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# Peasants into Perpetrators: The OUN-UPA and the Ethnic Cleansing of Volhynia, 1943–1944

Jared McBride

On a September afternoon in 1943, Artem Bubela, a former auxiliary policeman from the village of Krymne in the north-west region of Volyn' oblast in Ukraine, was walking along the outskirts of the village when he encountered an acquaintance, another Krymne resident, Vasilii Sikorskii.<sup>1</sup> Some thirty years later, Bubela recounted this meeting to Soviet prosecutors:

On the outskirts of Krymne I saw . . . Vasilii Sikorskii, who had served in a [Ukrainian Insurgent Army] (*Ukrainska Povstanska Armiia*, UPA) band. He was dressed in a new suit and new coat. He was carrying two big suitcases and was armed with a rifle. I said hello and asked him what he was carrying. He said he was returning from the forest, and he was carrying stolen goods from the Polish population. He then told me that the *bandity* [bandits, UPA], along with him and other residents of Krymne, had destroyed a number of Polish villages. He told me the UPA *bandity* had encircled the Polish villages, stabbed and shot the population, and then set their homes on fire. The Krymne residents who had been told to appear in the woods with saws and axes helped the bandits rob the population and steal their livestock. He then told me that UPA *bandity* killed the entire population: small children, the elderly, men and women.<sup>2</sup>

While Bubela's account provides an overview of his conversation with Sikorskii, it is stripped of emotional content. How did Bubela react to Sikorskii's news of mass murder? Did he disapprove of Sikorskii's actions? Did he congratulate Sikorskii on his good luck? Or was Bubela disappointed that he missed out on the spoils? Bubela had escaped his police service and refused to join the UPA months prior. However, the UPA had recruited Bubela again for this operation, and this time he alleged that he hurt his leg and could not participate. To the Soviet prosecutors, Bubela explained that he was scared of the *banderivtsy* (slang for the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, Stepan Bandera-wing [OUN-B] and UPA) and wanted nothing to do with them.<sup>3</sup>

Anyone familiar with these men's biographies might wonder if Bubela

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1. Ukrainians whose names have been Russified in archival documents are left in the form in which I found them.

2. Haluzevyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Sluzhby Bezpeky Ukrainy (HDA SBU), spr.67454, tom 4, ark.188.

3. Despite great efforts by the KGB to place Bubela at the crime scene, no incriminating evidence was found.

and Sikorskii had, during this encounter, spoken of their violent pasts. Sikorskii had not served in any police forces, and this operation was perhaps his introduction to participation in mass violence. In it, not only did Sikorskii witness the brutal murder of one thousand people, but he had hacked at least two Polish people to death with his own household ax. Sikorskii surely would have known Bubela was no stranger to such violence given that Bubela had served in the Krymne police for two years before his escape. In a small village like Krymne, everyone knew one another. Sikorskii would have known that Bubela was among the Ukrainian police who accompanied the Krymne Jewish population on their journey from the town center to their deaths outside of Krymne in September 1942—not far from where the two men met.<sup>4</sup>

This fall 1943 meeting of the policeman and the perpetrator in Krymne, a forgotten Ukrainian hamlet on the border with Belarus, spoke in many ways to the local violence that engulfed this region during the Nazi occupation of 1941 to 1944. Before the war, these two peasants had never left this *raion*. In the span of two and a half years, they had participated in the murder of over 2,000 people, the majority of whom were once their neighbors. In the fall of 1943, when these two men met on the outskirts of their village, the occupation was 28 months old. There were virtually no Jews left in Volhynia, and now the Poles' days were numbered, too.

This article discusses the ethnic cleansing campaign against Volhynian Poles in which Sikorskii participated. Importantly, I refer to this case specifically as one of “ethnic cleansing” first, because that is the definition that its organizers used, and second, because of scholarly consensus that this was a case of ethnic cleansing as opposed to genocide (notably, scholarly consensus of what constitutes genocide is much less clear).<sup>5</sup> For example, one OUN-UPA leader, Mykola Lebed, declared that the organization's intention was to “cleanse the entire revolutionary territory of the Polish population.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in its use of the term “cleansing,” the OUN-UPA leadership, including Lebed, referred specifically to the use of mass violence, including killing but also forced ex-

4. Bubela's daughter claimed he was not at the mass shooting of Jews, but was “at home sick”—a common excuse used by local policemen during criminal investigations. Interview with Ekaterina Gul' conducted by the author, Krymne, Ukraine, November 26, 2011.

5. Among the works using this term for the events in Volhynia of 1943–1944, see in particular the work of Timothy Snyder, who uses “ethnic cleansing” for “violent policies aiming to clear territories of national enemies, though not to kill every man, woman and child.” Timothy Snyder, “The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing 1943,” *Past & Present*, 179, no. 1 (May 2003), 197. Similarly, Norman Naimark, in *Fires of Hatred* describes the “intention of ethnic cleansing” as to “remove a people and often all traces of them from a concrete territory.” Norman Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Harvard, 2001), 3. For a brief review of the academic debate over the term “genocide,” see Scott Straus, “Contested Meanings and Conflicting Imperatives: A Conceptual Analysis of Genocide,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 3, no.3 (November 2001), 349–75.

6. Petro Balei, *Fronda Stepana Bandery v OUN 1940 roku: Prychyny i naslidky* (Kyiv, 1996), 141.

pulsion, to ensure that there would be no Poles left in Volhynia by the end of German occupation.<sup>7</sup> Thus, whether Poles left on their own accord as a result of nationalist violence or they died at the hands of the OUN-UPA, the goal remained the same for Ukrainian nationalists: to create a “nationally pure space” in western Ukraine through cleansing policies.<sup>8</sup> This, as many scholars on the subject have noted, distinguishes the case from one of genocide as the OUN-UPA did not intend to kill every Pole as a goal in and of itself—they only wanted to cleanse the territory of them.

Ethnic cleansing led by the OUN-UPA resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of Volhynian Poles in 1943 and forced thousands of others to flee Volhynia. The subject is well-traversed in Ukrainian and Polish historiographies, and still carries potent political currency in relations between Poland and Ukraine partly due to its importance to the Polish *Kresy* community (Poles from Second Republic of Poland’s eastern territories who now live in Poland).<sup>9</sup> Yet despite being one of the most violent ethnic cleansing episodes in 20th-century Europe, the Diaspora-dominated Ukrainian academic community in North America has overlooked this history in English-language literature, while others who write more generally about violence in twentieth century Europe have not attended to the episode in detail.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, in some academic circles in Ukraine and North America, there is still debate as to whether there was a campaign to cleanse Poles from the region at all. The research presented here, however—along with work done by others such as

7. The verb for cleanse in Ukrainian, *chystyty*, and the noun *chytska*, were used by the OUN-UPA leadership as euphemisms for murder and violent expulsion. Other terminology used by the leadership during the ethnic cleansing campaign, such as liquidate, exterminate, and destroy is discussed in more detail below. For an example of forced expulsion see Tsentral’nyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Hromads’kykh Ob’iednan’ [TsDAHOU], f.1, op.23, spr.927, ark.11.

8. Snyder, “Causes,” 197.

9. On the debates, Agnieszka Pasieka, “Re-enacting Ethnic Cleansing: People’s History and Elitist Nationalism in Contemporary Poland,” *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 22, no. 1 (January 2016): 63–83; Georgiy Kasianov, “The Burden of the Past: The Ukrainian-Polish Conflict of 1943–44 in Contemporary Public, Academic and Political Debates in Ukraine and Poland,” *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Sciences* 19, no.3/4 (September-December 2006): 247–59; Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, “Der polnisch-ukrainische Historikerdiskurs über den polnisch-ukrainischen Konflikt 1943–1947,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 57, no.1 (2009): 54–85; David R. Marples, *Heroes and Villains: Creating National History in Contemporary Ukraine* (Budapest, 2007), 203–8.

10. Among the omissions are Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge, 2005) and Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*. Works on ethnic cleansing with passing references to Volhynia, sometimes with errors, include Benjamin Lieberman, *Terrible Fate: Ethnic Cleansing in the Making of Modern Europe* (Chicago, 2006), 208–10; Philipp Ther, *The Dark Side of Nation States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe*, trans. Charlotte Kreutzmüller (New York, 2014), 121–22; Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak, *Rethinking Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948* (Lanham, 2001), 137, 143, 173–74. An exception to this trend is Alexander Prusin, “Revolution and Ethnic Cleansing in Western Ukraine: The OUN-UPA Assault against Polish Settlements in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia, 1943–1944,” in *Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth Century Europe*, Steven Béla Várdy, T. Hunt Tooley, Agnes Huszar Vardy, eds., (Boulder, 2003), 529.

Timothy Snyder, Franziska Bruder, Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, and Grzegorz Motyka—makes it clear that there was.<sup>11</sup>

In this article, I connect orders from the OUN-UPA leadership down through the chain of command to those who led the campaign against Polish villages in the Liuboml' region. While the orders demonstrate a clear policy of ethnic cleansing, it is less clear how the OUN-UPA managed to kill 50,000–60,000 Poles in Volhynia in such a short time period during a military occupation. This article thus also shows how the OUN-B and UPA exploited auxiliary police units to participate in their plans to cleanse the region. OUN-B and UPA nationalists also used a number of tactics to recruit men from the general population, in particular rural peasants, to kill Poles.

The study draws on newly declassified documents from former KGB archives, namely post-war war crimes trials, as well as material from half a dozen other archives from multiple countries, to provide first-hand accounts from leaders and the rank-and-file who participated in this violence. Though there is concern about the reliability of KGB trials, over the past decade a number of scholars have used this material judiciously by cross-referencing with outside sources to prove reliability—this study is no different.<sup>12</sup> Further, the emphasis here on documentation of perpetrators' actions is balanced by the usage of survivor testimony, which has been preserved and published by Polish authors. Victim testimony, recorded at different times and places than perpetrator material, also helps corroborate Soviet sources. Altogether, by providing new biographical information for the killers as well as analyzing their wartime activities, a more complex understanding of these events emerges—one in which both nationalists and average Volhynians participated in ethnic cleansing of Volhynian Poles.

