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ANATOMY OF THE UNSAID

ALONG THE TABOO LINES OF FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE UKRAINIAN NATIONALISTIC UNDERGROUND*

Lubov Gaiovska “Ruta” (literary pseudonym Olga Ilynska 1923-1954) became a legend of the Ukrainian underground during her own lifetime. She managed to escape from the Soviet Security Service four times in the 1940s-1950s under almost hopeless circumstances. In her autobiographical story “Oblava” (“The Raid”) she describes one such close-to-death episode. She was left alone, hiding in a peasant’s house. The peasant, who usually provided her with food every morning, didn’t appear. She heard voices and saw that the Soviet officers were searching around the yard. That day, the bunker of “Ruta” was not found; she caused the officers of the state security lots of trouble and headaches for quite a long time. Georgii Sannikov, a former KGB officer, recalls the speech of Oleksii Kyrychenko, the Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine, during the meeting of the leadership of the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1953 in Kyiv. He yelled at the security officers, asking how it is possible that “they were not to able to catch this baba”.¹

In 1954 the “baba”, this time occupying the position of referent in the underground’s propaganda department in Lviv and the Lviv region was finally found: she and her security guard committed suicide during the raid of the MGB.² By that time the underground structure practically did not

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¹ Georgii Sannikov, *Bolshaia okhota: Borba s vooruzhennym podpoiem OUN v Zapadnoi Ukraine* [The Big Hunt: The Fight with Armed Underground of the OUN in the Western Ukraine] (Moskva: Pechatnye traditsii, 2008), 249.

² MGB – Ministry for State Security, predecessor of KGB, which in the post-war time was responsible for the destroying of Ukrainian nationalists groups. The special operations were organized mainly by the Directorate for the Fight Against Banditry (*upravlenie po borbe s banditizmom NKGB URSR*), 2 H Directorate MGB URSR and 4 Directorate KGB.

exist anymore; the majority of insurgents had been eliminated or arrested. Gaiovska was actually one of the last key figures of the Ukrainian nationalistic underground eliminated by the Soviet counterinsurgency.³

The success of the Soviet counterinsurgency effort in the late 1940s led to not only numerous losses among the insurgents but also to a general demoralization and exhaustion. After twelve years of an uninterrupted state of war, declared or undeclared, the western Ukrainian population showed all the signs of war-fatigue.

Today the history of the *Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists* (OUN) and the *Ukrainian Insurgent Army* (UPA) remains one of the most controversial fields of the remembrance culture. The current research in Ukraine evokes opposing evaluations between the eastern and western regions of the country. On the one hand (from the perspective of West Ukraine), they are celebrated as martyrs who devoted their lives to the struggle of Ukraine; on the other hand (East Ukraine) they are portrayed as merciless gangsters and murderers of ordinary civilians. Although such a two-dimensional scheme does not consider numerous in-between positions, it represents the historical development of the East and the West of today's Ukraine. In western Ukraine⁴ which belonged to the Polish state until 1939, the topos of the divided nation and the absence of their own state sovereignty strongly shaped the development of the national radical movement after WWI. Their main representatives were the members of the OUN and the UPA.

See in detail, Oleksandr Ischuk and Valerii Ogorodnik, *General Mykola Arsenych: zhyttia ta diialnist shefa SB OUN* [General Mykola Arsenych: Life and activity of the SB OUN chef] (Kolomyia: Vik, 2010).

³ Four months later the last commander of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, Vasylii Kuk, was put to sleep and in such a way caught alive in his bunker. Individual insurgents and small groups operated until the 1960s in different areas of Western Ukraine, which in reality was more hiding from arrest. Individual insurgents hid until 1980s. The "official" last insurgent came out from the Underground life (hidden by his wife on the roof of their own house) in December 1991. See Zhanna Popovich, 'Podpolnaja liubov' ['Love in the underground'], *Segodnia*, 3 March 2006, available at <http://www.segodnya.ua/oldarchive/c2256713004f33f5c225712500591440.html> (last visited 31 July 2012). Thereafter Popovich, 'Podpolnaja liubov'.

⁴ Volyn' and East Galicia (today Western Ukraine). About inside splitting and cultural ambivalence in Ukraine, see, Ola Hnatiuk, 'Zwischen Ost und West. Über die ukrainischen Identitätsdebatten' ['Between East and West : about Ukrainian identity debates'], in Renata Makarska and Basil Kerski, eds., *Die Ukraine, Polen und Europa* [Ukraine, Poland and Europe] (Osnabrück: Fibre Verlag, 2004), 91-115; Mykola Riabtschuk, 'Verschwommenes Grenzgebiet. Die ukrainische Identität am Scheideweg von Ost und West' ['The blurred area: The Ukrainian identity at crossroad from the East to the West'], in Renata Makarska and Basil Kerski, eds., *Die Ukraine, Polen und Europa* [Ukraine, Poland and Europe] (Osnabrück: Fibre Verlag, 2004), 117-134.

This complex ambivalence which exists in the current culture of remembrance as well as in the research field, also relates to the female participation in the OUN and UPA underground. For years, their presence was suppressed by the Soviet side and Ukrainian emigrants. Today it looks like they could celebrate their heroines' status, at the same time such problematic issues as participation in acts of violence and their involvement in the Security Service of the OUN and UPA have no place either in the memoir literature, or in research. That is why the target of my article, in addition to an evaluation and definition of an appreciation of female participation in historiography and memoir literature, is to picture their participation in violent acts and its dynamics, which accelerates in the post-war period when women were actively enlisted by Soviet power as well as by the underground fighters.

Genderless nationalists? Soviet propaganda versus Diaspora about OUN

The OUN (which was created in Vienna in 1929 by different nationalistic organizations) tried to resist polonization by using terrorist methods. In 1940, the OUN split into two parts, with the older more moderate members supporting Andrii Melnyk OUN(m), while the younger and more radical members supporting Stepan Bandera OUN(b). The later leading caste of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, which was officially founded in October 1942, belonged to the OUN(b).

