‘A Knife in the Back of Our Revolution’:

A Reply to Alexander J. Motyl’s ‘The Ukrainian Nationalist Movement and the Jews: Theoretical Reflections on Nationalism, Fascism, Rationality, Primordialism, and History’

Marco Carynyyk

1. Fighting misrepresentation

Volume 26 of Polin, which appeared early this year, is devoted in large part to the contentious question of Ukrainian-Jewish relations. Scholars have been writing about it for a hundred years, but are still quarreling even about the broader issues.

Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern and Antony Polonsky have assembled excellent essays and written an informed introduction. The result is an admirable contribution to the attainment of the goal that they have set themselves: ‘to move beyond strongly held competing and incompatible narratives of the past and reach some consensus that will be acceptable to all people of good will and that will bring about a degree of normalization… in Ukrainian-Jewish relations’.

Although I am not qualified to review the entire volume, I feel compelled to respond to Alexander J. Motyl’s ‘The Ukrainian Nationalist Movement and the Jews’.

I like Dr. Motyl’s references to Henry Abramson’s observations about the ways in which Ukrainians and Jews have constructed competing narratives about suffering at each others’ hands. I myself have quoted Dr. Abramson and wish that he would develop his thoughts further.¹

I cannot dispute Dr. Motyl’s assertion that Ukrainian nationalists found Fascism only ‘conditionally attractive’. They lobbied London and Washington in the 1930s for support, but met no interest and only then strengthened their ties with Berlin.
I agree with Dr. Motyl when he writes that ‘Ukrainian nationalists, like all political actors, were not just dumb brutes responding to eliminationist urges’, and I understand him when he talks about primordialism, the notion that ethnic groups have fixed identities. I remember the words that the venerable Raul Hilberg allowed himself: ‘The Ukrainians have never been considered pro-Jewish (the Ukraine had been the scene of intermittent pogroms and oppressions for three hundred years)’. Why was he offering such a simplistic view, I wondered, and how could events in the 1640s foreshadow what happened in the 1940s? And I cannot forget the sting on my face when a woman whose husband I was interviewing about the pogrom in his Galician town asked, ‘What do you think about what your landsleit did?’

Yet Dr. Motyl ignores the equally powerful primordialism that shapes Ukrainian views of Jews. The nationalist discourse about Jews in the 1930s, as I have tried to show, was built on the conviction that their identity and behaviour were immutable. In 1943, when the Holocaust had claimed the lives of most Ukrainian Jews, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists announced, with astounding ignorance and lack of empathy, that ‘the Ukrainian people does not want to let itself be slaughtered without resistance in the Jewish manner’. And I can still feel the fury of the scholar who overheard me voicing questions about his associate’s attempts to show that Ukrainians were always friendly towards Jews.

Dr. Motyl argues—‘convincingly’ in the opinion of the editors—that the OUN was preoccupied with building a state and that, focusing on its Russian and Polish policies, it considered Jewish issues to be at best tertiary. Yet to those whom the OUN attacked it made no difference whether they were primary, secondary, or tertiary enemies. And a state, even an empire, free of Jews and other minorities was an important goal for the OUN.
Thus Dr. Motyl’s attempts to explain away the anti-Jewish views and actions of the nationalist movement leave me uneasy, and I am perturbed by his references to me. Fighting misrepresentation may be futile, but matters of substance are at stake.

2. ‘I... support the destruction of the Jews’

In his first reference to me Dr. Motyl brings up Yaroslav Stetsko’s zhyttyepys, or autobiography, which Karel Berkhoff and I published more than ten years ago and the authenticity and genuineness of which some diehards are still questioning. Stetsko was a prominent OUN member who declared a sovereign Ukrainian state in Lviv on 30 June 1941. In that autobiography he wrote:

> Although I consider Moscow, which in fact held Ukraine in captivity, and not Jewry, to be the main and decisive enemy, I nonetheless fully appreciate the undeniably harmful and hostile role of the Jews, who are helping Moscow to enslave Ukraine. I therefore support the destruction of the Jews and the expedience of bringing German methods of exterminating Jewry to Ukraine, barring their assimilation and the like.4

Dr. Motyl admits that there is ‘ample evidence’ that Ukrainian nationalists did not have ‘benign’ attitudes towards Jews, as he puts it, but he does not discuss any of it, and he argues that Stetsko’s autobiography may not represent his ‘truthful views’ because he composed it while the Gestapo was interrogating him.

The Gestapo had indeed taken Stetsko to Berlin in July 1941, placed him under Ehrenhaft, or honorary arrest, and proceeded to question him, but he was free to move about the city, to meet with other OUN members, and to assail German institutions with pleas to cooperate with him. And we have other documentation, in addition to his autobiography, concerning his views of Jews.
3. ‘A clique of international criminals led by Jews’

As early as 1933—when he was all of twenty-one years old, but had already attained the rank of ideological officer in the OUN homeland executive—Stetsko argued that Fascism, National Socialism, and the coming Ukrainian uprising were links in the chain of a single world revolution. Ukrainian nationalism would bring down Russia and open a new chapter in the history of Eastern Europe. ‘The tasks of Ukrainian nationalism’, he wrote, ‘begin where the tasks of Fascism and National Socialism end’.

