of relevance in Eastern Europe have been reviewed since the collapse of the former Soviet Union...The evidence we have been able to uncover is insufficient to merit the commencement of court proceedings against any member of the Division.” Excerpted from a letter sent by Justice Minister Anne McLellan to Borys Sydoruk, Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association, 23 October 1998.

3 Biographical sketches of the members of the First Grand Assembly of the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council (July 1944) are found in Potichnyj and Shtendera, eds., *Political Thought of the Ukrainian Underground 1943-1951*, pages 372-5. Shukhevych was killed on 5 March 1950. On UPA units making their way to the West see, for example, “6,000 Ukrainians Flee Reds: Resistance Army Units Approaching U.S. Zone,” *Globe and Mail*, 1 October 1947, page 1.

4 Dimitri Volkogonov writes that Stalin carefully reviewed reports about anti-Soviet insurgents in western Ukraine and the Baltic states. The Soviet minister of the interior, S Kruglov, reported that in March 1946 alone 8,360 so-called “bandits” had been liquidated in western Ukraine, which was engulfed by the nationalist movement. A year later Kruglov informed Stalin that, not counting those kept in prisons, there were 2,188,355 prisoners in the corrective-labour camps and colonies and that twenty-seven new camps had been built. On 5 March 1950 Stalin ordered that the capacity of the special camps housing those with a minimum sentence of twenty years be expanded from 180,000 to 250,000. No one was ever expected to return to the outside world from these camps. Volkogonov states that under Stalin there were more than five million camp inmates and exiles at any one time. Dimitri Volkogonov, *Autopsy For An Empire: The Seven Leaders Who Built The Soviet Regime* (New York: Free Press, 1998), pages 150-1.

5 Mykola Lebed, born 23 November 1909 in Strilychi Novi, Bibrka county, western Ukraine, passed away in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on 19 July 1998, at the age of eighty-eight. A member of the OUN and an early leader of its youth movement, he was jailed in Warsaw in 1934 after the assassination of General Bronislaw Pieracki. Freed in 1939, he eventually became second-in-command of the OUN’s underground struggle. He played a key role in setting up the UPA and later the UHVR. Lebed left Ukraine in July 1944 and became the head of the UHVR’s External Representation. He settled in New York in 1949. See Irene Jarosewich, “Mykola Lebed, top-level leader of Ukrainian nationalists, dies at 88,” *Ukrainian Weekly*, 26 July 1998, pages 1, 4.

6 John Ranelagh reports in *The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), pages 137, 228, that the CIA’s Office of Special Operations continued to brief agents and send them on missions behind the Iron Curtain “where for several years after the war a Ukrainian resistance movement continued to fight the Red Army. This was a major and fascinating undertaking. The Ukraine was an acknowledged part of the USSR, so the operations were tantamount to war. It demonstrated the determination with which the United States entered the cold war. It also demonstrated a cold ruthlessness: the Ukrainian resistance had no hope of winning unless America was prepared to go to war on its behalf. Since America was not prepared to go to war, America was in effect encouraging Ukrainians to go to their deaths.”





*Sunday in the Barracks*

## Résumé

Stefan Petelycky, l'auteur des mémoires *A Auschwitz pour l'Ukraine*, a passé deux ans dans des camps de concentration allemands pour sa participation au mouvement nationaliste.

Petelycky est né en 1923 dans une famille paysanne dans la région de Zolotchiv. Dans le premier chapitre de ses mémoires, "Pour l'Ukraine", il raconte ses premières années: instruction dans une école de village, travail dans la coopérative ukrainienne "Unité", adhésion depuis l'âge de quinze ans à la Jeunesse de l'ONU. Il offre aussi ses observations au sujet des relations entre Ukrainiens, Polonais et Juifs. Dans le deuxième chapitre, "A Auschwitz", Petelycky raconte la première occupation soviétique de l'Ukraine Occidentale aux années 1939-1941 et les activités clandestines de l'ONU dans la région de Zolotchiv à cette époque.

L'attaque allemande contre l'Union Soviétique en juin 1941 trouve Petelycky dans les forêts de la région de Zolotchiv. Après l'arrivée des Allemands à Zolotchiv le 1er juillet 1941 il a pénétré dans la prison de Zolotchiv et a vu les corps massacrés des prisonniers qu'avait tués le NKVD avant de fuir.

En mai 1943 les Allemands ont arrêté Petelycky, le soupçonnant d'avoir participé au mouvement nationaliste, et après trois semaines dans la prison de Zolotchiv ils l'ont transféré dans la prison à la rue Lacki à Lviv, où il a passé quatre mois. Le 1er octobre 1943 on l'a livré comme partie d'un grand transport de prisonniers ukrainiens au camp de concentration d'Auschwitz. Là il est devenu le prisonnier N° 154922. A l'approche de la fin de la guerre en janvier 1945 les Allemands ont transféré Petelycky d'Auschwitz au camp de Mauthausen en Autriche, et ensuite au camp d'Ebensee. C'est sur la

faim, le froid et la torture qu'il a connus dans des prisons et camps de concentration allemands qu'écrit Petelycky au troisième chapitre, "Les nombreux cercles de l'enfer".