The history of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army is marked by a highly visible presence and practice of violence: terrorist activities, subsequent actions against both communists and their followers and families, anti-Polish and anti-Jewish pogroms, and the physical extermination of insurgents who were suspected of betrayal. This brutality in its various contexts and frames remains one of the crucial factors which contributes to the ambivalent assessment of the Ukrainian resistance movement present in Volyn' and Eastern Galicia (today western Ukraine) from 1929 to the 1950s. Such ambivalent perceptions of the history of the OUN and UPA are in part due to the relative newness of the historical research on the subject. For a long time personal memoirs and Soviet propaganda literature were the main information source in the history of the Ukrainian underground.⁵

⁵ Four months later the last commander of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, Vasylii Kuk, was put to sleep and in such a way caught alive in his bunker. Individual insurgents and small groups operated until the 1960s in different areas of Western Ukraine, which in reality

After the 1940s isolated rebels hiding in the Ukrainian woods crossed the border and located first in Germany and afterwards in the USA and Canada. When they started to publish their memoirs⁶, these authors did not have access to archival materials and were too personally involved in the events to be able to produce balanced accounts.

At the same time Soviet propaganda printed “Anti-Bandera literature”.⁷ The activities of the OUN and the UPA during WW II, especially their contacts with German forces, the creation of the *Waffen-SS* Division “Galicia”⁸ and the battalions “Nachtigall” and “Roland”⁹ were the focus of the Soviet argumentation concerning the criminal acts of Ukrainian nationalists. The Soviet propaganda stressed and spread the image of western Ukrainian insurgents as offering a helping hand in establishing the Nazi

was more hiding from arrest. Individual insurgents hid until 1980s. The “official” last insurgent came out from the Underground life (hidden by his wife on the roof of their own house) in December 1991. See Popovich, ‘Podpolnaja liubov’.

⁶ Among others Zynovii Knysh, *Dukh, sho tilo rve do boiu* [*Spirit what brings the body to the struggle*] (Winnipeg: self-published, 1951); Petro Mirchuk, *Narys istoriï Organizacii Ukraïnskykh Natsionalistiv* [*Describing of the history of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists*] (München, London, New York: Ukraïnske vydavnytstvo, 1968); Iurii Tys-Krokhmaluk, *UPA Warfare in Ukraine. Strategical, Tactical and Organizational Problems of Ukrainian Resistance in World War II* (New York: Society of Veterans of Ukrainian Insurgent Army, 1972).

⁷ The choice of resources referring to the names of the victims killed by the nationalists as well as the places and forms of terror is obviously biased. Still, these resources provide important insight. In addition to that, the Soviet propaganda literature is essential for the pursuit of research on the second Sovietization of the Western Ukraine. This literature serves as a public platform on which the dominating discourses on the union of East and West can be found and it is still being used as a significant resource for research on that topic. Among others, Vitalii Cherednychenko, *Nacionalizm proty nacii* [*Nationalism against nation*] (Kyiv: Polityvydav Ukraïny, 1970); Serhii Danylenko, *Dorogoiu ganby i zrady: istorychna khronika* [*Along the way of shame and treason: historical chronic*] (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1970). In English see, Vitalii Cherednychenko, *Truth about UPA* (Lviv: Kameyar publishers, 1981); Andriy Sidiak, *Bankrupts* (Lviv: Kameyar publishers, 1984). For a comprehensive historical overview of literature on the OUN and UPA, see Serhii Zdioruk, Liudmyla Hrynevych and Olena Zdioruk, *Pokazhchyk publikacii pro diialnist OUN ta UPA (1945-1998)* [*Index of publications about the OUN and UPA (1945-1998)*] (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukraïny NANU, 1999); Oleksandr Lysenko and Oleksandr Marushchenko, *Organizaciia Ukraïnskykh nacionalistiv ta Ukraïnska Povstanska Armia. Bibliografichnyi pokazhchyk publikacii 1998-2002 rokiv* [*Organisation of Ukrainian nationalists and Ukrainian Insurgent Army. Bibliographical publication's index 1998-2002*] (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukraïny NANU, 2002).

⁸ Ukrainian military formation in the German armed forces during WWII. Formed in 1943, it was largely destroyed in the battle of Brody in July 1944.

⁹ Two military units of the “Ukrainian Legion”. 1941 reorganized into the 201st Schutzmannschaft Battalion, which was disbanded in the winter of 1942.

regime. Women as betrayers played in the Soviet propaganda brochures the role of passive followers, who as a result of backward family relationships in the pre-Soviet Ukraine were supposed to submissively follow men. The situation of women in western Ukraine was particularly stressed by so-called re-education literature and agitation for the new Soviet life. The hopelessness of existing in the woods with the underground was compared against the wide range of distractions of the post-war Soviet life in Ukraine. With an emphasis on the backwardness of the western Ukrainian housewife, Soviet power promoted the female participation in all spheres of life, from achieving high level political positions to professions which were previously difficult to access.¹⁰

On the contrary to this, the postwar diaspora narrative emphasized the anti-German actions of the UPA and tried to keep distance from possible connections between the Insurgency and German forces. Both sides tended towards a schematic portraying of enemies and heroes and constructing images of the insurgents, giving solid foundation for the contemporary dominate culture of memory concerning the OUN and UPA. For the apologists of the UPA they were impeccable, self-sacrificing heroes whose lives and deeds were subordinated to one overarching goal, namely to die for Ukraine. Women appeared in such works in subsidiary roles, as self-sacrificing wives and friends and as sturdy, uncomplaining helpers.¹¹

After obtaining independence in 1991, the official memory policy represented by politicians and former insurgents towards the nationalist movement in western Ukraine took on new shades in the Ukraine. Former rebels, who had spent many years in prison, became known as public persons, their glorification as Ukrainian heroes gained national status. The culmination arrived with the act of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko: on January 2010 he awarded posthumously the title Hero of Ukraine to the head of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, Stepan Bandera.