In turn, this article makes four contributions to the existing historiography on ethnic cleansing in western Ukraine and the general study of violence in the eastern European borderlands. First, it links orders from the OUN-UPA leadership to a specific ethnic cleansing episode, demonstrating that violence against Volhynian Poles was not a part of a leaderless Ukrainian jacquerie against neighbors, but rather a highly coordinated ethnic cleansing campaign organized and planned by a political organization against a civilian population. Second, by disaggregating categories of participants, this article shows how violence was made possible through the actions not only of nationalists, but also of policemen and average civilians; without them, killing on a large

11. A prominent example is Volodymyr V'iatrovych, who argues there was no ethnic cleansing, but a civil war between Poles and Ukrainians. Now director of the Institute of National Memory of Ukraine, V'iatrovych has always worked to absolve Ukrainian nationalist organizations of war crimes. Volodymyr V'iatrovych, *Druha pol's'ko-ukrains'ka viina, 1942–1947* (Kyiv, 2011). For one of many critical reviews, see Per Anders Rudling, “Warfare or War Criminality?” *Ab Imperio* 1 (January 2012), 356–81. On V'iatrovych's career: Jared McBride, “How Ukraine's New Memory Commissar Is Controlling the Nation's Past,” *The Nation*, August 13, 2015.

12. Scholars using KGB archives include e.g.: Eric Steinhart, Grzegorz Motyka, Per Anders Rudling, Oleksandr Melnyk, Diana Dumitru, Tanja Penter, and Jeffrey Burds.

scale would have been difficult for the OUN-UPA to achieve.<sup>13</sup> Third, the article intervenes in larger debates about how the triple occupation of eastern Europe produced local violence by arguing that micro-studies of violence, accompanied by biographical sketches of perpetrators, can shed light on the roots of violence rather than presuming a causal link from violence in one setting and for one reason to the next. Fourth, building on social-scientific literature on the micro-mechanisms of violence, this paper shows how participants in ethnic cleansing against Volhynian Poles became mobilized to kill for a variety of reasons, many unrelated to nationalist ideology or ethnic hatred. These two motives have often been said to explain why Poles were murdered in Volhynia, but this paper supports research in the social sciences by finding multiple mechanisms at play.<sup>14</sup>

The article proceeds as follows: first, I outline the OUN-UPA leadership's reasons for attacking Volhynian Poles. Second, I provide a general overview of how ethnic cleansing in Volhynia proceeded. Third, I detail a single ethnic cleansing operation in the Liuboml' area in what is now the western part of Volyn' oblast. Fourth, I discuss the historiographical contributions of this study. Fifth and last, I elaborate on how this case of ethnic cleansing in Volhynia is not only useful for explaining the history of what happened to Poles in western Ukraine, but also for understanding how mass violence unfolds at the micro-level in general.

### The OUN-UPA and Ethnic Cleansing

When it comes to the Polish question, this is not a military but a minority question. We will solve it as Hitler solved the Jewish question.<sup>15</sup>

—UPA Leadership

The OUN, as well as its main predecessor, the Ukrainian Military Organization (*Ukrains'ka Viis'kova Orhanizatsiia*, UVO), originated in Galicia, a territory along with Volhynia that Ukrainian nationalists believed was occupied illegitimately by the Second Polish Republic. Immediately following the end of hostilities in the Soviet-Polish war, the UVO, led by veterans of various frontier wars, began a coordinated campaign of terrorism against the Polish government. This violence continued throughout the interwar period and was embraced by a younger generation of nationalists who came of age during the 1920s and 1930s, such as Stepan Bandera and Mykola Lebed. Timothy Snyder describes the OUN-B as a “nationalist terrorist organization, led by immature and angry men.”<sup>16</sup>

13. Throughout the article, the terms “local auxiliary policemen” or “policemen” refer to the local police forces that served the Germans. They are often referred to as *Schutzmannschaften*, as well.

14. I discuss the import of this paper's findings for social-science research on mobilization for violence below.

15. Grzegorz Motyka, *Ukraińska partyzantka 1942–1960. Działalność Organizacji Ukraińskich Nacjonalistów i Ukraińskiej Powstańczej Armii* (Warsaw, 2006), 240.

16. Snyder, “Causes,” 208.

Alongside a belief that violence would create a Ukrainian nation, many nationalists connected to UVO and later the OUN propagated an “ideology of ethnic homogeneity.”<sup>17</sup> Compelled by the fascist movements of central Europe, these leaders envisioned not a democratic Ukraine that would include long-standing Jewish, Polish, and German historical minorities, but an ethnically homogenous Ukraine instead. OUN theoreticians like Mykola Stsibors’kyi prophesized in 1939 that “foreign parasitic growth” in the Ukrainian nation such as the “large part of the Russian, Polish, and other immigrants” were to be killed early in the forthcoming national revolution.<sup>18</sup>

Following the start of World War II, the OUN underwent a split in which the younger generation of nationalists beholden to Stepan Bandera formed their own faction, the OUN-B, while the older generation coalesced around Andrii Mel’nyk, the OUN-M. In the lead-up to the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, the radical OUN-B made explicit calls for violence against segments of the Polish population. In May 1941, the OUN-B produced a 74-page manifesto that would act as a guide for nationalist cadres during the opening weeks of war.<sup>19</sup> The document stated that “during the time of chaos and confusion, we should take the opportunity to liquidate undesirable Poles, Muscovites, and Jews, especially the supporters of Bolshevik-Muscovite imperialism.”<sup>20</sup> Regarding national minorities, the authors wrote: “the national minorities are divided into a) those that are friendly to us, namely, members of previously subjugated people (or captive nations), b) those that are hostile to us, Russians, Poles, Jews.” Finally, the OUN-B document explained, Poles could be “forcibly assimilated” in some cases, but their leaders should be “destroyed.”<sup>21</sup>

In the wake of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the OUN-B and its supporters translated their instructions into action. In one Polish account, the OUN killed “six hundred Poles; OUN-led peasant mobs attacked police stations, killed Polish officials, and robbed refugees escaping the Red Army.”<sup>22</sup> The OUN-B also tried to convince Volhynian civilians to participate in their violent program. OUN-B members disseminated leaflets with inscriptions such as “Ukraine for Ukrainians” in a number of towns. In Volodymyrets, OUN-B activists also posted signs telling Ukrainian people that Russians, Poles, and

17. Snyder, “Causes,” 212. On Ukrainian nationalist thinking about violence and ethnic cleansing, see Krzysztof Lada, “Ukrainian Topos of Oppression and the Volhynian Slaughter of Poles, 1841–1943/44” (Ph.D. diss., Flinders University, 2012).

18. Marco Carynnyk, “Foes of Our Rebirth: Ukrainian Nationalist Discussions about Jews, 1929–1947,” *Nationalities Papers* 39, no. 3 (May 2011): 326.

19. See the full document: Serhii Kul’chyts’kyi, ed., *OUN v 1941 rotsi. Dokumenty. V 2-x ch. Ch.1* (Kyiv, 2006), 65–176. The document has received little attention. On its meaning, see Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, “The ‘Ukrainian National Revolution’ of Summer 1941,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no.1 (2011), 93–95; Carynnyk, “Foes of our rebirth,” 329–32.

20. Tsentral’nyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Vyshchykh Orhaniv Vlady i Upravlinnia Ukrainy [TsDAVOU], f.3833, op.2, spr.1, ark.32.

21. TsDAVOU, f.3833, op.2, spr.1, ark.38.

22. Alexander V. Prusin, *The Lands Between: Conflict in the East European Borderlands, 1870–1992* (Oxford, 2010), 129. On summer 1941, see Kai Struve, *Deutsche Herrschaft, ukrainischer Nationalismus, antijüdische Gewalt Der Sommer 1941 in der Westukraine* (Berlin, 2015).

Jews were the “enemies” of Ukrainians.<sup>23</sup> A local Sernyky Jew, Milton Turk, described how three Ukrainians in uniforms with nationalist insignia on their hats came to the marketplace and gave speeches inciting Ukrainians to “kill Jews, Poles, and Communists” and take their property.<sup>24</sup> The infamous OUN-B leader Ivan Klymiv (in control of Volhynia in the summer of 1941), who opined before the war about taking revenge against “Jews, Poles and other scum,” wrote a directive in August 1941 that instructed the OUN-B to “wipe out Poles, Jews, professors, officers, leaders, and all established enemy elements of Ukraine and Germany.”<sup>25</sup> He added, “we will cast out the Polish and Jewish landlords and bankers from Ukraine. Death to the Muscovites, Poles, Jews and other enemies of Ukraine.”<sup>26</sup>

Although the OUN-B had envisioned the removal of Poles from western Ukraine as necessary for creating a Ukrainian state for over a decade, it was the following circumstances in Volhynia in 1943 that enabled it to come to fruition. First, Soviet partisans and rival nationalist groups helped force the OUN-B to create its own army in Volhynia in spring 1943. Soviet partisans first made their appearance in Volhynia in the summer of 1942 and continually picked up new members throughout the remainder of 1942 and into 1943. Concurrently, rival nationalist leader Taras Bul’ba-Borovets’ army continued to increase in strength and popularity throughout 1942 and into 1943. Thus, in spring 1943, the OUN-B leadership realized it needed to form an army and also begin to act militarily or risk losing Volhynians to rival nationalists or the Soviets. Second, the Soviet victory at Stalingrad on February 2, 1943 clarified for OUN-B leadership that the most important fight would not be against Germans, but against the Red Army as it returned to Ukraine. With the front rapidly closing in on them in spring 1943, OUN-UPA leaders believed there was no better or more practical time to solve the “Polish question” once and for all. Poles, they argued, had to be removed as potential fifth columnists for the coming occupation. Third and finally, the German response to both the Soviet partisan movement and the growing nationalist underground in 1942 and 1943 was also important. As the Germans began to wipe out villages, and as many young Volhynians, including policemen, went to the forests and sought revenge, the OUN-UPA aimed to benefit from this anger.<sup>27</sup> Combined, these three conditions helped provide manpower for the OUN-UPA to carry out ethnic cleansing.