Dans le dernier chapitre, "La lutte continue", Petelycky raconte comment, après une guérison graduelle, il s'est joint de nouveau aux activités de l'ONU: parcourant l'Allemagne et l'Autriche, il retrouvait des membres de l'ONU dispersés par la guerre et dénichait des renseignements sur les activités clandestines en Ukraine. En 1947 il a voyagé lui-même vers l'Est, pour entrer en contact avec des unités de l'Armée insurgée ukrainienne, qui essayait d'atteindre l'Ouest en passant par la Tchécoslovaquie.

En 1950, en automne, Petelycky est parti pour le Canada et, se joignant à la vie communautaire et politique de l'émigration ukrainienne, est devenu, entre autres choses, l'un des fondateurs de la Ligue mondiale de prisonniers politiques ukrainiens. Il vit aujourd'hui comme retraité en Colombie-Britannique. Il prend toujours une part active à la vie communautaire, surtout à l'organisation de l'aide charitable pour l'Ukraine. Petelycky se présente souvent aussi avec des commentaires au sujet de la punition des criminels de guerre et de l'honneur à la mémoire des victimes de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale.

Les mémoires de Stefan Petelycky sont enrichies de dessins de la vie dans les camps de concentration allemands de Paladii Osynka, des photographies et de nombreuses annotations avec des références à la littérature supplémentaire. Ce livre mérite l'attention de chacun qui s'intéresse à l'histoire du XXe siècle et aux questions politiques actuelles.

Стефан Петелицький, автор спогадів «До Авшвіцу за Україну», відсидів два роки в німецьких концентраційних таборах за участь у націоналістичному русі.

Петелицький народився 1923 року в селянській родині на Золочівщині. У першому розділі спогадів, «За Україну», він розповідає про свої ранні роки: навчання в сільській школі, праця в українській кооперативі «Єдність», членство від п'ятнадцяти років у Юнацтві ОУН. Він також подає свої спостереження про стосунки між українцями, поляками і євреями.

У другому розділі, «До Авшвіцу», Петелицький розповідає про першу радянську окупацію Західної України в 1939–1941 роках і про підпільну діяльність ОУН на Золочівщині в цей час.

Німецький напад на Радянський Союз у червні 1941 року застав Петелицького у лісах Золочівщини. Після приходу німців до Золочева 1 липня 1941 року він пробився до золочівської в'язниці і побачив змасакровані трупи в'язнів, яких закатувало НКВС перед втечею.

У травні 1943 року німці заарештували Петелицького за підозрінням участі в націоналістичному русі і після трьох тижнів у золочівській в'язниці перевезли до в'язниці на вулиці Лонцького у Львові, де він провів чотири місяці. 1 жовтня 1943 року його доставлено в складі великого транспорту українських в'язнів до концентраційного табору Авшвіц. Тут він став в'язнем № 154922. З наближенням кінця війни в січні 1945 року німці перекинули Петелицького з Авшвіцу до табору в

Мавтгавзені в Австрії, а тоді до табору в Ебензее. Про голод, холод і катування, яких він зазнав у німецьких кацетах, Петелицький пише у третьому розділі, «Кола пекла».

В останньому розділі, «Боротьба продовжується», Петелицький розповідає про те, як після поступового одужання він знову включився в роботу ОУН: роз'їжджаючи по Німеччині і Австрії, він розшукував розкинутих війною членів ОУН і роздобував відомості про підпільну боротьбу в Україні. 1947 року він сам їздив на схід, щоб зв'язатися з частинами УПА, які пробивалися через Чехо-Словаччину на захід.

Восени 1950 року Петелицький виїхав до Канади і, включившись у громадське й політичне життя української еміграції, став між іншим одним із засновників Світової ліги українських політичних в'язнів. Сьогодні він живе як пенсіонер у Британській Колумбії. Він далі активний в громадському житті, зокрема в організації харитативної допомоги для України. Петелицький також часто виступає в канадській пресі зі спогадами про свої переживання і з коментарями на теми покарання воєнних злочинців і вшанування пам'яті жертв Другої світової війни.

Спогади Стефана Петелицького збагачені малюнками життя в німецьких концтаборах Паладія Осинки, фотографіями і численними примітками з посилками на додаткову літературу. Книжка заслуговує на увагу кожного, хто цікавиться історією ХХ сторіччя і сьогоденними політичними питаннями.



*Zugang*

### ***About the Author***

A retired aircraft mechanic, Stefan Petelycky was a founding member of the World League of Ukrainian Political Prisoners. Since 1990 he has overseen the preparation and delivery of over a dozen containers of medical equipment and other humanitarian relief supplies from Canada to Ukraine. He has also been active in the BC Provincial Council of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of British Columbia, Ukrainian Canadian Social Services, and the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association. He lives in Richmond with his wife, Sofia.