¹⁰ See Yoshie Mitsuyoshi, 'Public Representations of Women in Western Ukraine under Late Stalinism: Magazines, Literature, and Memoirs', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 54, 1 (2006), 20-36.

¹¹ See Tetiana Antonova, 'Zhinka ta ii myrni, napivmyrni ta voenni roli v borotbi OUN ta UPA' ['Women and her peaceful, semi-peaceful military roles in the struggle of the OUN and UPA'], *Ukrainskyyi vysvolynyii rukh*, 9 (2007), 138-47; Oksana Kis, 'Zhinochyyi dosvid uchasti u nacionalno-vyzvolnykh zmaganniakh 1940-50-kh rokiv an zahidnoukrainskykh zemliakh' ['Female Experience of the participation in the national liberation movement'], *Skhid- Zakhid: Istoryko-kulturologichnyi zbirnyk*, 13-14 (2009), 101-26.

The award of the honorary title has caused large debates on political as well as on academic levels.¹² Also the repeated attempts of Yushchenko to lend legal veteran status to the members of the OUN and UPA failed each time in the parliament. Under Yushchenko, several institutes of memory management were organized¹³, whose particular function was to build a heroic narrative around the struggle of Ukrainian nationalists.¹⁴ A substantial part of the today's memory culture around the OUN and the UPA even consists of creating a kind of group biography, which should be applicable to each male and female former participant of the underground. However, these thoughts confirm a popular stereotype, which in the course of the last sixty years remained constant regarding its completeness, unanimity and clarity. Concerning the female participation in the underground, the pro-UPA side rests on the canon of *vitas* with two common narratives: one is the unbroken combatant marked by patriotism and unquestionable devotion to the ideological precepts of the movement. Disciplined and ready to sacrifice themselves, they placed national interests above the individual and justified any means to achieve the independence of Ukraine. Women appeared in such works in a complementary role, as self-sacrificing wives and friends and in most cases, as sturdy, uncomplaining, anonymous helpers. The other is the victim of the Soviet regime, and it pays particular attention to their arrest and torture during their hearing and time spent in a camp or prison.

Generalizing in this way, not paying attention to why women joined the UPA, not paying attention to all aspects of women's participation, and finally not paying attention to the tragic position of many women caught between NKVD and SB (Ukrainian insurgent security service), the contem-

¹² The debate between John Paul Himka, a professor at the University of Alberta, Canada, and Zenon Kohut, the director of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, was published in the *Edmonton Journal*, 8-10 February 2010. Meanwhile the decree was cancelled by the new Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovic. See <http://www.president.gov.ua/ru/news/19103.html> (last visited 31 July 2012).

¹³ See Per A. Rudling, *The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of Historical Myths*, (Pittsburgh: University Center for Russian and East European Studies, 2011).

¹⁴ Thereby this creation of new national collective memory took place under a strong selection policy, which downplayed for example the cooperation of Ukrainian nationalists with German forces. For more about this, see John-Paul Himka, 'War Criminality: A Blank Spot in the Collective Memory of the Ukrainian Diaspora', *Spaces of Identity*, 5, 1 (April 2005), available at <http://ia600202.us.archive.org/7/items/warCriminalityABlackSpotInTheCollectiveMemoryOfTheUkrainian/HimkaWarCriminality.pdf> (last visited 31 July 2012); David R. Marples, *Heroes and Villains: Creating National History in Contemporary Ukraine* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007).

porary memory narrative created a monochromatic picture which presented women either as victims or incredible heroines.¹⁵

Recollections as a Research Source for the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. The Case of Maria Savchyn

The use of personal accounts has become a solid research instrument for historians within the few last years, although as before, the memories themselves continue to be the most unreliable ones in the eyes of researchers.¹⁶ Particularly against a background of deep instrumentalization of facts according to the interests of contemporary political forces and because archival documents are largely closed, the landscape of Ukrainian memory evokes more skepticism than scientific interest with researchers. In many respects this view is fair: the theses of Halbwachs and Assmann about the primacy of the present, which prevails over the past, is perfectly proved by the published interviews and memoirs, whose presentations were created for specific reasons, expectations, hopes and goals, as well as being formed by the present political reference framework. (Auto-)Biography becomes social and political history, its creation and interpretation is consciously adapted to the political interests and circumstances. It is being written in order to single out certain chosen images.

Cooperation with Soviet Security forces, participation in executions (especially of the civilian population), love affairs with enemies and actions done for personal, non-ideological reasons are only a few of the ways in which a person's biography disqualifies them from being a good insurgent. These are the most common taboo topics which have been ignored or possibly repressed in the memoir literature until more recently.

The majority of printed remembrances are directly connected with the official canon of memory. As a rule, the main plot focuses on the activities and the heroic deaths of familiar insurgents, destinies of friends, inferior or

¹⁵ Contemporary research on women in the UPA is either local studies reproducing meta-narratives of heroic martyrdom of female fighters or they narrate individual biographies. The only scholarly study of the UPA foregrounding gender issues is a volume by the American historian Jeffrey Burds. See Jeffrey Burds, *Sovetskaia agentura: ocherki istorii SSSR v poslevoennnye gody 1944-1948* (Soviet Police Informants: Essays on the Postwar History of the USSR, 1944-1948) (Moscow, New York: self-publishing, 2006).

¹⁶ Aleida Assmann, 'Stabilisatoren der Erinnerung – Affekt, Symbol, Trauma' ['Memorys stabilisers – affect, symbol, trauma'], in Jürgen Straub and Jörn Rüsen, eds., *Die dunkle Spur der Vergangenheit. Psychoanalytische Zugänge zum Geschichtsbewusstsein. Erinnerung, Geschichte, Identität* [The Dark Trace of the Past. Psycho Analytical Approach to the Historical Consciousness] (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1998), 131-52.

superior rebels in the context of their meetings, celebrations, or spending winter in bunkers.