As editor of the OUN journal Na sluzhi natsi (‘In the Service of the Nation’) in the later 1930s, Stetsko published several articles with antisemitic overtones. Using his organizational pseudonym Zynovy Karbovych—he had probably borrowed the given name from Bohdan Khmelnytsky’s middle name and the surname from karb, the word for a notch or incision—he drafted an article that he may have been preparing for the journal. Democracy, he declared, is a ‘corruption of morality, a deceit… a demoralizing system. The rule of money is absolute, and the financial bourgeoisie, Masonry, and a clique of international criminals led by Jews control governments’.

4. ‘I shall not make the slightest reference to Masonry or Jewry’

In April 1938 Stetsko prepared a circular with an enumeration of topics for an OUN journal. He did not name the periodical, but may have had Na sluzhi in mind. The subjects were referenced to a fuller list of the questions that the journal would consider.

The twentieth topic on Stetsko’s list was ‘Demoliberalism, Masonry, Jewry (ethically, ideologically, and culturally)’. A pencilled note beside the entry reads ‘Nits’. The reference was to Mykola Nitskevych, who had been born in the Volhynia in 1906 and had studied for a year at Warsaw University. In October 1927, after the police detained him for making a public speech, he escaped to Czechoslovakia, enrolled at the Ukrainian Husbandry Academy in Poděbrady, and joined the Legion of Ukrainian Nationalists, which two years later became a part of the OUN.
Carynnyk, ‘A Knife in the Back of Our Revolution’
не підляг, якраз до того ступеня, який є потрібним, щоб визначити зас- 
тривання від "буржуазії" громад.

Така деправадія моралі, такий обман – це правдиво "демократії". 
еї найбільше деморалізаторський устрій, де воєнно-папусе "грома", де урядами керує фінансова "буржуазія", масонерія і кліка 
всіх інтернаціональних злочинців з життя у проводі "лиць - ставіс 
kідця", як може бути щось більше деморалізаторським, як заявляти себе 
ворогом приватної власності, а самому бути на то це приватніцьким, 
али мільйонером? Але, як можна бути устрій, в якій думає і тільки вродо 
соє? Чи не є більш оточеним, щоб вбачити не націоналістичний устрої, 
призвати свої принципи, "партії", "позитивних", "непоколебимих", зму 
"державних" "незалежних", "творчих" "унапрямленних", "обмежувати" "д 
руйних" "тенденцій" т.д., як "обо ворога" "своїх" "принципів", а бути 
мільйонером? Той редус зоставляє розв'язати "демократичний" "генії"!

Найбільша обстава влади в "демократії"? Насі "кадастровий" і "лиці" влади, 
шоб "народ при владі", а фактично "від влади", банкира Рокфелера чи 
якогоось іншого "вороґа", "вборці" посилається "з послідніх тут" крите 
рій"? Чекайте на "боротьби" з ним "демократично" "еліту"" вихідять з 
"від влади" "народ з даним у провід", які "світ" "з одними", "з тим "елітами"? Діє тут "якийсь" "ворога", "тут якіс" "моралі"? "Де ворога, а де приятелі? Все відпові 
хас! А над усім "ріш". Як може? "Сам" "керувати" "соціалістична" "нетер 
"одинко" "з життя" "в сеційне" "інституту 
приватної власності", яка сама "на ділі найбільшим консерватором ІІ?

Поруч весіл" наші "демократи" "запитати" про "їх ідеального соціалі 
ника" п. "Воблака" "знайти" "одну розв'язку", яка на "відповідь".

В "демократії" "всі народи" "всі" "сь" "блоє" "народу", "обріх" "всі "демократи" "знайти", "обо" "одинок 
з них не "рівний" "себе" при "хлібороби", тому що "мін" "чорнороби", а "оле"
Figure 3. Page 1 of Yaroslav Stetsko’s circular, 23 April 1938.
П.С.

Обіцянка ч.ї.в.жити є загадка про те, щоб зпівпрацівники по підготовці журналу пересилалі статті, написані на тему тотожних з їх роботою, підписування моделюється на стільки, щоб при нагоді листування з підписом по можністі тільки зазначити до дому операцію земельними в якомусь виданні.

28.04.1938.

Слава Україні!

[Подпис]

[Оригінал]
On 6 May 1938 Nitskevych wrote to Stetsko that he could not follow his guidelines. The negative influences of Masonry and especially Jewry, he stated, were not an axiom, but a theorem that had to be proven. He had often argued this point with leading OUN members, and had even submitted an article to an OUN newspaper in Paris, but the editors had rejected it.

Nitskevych then admitted that he did not see in Masonry ‘a serious factor’. ‘Masonry is one of those bugbears that are used to frighten people of little faith and one of the slop-pails into which the dirt that is used to justify one’s own impotence is poured’.

Masonry was not a matter of principle for him, Nitskevych continued, but relations with Jews were important. ‘I am not a Judeophile, but at the same time refuse to be a Judeophobe, precisely because Judeophobia goes against all our interests, has a negative influence on the psychology of our people, and shuffles our cards in the international propaganda of the Ukrainian liberation cause. Ukrainian Judeophobia, like all Judeophobia, has grown out of a conviction about the extraordinary power of Jewry and about its complete solidarity, and especially about the existence of a world Jewish centre that aims to conquer the world’.

Nitskevych could not agree with this because he thought that Jews were divided into ‘countless ideological directions and political groupings’. Not a single Zionist congress had taken place without a scandal. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion were a fable meant to explain the decline of Russia.

