

# Ukraine in the Second World War

Monday 10 June 2019, by [KRAWCHENKO Bohdan](#) (Date first published: 1 January 2019).

**Events in Ukraine during World War Two have come to feature greatly in analysis and commentary since the Russo-Ukraine war began in 2014. The Kremlin has revived Stalinist narratives of branding virtually any expression of Ukraine's desire for greater freedom and independence as associated with wartime fascists. Inside Ukraine ultra-right nationalists have given great prominence to war time nationalism, particularly Stepan Bandera a leader of a wing of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN).**

**Nevertheless the actual events in Ukraine (and East Europe) during World War Two are generally little known and often misunderstood even though it was here that the war lasted the longest and caused devastation on a unprecedented scale. Millions lost their lives or became slave labourers. In some areas resistance to Hitler and Stalin lasted into the early 1950's.**

**To help address this issue republished below is an article by the leading Ukrainian scholar Bohdan Krawchenko former Director of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies. Krawchenko was an activist of the collective of émigré Ukrainian socialists who published Meta and Dialoh. This article formed part of his book Social Change and National Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Ukraine (1985), it first appeared in the Ukrainian student journal Svichado London, No.4, 1985.**

Ukraine had barely begun to recover from the traumas of the 1930s when it was plunged into the cauldron of the Second World War. It was the largest Soviet republic which the Germans occupied in full, and it was held longer than parts of Russia which they were able to seize. In the course of the conflict 6.8 million people were killed, of whom 600,000 were Jews and 1.4 million were military personnel who either perished on the front or died as prisoners of war. In addition, over two million citizens of the republic were sent to Germany as "slave labour". By 1944 when the German armies were cleared from Soviet Ukrainian soil, the republic was literally in ruins. Over 700 cities and towns were destroyed - 42 per cent of all urban villages. Direct material damage amounted to 285 milliard rubles (in 1941 prices) or over 40 per cent of the USSR's losses. But the real costs of the war to the Ukrainian republic (damage, war effort, goods requisitioned by Germans, etc) are estimated at an astronomical one trillion two hundred milliard rubles (in 1941 prices).

The Second World War, reported Edgar Snow during his travels in Ukraine in 1945 "which some are apt to dismiss as "the Russian glory," has, in all truth and, in many costly ways, been first of all a Ukrainian war. No single European country suffered deeper wounds to its cities, its industries, its farmlands and its humanity." Despite the awesome burden shouldered by Ukraine during the Second World War, this period of Ukraine's history remains obscure. Here we can only summarize the most important developments in Soviet Ukraine and suggest their impact on national consciousness.

The German advance into Ukraine was rapid and spectacular. The invasion was launched on 22 June 1941 and by 29 August Kharkiv, lying on Ukraine's eastern border with Russia, was captured. The

swift defeat of Soviet troops can be understood as a natural consequence of the many weaknesses of Stalin's regime. Low morale among troops, the depletion of experienced commanders in the purges, and a military organization as bureaucratic and inflexible as its peacetime-one frustrated the Soviet effort.

The Germans encountered an army with little will. One of their soldiers reported, "Only a few small special detachments fought stubbornly. The great majority of Red soldiers was not influenced at all by a spirit of resistance." Widespread defeatism in the Red Army was partly due to prior discontent which stemmed from the population's experience of the 1930s. The bureaucratic centralisation of military decision-making in Stalin's hands also contributed to the collapse. Ignoring the pleas of Ukraine's republican leadership for more flexible manoeuvres and a regroupment of forces in order to draw up new lines of defence, he ordered haphazard, uncoordinated offensives which resulted in the encirclement and capture of entire armies. The Red army itself had suffered terrible blows to its fighting capacity during the 1936-8 purges. Almost 90 per cent of the most seasoned and experienced army divisional commanders had either been executed or died in prison camps prior to the war. Those who replaced the purged officers were unseasoned and less capable. Local authorities reduced to a state of servility by Stalin's bureaucratic system, did not exhibit the necessary independent initiative demanded of them in crisis situations and retreated instead. As a result of these factors, hordes of prisoners were captured by the Germans. As a result of this early in November 1941, the Germans held 3.6 million prisoners of war (POWs), amongst whom were an estimated 1.3 million Ukrainians.