Importantly, although the OUN-B leadership decided on a policy of ethnic cleansing in spring of 1943, the exact date and provenance of the decision to remove Volhynian Poles is unclear. Two competing theses dominate academic work on the subject. The first is that Lebed, still acting as leader of the *provid* (leadership council of the OUN-B), gave the order to begin kill-

23. Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii [GARF], f.7021, op.71, d.44, l.5.

24. Milton Turk, Testimony #1979, USC Shoah Foundation.

25. Marco Carynnyk, “‘Jews, Poles, and Other Scum’: Ruda Rozaniecka, Monday, 30 June 1941” (Paper presented at the Fourth Annual Danyliw Research Seminar, University of Ottawa, 23–25 Oct. 2008), 20.

26. TsDAVOU, f.3833, op.1, spr.46, ark.36–37.

27. For a Soviet partisan report on the burning of villages, see TsDAHOU, f.1, op.23, spr.585, ark.28.

ing Polish families to the OUN-UPA leadership in North-Western Ukrainian Lands (*Pivnichno-Zakhidni Ukrains'ki Zemli*, PZUZ) sometime in April 1943.<sup>28</sup> Lebed wrote in his post-war memoirs that Poles who would not leave certain areas of Volhynia needed to be “physically liquidated.”<sup>29</sup> Another nationalist leader, Zbignev Kaminski, when interrogated by Polish Communist police in 1955 and 1958, also noted that he received an order from Lebed to commence a “massive liquidation of the Polish population starting in Polissia and then Volhynia,” further supporting this argument.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, Lebed’s power base among the provid leadership had already been undercut in February 1943 by Roman Shukhevych and Dmytro Kliachkivs’kyi.<sup>31</sup> It can thus be argued that by spring 1943, Lebed was hardly in a position to give orders to the PZUZ leadership.

The second thesis suggests that local initiatives led to violence against the Polish population, rather than top-down orders. The PZUZ leadership, specifically Kliachkivs’kyi and Shukhevych, appeared to support an attack on Poles before 1943, and they initiated the cleansing on their own accord without the sanction of the provid or Lebed’s faction. Although Kliachkivs’kyi and Shukhevych may have told subordinates that their desire for violence against Poles was sanctioned by the central provid, given that Shukhevych had already begun to take over the provid in spring 1943, the blessing would have been irrelevant. Discussion and alleged criticisms of Kliachkivs’kyi’s actions by certain provid members at the Third Congress in August, by which time tens of thousands of Poles had already been murdered by Kliachkivs’kyi and Shukhevych’s forces, also support this interpretation.<sup>32</sup>

The two scenarios of the Lebed-led cleansing or the Kliachkivs’kyi-Shukhevych-led cleansing do not have to be mutually exclusive. It is possible that both the PZUZ leadership, which had taken control of the provid and issued its own directives to OUN-UPA commanders sometime between

28. Snyder, “Causes,” 202. See also Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera: The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist: Fascism, Genocide, and Cult* (Stuttgart, 2014), 239; Alexander Statiev, *The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands* (Cambridge, 2010), 85.

29. Mykola Lebed, *UPA: Ukrains'ka Povstans'ka Armiia* (Munich, 1946), 53.

30. For Zbignev Kaminski’s testimony, see Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, et al., eds., *Polacy i ukraińcy pomiędzy dwoma systemami totalitarnymi 1942–1945*, Tom 4 (Warszawa-Kijów, 2005), 180–202. Though not an impartial source, Taras Bul’ba-Borovets’ stated that Lebed wanted to cleanse Volhynia of Poles. Taras Bul’ba-Borovets’, *Armiia Bez Derzhavy: Slava i trahediia ukrains’koho povstans’koho rukhu: spohady* (Winnipeg, 1981), 251, 253, 272. Former OUN-m member, Petro Balei also mentioned Lebed’s desire to do so. Balei, *Frona Stepana Bandery v OUN 1940 roku*, 196–97.

31. On Kliachkivs’kyi, see the account by Ihor Marchuk, *Komandyr UPA-Pivnich Dmytro Kliachkivs'kyi “Klym Savur”* (Rivne, 2009) and on Shukhevych, Per A. Rudling, “Szkolenie w mordowaniu: Schutzmannschaft Battalion 201 i Hauptmann Roman Szuchewycz na Białorusi 1942 roku,” in *Prawda historyczna a prawda polityczna w badaniach naukowych: Przykład ludobójstwa na kresach południowej-wschodniej Polski w latach 1939–1946*, Bogusław Paż, ed. (Wrocław, 2011), 191–212. On Shukhevych and Kliachkivs’kyi’s rise to prominence, see Jared McBride, “‘A Sea of Blood and Tears’: Ethnic Diversity and Mass Violence in Nazi-Occupied Volhynia, Ukraine, 1941–1944” (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 2014), 272–76.

32. HDA SBU, f.13, spr.372, tom 1, ark.56.

February and April, and Lebed, though he argued against the cleansing officially at provid meetings, simultaneously issued orders to the *sluzhba bezpeky* (security service, SB) leaders in Volhynia.<sup>33</sup>

Regardless of debates over dates and provenance of the order to kill, sufficient evidence demonstrates a clear policy of ethnic cleansing in Volhynia by the OUN-UPA. Whether it is Lebed's instructions to "cleanse," "physically liquidate," or carry out "a complete, universal, physical liquidation of the Polish people," or testimony from a UPA commander who said he was directed by Kliachkivs'kyi to "physically exterminate" (*fizicheskoe istreblenie* in the Russian-language HDA SBU original) the Polish population, the intent on the part of the OUN-UPA leadership is clear.<sup>34</sup> In addition to calls for murder from the OUN-UPA leadership, we also have evidence from rank-and-file members of these nationalist organizations demonstrating this intent. For instance, rank-and-file member Nikolai Slobodiuk received an order from an OUN commander to "kill all enemies of the UPA, including all Poles, Czechs, Jews, Kom-somol members, Red Army officers, policemen, and all Ukrainians who even slightly sympathize with the Soviet authorities. . . ." <sup>35</sup> Moreover, when we consider these instructions in light of the tens of thousands of Polish victims killed in coordinated attacks by the OUN-UPA that often occurred in multiple villages simultaneously, there is little doubt the orders were executed with their initial intent in mind: remove Poles from Volhynia.

To be sure, some scholars minimize evidence that the OUN-B called for the ethnic cleansing of Poles during this time period, for example by arguing that endogenous structural causes led to mass displacement and the deaths of Volhynian Poles.<sup>36</sup> Others propose that the Ukrainian peasantry called for expulsion themselves, or that Poles caused their own cleansing by joining the German auxiliary police or engaging in other acts that would provoke violence against them.<sup>37</sup> Extreme versions of this argument still exist and regularly

33. For a balanced overview of these debates, see Motyka, *Ukraińska partyzantka*, 303–10; see also Ivan Katchanovski, "Ethnic Cleansing, Genocide or Ukrainian-Polish Conflict? The Mass Murder of Poles by the OUN and the UPA in Volhynia?" (Paper presented at the 19th Annual World Convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, Columbia University, New York, April 24–26, 2014). Nearly a dozen contemporary Ukrainian publications refused to publish Katchanovski's work on the premeditated ethnic cleansing of Poles.

34. On terminology: OUN-UPA leaders often used the term "likvidovuvaty" (likvidirovat' in Russian) or "liquidate" as a euphemism for murder, not only for the murder of Poles, but also other victims, including Jews, Czechs, and Ukrainians. For some examples see HDA SBU, f.13, spr.371, tom 1, ark.340; HDA SBU, spr.67430, tom 2, ark.81; Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Rivnens'koi Oblasti [DARO], f.R-30, op.2, spr.37, ark.69; HDA SBU, f.13, spr.372, tom 5, ark.21–6; HDA SBU, spr.22085, ark.42. For the use of these terms quoted above in the text see Lebed, *UPA*, 53; *Polacy i ukraińcy pomiędzy dwoma systemami totalitarnymi*, 180–220; Balei, *Frona Stepana Bandery v OUN 1940 roku*, 141, 196–7; HDA SBU, spr.11315, t.1, ch.2, ark.16; HDA SBU, f.13, op.65, spr.S-9079, tom 1, ark.168–9 and f.5, spr.67424.

35. HDA SBU, spr.67430, tom 2, ark.110–1 or GARF, f.9478, op.1, d.133, ll.84–6. SB member, Ivan Iavorskii, received a similar order to kill all "Russians, Poles, Czechs, Jews, Roma." GARF, f.9478, op.1, d.133, ll.53–4 or GARF, f.9478, op.1, d.398, ll.7–9. See also Kutkovets on these orders: TsDAHOU, f.57, op.4, spr.351, ark.52.