Four years earlier the OUN leader Yevhen Konovalets had chastised one of his closest associates for marrying a Jewish woman. ‘If nationalism is waging war against mixed marriages insofar as conquerors (especially Poles and Russians) are concerned’, he had written to Mykola Stsiborsky, ‘then it cannot bypass the problem of mixed marriages with Jews, who are indisputably if not greater, then at least comparable, foes of our rebirth… Your action has greatly encumbered the organization’.8
Високоповажний Пане,

Листі Вашого в якому мені подаєте приблизну програму статті про демократизм одержав і почав працювати над нею. Але зміцнення Вислого листа таке, що я муру поки не можу відосудити досягнення програм, які мені накреслива. Люди про те, що Я Вам вже їх гадайте саме про мислення про екзистенцію. Річ у тому, що вже вплив масонерії на освіту у світі є освітлення народов не можна приймати як екстери, а навпаки як теорему, яку не треба доказувати.

Це моє думку, із датується від сьогодення і якій я давав перехід конкретних випадів в товариських дискурсах з чіткими напрямами у Полонії в Празі в окремих, окремих думках, обґрунтованих статтю, надписану в Софії до редакції Укр. Слово.

Но торкається мислення, може тільки зазначити, що мене не цікавить така форма групи, яку не ділять, як для багатьох, багатьох, перш за все Українців так і не Українців. Ніякими зовнішніми формами масонерії може ніяк не впливати. Ната і в масонії чинки поважного, які можна було попаляти за роками. Тимчасом, коли хочи зі Спілки, де вплив масонії були охідні у вільній діяльності 19 ст. - а тепер, маю данні думати, чи не від їх нелишко я впливаю. Мислення - це тільки з тих пугал, що вони мігати малої від і один з них видати було, яким відповідає власне безімов.

Вважаю потрібним рахувати тільки в дійсно існуючих фактів - а не в суміші "тілищувати", яким для мене і мислення, отже, не раз підкреслюю, що в ньому ви додатково проводяться при ознаківу однієї у спільноті, а не стосується о. Отже, я вважаю, що цей факт, який навіть в якійсь мірі навіть відноситься до спільного. Але вже в цій роботі відповідає спільнота, що вона видається як конкретна, цілеспрямовано спільнота, яку я вважаю, що вона видається як конкретна, цілеспрямовано спільнота, яку я вважаю, що вона видається як конкретна, цілеспрямовано.
Now Nitskevych reproved Stetsko. The nationalists’ use of *The Protocols* was ‘a knife in the back of our revolution’, he declared.\(^9\)

‘I have written all this’, Nitskevych concluded, ‘to make clear what I think...’

Elaborating on the question of democracy, I shall not make the slightest reference to
Masonry or Jewry… If you cannot [accept my view], please inform me so that I don’t waste time on work that will be of no use’.\textsuperscript{10}

A note at the end of the letter shows that Stetsko received it on 9 May 1938. There is no evidence of a reply. The assassination of Yevhen Konovalets by a Soviet agent in Rotterdam on 23 May threw the organization into turmoil, contributed to the split into two rival factions, and amplified the anti-Jewish discourse within the nationalist movement.

Smersh, the Soviet counter-intelligence agency, arrested Nitskevych when the Red Army occupied Bulgaria in October 1944. Charged with providing aid to the bourgeoisie and counter-revolutionary activities, he received the death sentence, but it was commuted to twenty years of hard labour. He emerged from the Gulag in 1956, settled in Lutsk, and died there in 1969.\textsuperscript{11}

5. ‘The main present-day instrument of the Jewish danger’

In May 1939, long before the Germans arrested him, Stetsko published, once again as Zynovy Karbovych, an article with the title ‘We and Jewry’. Jews, he wrote, were ‘nomads and parasites’, a nation of ‘swindlers, materialists, and egotists’, ‘devoid of heroism, and lacking an idea that could inspire them to sacrifice’. They were only interested in ‘personal profit’, found ‘pleasure in the satisfaction of the basest instincts’, and were determined ‘to corrupt the heroic culture of warrior nations’.

‘Bolshevism, which Jews are now serving in Ukraine, is the creation of the Russian Asiatic, and Ukraine’s chief enemy is Moscow, and not Jews, who are Moscow’s helpers and as such are vanquished by us in accordance with their true importance’, Stetsko declared.
Figure 7. Yaroslav Stetsko’s article ‘We and Jewry’.
The Ukrainian struggle is being waged against Moscow and Bolshevisim along the first line and against Jewry to the extent that they [sic] assist Ukraine’s enemies and strive to exploit and corrupt the Ukrainian people.

Ukrainians, Stetsko continued, were ‘the first people in Europe to understand the corrupting work of Jewry’ and had separated themselves from the Jews centuries ago, thereby retaining ‘the purity of their spirituality and culture’. ‘The main enemies’, Stetsko concluded,

are those who conquered the Ukrainian lands by force of arms and are holding them by force. These are Moscow and its satellites Poland, Romania, and Hungary. Ukraine must destroy Russia and Bolshevisim, and in doing so we will also liquidate the main present-day instrument of the Jewish danger to us and the world.12

6. ‘How much those Jewish brats have cost us!’

When the OUN split into two factions in 1940, a minority of members remained loyal to Andriy Melnyk, who had replaced Konovalets after his death, and a majority, especially those OUN members who had been working underground in western Ukraine, sided with Stepan Bandera. He had been serving a life sentence in a Polish prison and had gained his freedom when Poland fell to the German-Soviet onslaught in September 1939. The two groups retained the same name, exchanged charges, and when the German-Soviet war began, set about killing each other off. But their rhetoric regarding Jews was similar.