Nevertheless, these memories make it possible to take a look at their everyday life, which is the least distorted in their memory, containing the least number of taboo issues. These repetitive actions, which could be described as simple routines, remain authentic in nature and therefore are a valuable object of analysis for researchers.¹⁷ In the end, they mainly reflect how the officially constructed policy of remembrance influences the construction of remembrance of one's own.

In that sense the recollections of Maria Savchyn, the author of one of the few of female insurgent memoirs that were translated into English, are a good example.¹⁸ The case of Maria Savchyn, wife of the chief of insurgent propaganda Vasyl Halasa, had turned into a legend both among the rebels and within the MGB circles. Savchyn spent over nine years in shelters and conspiratorial dwellings. Having survived numerous battles and the loss of their first child,¹⁹ in the spring of 1953 the couple while sleeping was tied up by their own guards and afterwards delivered to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Halasa, who was known under the pseudonym "Orlan"²⁰ in the underground, was of great importance for the Soviet security organs, because he knew the way to the shelter of the last underground commander Vasyl Kuk who had not yet been exposed. Halasa and Savchyn were brought from Khmelnytskyi by plane directly to Kyiv to be interrogated by

¹⁷ More in Lutz Niethammer, *Lebenserfahrung und kollektives Gedächtnis. Die Praxis des "Oral History"* [Experience and Collective Memory. The Practice of "Oral History"] (Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat, 1980); Lutz Niethammer, *Kollektive Identität. Heimliche Quellen einer unheimlichen Konjunktur* [Collective Identity. Secret Resources of Enormous Boom] (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 2000).

¹⁸ Maria Savchyn, *Thousands of Roads: A Memoir of a Young Woman's Life in the Ukrainian Underground During and After World War II* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2001).

¹⁹ Mariia Savchyn was apprehended on the street by sheer accident, while carrying an infant baby in her arms. But when she asked quickly to wash her child, Savchyn managed to flee through the window. She left the child behind, something that officers of the state security did not take into consideration. In her memoir she tried to justify her behaviour. They would take her son away in either case, she thought, so she chose to evade the interrogation and the concomitant torture that could cause her to divulge important information. During the interrogations after her arrest 1953, she found out that her 6 months' old son was adopted by a childless high-ranking Polish police officer. After that his all trace of him vanish.

²⁰ Halasas memoirs, see Vasyl Halasa, *Nashe zhyttia i borot'ba* [Our Life and Struggle] (Lviv: Mc, 2005).

the Ukrainian Minister of the Interior Timofii Strokach. The other examiner of the two was the famous general Zhukov.²¹

State security organs were interested in successful ‘cooperation’: Halasa was to send a fake courier to the West (it was not known there that the couple was arrested). The task of courier was to establish contacts with emigrational circles and return to the Soviet Union.²² Halasa’s wife Maria Savchyn was considered as a candidate for this ‘operation’. MGB was sure that a woman who had lost one child in the underground would not leave her second son and husband as hostages under any condition and so would return from the West to the Soviet Union. Halasa, who revealed the plans of Soviet security organs, saw Maria as his own courier to the West. He trusted her fully. He knew, she “would tell there all about them and would never come back.”²³

The plan was turned into action. Maria Savchyn left the Ukraine in 1954, having crossed the Polish and then the German borders. The first question she put to a passer-by was: “Where is the American embassy?” Indeed, she never came back until after the fall of the Soviet Union when she with her new family visited Halasa and her 46 year-old son.²⁴

Despite her ‘treacherous’ biography Savchyn did not accept the silence modus, which was usually taken on by thousands of the other insurgents, whose biographies did not fit in the linear scheme of a ‘good’ fighter. Moreover, in Savchyn’s case also a silent incomprehension on the part of the former insurgents takes place, since she had left her child. Here, first of all, there is a strong influence of a pattern of expected heroism: the woman has to be self-sacrificing, brave, but also a devoted wife and mother at the same time.²⁵

At the same time the biography of Savchyn is not a ‘typical’ example of betrayal: the suspicion and the mistrust of the diaspora and Savchyn’s social isolation abroad did not stop her from writing and finally from publishing her memoirs, because Savchyn and her husband had never been agents of the Soviet Security service, which gave her the internal legitima-

²¹ Mariia Savchyn, *Tysiachi dorog. Spogady [Thousands of Roads. Memoirs]* (Toronto/Lviv: Litopys UPA, 1995), 490. Thereafter Savchyn, *Tysiachi*.

²² Savchyn, *Tysiachi*, 202.

²³ Savchyn, *Tysiachi*.

²⁴ Marija Savchyn married again in the USA and has two children.

²⁵ In this context what is interesting is the footnote concerning rights and duties of OUN members, who were regimented during the meeting of Organization 1939: women members in the sense of position were able to carry out the aims like the man, but, concerning a natural sharing of functions, the women’s role is first of all in the educational agency. See Petro Mirchuk, *Narys istoriï OUN. 1929-1939rr [Essay of the OUN history]* (Kyiv: UVS, 2007), 452.

tion for writing. In spite of Savchyn, many other insurgents, who in various ways and for different reasons were incorporated by the Soviet power, remain silent or have published self documentations in a very selective format.

In the culture of memory this leads to a double concealment. On the one hand, the heroic presentation of the fight and the life of the majority of insurgents relating to the diaspora and lately Ukrainian historiography has not allowed for acknowledging the level of success of the Soviet agent network in counteracting these efforts. On the other hand, the Ukrainian underground opponents had no interest in revealing the mechanisms for recruitment of agents. In addition to the habitual application of physical and psychological pressure, they simultaneously extended tempting proposals for voluntary cooperation. To expedite the recruitment, MGB officers examined the details of individual biographies, skillfully exploiting personal wishes, motives, and needs.

The recognition of the use of brutal violence would mean locating the insurgents in the victim's role in a hopeless situation. In turn, the victim status would justify what they did, which, within the frame of the total condemnation, was not acceptable to the Soviet regime.

