

## Ultra-Nationalism in Our Backyard: The Story of the Monument to the Heavenly Brigade

By Adam Yunis



*Rev. Victor Poliarny, pastor of St. Andrew's UOC, is standing in the middle. To the right of him is Roman Holowka, president of the Palatine, Illinois branch of the ODFFU. Maria Korkatsch-Groszko the right of Holowka, and Jaroslav Sydorenko, second to the left holding the ODFFU-Palatine flag, are the first and second deputy chairmen (i.e. vice-presidents) of St. Andrew's parish board.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> [1] Maria Korkatsch-Groszko, "Illinois Ukrainians gather in remembrance of the Battle of Brody of 1944," *The Ukrainian Weekly*, September 11, 2020,

On Sunday, August 2nd, 2020 members of various Ukrainian-American organizations gathered in Bloomindale, IL in front of a monument to pay respect to the fallen heroes of Ukraine. The solemn event was hosted by the Organization for Defense of Four Freedoms for Ukraine (ODFU), Branch 31 based in Palatine, Il in cooperation with St. Andrews Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral, where the event was held.<sup>2</sup> The Very Rev. Polinary, head of the parish, made remarks, stating that “We do not have the right to forget our heroes who have devoted and sacrificed their lives to the Ukrainian people and protection of our land.”<sup>3</sup> Who were the heroes that this gathering was commemorating? The event was held in memorial of the 14<sup>th</sup> Waffen Grenadier Division of the Nazi SS, better known as the “Galicia Division”, Ukrainians who fought with the Nazis against the Soviets, most of whom perished during the Battle of Brody in 1944.

Approximately 50 meters away from the monument is a cemetery where UPA and OUN B veterans graves are widely ordained with UPA and OUN symbols.<sup>4</sup> An article commemorating the mask-free gathering was published in the principal English language Ukrainian American newspaper, *Ukrainian Weekly*. The author of the article, Dr. Maria Korkatsch-Groszko, is the vice-president of the Illinois branch of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) and was previously a member of the Illinois Holocaust and Genocide commission.<sup>5</sup> She apparently did not object to the declaration that Ukrainians **must** celebrate the 14<sup>th</sup> Grenadier Division of the Waffen SS. Natalie Jaresko, the Chicago-born former Finance Minister of Ukraine (2014-16), who is today a distinguished fellow at the Atlantic Council and the executive director of the Financial Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico, is one of Korkatsch’s former students. Natalie’s younger brother John is the president of the parish board of St. Andrew’s Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) in Bloomingdale, and co-chaired its Ukrainian Heroes Monument Committee.

The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA), the ODFU and the St. Andrews Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral are organizations that broadly trace their political mission to

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<http://www.ukrweekly.com/uwwp/illinois-ukrainians-gather-in-remembrance-of-the-battle-of-brody-of-1944/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Author’s visit.

<sup>5</sup> Moss Robeson, “October Surprise Pt. 1,” *Bandera Lobby*, Oct 20, 2020, <https://banderalobby.substack.com/p/october-surprise-pt-1>

Stephen Bandera and the OUN-B. Stephan Bandera has been a polarizing and influential figure in Eastern Europe since the 1930s. Born in 1909 in Galicia in an area governed by the Austria-Hungarian empire, young Bandera was radicalized by the Polish-Ukrainian war of 1918-19. Bandera was 10 years old when Galicia was integrated into eastern Poland. In between this time Bandera became a Ukrainian nationalist. In 1934 Bandera orchestrated the assassination of Poland's Minister of Interior, Bronislaw Pieracki and sentenced to death. After escaping prison during the invasion of Poland in 1939, Bandera joined other Ukrainian nationalists to reform the OUN.

The nationalist ideology of the Order of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) combined elements of European fascist ideas such as anti-Semitism<sup>6</sup> and eugenics in its goal of obtaining an ethnically pure Ukrainian state under the Fuhrerprinzip, the belief in one leader, Bandera, consolidating power. Ukrainian nationalists gathered in the General Gouvennement in and around Krakow in alliance with Nazi Germany between 1939 and Operation Barbarossa. . In preparation for the invasion of the Soviet Union, Stephan Bandera, Stepan Lenkav's'kyi, Roman Shukhevych, and Yaroslav Stesko produced a document intended to be used by revolutionaries. Titled "The Struggles and Activities of the OUN in wartime", the document includes the organization's plans for the population during their revolutionary struggle.

"The national minorities are divided into a) those that are friendly to us, that is, members of previously subjugated peoples b) those that are hostile to us, Russians, Poles, Jews.