Mykola Stsiborsky, who had sided with Melnyk, issued a ‘white book’ on the conflict. The book was turgid and tedious, but it avoided ad hominem attacks and jibes against Jews. Stetsko, who had thrown in his fortunes with Bandera, wrote a rebuttal that was even longer and more laborious.13
Stsiborsky’s marriage to a Jewish woman had angered OUN leaders. Stetsko would later deny that he harboured ill feelings against Jews, but the accusations that he hurled against Stsiborsky show otherwise:

Until the spring of 1940 you not only did not deny, but yourself admitted that your third living wife is Jewish. Not so long ago, at a bathing resort in Italy, you introduced your wife’s three daughters to several of our acquaintances, and Mr. Onatsky said in a fit of sincerity more or less as follows: ‘Oh! If only you knew how much those Jewish brats have cost us since 1928!’ And then… you denied everything and declared that it was all a lie…

Forgive us for interfering in your family affairs, but we are doing so in order to expose you as an unprincipled person who insinuates himself into eminent and responsible positions in organized Ukrainian life. Just as the late Leader expelled you from the Leadership, so now there is no room for you at the helm of national life.14

7. Jews ‘assist the occupiers’

Another transparent text that Stetsko issued, this time under his own name, is a wordy article with the title ‘For the Content of State Life’. A reference in the undated document to ‘the chaos and ruin… that Bolshevism will leave behind’ suggests that he wrote it in the late spring of 1941.15

Primarily Ukrainians could own Ukrainian land, Stetsko wrote. Of other nationalities those who would ‘actively and loyally cooperate and fight for a Ukrainian state and [who would be] ethically and culturally similar to the Ukrainian type’ would also have this right.16

And he made two references to Jews. In the first one he stipulated that ‘the foreign press and all publishing activities, particularly Jewish ones, cannot be published in Ukrainian’.17
Figures 8 and 9. Pages 12 and 13 of Yaroslav Stetsko’s ‘For the Content of State Life’.
The second reference occurred in a section about minorities:

1. In respect to national minorities we shall not conduct an exterminatory policy [but will] ensure their cultural and economic development within the limits of the integrity of the Ukrainian State.

2. The national minorities will themselves determine the attitude of the Ukrainian State by their behaviour during the national revolution and the period of strengthening of the state. They are divided into: a. minorities of the peoples who enslave Ukraine today, b. those who are fighting against the occupiers but are indifferent or hostile to the Ukrainian State... c. assist the occupiers (for example, Jews), d. [those who are] well-disposed towards Ukrainians...
5. …nationalism allows for assimilation only of those elements whose life was and is heroic [and] whose culture is similar to the Ukrainian. The assimilated must create a type equivalent in worth to the spiritual and cultural Ukrainian type.\textsuperscript{18}

8. ‘Kill the enemies among you’

Bandera’s followers had declared that the Second Great Assembly of the OUN, which had taken place in Rome in August 1939 and had elected Melnyk as leader, contravened OUN statutes, and in April 1941 they held another assembly in Kraków. When it ended, Bandera invited three of his closest associates—Stepan Lenkavsky, Roman Shukhevych, and Yaroslav Stetsko—to work with him in preparing a master plan for the moment when Germany attacked the Soviet Union. Bandera had already recruited several confederates to draft a plan in December 1939, but much had changed since then. According to Stetsko, he and Bandera wrote the political part of the new version, Shukhevych the military part, and Lenkavsky the section on ideology and propaganda. All four then vetted each other’s work.\textsuperscript{19}

Entitled ‘The Struggle and Activities of the OUN in Wartime’, the new text ran to seventy-four closely typed pages and bristled with references to ‘aliens’ in general and to Russians, Poles, and Jews in particular. OUN veterans have mentioned the plan in their memoirs; scholars have cited it in their studies; portions have appeared in print. Yet we have still not used the document to construe what the OUN(B) was thinking and doing in the summer of 1941.\textsuperscript{20}

One section of the plan dealt with “insurrectionary units from the Red Army”:

In disarming a unit immediately divide it by nationality. Take Ukrainians in, peoples subjugated by Moscow and friendly to us if they so desire as well. Better to set them (the subjugated peoples) up as separate units. Give them (our people and our friends) all possible assistance and care…
Останнім виразом здоров’я і підвищення здоров’я терени відноситься до здоров’я та забезпечення здоров’я національних меншин.

1. У відношенні до національних меншин часто виступає екстремальна національна політика, забезпечуючи їм культурний, громадянський розвій в рамках інтеграційності Української Держави.

2. Доставу Української Держави до національних меншин.

Які визначають вони самі себе повідомлюючи у час національної революції. Я у період закінчення революції вони поділяються: в/ меншини визначаючи сьогодені Україну народів, б/ ті, що борються проти окупантів, але байуже чи неприємно відстосування до української держави на території, де не відома як, визначаючи свої ідеї, в/ спочатку окупантів /при. наш. г/ прихильник України.

3. Органічним закінченням меншин до нац.укр. осередку відчуваю ідеї, творчість, освіту всіх громадян своєї території, що вони не Україна, культура, якією вони є в один національний.