36. Volodymyr V'iatrovych, mentioned above, is the main proponent of these ideas.

37. Petro R. Sodol, *UPA, They Fought Hitler and Stalin: A Brief Overview of Military Aspects from the History of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, 1942–1949* (New York, 1987), 20. For

appear in Ukrainian-language scholarship.<sup>38</sup> This perspective originates from statements made by OUN-B members themselves after the war, aiming to cover their tracks.<sup>39</sup> Take for example one of earliest defenses of the ethnic cleansing from a Ukrainian Congress Committee of America 1949 publication:

It is a pity that the insane hatred of the Poles for the Ukrainians prevented them from helping the Ukrainians in their quest for freedom . . . After unsuccessful attempts to get the Poles to join a united liberation front, the UPA finally proposed that the remaining Polish settlers on Ukrainian lands voluntarily evacuate them, and thus prevent further bloodshed between Poles and Ukrainians. This suggestion was rejected. The UPA was left no choice: it forcibly expelled these Poles to Poland proper. . . .<sup>40</sup>

To paraphrase historian John-Paul Himka, the twisted logic offered by nationalist groups after the war was: we didn't do it, but they still deserved it.<sup>41</sup> By way of contrast, after a brief overview of the violence in Volhynia, I detail how the operation to cleanse Poles in the Liuboml' region was organized and carried out from the top chain of command to the bottom.

### Overview of the Cleansing Campaign in Volhynia

The UPA began to recruit members in spring 1943 throughout Volhynia. Simultaneously, the OUN-UPA began killing Volhynian Poles in March 1943 (though there had been some sparse killings in early 1943).<sup>42</sup> The total number of Poles killed in Volhynia in 1943 number between 50,000 and 60,000, while the total number of Poles killed in all of western Ukraine throughout the war is estimated to be between 70,000 and 100,000.<sup>43</sup>

The attacks came in a series of waves. The first, from March to April 1943, took thousands of Polish lives. Following these initial attacks, many Poles fled Volhynia for fear of being killed, while others went to city centers where it was safer due to the presence of Germans.<sup>44</sup> In April 1943, many Poles filled

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criticism of this argument see: Jared McBride, "Who's Afraid of Ukrainian Nationalism?," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 17, no. 3 (Summer 2016): 647–63.

38. This thesis has found its way into English-language publications; see Mat Babiak (edited by Paul Robert Magosci), "Ethnic Cleansing or Ethnic Cleansings? The Polish-Ukrainian civil war in Galicia-Volhynia," *Ukrainian Policy* (co-published by Euromaidan Press): at [ukrainianpolicy.com/ethnic-cleansing-or-ethnic-cleansings-the-polish-ukrainian-civil-war-in-galicia-volhynia/](http://ukrainianpolicy.com/ethnic-cleansing-or-ethnic-cleansings-the-polish-ukrainian-civil-war-in-galicia-volhynia/) (last accessed March 28, 2016).

39. Lebed, *UPA*, 53.

40. Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, *Ukrainian Resistance: The Story of the Ukrainian National Liberation Movement in Modern Times* (New York, 1949), 79.

41. Himka made a similar remark when discussing Ukrainian denial of the OUN-UPA's participation in the Holocaust. John-Paul Himka, "Vyznannia popry znannia," *Krytyka* 7–8 (July–August 2010): 153–54. There is a history of Ukrainian nationalists denying involvement in mass murder while justifying the violence. A 1926 OUN publication (*Surma*) explained post-World War I anti-Jewish violence by "Jewish behavior toward the Ukrainian population, their Russifying and Polonizing mission" that "engendered the hatred of the Ukrainian population for the Jews and created the grounds for the pogroms, against which" Ukrainian forces were "helpless." Quoted in Carynnyk, "Foes of our rebirth," 317.

42. Motyka, *Ukraińska partyzantka*, 311–12.

43. According to Snyder, 50,000 in 1943 alone. "Causes," 202. For an overview of the numbers involved, see Motyka, *Ukraińska partyzantka*, 410–13.

44. TsDAHOU, f.57, op.4, spr.351, ark.9.

vacant posts left by Ukrainians in the German auxiliary forces (at least one thousand) and Soviet partisan units for protection and revenge.<sup>45</sup>

The OUN-UPA-planned ethnic cleansing continued unabated throughout summer 1943. The crescendo came on the night of July 11–12, 1943 when the UPA planned a highly coordinated attack (known among Poles as the “Peter and Paul action” for the holiday on which it occurred) against Polish villages in three *raions*: Kovel’, Khorokhiv, and Volodymyr-Volyns’kyi.<sup>46</sup> Over one hundred localities were targeted in this action, and some 4,000 Poles were murdered. Finally, the last wave of attacks came in December 1943 before Shukhevych decided to move the cleansing operations to Galicia where tens of thousands more Galician Poles were murdered. Following the killings in Volhynia, the UPA-North group gave the order to “destroy all traces of the Poles” by “destroying all Polish churches and all other Polish places of worship. Destroy all farm homes, so there is no evidence that anyone ever lived there.”<sup>47</sup>

These killings were no secret in Volhynia in 1943. Many historical sources on the occupation, from diaries to official Soviet and German reports, provide details about the cleansing. Likewise, contemporaneous Soviet partisan reports from the area are littered with references to the violence. One late May report noted, “throughout villages in Stepan’, Derazhanaia, Rafalovka, Sarny, Vysotsk, Vladimirets, Klevan,’ and other raions, the nationalists are carrying out mass terror against the Polish population . . . the nationalists are not shooting the Poles but are using knives and axes to murder Poles irrespective of age and gender.”<sup>48</sup> Another report from April 1943 remarked, “The Ukrainian nationalists are carrying out bestial reprisals against the Polish population with the goal of completely destroying the Polish population of Ukraine. In Tsuman’ raion, a *sotnia* (company) of nationalists was given the order on April 15, 1943 to destroy all of the Poles and burn down their villages.”<sup>49</sup> Similarly, German reports from this time also noted the killings, as did reports from Polish military units.<sup>50</sup> Eyewitness testimonies from post-Soviet investigations and Holocaust survivor collections in the west routinely reference these cleansing actions as well.<sup>51</sup>

45. Snyder, “Causes,” 223.

46. Motyka, *Ukrainska partyzantka*, 331–35.

47. Located at both: TsDAHOU, f.1, op.23, spr.931, ark.38 and DARO, f.R-30, op.2, spr.16, ark.94. As Naimark noted, “Ethnic cleansing involves not only the forced deportation of entire nations but the eradication of the memory of their presence.” *Fires of Hatred*, 192.

48. Vasyl’ Behma report from May 28, 1943 to Nikita Khrushchev and Timofii Strokach: TsDAHOU, f.1, op.22, spr.75, ark.37–43.

49. Ivan Shitov March 30 report to Strokach, amended and relayed by Strokach to Khrushchev on April 21, 1943, see TsDAHOU, f.1, op.23, spr.523, ark.44. There are many more references to the killings in other reports, see TsDAHOU, f.1, op.22, spr.49, ark.12; TsDAHOU, f.1, op.22, spr.55, ark.46; TsDAHOU, f.1, op.22, spr.507, ark.50.

50. On these German reports see Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Genocide and Rescue in Wolyń: Recollections of the Ukrainian Nationalist Ethnic Cleansing Campaign against the Poles during World War II* (Jefferson, 2000), 206–14; Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, Mass, 2004), 287. On the Polish reports, Piotrowski, *Genocide and Rescue*, 193–205.

51. For Soviet Extraordinary State Commission (ChGK) references to violence against Poles in Sarny and Oleksandriia (now Rivne) raions, see GARF, f.7021, op.71, d.41, l.94; GARF, f.7021, op.71, d.70, l.11; and recently declassified post-war Soviet trials that refer-

Not all Volhynian Ukrainians supported the murder of their Polish neighbors. Some Ukrainians warned their Polish peers of impending OUN-UPA attacks, hid Poles, and helped them escape from Volhynia.<sup>52</sup> Even in the Liuboml' area (the focus of the next section), Poles acknowledged how Ukrainian neighbors helped them survive. In Ostrivky, Czesław Kuwałek explained, "There were also incidents in which the Ukrainians behaved decently toward the Poles . . . two Ukrainian families . . . sheltered my uncle's family for about three days after the attack and then took them to Wilczy Przewóz, where they could cross the Bug river."<sup>53</sup> Moreover, a few Ukrainian leaders, including religious authorities and organizations, protested against the killings, though their declarations accomplished little.<sup>54</sup> Calls for restraint did not stem the tide of violence.

### The Liuboml' Killings: Anatomy of an UPA Ethnic Cleansing Episode

I now turn to how the OUN-UPA directed and organized ethnic cleansing campaign in the Liuboml' region. Following the OUN's Third Conference in February 1943, Kliachkivs'kyi and Shukhevych began to give orders to OUN cadres to form the new nationalist army, still called OUN-SD at this time.<sup>55</sup> A young Volhynian OUN-B leader in the Kovel' area, Iurii Stel'mashchuk, was one of several who received this order.<sup>56</sup> He was also told by OUN leader Vasyl' Ivakhiv to recruit as many as possible in each raion to join the UPA and to begin stockpiling weapons. Throughout February and March 1943, Stel'mashchuk was able to build an early incarnation of what would become the *voenna okruha* (a military district or VO) "Turiv," a UPA operational group within the larger UPA-North (UPA-Pivnich) military district formation. Eventually, "Turiv" would become responsible for overseeing the Volodymyrets and Kovel' areas in north-west Volyn' oblast.<sup>57</sup> Stel'mashchuk named his new *hrupa* (group, roughly battalion size), "Ozero."<sup>58</sup> It consisted of roughly 500 soldiers in spring 1943, and contained three *zahiny* (detachments, roughly company-size).<sup>59</sup> Stel'mashchuk put one of these *zahin*, named "Buh," under the command of

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ence the killing of Poles see HDA SBU (Rivne), spr.R-6426, spr.13169, spr.17009. For references to the ethnic cleansing of Poles in the USC Shoah Collection: Testimonies of Jacob Nagiel #15645; Shirman Grigorii #29420; Edith (Ida) Kimelman #47959; Avram (Niuma) Anapol'skii #32206; Vera Shchetinkova #45238; Ferdynand Martynowicz #49047.