Re a. Have equal rights with Ukrainians; we help them return to their homelands.

Re b. Destruction in battle particularly those who defend the regime..."

In the portion of document concerning the Security Service, it is left unambiguous the policy towards non ethnic Ukrainians.

"We have to remember that these existing elements have to be, as the main pillar of the NKVD and the Soviet authority in Ukraine, exterminated while we are establishing the new revolutionary order in Ukraine. These elements are:

1. Russians who have been sent... to strengthen Moscow's power in Ukraine.
2. Jews, both individually and as a national group.
3. Aliens, for the most part various Asians, whom Moscow is using to colonize Ukraine with the aim of creating a national checkerboard in Ukraine.
4. Poles in the western Ukrainian regions who have not renounced their dream of rebuilding a Greater Poland at the expense of Ukrainian lands, even if that Poland has to be red. <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Carynnyk, Marco. 2011. "Foes of Our Rebirth: Ukrainian Nationalist Discussions about Jews, 1929-1947." *Nationalities Papers* 39 (3): 315-52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2011.570327>

<sup>7</sup> Carynnyk, Marco. 2011. "Foes of Our Rebirth: Ukrainian Nationalist Discussions about Jews, 1929-1947." *Nationalities Papers* 39 (3): 315-52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2011.570327>. For photos of these documents please see

The OUN B followed the Nazi invasion into the Soviet Union, initiating their Ukrainian national revolution. On June 30, 1941, as Nazi forces entered the city, Yaroslav Stetsko proclaimed a Ukrainian state in Lviv, as Bandera remained in the General Gouvrenment. On July 1-2, 1941 a public pogrom took place in Lviv. The OUN printed leaflets urging Ukrainians to murder the Jewish population<sup>8</sup>. The pogrom was photographed, and involved ritualistic humiliation, along with sexual violence against girls and women<sup>9</sup>. Jews were grabbed from their homes by Ukrainian militias, thrown to the street, humiliated, subject to sexual violence, and beaten on their way to the prisons where they were murdered by Nazis and Ukrainian militias

The OUN B and its armed wing the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) began to falsify its immediate past during the war. An OUN B order dated October 27, 1943 demanded preparation of the following material:

“c. Lists that would confirm that the Germans carried out anti-Jewish pogroms and liquidations by themselves, without the participation or help of the Ukrainian police, and instead, before carrying out the executions, urged the Jewish committee or the rogues themselves to confirm with their signatures the presence of the Ukrainian police and its involvement in the actions.

d. Material that would clearly confirm that Poles had initiated and taken part in anti-Jewish pogroms and at the same time that they had served as the hirelings and agents of the Germans in their struggle with Ukrainians.”<sup>10</sup>

Thousands of Ukrainians retreated with the German army westwardly, ended up in DP camps, immigrated to Britain in the early 1950s, and later Canada and the United States<sup>11</sup>. The UPA murdered Jews who had survived the Nazi Holocaust in 1943-44 and committed ethnic

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[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233467822\\_Foes\\_of\\_our\\_rebirth\\_Ukrainian\\_nationalist\\_discussions\\_about\\_Jews\\_1929-1947](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233467822_Foes_of_our_rebirth_Ukrainian_nationalist_discussions_about_Jews_1929-1947)

<sup>8</sup> For further study, please see 2012. “Ukrainian Memories of the Holocaust: The Destruction of Jews as Reflected in Memoirs Collected in 1947.” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 54 (3-4): 427–42.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2012.11092716>. And 2011. “The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Carnival Crowd.” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 53 (2-4): 209–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2011.11092673>.

<sup>9</sup> 2011. “The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Carnival Crowd.” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 53 (2-4): 209–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2011.11092673>.

<sup>10</sup> Carynnyk, Marco. 2011. “Foes of Our Rebirth: Ukrainian Nationalist Discussions about Jews, 1929-1947.” *Nationalities Papers* 39 (3): 315–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2011.570327>. For photos of these documents please see [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233467822\\_Foes\\_of\\_our\\_rebirth\\_Ukrainian\\_nationalist\\_discussions\\_about\\_Jews\\_1929-1947](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233467822_Foes_of_our_rebirth_Ukrainian_nationalist_discussions_about_Jews_1929-1947)

<sup>11</sup> Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, and Ibidem Verlag. 2014. *Stepan Bandera : The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist : Fascism, Genocide, and Cult*. Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag.

cleansing of Poles in Galicia and Volhania, murdering between 40,000-60,000<sup>12</sup>. The UPA and the OUN continued to fight the Soviet Union, and Ukrainian nationalists allied with the Western powers after the war.