4. Национальним розглядаючи на асиміляцію героїчних елементів асимілюваного, що не продажних. Інтерпретувати, перфлеміровані, подібним розвитком, як засоби обсягових, тому є одним стосунок, культури, суперечного, фізичного, організації, що неможливо відчутна історія переносила і поглинали всіх прийнятих, від нової, героїчні елементи поєднаних приймають націоналізм, а не дезертир і зрадник.

5. Тому націоналізм допускає асиміляції тільки і тих елементів, що зміст їх шлях був і а героїчним, якіх культура з подібна української. Засвоєння не може бути значною різнорідністю духовно-культурного типу українця.
With the rest of the disarmed soldiers do as follows: Russian peasants to be disarmed and handed over as prisoners to the Germans, that is, to be liquidated. Other nationalities to be permitted to go home. Political officers and known Communists and Russians to be liquidated. The same (somewhat more harshly) with NKVD units.  

The plan foresaw the ‘cleansing of hostile elements from the field’: ‘At a time of chaos and confusion it is permissible to liquidate undesirable Polish, Russian, and Jewish activists, especially supporters of Bolshevik Russian imperialism’.  

The authors also established a policy for the treatment of minorities:

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

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

Re b. Destruction in battle, particularly those who defend the regime: deportation to their lands, principally destroy the intelligentsia, which cannot be allowed to assume any official positions, and in general make it impossible to create an intelligentsia, that is, access to schools and so forth. For example, so-called Polish peasants are to be assimilated, given the explanation, especially at this heated and fanatical time, that they are Ukrainians of the Latin rite who have been forcibly assimilated. The leaders to be destroyed. Jews to be isolated, eliminated from official positions in order to avoid sabotage, Russians and Poles all the more so. Should there be an insurmountable need to leave a Jew in the economic administration, place one of our militiamen over him and liquidate him for the slightest offense. Administrators of various branches can only be Ukrainians, never hostile aliens.

Assimilation of Jews is excluded.

The plan provided ‘general reminders’:  

Carynnyk, ‘A Knife in the Back of Our Revolution’
Our power must be terrible for its opponents. Terror for hostile aliens and our own traitors, creative freedom and the breath of new ideas from the Ukrainian who rules his own land must be sensed in every action and at every step. Involve in work all honest and patriotic Ukrainians, Ukrainian workers, by which we mean not only Ukrainian labourers, but all creative Ukrainians. No social class criteria, only national ones.

The plan included ‘security instructions’. The references to Communists, NKVD agents, and informers in them were in part allusions to Jews:

11. Collect personal data on all prominent Poles, members of underground organizations, who could try to organize an uprising at the appropriate time. Apply an offensive tactic to the extent that this is necessary and possible.

12. Compile a ‘blacklist’ of all fervent Communists, NKVD agents, secret informers, provocateurs, and other hirelings of the Communist regime. The ‘blacklist’ should above all include leaders.

13. Compile a ‘blacklist’ of all prominent Ukrainians who might try to conduct their own politics at the appropriate time, thus breaking up the unity of the Ukrainian people.

14. Compile a ‘blacklist’ of Poles according to the instructions in 11.

Anti-Jewish topoi also appeared in a section on slogans that OUN(B) activists could use to drum up support for the national revolution. Most were variations on the theme of Judeo-communism: ‘Stalinist and Jewish commissars are the arch-enemies of the people!’ ‘Workers in western Europe are afraid of the Jewish and Russian commune. They see all the lies and fraud. They know that Marxism is a Jewish invention.’

OUN(B) activists were to encourage Red Army soldiers to kill ‘Russians, Jews, NKVD agents, commissars, and everyone who wants war and death for us. They are the greatest enemies of the people’. Activists were to tell workers to defend their
workplaces: ‘Don’t allow the Red Army to destroy your factories while it is retreating. Kill the enemies among you—Jews and secret informers. Make your factories into bastions of the liberation revolution’.27

9. ‘We are establishing a militia that will help eliminate Jews’

The OUN(B) had set up three task forces or expeditionary groups in Kraków before 22 June 1941. A ‘special executive force’ headed by Stetsko had the assignment to reach Lviv and declare sovereignty. On 24 June the force arrived in the village of Mlyny. The next day Stetsko dashed off a letter to Bandera. In a village along the way a Jewish sniper had killed a German soldier and a horse, Stetsko wrote. The Germans had responded by executing two Ukrainian nationalists.

At midday that same day Jews killed a German soldier. Only Jews were arrested. Jews are deliberately causing provocations. They say that they are doomed, and so they want to destroy our people and our population. This is revenge by Jews against the population. Have them intervene with the OKW. The population is well disposed towards the Germans and is helping them.

‘Warm greetings Glory to Ukraine’ Stetsko concluded and then added a postscript:

We are establishing a militia that will help eliminate Jews and protect the population.

The dead men and the whole village welcomed the Germans with a procession, but now [the village] is bitter… Have the OKW exert influence. The militia will help them establish order.

Father Lev Sohor has already organized a militia and has a written mandate from the OUN for this, and the village has accepted this. So have them come here to meet the militia, and it will eliminate those Jews.28
The OKW was the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, or German high command. Lev Sohor was a twenty-eight-year-old parish priest. ‘They’ were probably the Kraków office of Abwehr II, the branch of the German military intelligence agency that dealt with sabotage and subversion. Bandera was in Kraków, and Stetsko wanted Abwehr II to persuade the OKW to rein in the German troops because they were shooting Ukrainians who were trying to help them.29

10. ‘Ukraine… is… hostile to international Jewry’

After the war Stetsko distanced himself from the German policies towards Jews and denied that the OUN had taken part in violence against them, but his underlying views had not changed. ‘As we travelled to Lviv’, he wrote about the advance of his task force in June 1941, ‘we encountered everywhere a spontaneous attempt by the Ukrainian community to become a self-confident and sovereign master in its own land’.