52. For some examples, see Leon Popek, ed., *Wołyński testament* (Lublin, 1997), 97, 109, 115–16, 139, 155–56; Jerzy Dębski and Leon Popek, *Okrutna przestroga* (Lublin, 1997), 107, 208; Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair*, 296–97.

53. Piotrowski, *Genocide*, 83–4.

54. Prusin, "Revolution," 529.

55. For a list of early UPA units in winter and spring 1943, see Marchuk, *Komandyr UPA-Pivnich*, 41.

56. For more on Stel'mashchuk see Marchuk, *Komandyr UPA-Pivnich*, 36; McBride, "A Sea of Blood and Tears," 271–76.

57. For a sanitized history of the Turiv group leaving out ethnic cleansing, see V. Novak, "V Pivnichnozakhidnia okruha 'Tuiv,' in Yevhen Shtendera, ed., *Litopys UPA, Tom 5* (Toronto, 1984), 96–134.

58. "Ozero" is also described at times as a *zahin*.

59. HDA SBU, spr.22085, ark.43–44.

Ivan Klymchak—a former assistant commander of the officer's school in the German-run 103rd mobile police battalion in Volyn' oblast.<sup>60</sup> Many soldiers in this zahin had served under Klymchak in the 103rd battalion and deserted with him. In late May, Stel'mashchuk created an officer's school where at least fifty people would be trained at a time for service in the army. Throughout all of these preparations there was little actual fighting done. Only in mid-July did this division have its first encounter with Soviet partisans.<sup>61</sup>

That summer also saw another development. In June 1943, Kliachkivs'kyi, commander of the UPA at this time, called Stel'mashchuk to meet with him in the Kolki area and report on his division's progress. During this meeting, Stel'mashchuk recalled how "Klym Savur [Kliachkivs'kyi] personally gave me the secret directive from the OUN-B central provid about the complete physical destruction of the Polish population to be carried out in western Ukraine."<sup>62</sup> Following this meeting, Stel'mashchuk wrote to Lebed telling him that Kliachkivs'kyi "imparted to me a secret directive in the matter of a complete, universal, physical liquidation of the Polish people. . . ."<sup>63</sup> Ultimately, Stel'mashchuk chose Klymchak's *kurin'* (battalion), known by Klymchak's pseudonym "Lysyi" at this point, to wipe out Polish villages in the Liuboml' region, including the villages of Ostrivky (Ostrówki in Polish), Volia Ostrovetska (Wola Ostrowiecka), Iahotyn (Jagodzín), Kuti (Kuty or Kały), and Iankivtsi (Jankowce).<sup>64</sup> Then in late August, after preparations were com-

60. Klymchak is also known as "Pavliuk" and "Lysyi" and his zahin is also called "Pyliavtsi" in some documents.

61. HDA SBU, spr.22085, ark.45.

62. Two different interrogation sessions revealed information about this meeting and directive. In Stel'mashchuk's arrest file there is a February 20, 1945 interrogation where he mentions the Kolki meeting with Savur, although he does not mention the Polish directive explicitly. The trial summary from August 6 does however note the orders to kill Poles. In a February 28 interrogation there is an explicit reference to the directive and this source is quoted in the text. For the February 20, 1945 testimony, see HDA SBU, spr.22085, ark.45, 94ob-95. For the February 28, 1945 testimony, see the original copy at GARF, f.9478, op.1, d.399, l.18 and copies in Ukraine at HDA SBU, f.13, op.65, spr.S-9079, tom 1, ark.168-9 and f.5, spr.67424. The Litopys UPA collection also has copies of the February 9, 20, 22, 23 and June 20 interrogations. Oleksandr Ishchuk and S.A. Kokin, eds., *Litopys UPA, New Series*, Vol. 9 (Toronto, 2007), 430-53.

63. See the June 24, 1943 letter from Stel'mashchuk to Lebed in HDA SBU, spr.11315, t.1, ch.2, ark.16. I and other authors have not been able to review this file directly due to recent archival restrictions. Nonetheless, the file has been cited by Vladyslav Nakonechnyi, formerly the director of the Communist Party Archive in Luts'k. Nakonechnyi had access to this file and regularly cited it in his work. Polish academic and non-academic writers have also cited and reproduced documents from this file. For further background, see Katchanovski, "Ethnic Cleansing," 5-6, 9-11. For Nakonechnyi see V.A. Nakonechnyi, *Volyn'—kryvave pole viiny* (Ternopil', 2006), 104-5, 116-7, 126. For Polish works see Władysław Filar, *Przed akcją "Wisła" był Wołyń* (Warsaw, 1997), 33-7; Piotrowski, *Genocide*, 180; Grzegorz Motyka, *Od rzezi wołyńskiej do Akcji "Wisła": Konflikt polsko-ukraiński 1943-1947* (Kraków, 2011), 130. It bears emphasis that well-respected Polish historian Grzegorz Motyka uses this document.

64. On connections between Stel'mashchuk and Lysyi see HDA SBU, spr.22085, ark.44; HDA SBU, spr.11315, t.1, ch.2, ark.16. There is some confusion regarding whether this was a zahin or kurin.' Stel'mashchuk mentioned putting Klymchak in charge of the "Buh" zahin initially in spring 1943, but in late summer, all participants mentioned operating in a kurin' under Lysyi or Klymchak. For background on the Lysyi zahin, see

plete, another commander in the Turiv operational group, Mykola Iakymchuk (“Oleh”) relayed the final orders to begin the attack on Poles in the raions of Holoby, Kovel’, Sedlyshche, Matseiv, and Liuboml’.<sup>65</sup>

Though the attacks on Ostrivky and Volia Ostrovetska have been detailed in a number of Polish publications, little was known and subsequently written about the perpetrators of this violence except that they came from the Lysyi kurin’.<sup>66</sup> Fortunately, new archival records reveal the identities of these men, showing that a number of policemen from the Krymne and Zabolottia auxiliary police forces were active in this campaign.<sup>67</sup> Two members from these police forces who provided extensive post-war testimony on the operation were Stepan Redesha, a former police leader in Zabolottia, and Pylyp Rybachuk, a policeman who served in the Krymne and Zabolottia forces. Both Rybachuk and Redesha joined the UPA after their tenure in the police—Rybachuk became a rank-and-file member, while Redesha was a platoon leader. Pylyp Rybachuk provided important information on the size and organization of the groups involved: “Our [UPA] sotnia [company] was based in the forest near the village of Kukuriky. In total, in the forest, we had about two to three sotni of armed OUN-B bandits. In preparation for the reprisal against the Poles, other armed OUN-B groups came to our encampment, as well as about 100 people from various villages, including Krymne. They brought axes with them for participation in the pogrom against the Polish village.”<sup>68</sup> Rybachuk’s testimony indicates that the UPA used their own pre-existing units, as well as local OUN-B cadres and civilians armed with farm implements, for the attacks.

Concerning this latter group, the OUN-B and UPA leadership recruited a number of men from Krymne to participate in the cleansing of Poles. Artem Bubela, the former Krymne policeman whose encounter with Sikorskii began this article, was one of them, told to bring an ax to the meeting point.<sup>69</sup> Though Bubela managed to escape recruitment because of what he claimed was an injured leg, other Krymne residents were less fortunate. On the day of

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Volodymyr Koval’chuk, “Taemnytsi Pol’ovoi Sumky ‘Klym Savur’ (za materialamy SBU),” *Mandrivets*, no.5 (Sept./Oct. 2012), 62; Oleksandr Denyshchuk, ed. *Borot’ba UPA proty niemts’kykh okupantiv. Khronolohiia podii. U 2–kh tomakh. T.1: Volyn’* (Rivne, 2008), 263–64, 275, 291, 295.

65. HDA SBU, spr.22085, ark.46.

66. On Ostrówki and Wola Ostrowiecka in Polish literature, see Leon Popek and Andrzej Krzystof Kunert, *Ostrowki: Wołyńskie Ludobójstwo* (Warsaw, 2011); Leon Popek, *Wołyński testament. Władysław Filar, Wołyn 1939–1944* (Torun, 2003), 99–100; Motyka, *Od rzezi wołyńskiej*, 146–50; Grzegorz Rąkowski, *Wołyń Przewodnik krajoznawczo-historyczny po Ukrainie Zachodniej* (Pruszków, 2005), 55–56. For the relevant Siemaszko entries, see Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo*, 492–96, 502–10, 513–52. On the exhumation in 1992, Roman Mądro, “Badania masowych grobów ludności polskiej zamordowanej przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich w roku 1943 w powiecie lubomelskim. Część II—Przebieg i wyniki ekshumacji w Ostrówkach,” *Archiwum Medycyny Sądowej i Kryminologii*, tom 43, no.1 (Kraków, 1993), 64–78.

67. For extensive discussion of these police forces see Chapter 3 in McBride, “A Sea of Blood and Tears,” 183–257.

68. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 5, ark.136.

69. It is unclear from the documentation whether Bubela lied about his participation. See HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 4, ark.187 and HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 5, ark.41–2.

the meeting, Bubela reported seeing his neighbors, Emel'ian Ziniuk and Pan-teleimon Kits, with axes as they headed into the woods. Also in this group was another Krymne resident, a young farmer, Fedot Kushk, who was twenty-three years old. Unlike Bubela, Kushk had not served in the police.<sup>70</sup> Vasili Sikorskii, age 27, was also present. He was recruited personally by the local OUN-B Krymne leader and former policeman, Aleksei Gritsiuk.<sup>71</sup> In total, Bubela and Kushk estimated some 40 Krymne civilians were enlisted for the operation.<sup>72</sup> The men left Krymne with the local OUN-B leaders and first stopped in an area outside of Smoliari, south of Krymne where they met more armed OUN-B soldiers. According to Kushk, the OUN-B member did not explain why they had gathered and what they were going to do.<sup>73</sup>

The reason the UPA recruited these locals, according to Rybachuk, was because "the OUN-B did not have enough men" to conduct the operation. Rybachuk explained that those gathered by the local OUN-B cadres "were used to participating in these types of reprisals." These men "worked on their farms" as their regular occupation and when the time came for them to participate, the OUN-B simply "told them where to go and they sprung to action."<sup>74</sup> However, other than occasional participation in ethnic cleansing, these were ordinary peasants who were not politically aligned with the OUN-UPA's agenda, nor were they members of any other Ukrainian nationalist organization.