The Cold War provided the context for Ukrainian diaspora groups to weaponize and glorify the OUN and UPA and to be seen by Western governments as freedom fighters. Banderite nationalist Ukrainian groups gained power in Ukrainian diaspora political organizations in Canada, Australia and the United States. Journalist Moss Robeson has written on the infiltration of OUN members and Banderites in Ukrainian diaspora political organizations.<sup>13</sup> There have been predictable clashes between more moderate and left-wing Ukrainians in these communities, particularly in Canada.<sup>14</sup> In 1983 Ronald Reagan and George Bush received Yaroslav Stetsko at the White House. In 1982, as a part of “Captive Nations Week”, the red and black flag of the UPA flew over the White House.<sup>15</sup> The same flag flew over Lviv city hall while thousands of Jews were brutalized and murdered in July of 1941.



*Opening Ceremony for Monument to Heavenly Brigade, September 20, 2015, published on Censor.net*<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This number is based on the range given by Timothy Snyder In *Past and Present* (p. 202)

<sup>13</sup> Robeson, Moss 2021 <https://banderalobby.substack.com/> . Robeson is an investigative journalist and author of a blog tracing the OUN B's influence on world politics.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Robeson, Moss. 2020. “The Center for U.S. Banderite Relations.” [Banderalobby.substack.com](https://banderalobby.substack.com/p/exposing-the-bandera-lobby-in-the). March 20, 2020. <https://banderalobby.substack.com/p/exposing-the-bandera-lobby-in-the>.

<sup>16</sup> First Monument to Ukraine's Heavenly Hundred opened in US.”, September 22, 2015, Censor.net,



The monument that played host to the event is North America's first and largest monument to the "Heaven's Brigade" or the "Heavenly Hundred", the 100 victims of the February 2014 Maidan protests and "Snipers' Massacre" in Kyiv.<sup>17</sup> The event memorialized was a part of the Euromaidan demonstrations, occurring between Nov 21, 2013-Feb 23, 2014, where Ukrainians protested President Viktor Yanukovich's suspension of an agreement with the European Union, seeking closer ties with Russia instead. The Maidan revolution resulted in the resignation by Yanukovich, and although the protests initially involved a broad coalition of Ukrainians protesting their government, the far right gained a larger influence over the course of the rebellion. Western support for the movement was represented by media and government actions framing the moment as a rebellion against growing Russian influence in Europe.

The monument is a highly polished and reflective stainless-steel Cossack cross with the larger cross containing 100 smaller crosses. It was designed by Ukrainian artist Yevhen Propopov and architectural collaborator Orest Baranyk. Propopov stated that the main idea behind the monument was that one hundred human destinies are unified by one belief that give birth to one undying mass movement, and that the polished steel will reflect the sky, furthering the reference to the Heavenly Hundred.<sup>18</sup> The reflective aspect of the monument acts as a mirror, and the viewer is supposed to see themselves in the cross.<sup>19</sup> John Jaresko as president of the parish board of St. Andrew's Ukrainian Orthodox Church and co-chaired Monument Committee, led the fundraising efforts.<sup>20</sup>

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[https://censor.net/en/photo\\_news/352862/first\\_monument\\_to\\_ukaines\\_heavenly\\_hundred\\_opened\\_in\\_us\\_photos](https://censor.net/en/photo_news/352862/first_monument_to_ukaines_heavenly_hundred_opened_in_us_photos)

<sup>17</sup> Katchanovski, Ivan, "The "Snipers' Massacre" on the Maidan in Ukraine," Conference: Annual Meeting of American Political Science Association, September 2015,

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266855828\\_The\\_Snipers'\\_Massacre\\_on\\_the\\_Maidan\\_in\\_Ukraine](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266855828_The_Snipers'_Massacre_on_the_Maidan_in_Ukraine)

<sup>18</sup> Staff, "Monument to Heavenly Brigade to be unveiled in Illinois," *The Ukrainian Weekly*, September 11, 2015,

<http://www.ukrweekly.com/uwwp/monument-to-heavenly-brigade-to-be-unveiled-in-illinois/>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Julian Hayda, "A Monument To The Ages: A Landmark To Remember," *Ukrainian Magazine Chicago*, September 06, 2015,

<http://ukrainianchi.com/monument-ages-landmark-remember/>



John Jaresko is organizing this fundraiser.