In the foreword Savchyn mentions, that her fundamental goal was to imprint the history of the underground fight, in which she was a participant, for those who followed.²⁶ This idea subordinates the whole narrative, which is focused on a specific excuse for not dying. Savchyn wrote her recollections under the condition of double isolation: on one level by the 1980s she had been separated from Ukraine and her family for more than 35 years; on another – her 'suspicious' arrival in the USA isolated Savchyn from the 'traditional' diaspora, as the majority of them came in the post-war period. This put Savchyn in a special writing frame, which influenced her memories tremendously. She constructed a lyrical monument for the insurgents who died in Ukraine and simultaneously condemned those who did not go back and remained as emigrants. In her "Thousands of Roads" Maria appeals to the men and women who had to endure hopeless circumstances and created a symbol of common identity of survival, uniting them in the desire to continue fighting until the end of their lives. Offering them such a platform of non-oppositional gender to act on, Savchyn overcomes the attributed 'norm' of behavior and refers to both sexes: "The criterion of people's (in the underground- A) value was only their contribution to the fight and disciplining of the other. If a woman justified itself [...] she did not have problems to be accepted."²⁷

²⁶ Savchyn, *Tysiachi*, 13.

²⁷ Savchyn, *Tysiachi*, 188-89.

Referring to these non-oppositional presentations of fighting for the same thing (*borotysja za odnu spravu*), Savchyn clarifies that it was always the man who had the authority to make final decisions.²⁸ In her recollections she gives many examples, whenever relations between men and women “reflect the female position in the society”.²⁹ In this context, Savchyn remembers that secretaries and stenographers (usually women) in the underground were as a rule more educated than the average male insurgent.³⁰ This led to tensions between the bunker occupants. Moreover, every woman’s mention or connotation of education level was perceived as a self-exaltation.³¹ Savchyn, being the wife of a high-grade commander, often ran into the reaction that her ideas were looked at as merely an opinion of her husband, not perceiving her as an independent “thinker”.³² Also in describing many female fates in a way displaying their characteristic features, Savchyn provides the majority of those with a common line – as accompanists of their men, who had understood and accepted the national priorities of husbands and sacrifice of their own life and safety of their families for a “common concern” (*spilna sprava*).

Savchyn’s attempts to demonstrate the character differences makes her memories alive and exciting, which could be an explanation for the subsequent popularity of her recollections. In spite of a mosaic and multi-faced representation of insurgents, she and many others memoirists were blinded to or only indicated the ‘unpleasant’ aspects of the history of the Ukrainian nationalistic underground, where the violent routines and the carrying out of massive terror acts belonged to pre- and post-war periods. In the establishment of ‘lyric monuments’ it would be hard to doubt a large period of her own life and the lives of the comrades. Admitting the violent policy, the insurgents would have offered to those who performed Soviet administration as well as citizens aggrieved by their actions a victim role, at the same time losing the position of devoted heroic fighters and giving themselves a status of nationalistic deviants.

²⁸ Savchyn, *Tysiachi*, 189

²⁹ Savchyn, *Tysiachi*.

³⁰ Savchyn, *Tysiachi*.

³¹ Savchyn, *Tysiachi*, 188.

³² Savchyn, *Tysiachi*, 168.

UPA-Insurgents: Role models

At the very outset of terror acts against Polish landowners and politicians by the OUN, the violence was perceived as acceptable, legitimate, and appropriate and was taken positively by a significant part of the younger generation within West Ukraine. Thereby, the ideology appeared as the most important and “exploitative” factor for the executed violence, which happened from the beginning of the foundation of the OUN predecessor - Ukrainian Military Organization (UVO).³³

The work of Dmytro Doncov, one of the best known and at the same time most controversial Ukrainian society theorists, was regarded as a theoretical basis for radical Ukrainian forces.³⁴ However, his basic work “Nationalism” from 1926, where he valued the nation higher compared to individuality, representing it as the uppermost legitimate authority, raised great resonance in the radically minded milieu.

According to Doncov, the most important task for the Ukrainian nation would be the achievement of unity and independence, what is unreachable without the establishment of an authoritarian regime and a leading caste. The ideologist justified all means for achieving this goal and insisted on war against everyone who appears to be in the way and saw Russia as the main enemy of the Ukrainian nation. To defeat this powerful opponent, Doncov offered the concept of immorality (*Amoralnist*): If necessary, unite forces with every one of Russia’s opponents. Despite the fact that Doncov never became a member of the OUN and his work was not appreciated by the side of the nationalists over the course of the war, his ideas served for developing the postulates of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists.

Doncov did not examine the ‘female question’ in his doctrine, but nevertheless beginning from 1920s numerous women were involved in terrorist acts against Polish and Ukrainian politicians and public people. Because of their relatively unnoticed movement in the town, their ‘invisibility’ as a ‘safe person’, female prospective participants were included without reservations or preconditions in the terror acts. They maintained mainly the communication lines or participated in activities related to espionage, sabotage, and terroristic acts. Female members of the OUN observed the

³³ UVO – was founded as a secret military organization in 1920 in Prague. Due to its conspiratorial nature, the UVO was an organization with a limited number of members engaging in carefully staged acts of terror. Gradually its influence spread beyond the exile. UVO’s main undertakings now consisted in armed attacks on functionaries of the Polish state and Polish settlers. In 1929 members of the UVO and representatives of Ukrainian student organization in exile created the OUN.

³⁴ Dmytro Doncov, *Nacionalism [Nationalism]* (London/Toronto: Ukraiinska vydavnycha spilka, 1966).

‘objects’, got acquainted with their habits and regular daily routines, started selective friendships with ‘useful’ people, hid weapons before and after the attempt, helped assassins to disappear, and laid bombs.³⁵ These participants in terror attempts became media stars, who had their names and stories on every front page and at the same time – they were a symbolic pattern for thousands of young radically-minded Ukrainians; their uncompromising behavior, as for example the refusal to answer in Polish or calls in the courtroom “Slava Ukraini” (“Honor to Ukraine”), their personal willingness to take risks made them national heroines in the eyes of young people.