There were no attempts anywhere to seek retribution from the Polish or Jewish minorities, a part of which had participated in hostile actions against Ukrainians. Ukrainians did not carry out any pogroms, did not lynch anyone… This was never our style. The militia that was being established maintained order and did not take revenge. Nazi anti-Jewish calls did not find any response among Ukrainians.30

In an article from 1957 with the title ‘National and International Jewry’ Stetsko argued that although some Jews had performed their duty ‘to the land where they had been born and from which they lived with honour’, ‘out of opportunism and greed the greater number of Jews served the occupiers of Ukraine and helped strengthen their rule. Hence the distrust of Jews, and not racial hatred, by Ukrainians’.31

‘It would have been a mistake’, Stetsko went on, ‘to divert attention from Moscow and to accuse Jews of the crimes of communism. This was Hitler’s false and mendacious
tactic. Moscow is primarily responsible for communism as the most modern form of Russian imperialism, and only then those Jews who are helping it, and that to the extent that they are helping… Some Jews, particularly their elites, have an internationalist attitude. They long for a world empire under the aegis of international capital and a world government’ — note the echo of Stetsko’s previous remarks about Masons—‘which Masonry also supports’.32

There was more. ‘Although Ukraine does not have antisemitic elements or pogromists’, Stetsko wrote,

ideologically and spiritually it is hostile to international Jewry… The organic national idea of a Christian Ukraine with its longing for liberty, truth, and justice is opposite to the idea of international Jewry… The Ukrainian people has never opposed the Jewish minority in Ukraine and has always been ready to ensure it equal rights… but it cannot agree to being a minority in its lands… Jews will enjoy all the liberties in the Ukrainian state… if they do not try to overturn it. We have no basis or intention to limit the civic rights of Jews, but we also cannot give them special privileges. Equality for all.33

Stetsko continued denying that his faction of the OUN had been hostile to Jews in a collection of his writings:

At a time when all of Nazi propaganda and all of Hitler’s speeches were blaming Jews for the woes of the world, the Declaration [of the Ukrainian State Administration of 5 July 1941] did not contain a single anti-Jewish reference. For [the Germans] communism was a purely Jewish product and not a Russian one. By contrast, our declaration clearly and unambiguously singles out the Russian element in Bolshevism and Russian imperialism, and the official declaration of the Ukrainian State Administration neither offers a common front with the Germans against Jewry nor argues for it, and blames only Russians, not Jews,
This affirmation is significant because the Ukrainian State Administration dissociated itself in this way from the anti-Jewish campaign and the Nazi genocide of the Jewish population. What other government in… ‘the New Europe’, controlled at that time by Germany, including Italy, had the courage to take such an independent and sovereign stand in this matter as did our government when it opposed Berlin?

This is all the more important to note because I had the opportunity to see with horror our murdered prisoners in the prisons who were victims of the NKVD, in which Jews occupied second place after Russians. But political sense required that we accuse the Russians, who were the real enemy, the chief culprit in the genocide in Ukraine, and not their Jewish helpers who were serving the Russian master. Only unscrupulous pro-Bolshevik elements can accuse our government and its important support, the OUN, of carrying out pogroms against Jews. The facts and the official documents of the Ukrainian State Administration speak a different language than the one these falsifiers of history and slanderers of Ukraine are trying to show.34

11. ‘Germans carried out pogroms without the Ukrainian police’

Dr. Motyl thinks that at its Third Extraordinary Great Assembly in August 1943 the OUN(B) renounced the ‘fascist elements’ that it had borrowed and ‘began acquiring progressively more democratic and social-democratic characteristics’. Let’s look at this evolution a little more closely.

A Soviet informer within the OUN(B)—both the nationalists and the Soviets had their agents on the other side—took part in a conference in Lviv in October 1942. The OUN(B), ‘Yaroslav’ reported, had begun thinking that Germany would lose the war in the East. The Anglo-Americans or the Japanese would then attack Russia. The OUN(B) would form a ‘Ukrainian Armed Forces’. Ukrainians who refused service could be shot. With the exception of volunteers who had been thoroughly checked, non-Ukrainians could not be mobilized.35
‘Yaroslav’ also dealt in his report with internal security. As soon as the Ukrainian forces started fighting for independence, local military commands would have to resolve the question of minorities by liquidating them and enemies of the people. Russians were to be left in peace. They had identified themselves with the Ukrainian people and did not pose a threat. But Russian activists who were fighting with Ukrainians had to be listed and killed. Jews had to be taken into consideration because they had ‘great influence in England and America’ and were to be deported from Ukraine and allowed ‘to take some of their property’ with them. Poles would be expelled and permitted to take whatever they wanted of their property because ‘England and America will also protect them’. Those who refused to leave would be killed. Local military commands would list ‘the most active enemies’ and the members of anti-Ukrainian organizations, and the gendarmerie and the OUN(B) security service would kill them a day before the announcement of expulsion. Other Soviet minorities and Hungarians, Czechs, and Romanians would not be disturbed, but Armenians, who were devoted to Russia, would be treated like Jews.\[36\]

By the summer of 1943, after the Red Army had repulsed the Wehrmacht first at Stalingrad and then at Kursk, the OUN(B) was certain that the Soviet Union would defeat Germany. London and Washington, possibly with Berlin as an ally, would then declare war on Moscow. The OUN(B) wanted to be on whichever side was fighting against Moscow. It also believed that Jews were influencing the Western allies.