After the layover in Smoliari, the reinforced group travelled further south and stopped in the Stara Huta village on Friday, August 27, 1943. Here they met with more OUN-B soldiers, some of whom had served the Germans. Sikorskii noted, "Some of the bandits wore German uniforms and were carrying machine guns and rifles."<sup>75</sup> After spending the night in Stara Huta, the group marched deeper into the forest and stopped at the village of Kukuriky where they bivouacked on Saturday night, August 28, 1943. Somewhere near Kukuriky, Rybachuk instructed his godson, Stepan Shava, to leave the group and head home. He later told investigators, "I did not want my godson to participate in this bloody action."<sup>76</sup> It was no secret to Rybachuk what would happen next.

On Sunday, August 29, 1943, the group came to their last stop at the village of Polapy in Liuboml' raion. In Polapy, the group rendezvoused with the final unit of armed men, some of whom included former local policemen.<sup>77</sup> In total, there were now roughly 500 of them. While in Polapy, townspeople invited the men to celebrate a religious holiday.<sup>78</sup> Villagers dressed up for the occasion and prepared a large celebration in the town square replete with food and dancing. Rybachuk recalled, "The locals brought us food. We all ate warm chicken. We relaxed all day long in this village."<sup>79</sup> In the town square,

70. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.26.

71. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.161.

72. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 4, ark.187; tom 22, ark.26.

73. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.29.

74. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 5, ark.136.

75. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.161–62.

76. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 5, ark.137.

77. Popek, *Ostrowki*, 99,122–23,135–36.

78. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.168; tom 4, ark.137.

79. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 5, ark.137.

the men danced with locals into the night. After a day of leisure, drink, food and celebration, the battalion then headed west in the evening towards the Polish villages.<sup>80</sup>

With their bellies full of warm food and alcohol coursing through their veins, the men marched through Volhynian forests deep into the night. Both Rybachuk and Zeniuk recalled the last stretch of their journey. Rybachuk said, “We went, I remember, though a large forest overgrown with shrubbery and hazelnut trees. We were exhausted.”<sup>81</sup> Zeniuk added, “I remember the forest was very dense and we broke into single file—one after the other. We travelled slowly. Then at dawn, maybe four in the morning, we arrived at the Polish village.”<sup>82</sup> They had arrived at Volia Ostrovetska—a village that contained 79 Polish families and roughly 500 people. Not a single participant remembered the name of any of the Polish villages after the war.

At the edge of the village, the men stopped and prepared for their attack. Parts of the battalion were sent to nearby villages, while a larger group gathered near Volia Ostrovetska to receive further instruction. One person in this larger group, Kushk, recalled the situation: “When we arrived at the village, the OUN bandits told us that they are going to kill the Poles and our job is to stand guard around the village and make sure no one escapes.” He also said that since the OUN-B did not trust civilians like him, they left an OUN-B member with this group to guard them.<sup>83</sup> Sikorskii explained how the attack was organized: “There the bandits broke us into groups. In one group were two to three men with axes and in other groups were men with firearms. Part of the unit was to encircle the village. Then the organized groups were to head in and begin to destroy the Poles.”<sup>84</sup> Rybachuk added, “The signal to begin the attack was three red flares . . . after the flares [were fired], the bandits should begin to enter the homes and kill the Poles, including the elderly, women, and children.”<sup>85</sup>

After three red flares lit up the August dawn sky above the homes of the Polish families, the massacre commenced. Rybachuk recalled that as soon as the killing started he heard “screams, wailing and prayers” emanating from the villages.<sup>86</sup> The smaller groups “. . . went from home to home and knocked on the doors. When the Poles opened the door, they sprang into the homes and hacked the Poles to death with their axes.”<sup>87</sup> Sikorskii was in one of these groups: “. . . I went with Fedor Chikun into two Polish homes. In the first home lived an elderly couple whom I killed with my ax. I killed the elderly man by

80. In a similar account, Oleksandr Povshuk recalled how the UPA held a banquet before attacking Polish villages in June 1943 in the Rivne area. TsDAHOU, f.57, op.4, spr.344, ark.118.

81. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 5, ark.137.

82. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.186.

83. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.30.

84. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.162.

85. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 5, ark.138.

86. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 5, ark.138. Note similar victim and perpetrator testimony on the flares recorded decades apart. Compare Rybachuk’s testimony from Soviet archives with that of Maria Pendel, a Polish survivor. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 5, ark.138 and Popek, Wołyński testament, 115–16 (translated in Piotrowski, *Genocide*, 89).

87. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.186.

axing him in the head and then I did the same thing to the woman. Gritsiuk [the OUN-B leader] was in the home with me and Fedot Chikun—he forced us to kill the Poles.” Sikorskii continued, “We then went to the second Polish home. In the doorway, Fedot Chikun killed a girl with his ax and then went into the home. I followed after him. In the home, a young Polish woman attacked him with an ax, but I was able to push her over. While she was on the ground, or rather the floor, Fedot Chikun killed her with his ax.”<sup>88</sup>

The Ukrainians killed Poles in other ways, too. Sikorskii claimed, “I saw a former policeman from Mokroe, the name I forgot [Pavel Avramuk], take two or three girls from their home and throw them alive into the well, and then he fired into the well, killing them.”<sup>89</sup> Fedot Chikun reported the same types of killing: “I personally saw how young men, the names I don’t remember, threw still-living children into the well.”<sup>90</sup> Anyone who tried to escape was shot by the men surrounding the village. One participant accused Rybachuk of shooting a man and woman as they tried to escape. Rybachuk denied the charge.<sup>91</sup>

By the time the UPA had completed its killings in Volia Ostrovetska, according to Rybachuk, “There were the bodies of murdered children, women, the elderly and men in or by every single home.”<sup>92</sup> Sikorskii recounted, “The bloody action continued for a few hours. It was already morning by the time all of the Poles were killed and all of their belongings had been stolen. The bandits then lit the village on fire.”<sup>93</sup> Chikun confirmed these events: “When we arrived at the village, the bandits instructed us that they would kill the Poles and we would then collect all the possessions of those murdered.”<sup>94</sup> The UPA members brought matches with them to light the homes ablaze. When some of the men refused to light the homes on fire, the soldiers fired on the homes and the village began to burn.<sup>95</sup>

Following the destruction of Volia Ostrovetska, they moved on to the next village, Ostrivky. In Ostrivky, the killings resembled German actions against the Volhynian Jewish population in which a number of these men had already participated from 1941 to 1943. While some were killed in their homes, the UPA gathered the rest of the population in the town square not far from the school under the pretense of a meeting. The Poles learned their fate here and many began to pray and others to cry and scream.<sup>96</sup> Afterwards, the UPA took a group of men and children to prepared pits near the church. Antoni Ulewicz, age 21, was in this group:

They told me to go toward Trusiuk’s barnyard, where they were murdering the Poles who had been led out of the school. After a while, a Banderowiec [OUN-B nationalist] whom I recognized came riding up on a horse. I said ‘Good morning’ to him, but there was no reply. At Trusiuk’s, I saw a pit in

88. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.167.

89. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.162, 169.

90. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.208.

91. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.30–31, 209–10.

92. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 5, ark.138.

93. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.161.

94. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.208.

95. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.187.

96. Popek, *Ostrowki*, 120–21.

which naked people were lying. I was told to lie down with them . . . Three Ukrainians stood over us . . . Among them was someone I knew. I began to beg him to kill me with a bullet, rather than an axe or some other instrument. Julian [a Polish friend] heard me and said, ‘You’d be better off praying because there’s no use talking to him. They’re animals, not people.’ . . . After a moment of reflection, the Ukrainian acquaintance came up to the ditch, gave me his hand, and told me to get up.<sup>97</sup>

The acquaintance then led him to a hiding spot in a tunnel where Antoni remained until the end of the massacre.

Unlike the Jewish killings of 1941–42, the UPA did not have enough ammunition and weapons to shoot everyone. Instead, Poles were often put into pits and then hacked to death with axes, pitchforks and saws. While the UPA killed the men, other soldiers took women and children from the church area to the northeast in the direction of the village Sokół.<sup>98</sup> Prior to the murder of women, a man on horseback, presumably one of the kurin’ leaders, Klymchak or Stel’ mashchuk, came before the group and “read an order which condemned the Poles to death by shooting.”<sup>99</sup> Janina Martosińska was in this group and recounted her harrowing experience:

When we reached the destination, the two women pleaded again for our safety. Another [Ukrainian] replied, ‘In 1918 you did this to us.’ Then all hell broke loose. They drove us from the clearing into a field of stubble. There, they took a few people at a time, made them lie down, and shot them. Entire families of women and children were brought out. I waited until I could go with my own family, which was large and included my father’s three sisters with their children . . . I was 14, my brother was 12, and my mother, Marianna, was in the last weeks of her pregnancy . . . There were about 300 to 400 of us in all, mostly women and children from Ostrówki, but also a few from Wola Ostrowiecka. One of the Ukrainians killed half of us. His comrades snickered on the side at his courage. Finally, he got fed up, threw down his rifle and said, ‘Since I’m doing all the killing, the entire responsibility will fall on me. Then a few more of them came over, and they continued the killing. Not many of us remained alive, and now it was our turn. We went to our death together. We lay down on the ground: I, next to my mother and brother, and next to us, our aunts with the boys . . . The boys did not want to lie down and began to cry hysterically. Both of my aunts begged them to lie down but they wailed all the louder. I will remember their frightening screams for the rest of my life. There was a shot, and one of the children was silenced; then another shot, and the other child was stilled, as well. I prayed, ‘God grant that he will kill me, rather than wound me.’<sup>100</sup>

The few survivors from the Ostrivky executions have Germans to thank for their survival. A German unit came to investigate what was happening during the killings and this caused the UPA to speed up its executions in

97. Popek, *Wołyński testament*, 155–56 (translated in Piotrowski, *Genocide*, 87). For other examples of victims recognizing their killers as neighbors see Popek, *Ostrowki*, 122–23.