In the face of the German advance "Stalin's strategic plan" was put into effect. This consisted of destroying all that which cannot be evacuated. Cities, factories and food supplies were blown up. Tens of thousands of prisoners in the hands of the NKVD were executed. Almost 45 per cent of all collective and state farms cattle were driven across the border to Russia. Over 50,000 factories and plants were dismantled and removed. As for people, approximately 3.5 million men, women and children moved into the interior of Russia and Central Asia. Since "pull and friends were used to get out ahead of the Germans", it was mostly the leading stratum - prominent party and state officials, the labour aristocracy and the "higher intelligentsia" - that left. Given the Nazis' extermination policies, the evacuation of people was necessary; however, Western Ukrainian observers noted that the departure of the most well-known members of the Ukrainian intelligentsia produced a leadership vacuum. The population could not help but think that it was being abandoned to face the Germans on their own. This, when combined with the widespread destruction which accompanied the Soviet retreat 'helped infuriate the population against the Soviet regime.'

The initial response of the civilian population towards the Germans has yet to be studied in a systematic way. However, it is safe to say that the image of smiling Ukrainians in national costume welcoming the German 'liberators' with the traditional bread and salt has been grossly overwrought. This stereotype was peddled, rather effectively, during the Cold War as proof that American commitment to psychological warfare directed at the Soviet population would pay huge dividends. Its source was the measured welcome that the residents of the Western regions, annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939, offered the Germans. Popular moods towards the Germans in the Soviet regions during the first days of occupation were 'considerably more complex,' according to an Einsatzgruppe (special action team) report of 9 July 1941. Judging from eye-witness accounts and interview with refugees, the vast majority of people were relieved to see the Soviets leave, but they were 'completely disorientated' by the rapid turn of events and waited for the situation to clarify itself. Most saw 'no reason to be overjoyed by the Germans' since common sense dictated that 'they have not come to Ukraine to do good.' Others, notably some former urban petite-bourgeois (small shopkeepers and the like), some intellectuals, as well as some peasants whose families had had substantial holdings before the revolution, engaged in 'watchful waiting'. Their hopes were pinned

on the expectations that "German are a cultured people" and that the events of the First World War – when Germans occupied Ukraine in 1918 and 'things were not so bad' – would be repeated. (Tragically, some Jewish artisans also shared this illusion and thought that they would be permitted to open private shops.) The announcement of a positive programme in this initial period of uncertainty and confusion would have yielded results for the Germans. Their silence, however, was not an oversight. Giving consideration to the wishes of the conquered peoples would have meant compromising Hitler's goals. Confident of victory, German propagandists were strictly forbidden to say anything about Nazi plans for the occupied territories.

The hiatus between the evacuation of Soviet authority and the entrenchment of the German administration lasted approximately two months, from July to September 1941 in most regions. In this short span of time, numerous attempts at the self-organisation of Ukrainian society (in local administration, schools, newspapers, etc.) were made. In explaining this unexpected self-activity which often manifested itself days after the departure of Soviet officials, two factors must be taken into account. The first is the role of Western Ukrainians, several thousand of whom were sent into Soviet Ukraine by their revolutionary nationalist parties. The second was the development of the national consciousness of Soviet Ukrainians during the previous two decades. Let us examine each factor in somewhat more detail.

Western Ukrainian intervention in Soviet Ukraine is intertwined with the story of the organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), founded in 1929. The OUN propagated a brand of revolutionary integral nationalism, emphasizing voluntarism, self-sacrifice, discipline and obedience to the leadership. Apart from a militant attachment to Ukrainian independence, its political and social programme was confused, with an unimaginative recast of Italian fascism coexisting within an essentially populist framework. When Hitler took power, the OUN essentially condemned Nazi ideology as imperialist, racist and anti-Christian. The Soviet-German non-aggression treaty in 1939 and the subsequent Soviet occupation of Western Ukraine, as well as Hitler's backing of Hungary's destruction of the short-lived Carpatho-Ukrainian republic, whose defence forces the OUN helped organize, reinforced OUN suspicions of German ambitions. Nonetheless, Germany was the only power opposed to the European status quo and a German-Soviet conflict seemed to be the only way out of the impasse in which Ukraine found itself. For this reason the OUN continued to bank on a new war to give them an opportunity to assert Ukrainian statehood, and it prepared for this moment.

