Stepan Bandera and Ukrainian Nazis

CONSTANTIN VON HOFFMEISTER

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An assassination in broad daylight — October 15, 1959, in Munich’s Maxvorstadt student district: the KGB agent was lurking in the hallway, holding a tube with a special spraying device. When Stepan Bandera, a Ukrainian nationalist and Nazi collaborator in exile in Germany, stepped into the stairwell around 1 pm, the agent blew a gaseous poison into his face. Bandera stumbled and fell. When he was found a little later, he was still alive, but the poison was already doing its work: Bandera died of the consequences of cyanide poisoning.

Nazis played a decisive role during Ukraine’s 2013/2014 “Euromaidan” coup. After that, they assumed several leadership positions in all spheres of the Ukrainian state system; their armed paramilitary formations were legalized and included in the National Guard, the police and the regular army. They were also responsible for educating children and young people, who were brainwashed for eight years in special training camps.

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In all these years, only Ukraine and the United States voted annually in the UN against a resolution condemning Nazism, which speaks volumes. Gradually, the state apparatus merged with Nazi groups; the ultra-right ideology became the state ideology, and their symbols became official state symbols. The slogan of the Nazi collaborators — “Slava Ukraini” (Glory to Ukraine) — has become an official greeting in the army, and even liberal European politicians do not hesitate to repeat it.

The “Territorial Defense” and military personnel like to show the insignia of the SS division “Totenkopf” (skull) and other Nazi imagery. Of course, not all soldiers of the army or members of the “Territorial Defense” harbor Nazi sympathies or espouse a Banderite ideology. However, they are all, to one degree or another, under the leadership and control of the extreme right-wing forces that form the backbone of the Ukrainian military.

In the years of the “frozen conflict” in Donbass, it looked as if Ukrainian Fascism had regressed to the status of a vocal minority it had traditionally held. The number of participants in the regularly organized rallies — for example, on the birthday of Stepan Bandera — steadily declined. But this is deceptive, for another aspect has received little attention, although it is politically the most alarming: it is about the normalization of Fascist ideas in Ukrainian society. Bandera is portrayed in textbooks as a national hero. The founding day of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), launched by his Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) — not by Bandera himself as he was sitting at the time in the barracks for prominent figures at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, where the Nazis had gathered potential allies from the occupied territories for future use —, on October 14, 1942, was made an official state holiday and replaced the Soviet “Defender of the Fatherland Day” on February 23. As the Cold War matured, former Ukrainian Nazi collaborators served the Western powers as anti-Soviet fighters. Bandera, for example, had been in the service of first British, then Italian, and finally US intelligence since the late 1940s.

According to Soviet reports, “large gangs operating on the territory of Rava Ruska, Ugniv, Magyrov, Nemirov, Velyka Mostivka and Yavoriv districts of the Lvov region consist of remnants of the defeated SS Galicia division, former police officers and forcibly mobilized local residents, as well as those who evaded mobilization into the Red Army. These gangs have a sufficient number of automatic weapons and ammunition and are under the command of well-trained officers, who have undergone military training in UPA field schools, and special instructors trained by the OUN in the Carpathians.” Cases of bandit attacks on trains, murder of peaceful Ukrainians for refusing to join the UPA, and murder of Soviet border guards and Polish families are cited. The reports also mention the successful actions of NKVD units guarding the rear of the 1st Ukrainian Front, with three Red Army regiments attached, in liquidating bandits: “Due to their operations from August 22 to 27, 1944, 1,549 bandits were killed, 541 were taken prisoner.”

Responsible and rationally acting leaders of Ukraine must now do what is necessary to prevent the complete destruction of their country. They have to free themselves from all foreign meddlers, who, out of pure self-interest, extol suicide as a patriotic act. Surrender to survive should be the order of the day — and the absorption into a more meaningful imperial project. Today’s situation is reminiscent of the madness in Germany in 1945, where — through the employment of a scorched-earth strategy — the last stand consisted of children and old men fighting to the last drop of blood. Ukraine’s only option seems to be to merge its destiny with a blossoming Russia rather than a decaying West.