98. Note matching perpetrator and victim testimony. Zeniuk recounted shootings into pits, see HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 5, ark.187. For witness testimonies on the same shootings, see the Kuwałek family (Janina and Czesław) in Piotrowski, *Genocide*, 83–86.

99. Popek, *Ostrowki*, 107.

100. Popek, *Wołyński testament*, 100–5 (translated in Piotrowski, *Genocide*, 86–87).

Sokół, leading a number of victims to only be wounded.<sup>101</sup> Still, the UPA had murdered almost everyone and plundered all the homes in Ostrivky. Then the UPA set the village on fire and left. Following the operation, Klymchak reported to his superiors: “I liquidated all Poles from young to old. I burned all the buildings and took the possessions and livestock for the needs of the battalion.”<sup>102</sup>

By the end of August 30, 1943, the UPA had wiped these two Polish villages off the map—villages that had existed since the sixteenth century. The UPA killed over 1,000 Poles in this single operation. Although every man but one interrogated by Soviet authorities denied participating in the violence, it is clear that men from all three groups—the UPA, the OUN-B, and civilians—were involved in the killing in some fashion. At this time there is no direct evidence to determine the role of either UPA leaders Stel’mashchuk or Klymchak on the day of the massacres, but we can also assume that both were present given that they organized the operation.<sup>103</sup> It is not known if they participated directly in the killings.<sup>104</sup> If they did not kill any Poles, however, it would not be surprising since leaders were able to insulate themselves from participating in actual violence, while directing those with less authority to kill. For example, platoon leader Stepan Redesha claimed he “did not kill a single Pole,” but acknowledged, “As a result of my orders many Poles were killed.”<sup>105</sup>

In the following decades, local Ukrainians referred to this area as “the Field of Dead Bodies.” This field of dead bodies would not be recognized nor memorialized for decades until Poles came back to claim and remember their dead in the 1980s.

### Disaggregating Perpetrators and Motivations

The following section reviews four contributions of this paper. First, evidence presented here indicates that OUN-UPA leaders organized massacres in Volhynia. This was a well-coordinated operation. Consider again the documentation: the leader of the entire UPA, Kliachkiv’kyi, gave orders to UPA leaders to cleanse Volhynia of Poles. Stel’mashchuk, a UPA commander, substantiated these orders and his transmission of them to his subordinate battalion commander, Klymchak. There is also extensive testimony from rank-and-file members of the UPA and low-level leaders (NCO-types) of Klymchak’s involvement in organizing the cleansing of Poles in the Liuboml’ region. Therefore, it would be difficult to consider violence against Poles in Ostrivky and Volia Ostrovetska as mere coincidence. Yet the prevailing trend in Ukrainian histo-

101. Popek, *Ostrowki*, 106, 117, 137; Piotrowski, *Genocide*, 86, 90; Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo*, 506.

102. HDA SBU, spr.11315, t.1, ch.2, ark.16. Also cited in Filar, *Przed akcją “Wisła,”* 34; Piotrowski, *Genocide*, 180.

103. HDA SBU, spr.22085, ark. 45.

104. Polish testimony notes one Ukrainian leader on a white horse participating in killings. Popek, *Ostrowki*, 143.

105. This is the same Redesha who bragged about his other killings to Soviet authorities, so he was not protecting himself in his testimony. HDA SBU, f.13, spr.1020, ark.174.

riography is that there was no ethnic cleansing campaign at all, or that the cleansing was a peasant civil war that lacked structure, continuity, or any discernible pattern.<sup>106</sup>

Second, this analysis disaggregates categories of participants in the ethnic cleansing of Poles and allows us to go beyond the labeling of perpetrators as simply “nationalists,” an approach typical in much of the previous research. There were three general groups involved in the killings: UPA soldiers, OUN-B members, and civilians. Further, closer inspection of these groups shows that even they were not politically or biographically homogeneous. For example, the UPA organized killings, but the ranks of the UPA were not solely comprised of long-term nationalists who joined the OUN during the interwar period. Take for example Redesha, who was apolitical and had no connection to the nationalists before the war. He found himself in the auxiliary police largely out of anger for the repression his family experienced under the Soviets in 1939–1941.<sup>107</sup> Redesha joined with the UPA in the spring of 1943 alongside most of his police unit who, like him, had nowhere to go after the Germans disbanded the police. Likewise, Pylyp Rybachuk, also a low-ranking policeman, did not have a political background.<sup>108</sup> Although there were so-called professional revolutionaries in the UPA who were eager to carry out violence against Poles in Volhynia, there was also a spectrum of participants who were not nationalists at all.

Similarly, during spring and summer of 1943, demarcations between the OUN-B and UPA remained in flux. In some places the OUN-B, which initially was considered a political organization, had already become the UPA; in others, both existed simultaneously. Given the evidence in this case, it appears that OUN-B members from Krymne probably remained in their home villages and maintained contact with the UPA. One participant, Tkachuk, emphasized this distinction by noting certain Krymne OUN-B members were not in the UPA “Baida” unit, but were rather only “in connection with them and met up with the bandit groups for participation in pogroms against the Polish population.”<sup>109</sup> Though there were many former policemen in the OUN-B, they were not the only members, given that the Krymne OUN-B included both former police leaders like Andrei Gritsiuk, and men who had not served in the police like Timofei Pototskii.<sup>110</sup> This again demonstrates that there were a variety of participants from diverse backgrounds with different degrees of radicalization that ended up in the OUN and participated in violence.<sup>111</sup>

Lastly, there were hundreds of civilians from the Ratne and Liuboml’ regions who were recruited solely for the operation by the UPA. Recruitment

106. A notable exception to this trend is Ihor Il’iushyn’s balanced and well-researched publications.

107. For more discussion of Redesha, see McBride, “A Sea of Blood and Tears,” 235–45.

108. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.163.

109. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 28, ark.175–76.

110. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.162.

111. It is possible to extend this discussion to the role of the OUN’s security service, the SB. In this operation, the SB and UPA worked together, despite the SB’s separate command structure. The Krymne SB included former policemen, as well as civilians.

was not an anomaly, as the UPA undertook this type of measure whenever they did not have enough manpower for an operation.<sup>112</sup> These were the men the UPA told to bring their axes to a meeting place, with few other instructions. Most of these men claimed they had no idea what they were going to do until they reached the Polish villages, as Sikorskii's account demonstrates: ". . . the bandits did not tell us anything in the beginning, only that we have arrived at a Polish village and we need to kill the Poles since the Poles are killing Ukrainians. There was nothing we could do since we were subordinated to the bandits."<sup>113</sup> Still, it is difficult to believe that after two days of intermingling with nationalist units these men had no idea where they were going until the last moment, further evidenced by the fact Rybachuk told his godson to go home during the journey. It would also be wrong to envision the civilians as men who had not yet participated in any violence, since a number of them had already served in the police as well. Again, this detailed information provides a more complex picture of the peasants: some were former policemen, some had already participated in ethnic cleansing, and for some this was the first time they were involved in violence at all. This disaggregation of actors' varied backgrounds and trajectories echoes similar findings from Omer Bartov's work on the Galician city of Buchach. Like the microhistorical analysis provided here, Bartov shows that within a community of perpetrators, there can be a diversity of backgrounds and motives for participation.<sup>114</sup>

Third, this article cautions against the blanket application of the "triple occupation thesis" (or in some cases, the "double occupation thesis"), made prominent originally by Jan Gross and more recently and importantly by Timothy Snyder in *Black Earth* and *Bloodlands*.<sup>115</sup> These scholars emphasize the need to examine internal conflicts and local violence in the borderlands through the lens of the triple occupation of their changing governments (Soviet, German, and Soviet again). They argue that the rapid succession of brutal regimes each empowered different sections of communities to take out frustrations against neighbors and enemies, and produced ruptures and grievances in society that ultimately generated more violence. Further, they assert that the murderous programs of the Soviets and Germans created a mental framework through which nationalists could conceive of mass violence like

112. Motyka has discussed a similar situation: in the summer of 1943 the UPA gathered men from the village of Janówka for an action against Gaj, ordering them to bring axes and pitchforks. Grzegorz Motyka, *Cień Kłyma Sawura: Polsko-ukraiński konflikt pamięci* (Gdańsk, 2013), 98. For another example, see the testimony of Adam Demchuk, a Kostopil' raion resident, participating, perhaps under compulsion, in the Ivanova Dolyna action HDA SBU, f.13, spr.1020, ark.15–22. On the issue of forced recruitment by the OUN-UPA, see McBride, "A Sea of Blood and Tears," 258–313.

113. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 22, ark.163.

114. Omer Bartov, "Wartime Lies and Other Testimonies: Jewish-Christian Relations in Buczacz, 1939–1944," *East European Politics and Societies* 25, no.3 (August 2011): 486–511.