Because of its conspiratorial nature, the OUN survived the Soviet occupation of Western Ukraine better than socialist formations and the large electoralist parties such as the Ukrainian National Democratic Union, which all collapsed. Indeed, it used the opportunity to establish contact with some Eastern Ukrainians. It should be noted that Soviet rule in Western Ukraine between 1939-41 was relatively mild by comparison to the post World War II period. The regime alienated the Western Ukrainian population without completely destroying the cadres of the nationalist movement. Moreover, the OUN had members scattered throughout Western Europe. Many lived in German-occupied Poland, having crossed the border when the Red Army entered Western Ukraine. In 1940 the OUN split – the younger, more radical elements followed S. Bandera, the rest remained A. Melnyk's adherents. Both factions started forming expeditionary groups (Pokhidni hrupy) whose task would be to follow the Germans into Ukraine and seize power. The groups were also instructed to organise anti-German resistance if this became necessary. In 1941 the OUN had close to 20,000 members, half of whom were under 21 years of age. It sent some 8,000 members into Soviet Ukraine as soon as the Germans launched their offensive. Of these, roughly 300 acted as translators with the German forces and were to facilitate the work of expeditionary groups. The rest were formed into small detachments of 10-15 and spread into all the regions of Ukraine where they served as a catalyst and filled part of the leadership vacuum.

When the expeditionary groups entered Soviet Ukraine they encountered a population on whom 'the

ear of Ukrainisation and formal existence of a Soviet Ukrainian state had left a great mark," to quote a Western Ukrainian observer. Former members of the Ukrainian Galician Army who were in Ukraine in 1918-19 and who visited the country again in 1941 noted that 'national consciousness is now incomparably greater than during the revolution.' This was also "observed to be the case in Ukraine's industrial regions whose human fabric had been transformed by the influx of Ukrainian peasants during the 1930's. In Donbass, according to a local resident, 'the need for Ukrainian statehood was taken for granted.' This national awareness served as a basis for common action between Soviet and Western Ukrainians.

The political culture of Western Ukrainians, on the other hand, differed markedly from that of their Soviet compatriots and emerged as a point of tension. Western Ukrainian nationalists ignored socio-economic and civil rights issues and viewed the attainment of national independence as a panacea, while Eastern Ukrainians regarded these questions with great concern and rejected the integral nationalist doctrine as elitist, intolerant and obscurantist. But at a time when Soviet Ukrainians had no political organisations, and the democratic and socialist parties either from Western Ukraine or those in exile in Western Europe were 'absent from the scene', 'What remained were only the nationalists.' People were prepared to work with Western Ukrainian nationalists in establishing local administration, schools, etc., not only because these institutions were essential for a minimal functioning of society, but also in order to give these institutions a national content. It was felt that embryonic self-organisation at the local level was the first step in achieving a national government. The OUN's singleness of purpose and dynamism impressed the still atomised Soviet Ukrainian population and was taken by them as a sign that the activity which was being undertaken would be tolerated by the Germans. The fact that the Wehrmacht had left a relatively free hand to the inhabitants in the first month or so reinforced this false belief.

Within a matter of weeks a local administration (with various departments such as health and education) was established at the municipal, village and occasionally at the oblast levels. These administrations (many of whom were elected) and the militias served as organs of self-government and attempted to rebuild the shattered committees. Since these organs were targeted for control by the OUN members, in many regions they became dominated by "separatist elements". Where this occurred, the OUN together with their Eastern Ukrainian sympathizers Ukrainised the administrators linguistically and transformed these organs into vehicles promoting Ukrainian national goals. The work of some administrations was marred by the factional conflict between the Bandera and Mel'nyk OUN groups, and in some instances by Eastern Ukrainians' resentment of OUN high handedness, their neglect of social welfare issues and virulent anti-Russian attitudes.

Throughout Ukraine many elemental, secondary and vocational schools were repaired and re-opened by local community efforts. Wherever possible, universities and institute renewed their activity. An all-Ukrainian Teachers' Union was founded which had as one of its principal aims the production of new textbooks. As a result of local initiatives, the school curriculum was revised in order to turn schools into agencies communicating a Ukrainian national message, stressing language, history and culture. At the start of the German occupation 115 Ukrainian language newspapers were founded. Some, such as the Kievan Ukrainske slovo (Ukrainian Word), established by the Mel'nyk faction of the OUN with a circulation of 50,000 developed a substantial readership. They carried articles outlining the case for Ukrainian independence, revelatory exposes of events during the 1930s, discussions of the works of Khvylovyi and of other cultural figures purged under Stalin, and popular accounts of Ukrainian history. At the same time, scores of theatres and choirs (with new repertoires) were founded. Peasants began to divide up collective farms on the basis of the old principle of the size of family. Roughly two months after the Soviet evacuation Zhytomyr oblast for example, had an agricultural bank with eleven branches and a cooperative with 140 branches. Trade Unions were revived. In Kryvyi Rih these unions, together with the newly established Club of Ukrainian