At its Third Extraordinary Great Assembly in August 1943 (the same assembly at which it declared that Ukrainians did not want to be slaughtered in ‘the Jewish manner’), the OUN(B) therefore proclaimed that it was opposed to both Bolshevism and National Socialism, muted its anti-Jewish rhetoric, called for an alliance of captive nations against German and Soviet imperialism, and announced a number of democratic principles. In 1939 the OUN had excluded Jews from Ukrainian citizenship.
Now the OUN(B) declared that all citizens of Ukraine, regardless of their ethnicity, would have equal rights.\textsuperscript{37}

As Roman Ilnytsky, a long-standing member of the OUN and secretary to Stetsko in July 1941, pointed out, the OUN thought in terms of two programmes, one for internal use and one for public consumption. The internal programme would be the unchanging credo of the OUN. The public programme could vary according to circumstances. The resolutions of the Great Assembly were clearly in the second category. The conviction that Jews and Poles were aliens persisted, and killings continued.\textsuperscript{38}

Three months after the assembly, the OUN issued a ‘strictly confidential’ order to collect ‘exhaustive recorded data’:

\begin{enumerate}
\item Material about anti-Ukrainian actions staged by Poles.
\item Records, instructions, circulars, letters (Polish, Bolshevik, German) that would reveal the hostile attitude of these agents to our struggle and their predatory colonial policy in Ukraine.
\item Lists that would confirm that the Germans themselves carried out anti-Jewish pogroms and liquidations without the participation or assistance of the Ukrainian police and before the executions forced the Jewish committee or the delinquents to confirm with their signatures the presence of the Ukrainian police and its involvement in the actions.
\item Material that would visibly confirm the initiation and participation by Poles in anti-Jewish pogroms and also their servile intelligence work for the Germans in the fight against Ukrainians.\textsuperscript{39}
\end{enumerate}

That, I suggest, is the beginning of the denial of involvement in the killing of Jews and Poles that the OUN and its supporters perpetuate to this day.
9. Турция указывать на угрозу со стороны Москвы и потерю влияния на Черное море, Наладить там покупку оружия и амуниции и через нее связаться с Средиземным морем.

ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ ВНУТРЕННЕЙ БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ

Главная военная команда требует от краевых военных команд:

С началом военных действий за "самостоятельность" ликвидировать за всякую цену вопрос национальных меньшинств, чтобы этот вопрос ликвидировать - нужно нацменов - врагов народа - уничтожить.

1. Русских нацменов вообще нужно оставить в покое, потому что они на Украине сжились с народом и не представляют никакой угрозы. Они вместе с украинским народом в главном образе крестьяне/переживают все политические события. Русских же активистов, борющихся против украинцев, необходимо уничтожать, предварительно взяв их всех на учет, главным образом в маленьких городах, т.к. они являются врагами украинцев.

2. Евреев не следует уничтожать, но выселить их с Украины, дав им возможность кое-что вывезти из имущества. Считаться с ними нужно, потому что они имеют большое влияние в Англии и Америке.

3. Польских везде выселить, дав им возможность взят свою жизнь, что они хотят, как их также будут защищать Англия и Америка. Тех же, которые не захотят выезжать - уничтожать. Активнейших врагов и среди них всех членов против украинских организаций уничтожить в день перед объявлением мобильизации. На убеж они будут взят при благоовременно и уездными военными командами. Уничтожением будет заниматься

Figure 14. Page 17 of a report by 'Yaroslav' on an OUN(B) conference in October 1942.
12. Four final thoughts

I was once called a ‘Ukrainian apologist’. Now Dr. Motyl has labelled me as a ‘radical critic’ of the OUN who ‘has produced the equivalent of a “blacklist” consisting of scholars with different degrees of presumed guilt’. He also implies that I intended my list to end debate. That ‘blacklist’ was nothing of the sort. It was an attempt, no doubt incomplete, to suggest further readings and encourage more discussion.

So I put forward four propositions.

By arguing that the involvement of the OUN in the Holocaust was minimal Dr. Motyl is absolving it of its participation in the killing of Jews. When he affirms that the OUN saw Jews as ‘secondary’ or even ‘tertiary’ enemies, he forgets that to those who suffered at the hands of the nationalist hotheads—one young man confessed to Metropolitan Sheptytsky that he had killed seventy-five people in one night; this probably occurred in early July 1941, and the victims were likely Jews—it made no difference into which category they had fallen. Does not the simple fact that nationalists treated them as enemies suffice?

When Dr. Motyl writes about what led the OUN to try to cooperate with the Germans, he fails to make one essential point. The nationalists differed with Berlin—their goal was an independent state and even an empire, in which Germany had no interest—but some of them, whether they were ‘situational’ or ‘eliminationist’ antisemites, were willing to kill or expel Jews.

Dr. Motyl claims that the OUN began to adopt a more democratic position in 1943. Whatever the declared programme, local leaders issued orders to cover up earlier killings of Jews and Poles and continued calling for murder.