Created February 23, 2015 | Funerals & Memorials

### Monument to "Heaven's Brigade"

North America's first and largest monument to "Heaven's Brigade" and all who gave their lives for a free Ukraine.

In the last year hundreds of people including innocent women and children have died in a terrorist act of aggression by Russia against Ukraine.

Each and every day the aggression against Ukraine and its people continues and the world looks the other way.

This monument will serve to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice; their lives. Do not let future generations forget these acts of aggression and terrorism.

If we do not teach future generations this history, they are doomed to repeat it.

This monument will be prominently placed and visible from the street, we are petitioning the state of Illinois to place road signs on major highways as a place on interest. The monument park will include literature for schools and the public to learn about this tragedy.

Please consider helping with a donation.

"Heroes never Die"

St. Andrew Ukrainian Orthodox Church -

*GoFundMe entry by John Jaresko.*<sup>21</sup>

The monument was dedicated on September 2015, only 19 months after the events they memorialize, and the opening was attended by Governor of Illinois Bruce Rauner and various Ukrainian and American government representatives.<sup>22</sup> A letter from Senator John McCain was read.<sup>23</sup> McCain actively supported construction of the monument and gave a speech to protesters in Kyiv in December of 2013 behind the Black and Red UPA flag, next to the leader of ultra-nationalist/neo-Nazi Svoboda Party, Oleh Tyahnybok.<sup>24</sup> Tyahnybok has called for the liberation of his country from the "Muscovite-Jewish mafia."<sup>25</sup> The truth is that the monument is not only

<sup>21</sup> John Jaresko, "Monument to the Heroes of Ukraine," GoFundMe.com, February 23, 2015

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/n14eqo>

<sup>22</sup> First Monument to Ukraine's Heavenly Hundred opened in US., September 22, 2015, Censor.net,

[https://censor.net/en/photo\\_news/352862/first\\_monument\\_to\\_ukaines\\_heavenly\\_hundred\\_opened\\_in\\_us\\_photos](https://censor.net/en/photo_news/352862/first_monument_to_ukaines_heavenly_hundred_opened_in_us_photos)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Max Blumenthal, "Is the US backing neo-Nazis in Ukraine?", Salon, February 25, 2014

[https://www.salon.com/2014/02/25/is\\_the\\_us\\_backing\\_neo\\_nazis\\_in\\_ukraine\\_partner/](https://www.salon.com/2014/02/25/is_the_us_backing_neo_nazis_in_ukraine_partner/)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

dedicated to the “Heavenly Hundred” but to “All Heroes of Ukraine”, those who put their lives on the line for a free and sovereign Ukraine.<sup>26</sup> According to Jaresko in *Ukraine Magazine Chicago*, “There really doesn’t exist a monument to all Ukrainian heroes — we have statues of Shevchenko that are very important, or the Ukrainian-American Veterans Memorial which is going up now in South Bound Brook [New Jersey], and is also very important. But there is nothing to the heroes of Ukraine who lost their lives in pursuit of freedom for Ukraine.”<sup>27</sup>

Supporters of the OUN-B, organizations such as the UCCA and the ODFFU, hold a celebratory view of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, the armed wing of OUN-B, and of the Galicia SS, the monument was thus an appropriate setting for a tribute to Ukrainian Waffen SS soldiers, all of whom volunteered to join the SS. The monument’s creation has the explicit goal of providing an “educational point of view” and Jaresko stated that he hopes the monument will be a point of interest for schools to learn Ukrainian history.<sup>28</sup> The monument operates as a way of solidifying ultranationalist power over the narrative of Ukrainian history, with the latest deaths during *Euromaidan* being viewed as a part of the centuries long struggle for Ukrainian independence. Ukrainian ultranationalists downplay or deny the role of the OUN in the Holocaust and ethnic cleansing. It is a non-issue, something attributed to the Nazis if acknowledged at all.<sup>29</sup>

The monument to the “Heavenly Hundred” is an explicit example of the power of monuments and the interests that they can hide. It speaks to the powerful diaspora of Ukrainian ultra-nationalists and of supporters of the OUN-B to control the narrative concerning events in Ukraine. The monument cynically takes the presentation and memorial of the recent deaths of protesters to further a political agenda. Functionally, the monument is a place to celebrate Ukrainian nationalism, including Bandera, the OUN and the UPA. This function can be seen in Bloomington’s 2017 Day of Defenders, where John Jaresko received a thank you in the program.<sup>30</sup> Dedicated to the 75<sup>th</sup> birthday of the UPA the event was hosted by St. Andrew Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral. During this event, a procession was made to the monument and the flags of the OUN-B and the UPA were placed. Attendees made their way to a section of the