115. For recent works see Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (New York, 2015), 152, 156, 165, 214; Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York, 2010), 196, 485n20; Snyder, *Reconstruction of Nations*, 154–78; Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community of Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, 2001).

ethnic cleansing. Finally, the “opportunistic collaborator,” the prototypical perpetrator according to these scholars, is said to take advantage of each totalitarian regime and voluntarily collaborate in violence time and again as a means to self-sustain and profit.<sup>116</sup>

Numerous problems exist with such an injudicious application of this framework. First, the argument that processes of extreme ethnicization, racialization, and nationalization which accompanied both the Soviet and German occupations had an effect on the imagination of OUN-B leaders is true, but only to an extent. As presented herein, evidence demonstrates that the OUN-UPA leaders embraced the idea of violence against ethnic enemies in both ideology and practice long before the Soviet occupation of 1939 and the German occupation of Volhynia in 1941.<sup>117</sup> Additionally, one of the key architects of ethnic cleansing, Dmytro Kliachkivs’kyi, did not participate in any German mass shootings, and although Iurii Stel’ mashchuk served briefly in a militia under the Germans, there is little reason to assume this experience was formative in teaching him how to kill.<sup>118</sup> Likewise, key Volhynian nationalist leaders like Iakiv Busel or Leonid Stupnyts’kyi, among others, also did not learn to kill from Germans during the occupation. It was not necessary for them to watch massacres of Jews in order to destroy a Polish village.

Similarly, concerning the “opportunistic collaborator,” there is also no evidence in this case of widespread shared collaboration in police forces from the Soviet to German occupation in Volhynia. As demonstrated in this example, none of the policemen present in the Liuboml’ massacre, nor any of the other major operations in Volhynia, can be linked to participating in violence in the Soviet police from 1939–1941. This is easier to understand when considering that the OUN-B and the Germans ensured that this overlap in collaboration did not happen in the summer of 1941 by killing every communist and former Soviet official possible.<sup>119</sup> As a result, we cannot make causal connections and “presumptions of continuity” between rank-and-file OUN-UPA as members of the Soviet police in 1939–1941, and members of the Nazi auxiliary police, as

116. On the collaborator trope, Gross, *Neighbors*, 117, 156; Marci Shore, “Conversing with Ghosts: Jedwabne, Zydokomuna, and Totalitarianism,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6, no.2 (June 2005): 352; John Connelly, Mark Roseman, Andriy Portnov, Michael David-Fox, and Timothy Snyder, “Timothy Snyder, Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 13, no.3 (September 2011): 350; Timothy Snyder, “What We Need to Know About the Holocaust,” *New York Review of Books*, September 30, 2010, 81. For criticism of this trope see McBride, “A Sea of Blood and Tears,” 250–51.

117. Snyder, “Causes,” 209. Snyder made the argument that the OUN-B infiltrated the Soviet police from 1939–1941 and thus gathered experience about specific methods and possibilities of mass violence. There is little evidence, however, that the OUN-B successfully infiltrated the Soviet police to any serious degree and it is unclear why OUN-B leaders needed Soviet experience to understand the potential efficacy of mass violence to achieve political goals.

118. McBride, “A Sea of Blood and Tears,” 267–78. Stel’ mashchuk did serve briefly in an early militia in Zhytoyrm in the summer of 1941, but there is no evidence of his participation in mass killings under the Germans. HDA SBU, spr.22085, ark.26–9.

119. Extensive archival research, including an analysis of over 1,000 policemen, shows hardly any personnel overlap. McBride, “A Sea of Blood and Tears,” 97–115, 278–99.

a means to explain violence.<sup>120</sup> Snyder himself admits that “double collaboration,” which although he believes it was “widespread,” should be the “topic of a detailed empirical study.”<sup>121</sup> This article presents an empirical challenge to this idea, though further micro-historical work is needed.<sup>122</sup>

Of course, there were some former auxiliary police members who participated in the Holocaust under the Germans and later in violence as UPA members. However, here, too, the connection between both forms of participation should not be overstated. The argument is made that the Holocaust “transformed Ukrainian boys in Volhynia into the kind of men they could never have been otherwise,” and that this transformation was crucial in providing the manpower necessary for ethnic cleansing.<sup>123</sup> Yet it should not be assumed that participation in the Holocaust somehow *caused* participation in ethnic cleansing. Many policemen (and seasoned killers) ended up in the UPA because they lacked choices once their police service ended (like Rybachuk) or because the UPA forcibly recruited (or impressed) them to join, not simply because they had “blood on their hands,” which some argue desensitized them to further killing.<sup>124</sup> We know that some brutalized policemen simply went home after their police tenure, which shows that brutalization in and of itself does not necessarily lead to more violence.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, the proximity of overlapping mass violence episodes should not overshadow local situational factors and mechanisms by which violence can be generated. The OUN-UPA either found or created killers irrespective of their participation in the Holocaust.

This leads us to a fourth contribution of this paper: the OUN-UPA used various methods to entice men to kill. This could have been through ideology, coercion from OUN-UPA leaders, or provision of goods for joining in violence. For example, there is some evidence OUN-UPA leaders created an ideological framework through which some rank and file leaders perceived the violence. As Redesha, a platoon leader, noted, “We burned Polish settlements so there would be no trace of their existence and so that the Poles would never again try to lay claim to Ukraine. It was explained to us [by OUN-UPA] that by doing this it would make it easier to bring about the coming ‘Ukrainian revolu-

120. The quote is from Rich’s analysis of the Ukrainian personnel in the L’viv militia of 1941–2. David Alan Rich, “Armed Ukrainians in L’viv: Ukrainian Militia, Ukrainian Police, 1941 to 1942,” *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 48, no. 3 (2014): 273.

121. Snyder, *Black Earth*, 214, 372.

122. The same reservations about the “double occupation” thesis are shared by Christopher Browning in his recent review of *Black Earth*. Christopher Browning, “A New Vision of the Holocaust,” *New York Review of Books*, October 8, 2015. This author’s larger study of this topic will be present in the forthcoming manuscript on violence during the Nazi occupation of Volhynia.

123. Snyder, *Reconstruction of Nations*, 160.

124. Snyder, *Reconstruction of Nations*, 158–62. Elsewhere, I underscore the complex conditions under which men become involved in groups and organizations that kill. McBride, “A Sea of Blood and Tears,” 300–13. On the same point, Stathis Kalyvas argues that the “absence of alternatives often produces collaboration irrespective of the level of popular satisfaction or lack thereof, which may be then wrongly interpreted as a reflection of legitimacy,” Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge, 2006), 93.

125. McBride, “A Sea of Blood and Tears,” 293–94.

tion.” Redesha claimed he “blindly believed” this justification, and whether he was a genuine convert or not (as he may have used OUN-UPA ideology as a defense in his case), this worldview likely influenced other participants in the violence, either during the killings or ex post facto.<sup>126</sup>

For others, especially the civilian participants, ideology did not necessarily motivate them to kill, but rather, coercion explains their participation. For example, Sikorskii, the only man to admit to killing Poles, claimed he killed under threats of the OUN-B leader Gritsiuk. Though this too may have been a trial defense tactic, such threats were often very real. One Polish victim from the attacks provided proof of this pressure: “Evidently, after a while, some of the shooters refused to go on with their ghastly task. The Ukrainian leader read the order again . . . and said that those who do not carry it out will be shot.”<sup>127</sup>

As demonstrated in the anecdote that started this article, despite the fact that Sikorskii claimed he was forced to kill, he took a helping of Polish goods home from the villages he helped to annihilate. Bubela, who gave us Sikorskii’s story, also recounted how another Krymne resident, Trofim Shava, surprisingly had a new horse after this operation commenced. Bubela later found out from a neighbor that Shava participated in the reprisal and allegedly killed a Polish priest and took his horse.<sup>128</sup> For first-time killers, the enticement of material goods during an occupation where starvation and poverty were daily realities must have played a role for future involvement for some regardless of how they first joined in violence, just as it did in the Holocaust shootings.

Finally, it is important to note that these explanatory factors for killing need not be mutually exclusive. For example, ideology and material enticements easily could have comingled in the minds of the some killers at one point in time or another, while for others it could have been a different combination of influences and factors.

This study has shown how OUN and UPA leaders recruited average Volhynian peasants and policemen to participate in ethnic cleansing. In line with growing social science research on the micro-mechanisms of violence, the interpretation offered here looks beyond structural causes to explain individual mobilization for murder.<sup>129</sup> Many of the peasants in Volhynia had no prior experience in killing neighbors or any ideological worldview to justify such

126. HDA SBU, f.13, spr.1020, ark.173–74.

127. Popek, *Ostrowki*, 107, 123. For an overview of the coercion thesis, Ivan Ermakoff, *Ruling Oneself Out: A Theory of Collective Abdications* (Durham, 2008), 61–91.

128. HDA SBU, spr.67454, tom 4, ark.188.

129. For useful reviews of this literature see Evgeny Finkel and Scott Straus, “Macro, Meso, and Micro Research on Genocide: Gains, Shortcomings, and Future Areas of Inquiry,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 7, no.1 (2012): 56–67; Erica Chenoweth and Adria Lawrence, eds., *Rethinking Violence: States and Non-State Actors in Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass, 2010); For examples of specific cases, Aliza Luft, “Toward a Dynamic Theory of Action at the Micro-Level of Genocide: Killing, Desistance, and Saving in 1994 Rwanda,” *Sociological Theory* 33, no.2 (June 2015): 148–72; Jocelyn Viterna, “Pulled, Pushed, and Persuaded: Explaining Women’s Mobilization into the Salvadoran Guerrilla Army,” *American Journal of Sociology* 112, no.1 (July 2006): 1–45; Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy Weinstein, “Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War,” *American Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 2 (2008): 436–55.

violence, while some who did have experience with organized killing also did not necessarily want to continue. Thus it was through a mix of coercion, ideology, and rewards that nationalist leaders were able to recruit average men to participate in heinous crimes. Without these thousands of participants, the ethnic cleansing campaign never would have reached its scale or magnitude. To this same point, if there was a lesson that Ukrainian nationalist leaders may have learned in German service or from the Germans in general—rather than the “idea” that ethnic cleansing is possible—is that it was possible to get men to kill who had no vested interest in the politics of killing.