The women, whose participation was legitimized above all by the general national appeal, appeared often in the press reports and propaganda works of the OUN as patriots who proved true to the ideological principles and not only tolerated the exercise of violence, but practiced it themselves.

OUN reached the peak of its popularity in the mid-1930s, owing primarily to the spread of its youth cells within educational institutions in western Ukraine. Of all social strata, youth responded by far the most enthusiastically to the ideologies of Ukrainian nationalism. Practically every school had its own loose OUN network, which enjoyed a good deal of prestige among the students. Those women who participated in the development of that network later occupied mid-level positions in the Insurgent Army, especially in the medical or supply divisions, which sometimes enabled their rise to leadership positions in the OUN hierarchy. The biographies of such women are quite similar. The majority came from the milieu of Ukrainian intelligentsia and acquired a good general education and political experience through their early participation in the OUN youth groups.³⁶

³⁵ See Lucyna Kulińska, *Działalność terrorystyczna i sabotażowa nacjonalistycznych organizacji ukraińskich w Polsce w latach 1922-1939* [Terroristic and Sabotage Activity of Ukrainian Nationalistic Organisations in Poland 1922-1939] (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2009). Olena Petrenko, ‘Makellose HeldInnen des Terrors. Die “Organisation der Ukrainischen Nationalisten” im Spannungsfeld zwischen Heroisierung und Diffamierung’ [‘Irreproachable Heroes of Terror: The “Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists” between contradictory contexts of glorification and defamation’], in Christine Hikel and Sylvia Schraut, eds., *Terrorismus / Geschlecht / Erinnerung. Tradierung und Transformation von Geschlechterbildern in Terrorismusdebatten (19.-21. Jahrhundert)* [Terrorism / Gender / Memory. Transmission and Transformation of the Gender Roles in the Terrorism Debate] (19.-21th Century)] (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2012, in print).

³⁶ Into this pattern fit, for instance, trustees of Roman Shukhevych, Commander of the UPA, today among the best had known female activists of the underground. See Lesia Onyshko, ‘Zviazkovi Romana Shukhevycha u 1945-1947 rokakh’ [‘Messengers of Roman Shukhevych 1945-1947’], in *Nacionalni rukhy oporu v Shkhidii I Centralnii Evropi kincia 1930- seredyni 1950 rokiv. Materialy Mizhnarodnoi naukovo-teoretychnoi konferencii* [National Resistance Movements in the Eastern and Central Europe at the End of 1930s-

The engagement of women in this first wave was characterized by a certain overriding priority of the national goals over the interests of gender and is marked with conscious sacrifice for the political goals. In a sense, the motivation for women's participation in the Ukrainian nationalist movement of this period most closely resembles that told in contemporary public memory.

Being adjusted to a strict juxtaposition enemy vs. friend, they were prepared for an uncompromised fight, the integral part of which was violence based on the ideological doctrine of the OUN.

Female participation at the UPA and Security Service of OUN(b)

The second wave of women in the underground movement arrived after the outbreak of the Second World War and the creation of a military wing of OUN: the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. During the 1930s the OUN recruited the bulk of its cadres from the ranks of young radicals, particularly students at Ukrainian educational institutions. Following the creation in 1942 of the UPA, whose units operated in the woods far away from the cities; there rose problems with food supply and communication between individual military units. To assuage the situation, the Nationalists strove to bring into the ranks of the OUN-UPA (primarily UPA) women sympathizers from the neighboring villages. The overwhelming majority of women within the Ukrainian underground were deployed in the insurgent's medical services. From the very beginning women in this traditionally female field were recognized as 'ancillary fighters' and their achievements and presence were celebrated as such. Over the course of the war, the Red Cross increasingly became the one possibility for women to remain within the underground. Within its framework, they improvised field hospitals, gathered and prepared medicine, and organized courses. The Red Cross division employed almost exclusively women, who were under the command of other women.³⁷ Commanders preferred the services of nurses and orderlies who

1950s. *Materials of International Scientific-Theoretical Conference*] (Kyiv: KMPU im. B.D. Grinchenka, 2005), 112-17; Olena Petrenko, 'Zwischenpositionen. Frauen im ukrainischen bewaffneten Untergrund der 1940er und 1950er Jahre' ['In-Between. Women in the Ukrainian armed underground of the 1940s-1950s'], in Klaus Latzel, Franka Maubach, and Silke Satjukow, eds., *Soldatinnen. Gewalt und Geschlecht im Krieg vom Mittelalter bis heute* [Female soldiers. Violence and Gender in the War from Middle Age until Today] (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2011), 257-78.

³⁷ Kateryna Zarycka, the chief of the insurgents' Red Cross, today is a symbol of the female involvement in the Ukrainian underground. In 1934 she was arrested in connection with the OUN assassination of Poland's Minister of Interior Pieracki. Sentenced to eight

had legal jobs in nearby villages. The latter spent most of their time at home, going to the forest only when necessary.

As UPA's situation worsened during the final stages of WWII, ever fewer women were to be found as permanent members of the resistance army. The increasingly difficult circumstances the underground had to offer to children or the restrictions insurgent fighters imposed on their wives' actions essentially stanching the flow of married women into the forest.³⁸ Increasingly, the UPA recruited women residing in western Ukrainian villages to fulfill auxiliary functions as part-time suppliers or messengers for the military groups. The duties UPA commanders assigned them remained loosely defined and thus very flexible. Above everything, it was the legal status and the 'inconspicuousness' of those women that proved of greatest usefulness to the insurgents. Thanks to the socially prescribed everyday errands women traditionally had to run, they also enjoyed a great deal of mobility. That quality made women particularly suitable for another function: communications. Messengers became the most important carriers of knowledge about the lines of communication and the possible hiding places not only of their commanders but also of numerous other messengers.