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<sup>26</sup> Julian Hayda, “A Monument To The Ages: A Landmark To Remember,” *Ukrainian Magazine Chicago*, September 06, 2015,

<http://ukrainianchi.com/monument-ages-landmark-remember/>

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<sup>28</sup> Julian Hayda, “A Monument To The Ages: A Landmark To Remember,” *Ukrainian Magazine Chicago*, September 06, 2015,

<http://ukrainianchi.com/monument-ages-landmark-remember/>

<sup>29</sup> Per Anders Rudling, Efraim Zuroff, “The fight for historical truth about the Holocaust in Ukraine,” *Jerusalem Post*, March 30, 2017

<https://www.jpost.com/opinion/the-fight-for-historical-truth-about-the-holocaust-in-ukraine-485696>

<sup>30</sup> UPA Program”, [uccaillinois.org](http://uccaillinois.org), October 18, 2017,

[https://uccaillinois.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/UPA-Program\\_FINAL\\_ENGA.pdf](https://uccaillinois.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/UPA-Program_FINAL_ENGA.pdf)



church cemetery reserved for UPA veterans for blessings, songs and a military salute. History is alive in Bloomingdale, with a monument to those opposing Yanukovych in 2014 being used to commemorate events 80 years ago.<sup>31</sup>



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<sup>31</sup> Ibid



July 1941 pogrom in Lviv Ukraine (public domain)

The photos of the Lviv pogrom encapsulate the chaotic violence, the deeply personal and mobbish Holocaust that so many of the victims in Ukraine experienced. Holocaust victims must be at the center of any discussion surrounding groups seeking to memorialize groups that were active in Ukraine from 1940-1944. There is a reason glorification of the Galicia SS, and the OUN-B is problematic, the explosion of violence unleashed in Ukraine against a religious minority is almost unprecedented in its brutality and effectiveness. 1 % of the prewar population of 150,000 in Lviv survived the Holocaust.<sup>32</sup> The OUN B declared its independence on June 30, 1941, in Lviv, two weeks later the Lviv Pogrom began, these photos taken during a second pogrom in Lviv, which took place on July 25, 1941. 5,000 Jews died as a result of these pogroms, additionally 2,500 to 3,000 Jews were shot by death squads of the Einsatzgruppe.<sup>33</sup>

The manipulation of history to fit a political agenda is one of the most powerful things a monument and public historical remembrance can do. In this case, the history is correct, 100 protesters did die during the Euromaidan protests. This fact alone cannot hide the true intentions of such a place of remembrance, which is the celebration of Ukrainian ultra-nationalism. The fact that this includes the Galicia SS and widespread adoration for the UPA should alarm the Ukrainian community in Chicago and those concerned with Holocaust distortion. Ukrainian far right groups are extremely effective at concealing their agenda when it comes to the actual history that they are celebrating. This adds fire to those that wish to discredit legitimate Ukraine

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<sup>32</sup> Gera, Vanessa, R, y Herschaft, and Yevhen Kravts. 2018. "Ukrainian City Remembers Slain Jews on Holocaust Anniversary." *Www.timesofisrael.com*. September 2, 2018. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/ukrainian-city-remembers-slain-jews-on-holocaust-anniversary/>.

<sup>33</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. 2021. "Lvov." *Encyclopedia.ushmm.org*. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/lvov>.

claims of historic injustices perpetrated by Russian forces. The growth of the far right in Ukraine and Ukrainian diaspora communities has had the unfortunate effect of placing those concerned with the dignity of the victims of the Holocaust against the hopes of a Ukrainian community that is trying to remain independent from Russian influence. These beliefs must be reconciled.

The victims of the Holocaust do not deserve to have their murderers be celebrated in the United States. Future historical work on the Shoah in Ukraine will take place while the Ukrainian far right only continues to grow. One wonders how much scholarship will need to be produced for the United States government to stop its support of Ukrainian nationalism. Historians have and can be public voices of discontent. American and Canadian historians can actively call attention to government support for groups that memorialize participants in genocide. We owe it to the victims to continue to produce work accurately documenting how the murder of 1.5 million Jews in Ukraine took place, along with explanations on how memory of this event has been warped. It is a difficult history, but the suffering of the Jewish people in Ukraine requires it, as extreme nationalism is far from history.