engineers, began to reconstruct the factories and plants as well as establish forms of self-management. A Ukrainian Red Cross undertook the operation of hospitals and clinics and provided assistance for Ukrainian POWs. Religious life developed briskly. The Ukrainian Autocephalous Church quickly took root and opened thousands of new parishes. Streets were renamed in honour of Ukrainian national heroes, and in urban centres it was noted that "more Ukrainian is being spoken since people no longer have the same fear of reprisals".

On the basis of available information it is difficult to establish the exact composition of the Soviet Ukrainians who emerged as the leadership in this initial period. The composition appears to have varied from region to region. Surviving members of the 'old intelligentsia' – those who participated in the 1917-20 revolution, individuals who had suffered repression during the Soviet period, activists of the Ukrainisation era, former state and trade union functionaries, teachers, members of the younger intelligentsia – all appear to have played an important role. Noticeably absent were the higher Soviet intelligentsia and party functionaries, many of whom had either evacuated or remained passive fearing German reprisals.

The period of national revival 'passed in a lightning'. The first concerted German campaign against Ukrainian national assertion began on 31 August 1941 in Zhytomyr, and by the end of September 1941 had engulfed all of Ukraine. The instruments used for the task were the task forces of specially selected police officials headed by SS officers from H. Himmler's trusted circles. They struck at the cadres of the nascent Ukrainian national movement at the same time as they initiated the slaughter of the Jews. First to fall victim in the attack against the Ukrainian movement were members of the expeditionary groups sent by the Bandera faction of the OUN and their Eastern Ukrainian sympathizers. In November following a mass patriotic rally in Bazar organized by the Mel'nyk faction of the OUN which demonstrated the strength of Ukrainian national sentiment and alarmed the Germans, an attack on the Mel'nyk groups and their Eastern Ukrainian co-workers was launched. By January 1942, most Ukrainian independentists, Western and Eastern Ukrainians alike, who had openly participated in the founding of local administrations, militias Prosvita societies, cooperatives, newspapers and schools had been caught in the Nazi net. These people, wrote an eye-witness 'had naively "deconspiratorialised" themselves and it was easy for the Germans now to arrest them.' A colossal number were executed in this campaign which marked the entrenchment of German administration in Ukraine.

German policy paid not the slightest attention to Ukrainian national sensitivities. The country was divided: Galicia became a district of the General Government of Poland (the Generalgouvernement); most of Odessa, parts of Vinnytsia and Mykolaiv as well as northern Bukovyna were assigned to Romania as compensation for Romania's loss of Transylvania to Hungary. The rest of Ukraine, except for the Eastern district near the front which remained under the jurisdiction of the Wehrmacht, fell under the direct control of Koch.' To emphasize the point that Ukraine does not exist it is merely a geographical concept, Koch made the small provincial town of Rivno the capital of the *Reichskommissariat*.

It should also be pointed out that when Germans used the adjective Ukrainian to describe the local administration and its officials they were referring merely to the territory of Ukraine. In fact, many officials were Russians or local ethnic Germans. This was especially the case after those with a pro-Ukrainian orientation were repressed. While many who served in the local administration did so only to survive the famine which ravaged urban centres, others did so because they were opportunists or because they were Soviet agents. The national composition of the auxiliary police (or militia) was also varied.

As Ievhen Stakhiv observed sardonically, after the Nazi's purges, all that remained of nationalists efforts to Ukrainise the Ukrainian police was the name and the fact that they continue to wear blue

and yellow stripes on their uniforms. The police, some of whom participated in the Nazi's round-up and extermination of Jews, was comprised of the worst elements of society and was detested by the population. The police also contained the strongest Communist infiltration, a development greatly assisted by the German practise of retaining the Soviet Militia [police] as a matter of convenience. If one takes into account the systematic penetration of the local administration and police by the Soviets, then the number of people who participated voluntarily in these institutions is thus considerably reduced. By the winter and spring of 1942 according to the official soviet history of Ukraine, members of the [communist] underground had infiltrated the auxiliary [local] organs, established by the occupiers. Very often these organs were in the hands of Bolshevik agents or Communists. Finally only a very few Ukrainian units were established in the German army. Their numbers have been greatly exaggerated because of the fact that after the war the Western allies described all of the *Wehrmacht's* eastern units, whatever their national origin as 'Ukrainians'.