In generally the tasks of women insurgents and sympathizers of the movement were initially limited to the traditionally female domains, such as medical care and communications. But as the conditions of fighting worsened, the fields of participation expanded, especially around 1944-45.

In 1944 the Red Army crossed the Ukrainian border and could no longer be stopped. The victory of the Soviet Union stood right before them. The Ukrainian Insurgent Army, which during the war years had only rarely been involved in armed conflicts with German forces,³⁹ prepared for the inevitable struggle against the Soviets. With the final victory over Germany, the Ukrainian rebels became the main enemy of the Soviet regime and the Soviet Security Service focused their attention on them. Under such conditions, Ukrainian insurgents adopted a strategy of a 'deep underground', which became known as 'the bunker war'. Under these circumstances of secretive ways, numerous arrests and human losses, the opera-

years of imprisonment, she was set free in 1939, a benefactor of the political regime change. In 1940 Zarycka who was already pregnant, was arrested again – this time by the NKVD. In prison she gave birth to a son. Following the outbreak of the Soviet-German war, she managed to escape from prison. In 1947 she was arrested for the third time and was sentenced to 25 years in the camps.

³⁸ As a rule wives of high rank members of the underground went in hiding.

³⁹ More see Anatolii Kentii, *Ukrainska Povstanska Armia v 1942-1943 rokakh* [Ukrainian Insurgent Army 1942-1943] (Kyiv: NAN Ukrainy, 1999).

tions of the insurgents and especially the roles of female participants quickly changed.

These often changing, unclearly defined functions were linked to the intensification of Soviet security force operations against Ukrainian nationalists after the war and the associated growth of casualties. Whereas in the early 1940s, when the UPA was first created, the majority of women in the underground were involved in medical work or performed auxiliary functions, after the arrival of the Red Army in the western regions of Ukraine (when insurgents flocked to the forests), women could be spotted even in such male-dominated roles as the security service.

The Security Service (SB) of the OUN(b) was created in 1939 and at the beginning had the task of protecting OUN-Members, control of conspiracy rules, organize sabotages, and participate in the conflict between OUN(m) and OUN(b). In 1941 Mykola Arsenich was appointed to the position of the head of the Security Service, and fulfilled it till his death in 1947. Especially the years under his supervision made the history and agency of the SB contested today. Since the end of the war the central task of the Ukrainian Security Service was in the identification and 'neutralization' of Soviet agents who penetrated structures of the underground. The mass purges and the ruthless terror of the SB became a constant part of insurgents' everyday life. Activities, structure, and functions of the SB were all taboo topics for years. Owing to the scarcity of sources and the politicization of the history of the underground, the female participation in the security service of the OUN at the same time remains largely unexplored.

Particularly revealing in this sense is the protocol of the interrogation of the chief of the insurgent security service of the city of Lemberg, Josef Pankiv. Pankiv told his interrogators that "Mikushka" (Hrygorii Pryshliak), at the time chief of the SB-West, decided to begin mass recruitment of women for the service in the SB as a response to the Red Army march into western Ukraine and the concomitant worsening of the conditions of operation.⁴⁰ Pryshliak reportedly imagined that women would be attracting less attention. Many of them, due to their as yet unblemished past, had an opportunity to move around legally. In addition, there were hardly any men left in the security service who did not have to evade arrest. Pankiv himself planned to flee from the city when he got arrested. For this reason his sister Iuliya Pankiv was made referent (chief) of the L'viv branch of the

⁴⁰ The State Archive of the Russian Federation [hereafter abbreviated GARF], f. R-9478, op. 1, d. 135, l.193.

security service.⁴¹ She must have graduated from the agents' school in L'viv in 1942 under the guidance of "Mikushka".⁴²

The official documents of the OUN and UPA also point to the influx of women into the most important internal sector of the security service which precipitated the overall increase in the number of female members. In 1943 there were efforts to create a unified organizational structure of SB-sectors (*referaty*).⁴³ According to the order from September 1943, each sector was assigned two departments: agent/informational and police/executive. Couriers and archivists were regarded as auxiliary personnel who could be used by both departments.⁴⁴ The core of the agent/informational department consisted of three employees, one of them a woman, who also could rise to the position of chief of the department, provided she had demonstrated her "devotion and ability."⁴⁵

The appearance of women in the security service was duly noted by the Soviet punitive organs. The extent of this phenomenon was illustrated by a secret report from 1944:

"The majority of representatives of 25 chiefs of the agent/informational departments of the SB 2 [code, could be SB-West] are women. That SB attaches so much significance to women becomes understandable when one takes into consideration that already UVO [Ukrainian Military organization] and later OUN devoted a lot of attention to raising cadres of fanatical female nationalists. They were messengers, couriers, and sometimes also terrorists."⁴⁶

The atmosphere of mistrust pervading the underground was to a large degree a by-product of the numerous raids by the MGB. Soviet security agencies regarded each arrested insurgent as a potential agent who could conduct subversive work on their behalf. From the mid-1940s the MGB started to build special diversionary groups (*boiivky*) consisting of UPA

⁴¹ GARF, f. R-9478, op. 1, d. 135, l.193.

⁴² GARF, f. R-9478, op. 1, d. 135, l204.

⁴³ The Security Service Archive of Ukraine [hereafter abbreviated GDA SBU], f. 13, sp. 376, t. 49, ark. 178; ark. 265-66; Dmytro Viedenieiev and Genadii Bystruchin, "Povstans'ka rozvidka die tochno i vidvazhno..." *Dokumentalna spadschyna pidrozdiliv specialnogo pryznachennia Organisasii ukrainiiskyyh nacionalistiv ta Ukrainiskoi Povstanskoi Armii 1940-1950-ti roky* ["Insurgent intelligence works precise and courageous..." *Documental heritage of the special police service of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists and Ukrainian Insurgent Army in the 1940s-1950s*] (Kyiv: K.I.C., 2006), 232-36. Thereafter Viedenieiev and Bystruchin, *Dokumentalna*.

⁴⁴ Viedenieiev and Bystruchin, *Dokumentalna*, 232.

