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Volodymyr Viatrovykh and Lubomyr Luciuk (eds.): *Enemy Archives: Soviet Counterinsurgency Operations and the Ukrainian Nationalist Movement* McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal and Kingston, Canada, 2023, 988 p., \$135.00 CAD (hardcover).

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## BOOK REVIEW

# Ukrainian Nationalist Movement and Soviet Counterinsurgency Operations

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**Volodymyr Viatrovych and Lubomyr Luciuk** (eds.): *Enemy Archives: Soviet Counterinsurgency Operations and the Ukrainian Nationalist Movement*  
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Those readers who truly want to know the meaning of Ukrainian nationalism and the roots of Russia's aggression against sovereign Ukraine might want to embark on an intellectual journey and read *Enemy Archives: Soviet Counterinsurgency Operations and the Ukrainian Nationalist Movement*. This treasure trove of archival documents is found in the HDA SBU archive (the Sectoral Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine).

In the late 1950s, the Committee for State Security (KGB) decided to

systematize the archives of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) that were discovered or seized from their members. In 1959, Vitalii Nikitchenko, the KGB's head in Ukraine, formed a group of chekists who directly participated in curtailing the underground nationalist movement in Western Ukraine and exterminating its leaders.

They were tasked with carefully organizing the archives of the enemies of the Soviet regime, Ukrainian nationalists,

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with the goal of preserving theoretical and practical knowledge of counterintelligence and counterinsurgency operations for future generations of chekists involved in covert action and counterintelligence operations against the West. Undoubtedly, these practitioners pursued another, rather pragmatic, goal—to engrave their names in the history of Soviet counterinsurgency operations and their contribution to the victory of the KGB that largely managed to thwart the activities of OUN and UPA members by the middle of the 1950s. To record their names for posterity, these chekists who were directly involved in fighting Ukrainian nationalism took advantage of the post-Stalin relaxation of policies and the Khrushchev Thaw, when the Soviet regime released some information for public consumption. This group of chekists also focused on organizing Soviet secret services' operational analyses and reports.

The value of this collection is grounded in its dual perspective offered by insurgent documents captured during searches and arrests and by materials drafted by Soviet secret organs pertaining to the activities of the OUN and UPA. It is important to note, however, that the book contains only a small portion of documents that have been preserved in the HDA SBU. The editors and compilers of this collection, Dr. Volodymyr Viatrovykh and Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk, selected them from files 372 (that includes 103 volumes), 376 (88 volumes), and 398 (51 volumes) that constitute fond 13 of the archive. Many documents pertaining to the topic were destroyed by the Soviet secret

services. The selection of documents included in this collection addresses the most important questions associated with the movement. The majority of documents have been ably translated into English for the first time by Marta Olynyk, which will provide Western academics and broader audiences with an opportunity to study and interpret these primary materials. Crucially, this collection will generate a more subtle understanding of the legacy of the Ukrainian nationalist insurgency and public awareness of what this legacy means for contemporary Ukrainian society and its stoicism in the face of Russia's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine. In light of Russia's genocidal agenda against sovereign Ukraine, this collection illuminates the continuity of Russia's state violence, uncovering many ideological and tactical parallels between the Soviet era and modern Russia and the atrocities that have been perpetrated against Ukrainians.

Unlike many other volumes of archival documents, *Enemy Archives* includes a substantial introduction written by Viatrovykh and Luciuk that offers readers a nuanced and analytical history of the Ukrainian nationalist movement, carefully explicating its intellectual origins and the structure and the objectives of groups that represented it. The authors carefully explain how dynamic the movement was, going through the stages of its strategic and tactical maturity. In contrast to many other narratives that are quite simplistic, insipid, and trivial, labeling these men and women altogether as Nazi collaborators, Viatrovykh's and Luciuk's

analysis reveals the complexity and diversity of the movement and people who resisted Polish, Hungarian, Soviet, and Nazi German rule.

Importantly, this introduction is a reflection of the editors' meticulous research and their systemic approach to the problem of historical myths. In addition, they constructed a list of the most salient and controversial questions associated with the history of the OUN and UPA, which might help readers navigate through the documents and formulate their own answers to these questions. The way these twenty-two questions were phrased reveals the editors' academic honesty and their ability to highlight the most problematic aspects of Ukrainian–Polish relations and the OUN's and UPA's activities. The editors' insights into ideological transformations from a clandestine group known as the Ukrainian Military Organization formed in 1920 (its members were tied to the émigré government of the Western Ukrainian National Republic) to the Ukrainian liberation movement are thorough and detailed, and the evidential base of their arguments and interpretations of these transformations is broad and impressive.