Turning to agriculture, the striking characteristic of the agrarian order established by the Germans was that they preserved intact the entire Soviet collective and state farm system, including even work norms, price scales and administrative machinery. Attempts to dissolve collective farms were fought with the severest measures. There were, of course, a few innovations. Notable among these was the renaming of collective farms as community farms. Some in the German hierarchy such as Rosenberg and elements of the Wehrmacht argued that Ukrainians would never cooperate with the Germans until land had been distributed amongst the peasants. In Rosenberg's programme for a new agrarian order the parcelling out of land to individual peasants was to occur through a transitional arrangement called an agricultural cooperative. In this phase peasants would receive an allotment and be allowed to keep a portion of the harvest from this land. Major agricultural operations, however, would still be performed in common, under German supervision. Mass execution as punishment for voluntary or involuntary peasant assistance to partisans was commonplace. Indeed, in Ukraine 250 villages and their inhabitants were totally obliterated as part of the Nazi campaign against the resistance.

One of the consequences of the Nazi's exploitation of Ukrainian agriculture was the disastrous food supply situation in the urban centres. In December 1941 German economic administration decided to increase the delivery of foodstuffs to the Reich by eliminating superfluous eaters, namely Jews and the population of Ukrainian cities such as Kiev. The reduction of the urban population was achieved by a drastic cut in food rations, the establishment of road blocks to prevent food from entering farm markets. Some of these measures were subsequently repealed. The urban population plummeted. In the case of Kharkiv between 70,000 and 80,000 residents of Kharkiv died of famine during the German occupation.

The next aspect we wish to consider is education culture and health. The Nazi's approach towards education was quite straight forward. As Hitler explained during his 1942 visit to Ukraine, "Ukrainians should be given only the crudest kind of education necessary for communication between them and their German masters." In January 1942 it was announced that all schools above the fourth grade were to be closed. Only the occasional vocational school survived the implementation of this policy. Turning to theatre, most theatres, choirs and operas were disbanded. The best of that which did survive was reserved for Germans. Of the 115 newspapers founded in the early summer of 1941, only 40 remained by April 1942. The publishing of books, journals and magazines was not allowed. As for health, it was decided as much as possible to curtail medical services in order to check the biological power of the Ukrainians. Policies such as these were utterly incomprehensible to a population on whom the ideology of progress had left such a deep imprint and who accepted as axiomatic the development of educational, medical and social services.

Finally, we must consider the effect of Nazi racial politics. The genocide of Jews is so well-researched that it need not be discussed here. The popular revulsion produced by the Germans

atrocities, however, has not been emphasized enough. It should be noted that assisting Jews was punishable by death and that hundreds were executed for such actions. Nazi racial doctrine towards Jews were, of course, qualitatively different from those applied to *Untermenschen* such as Ukrainians. However, by any other measure, Nazi views concerning Ukrainians were extreme. The mass destruction of the Ukrainian intelligentsia the execution of hundreds of thousands of hostages the incarceration of countless others in Buchenwald, Auschwitz, Ravensbrück and other camps where Ukrainians were even denied the right to wear the letter 'U' to indicate their nationality. In daily life, in countless ways, including such seemingly petty things as stores and latrines marked for Germans only – the message of German racial superiority was driven home.

The “strong hatred” which Nazi actions provoked expressed itself in an affirmation of a Ukrainian national identity. “The German occupation increased national consciousness in Ukraine,” commented an eyewitness. “By their behaviour the Germans evoked a reaction in the form of a counter-chauvinism.” Another noted that “the idea of Ukrainian independence grew”. The national revival of the early months served as a reminder of unrealised ambitions and contributed to this “upsurge of Ukrainian patriotism”. In Transnistria as well, where the civil administration was less oppressive than in the neighbouring German-held areas, “the national consciousness of the Ukrainian population was . . . stirred by Romanian behaviour”. Nazi policies also gave rise to large-scale resistance movements (both national and Soviet) which were influenced, albeit in different ways, by this new patriotism.

From the military point of view the national resistance movement counted for something only in Western Ukraine. In Volyn, in 1941, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (*Ukrains'ka povstans'ka armiia* — UPA) was established and by 1942 it had 15 000 men under arms and controlled a liberated zone of some 50 000 square kilometres and two million people. By 1943, after the UPA had come under the control of the Bandera faction of the OUN, the UPA began to extend its operations to Galicia and by 1944 the UPA numbered approximately 40 000 people.