⁴⁵ Viedenieiev and Bystruchin, *Dokumentalna*, 232.

⁴⁶ GDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 376, t. 49, ark. 178; Viedenieiev and Bystruchin, *Dokumentalna*, 229.

activists earlier recruited to act as agents of the Soviet security apparatus. Disguised as insurgents, they were to destroy the UPA from within.⁴⁷ Recruitment of insurgents (including women) by organs of state security proved extremely successful and effective. Relying on the assistance of wide-reaching agent network and ‘timely’ tips from the informers, Soviet punitive organs managed to arrest or kill a number of the key figures of the underground.

The SB took the law into their own hands and sentenced the insurgents and civil population who did not fit into certain behavior rules. This applied, for instance, to women who lived legally in the villages and allowed the soldiers of Red Army to stay in their houses.

In this respect, one appeal addressed in verse form to the women and girls from the village of Novosilki (in the Zolochiv region near L’viv) in 1943 sounds illustrative. The doggerel verse warns women to avoid relationships with *moskali* (Moscovites) and urges them to think of their “sons and men, who die of hunger in Siberia.”⁴⁸ The heroism of the deported Ukrainians is contrasted with the morally slack behavior of village women.

The poem warns that “those women, who don’t love their men/ or respect their country/ are traitresses. [...] The righteous women and girls who respect her country can live [...] Death to those who traffic with the Red Army Soldiers.”⁴⁹

Having the image of “righteous” insurgents and “those, who respect the country” they regarded it as inconceivable to be arrested alive. Not to fall into the hands of the enemy was considered the duty of every insurgent. In this context, unwillingness to commit suicide was interpreted as treason. This attitude was particularly acute in the post-war times, when bunkers became one of the most important hide places. Trying to limit damage to the movement, resistance fighters were ordered to commit suicide in a desperate measure to avoid arrest.⁵⁰

Insurgents discovered in hiding places rarely surrendered without resistance or allowed themselves to be taken alive. Usually the commander shot

⁴⁷ In mid 1945 there existed 156 such special units that encompassed 1.783 fighters. See Viedienieiev and Bystruchin, *Dokumentalna*, 289. Documents point to the participation of numerous women in such special operations. For the detailed description of the involvement of the liaison woman see “Dzvinka”, see The Central State Archive of Public Organizations of Ukraine [hereafter abbreviated TsDAHOU], f. 1, op. 27, spr. 5454, ark. 14-19.

⁴⁸ Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine [hereafter abbreviated TsDAVO], f. 3833, op.1, sp. 220, ark. 10.

⁴⁹ TsDAVO, f. 3833, op. 1, sp. 220, ark. 10.

⁵⁰ See in *Volyn’, Polissia, Podillia: UPA ta zapillia. 1944-1946. Dokumenty ta materialy, Litopys UPA* [Volyn’, Polissia, Podillia: UPA und home front. Documents and materials], Nowa seriiia, Volume 8 (Toronto/Kyiv: Litopys UPA, 2006), 419.

other insurgents, and then killed himself. Insurgents who managed to escape from a discovered bunker were usually suspected of being traitors by the SB. Arrests and cooperation with Soviet power remain one of the most problematic aspects in the collective memory and in historiography.

Conclusion

The female participation in the Ukrainian nationalistic movement from the beginning has been mythologized and purposely instrumentalized by different political sides. From the beginning the female involvement, having its peak in the early postwar period, was supported by the propaganda of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, which put the attention on national engagement in order to provoke self-sacrifice for political purposes. At the same time the Soviet power, which registered the mass mobilization of women in an underground life, tried to re-orient a 'backward' western Ukrainian woman into a progressive Soviet one. A specific fight for female resources took place in which Soviet propaganda portrayed the western Ukrainian woman as an object of instrumentalization in the hands of the OUN and the UPA. In contrast, the new Soviet Ukrainian women were characterized by the Soviet press as antipodes to "weak mothers" and wives who support their men in the 'wrong' way. They were presented as equals to their male counterparts and loyal to the Soviet power.

In the course of time, after the WWII within the diaspora, when more recollections of emigrants were published and the diaspora provided its own research actively, two narratives were created in which the woman appeared in two roles: as a victim of prisons and regimes and as a brave fighter for the nation. Thereby the female participation in the violent acts of OUN or SB OUN(b) as in general the terrorist practices against their enemies, still remained a taboo.

Regarding the above mentioned memory patterns, due to gender specific mechanisms; women were essentially associated with non-violent functions. This vision relates to traditional clichés of perpetrators and victims where the capacity to hurt is male, whereas vulnerability is female. According to these clichés there is a clear demarcation line between spatial categories such as battle field and home which stand for male protective and female protective needs respectively.

In the praxis, however, these definitions were blurred: if the tasks of women insurgents and sympathizers of the movement were initially limited to the traditionally female domains such as medical care and communications, so with unfavorable conditions of fighting, the fields of participation expanded, especially in the postwar period. A particularly revealing exam-

ple is the influx of female employees into the Ukrainian Security service, which was traditionally dominated by men.

On the one hand, a high status for several women is present in the underground of the 1920s: numerous women participated in the acts of terror of the OUN. On the other hand, the promotion of women can be explained by pragmatic reasons: the aim was to stabilize the networks between the participants of the underground. Therefore, under the conditions of the postwar period, the involvement of women seemed to be a good decision.

The female presentation still remains in the post-Soviet Ukraine where printed memoirs as well as the largest part of the modern historiography refer to these two positions, two schemes of self-description, one description of enemies and one of heroes.

What happens now is an open domination of today's canon of memory over and above self-documents and their right to exist and be published. Under these circumstances of selecting and correcting memories of ordinary unknown participants enable us to have a look behind the scheme of the traditional vision 'despotic occupant – innocent fighters for independence'.

In that way, the writing of the history of the underground and the contemporary perception of female presence in the Ukrainian nationalist underground is influenced by radical categorizations with no space for 'in between' positions.