And although he comes close to admitting that the OUN planned to carry out ethnic cleansing, Dr. Motyl still clings to the stereotypes that Yaroslav Stetsko circulated and the revisionism that the OUN began to practice in 1943.
I am grateful to Ray Brandon for his thoughtful reading of several drafts of this reply.


6 The OUN journal: Yu. Cherchenko, ‘Yevhen Konovalets’ pro pidhotovku Druhoho konhresu OUN’, Ukrayins’kyi vyzvol’nyi rukh 18 (2013), 18, says that at least three issues were published. I have found only an issue dated 1938, which appears to be the second. Z. Karbovych, ‘Na shlyakhu rostu natsiyi’, Konovaletz Evhen/Box 307, Folder 15/8, p. 2, Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre Archives, Winnipeg (hereafter UCECA). I owe my discovery of several documents at the UCECA to O. T. Martynowych, ‘Sympathy for the Devil: The Attitude of Ukrainian War Veterans in Canada to Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1933–1939’, in Re-Imagining Ukrainian Canadians: History, Politics, and Identity, eds. R. L. Hinther and J. Mochoruk (Toronto, 2010), [173]–220.

7 Z. Karbovych, ‘Zainteresovanym po sprawakh zhurnalu, Obizhnyk ch: 3’, 23 Apr. 1938, Konovaletz Evhen/Box 307, Folder 15, UCECA. I have not found that longer list.

8 Carynnyk, ““Foes of our rebirth””, 325–6.

9 Various Ukrainian translations of The Protocols circulated in the 1930s and later. Nitskevych’s comment offers scholars a new line of research: was the OUN responsible for any of these editions?

10 M. Nitskevych, Letter to Yaroslav Stetsko, 6 May 1938, Konovaletz Evhen/Box 307, Folder 18/10, UCECA.


The publication is unsigned and undated. Lyubomyr Vynar, ‘Oleh Kandyba–Ol’zhych u lystuvanni Levashankov’s’koho’, Problemy istoriiy i Ukrainy 16 (2007): 156, writes that the author was ‘probably’ Stetsko. Mention of a conversation that took place on 16 February 1941 (3: 23) indicates that the broadside was written after that date, and the statement ‘before the United States has joined the war’ (3: 19) suggests that it was written between June and December 1941.


Stetsko, ‘Za zmist derzhavnoho zhyttia,’ 13/372/t. 12, 7/232, HDASBU.

Stetsko, ‘Za zmist derzhavnoho zhyttia,’ 13/372/t. 12, 7/225, 227–8, HDASBU.

Stetsko, ‘Za zmist derzhavnoho zhyttia,’ 13/372/t. 12, 7/260, HDASBU.

Stetsko, ‘Za zmist derzhavnoho zhyttia,’ 13/372/t. 12, 7/262–3, HDASBU.


21 3833/2/1/31, TsDAVOVU.
22 3833/2/1/32, TsDAVOVU.
23 3833/2/1/38, TsDAVOVU.
24 3833/2/1/39, TsDAVOVU.
25 3833/2/1/58, TsDAVOVU.
26 3833/2/1/77, TsDAVOVU.
27 3833/2/1/77, TsDAVOVU. To ensure that these instructions reached OUN(B) propagandists the section was printed on bible paper: Orhanizatsiya ukrayins’kykh natsionalistiv, ‘Borot’ba i diyal’nist’ OUN pidchas viyny: Propahandyvni vkazivky na peredvoyennyi chas, na chas viyny i revoliutsiyi ta na pochatkovi dni derzhavnogo budivnytstva’, 299/307-s/ and 299/543-s, Lvivska naukova biblioteka im. V. Stefanyka, Lviv.
28 ‘Karb’ [Yaroslav Stetsko], Letter to ‘Stepan’ [Bandera], 25 June 1941, 3833/1/12/10, Tsentral’nyi derzhavnii arkhiv vyshchikh orhaniv vlady Ukrayiny (hereafter TsDAVOVU); rpt. in O. Dzyuban, ed., Ukrayins’ke derzhavotvorennia: Zbirnyk dokumentiv i materialiv (Lviv, 2001), 77–8. The archival text is a typewritten copy, probably prepared by the OUN(B) in Lviv in July 1941. Dzyuban fills in two ellipses without explaining his source and changes spelling.
29 I owe the explanation of Stetsko’s request that ‘they’ intervene to Ray Brandon, e-mail message, 1 March 2014.
30 Stetsko, 30 chervnya 1941, 177.
32 Ibid., 488.
33 Ibid.
34 Stetsko, 30 chervnya 1941, 239–40. The declaration is a letter in German from Stetsko to Adolf Hitler informing him of the renewal of an ‘Independent United Ukrainian State’ and the formation of a ‘Ukrainian national government’ and wishing him and his ‘heroic army’ success in the war. 3833/3/7/28-9, TsDAVOVU, copy at 4620/3/378/22–3, TsDAVOVU; translated in Veselova et al., comps., OUN v 1941 rotsi, pt. 1, 282–3.
Ibid., 37-8.


‘Nakaz Ch. 2/43. Povitovym i rayonovym do vykonannya’, 27 Oct. 1943, 3833/1/43/9, TsDAVOVU.

Dr. Frédéric, ‘Memorandum’, 19 Sept. 1943, CXLVа-60, Centre de documentation juive contemporaine, Paris. ‘Frédéric’ was the French historian René Martel, who went to Lviv for the German Foreign Ministry in August 1943 to talk with Sheptytsky and other prominent Ukrainians.