In Eastern Ukraine, on the other hand, apart from a few forays by the UPA and the emergence of small “independent” guerrilla detachments which were either quickly absorbed or, more often than not, destroyed by Soviet partisan formations, the resistance movement did not take the form of armed struggle. The dominant organisational mode of the Ukrainian national resistance was clandestine groups engaged in anti-Nazi and anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation. Interestingly enough, these groups were most successful in Ukraine's industrial heartland, among workers in Dnipropetrovsk, Kryvyi Rih and especially Donbass. In Donbass, for instance, members of Bandera's expeditionary groups built an OUN network which encompassed a dozen cities and whose organisational core consisted of over 500 people with some 10 000 others who could be considered “active sympathizers”, that is, those who distributed leaflets and the like. This organisation was unquestionably more significant than the Communist underground in Donbass. The ingredients which contributed to this success were varied. To begin with, having arrived in Donbass after the Germans had started purging and executing pro-Ukrainian elements in the right bank, the OUN here never attempted open work such as assuming control of local administrations. Rather, they remained underground, thus preserving their cadres as well as a resolutely anti-Nazi reputation. Another factor was the readiness of Western Ukrainian OUN members to abandon, under pressure from Eastern Ukrainian workers, the integral nationalist doctrine in favour of a programme calling for a radical democratisation of socio-economic and political life. The workers, on the other hand, embittered by their exploitation under Stalin, and whose Ukrainian identity Nazi policies had reinforced, were more than willing to support what they called, “the struggle to complete the social revolution of 1917 by giving it a concrete national form”. Thus in Donbass the OUN advanced the slogan “For a Soviet Ukraine without the dictatorship of the Communist Party.”

The rise of Ukrainian patriotism during the war was such that even Stalin was forced to concede to it

in order to harness its force. Undoubtedly for him this was merely an expedient to improve the battle-worthiness of the 4.5 million citizens of Ukraine who served in the armed forces (1941-5). Moreover, the 250 000 strong Soviet partisan force in Ukraine, of whom 60 per cent were Ukrainians, represented a major force and they too had to be permitted to communicate to the population a message somewhat more palatable than the dreary slogans which characterised Soviet propaganda hitherto. In concrete terms Stalin's concessions did not amount to much: Ukraine obtained its own ministry of foreign affairs and was eventually admitted to the United Nations; measures were taken to revive the study of Ukrainian ethnography, archaeology and history; the adjective "Ukrainian" was attached to the names of armies and fronts; the Order of Bohdan Khmelnytsky was created. Yet these concessions had an enormous symbolic significance for they legitimised the expression of Ukrainian national self-awareness. The opportunity was seized by the Ukrainian intelligentsia and party leaders and transformed into a major propaganda effort. In countless leaflets, posters, meetings and publications the historical continuity of the Ukrainian nation was affirmed and its uniqueness stressed. The struggle against Hitler was legitimised not by reference to the party, to Stalin or to any other familiar themes. Rather, the traditions of the Ukrainian liberation struggle were invoked. Ukrainians were called upon to fight Hitler in order to defend "our Ukrainian statehood", "our native culture, our native tongue", or "our national honour and pride". Important concessions to Ukrainians, it was felt, were in the offing. This mood was reinforced by a whispering campaign, initiated by the Soviet underground, to the effect that collective farms would soon be disbanded.

The Soviet Ukrainian intelligentsia and party leadership, which had been caught up in the surge of patriotism during the war, attempted to continue the momentum when the last German troops were chased out of Ukraine in the autumn of 1944. They were stopped by A. Zhdanov's crackdown on liberalisation which began in Ukraine in 1946. The focus of this campaign was the struggle against the relaxation of ideological controls during the war which had led "Ukrainian historians to publish books with a less russified version of history", "prompted Ukrainian writers to press for freedom from censorship", and allowed others to commit a host of serious "Ukrainian nationalistic errors". Donbass was singled out as requiring particularly "decisive measures" to correct shortcomings in the ideological sphere. The Soviet Ukrainian citizen could be forgiven for thinking, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.

---

## **Bohdan Krawchenko**

[Click here](#) to subscribe to our weekly newsletters in English and or French. You will receive one email every Monday containing links to all articles published in the last 7 days.

---

## **P.S.**

Ukraine Solidarity Campaign

<https://ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org/2019/01/01/ukraine-in-the-second-world-war/>