Viatrovych and Luciuk reject the idea about the marginality of the OUN and UPA, arguing that these organizations enjoyed quite substantial support among the Ukrainian population. In late June of 1941, the OUNb (the Bandera faction) proclaimed the restoration of a Ukrainian state and managed to administer the territories of 187 out of 200 districts in Western Ukraine,

heading east (Zhytomyr, Proskuriv, Kamianets-Podilsky, Kryvyi Rih, Nykopol, Mykolaiv, and Dnipropetrovsk [today Dnipro]), where they, with the help of local Ukrainians, established governing councils. Special attention is paid to what happened to Ukrainian nationalists under the German occupation, and how the movement survived after the Germans isolated its leaders in concentration camps.

The editors also offer a clear explanation about the waves of counterinsurgency operations, including the largest, entitled the Great Blockade, which the Soviets conducted in winter of 1945–1946, deploying more than a million troops into Western Ukraine. To sustain Soviet power in Western Ukraine, Soviet military tactics were combined with the use of chemical weapons against the insurgents, forcible displacement, and mass deportation of the population, including the largest operation, known as “Zapad” (“West”) that was carried out on 21 October 1947. More than 76,000 people were removed from their homes in Western Ukraine within 24 hours. It took the Soviets another decade to curtail the movement, yet attacks of Ukrainian nationalists using guerilla tactics were reported as late as 1962. The documents in this collection detail the Soviet counterinsurgency operations that finally helped crush the Ukrainian insurgent movement, complemented with eight full-color maps portraying the political geography of this struggle.

As the editors have pointed out, very few documents in this collection are known outside Ukraine, and one might

add that very few Western scholars, including Canadian and American historians, conducted research in the HDA SBU, the former KGB archive in Kyiv. Therefore, many Western interpretations of the goals and dynamics of the Ukrainian nationalist movement and scholarship about the OUN and UPA are speculative. Moreover, some scholars produce narratives that are highly biased, grounded in historical accounts that emanate directly from the Kremlin.

Therefore, this volume provides indispensable reading for scholars, historians, and political scientists, whose research examines the history of nationalist movements in Europe, including Ukraine. These documents might help them adjust their views and beliefs, and assist them in writing more balanced narratives about who these members of the Ukrainian national liberation movement were. Western politicians and policymakers might also benefit from reading this volume. Despite the quite transparent reasons behind contemporary Russia's war against Ukraine, many still believe Soviet and Russian historical myths and propaganda about the "civil war" in Ukraine's Donbas, depicting Ukrainians as organic antisemites, Nazi collaborators, and fascists, narratives that were conceived by the KGB and spread in the West through special operations known as active measures.

The continuity of Soviet tactics and strategies and the durability of Soviet official narratives in which the chekists' reputations have been whitewashed and even glorified is observable for those

who study the history of Soviet and Russian covert operations. Viatrovych and Luciuk have amply noted that Soviet and Russian disinformation campaigns, targeting the most active faction of the OUN, the Bandera faction, managed to sustain the Kremlin's official historical narratives about the Banderivtsi as murderers and fascists, and as a result, the legacy of the Ukrainian nationalist movement in the twentieth century remains highly controversial. Indeed, the research topic of the Ukrainian nationalist movement in the twentieth century and how it should be remembered has been the subject of many scholarly conferences and forums that on a number of occasions became a space for memory wars.

Moreover, these memory wars attracted Russian money in the form of scholarly grants and honorariums offered to those who agreed to defend and perpetuate Russian narratives designed to conceal the Soviet regime's crimes against humanity and genocides against "national minorities," including Ukrainians. Russia's anti-Ukrainian rhetoric and attempts to generalize and truncate the history of the OUN and UPA have shaped the views of many scholars and politicians who, to a significant degree, influence domestic and foreign policies of the United States and, more broadly, of the collective West.

This collection of documents might enlighten them and those whose partial understanding of the evolution and the objectives of the Ukrainian nationalist movement wrongly depicted all of its members as villains.