



Re-Vision of History

Russian Historical Propaganda and Ukraine

Edited by Volodymyr Yermolenko

This publication was compiled by NGO Internews Ukraine with the support of the European Union and the International Renaissance Foundation within the framework of the Civic Synergy Project and under the auspices of the Ukrainian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. Its content is the exclusive responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union and the International Renaissance Foundation.



This project is funded
by the European Union



УДК 94(477):[316.776.23(470):004.77]=111
R30

Re-Vision of history. Russian historical propaganda and Ukraine / Y. Hrytsak et al. ; ed. by V. Yermolenko. — Kyiv : K.I.S., 2019. — 92 p.

ISBN 978-617-684-247-7

The book *Re-Vision of History* has two main pillars: an analysis of the key narratives of Russian historical propaganda about Ukraine, and comments on those narratives from Ukrainian historians. These narratives were identified within the analysis of the Russian Internet segment, which was carried out with the help of neural networks and other methods of machine learning. The book consists of six main narratives with respective messages and sub-messages demonstrating how Russia re-interprets Ukrainian history in order to justify its military aggression. The book also contains responses of Ukrainian historians to these narratives and messages, in particular an analysis provided by experts of the project *LikBez: Historical Front*, and a conversation with well-known Ukrainian historian and intellectual Yaroslav Hrytsak.

УДК 94(477):[316.776.23(470):004.77]=111

- Yaroslav Hrytsak • Kyrylo Halushko • Yana Prymachenko •
- Hennadii Yefimenko • Serhii Hromenko • Ivan Homeniuk •
- Volodymyr Yermolenko • Oksana Iliuk • Olena Sorotsynska • Artur Kadelnik •

Expert support:

ЛІКБЕЗ
історичний фронт

Data analysis:

SINGULAREX

© Hrytsak Y., Halushko K., Prymachenko Y.,
Yefimenko H., Hromenko S., Homeniuk I.,
Yermolenko V., Iliuk O., Sorotsynska O.,
Kadelnik A., 2019

ISBN 978-617-684-247-7

© Internews Ukraine, 2019

Contents

- Introduction** 4
- Executive summary** 6
- I. "Outskirts", "Russia's shadow", "fascists":**
- Russian historical propaganda about Ukraine 9
 - Narrative I. "Ukraine is Russia's failed shadow" 10
 - Narrative II. "Ukraine is an artificial project of the West" 13
 - Narrative III. "Crimea, Donbas, and South-East of Ukraine should belong to Russia" 16
 - Narrative IV. "USSR was a powerful empire, and Stalin was a hero" 21
 - Narrative V. "All Ukrainian nationalists were fascists" 24
 - Narrative VI. "Ukraine forgot about the victory over Nazism" 28
- II. Response from Ukrainian Historians: Project "LikBez.**
- A Historical Front" 31**
 - Narrative I. "Ukraine is Russia's failed shadow" 32
 - Narrative II. "Ukraine is an artificial project of the West" 38
 - Narrative III. "Crimea, Donbas, and South-East of Ukraine should belong to Russia" 43
 - Narrative IV. "USSR was a powerful empire, and Stalin was a hero" 50
 - Narrative V. "All Ukrainian nationalists were fascists" 52
 - Narrative VI. "Ukraine forgot about the victory over Nazism" 60
- III. Response from Ukrainian Historians: Yaroslav Hrytsak 65**
 - Narrative I. "Ukraine is Russia's failed shadow" 66
 - Narrative II. "Ukraine is an artificial project of the West" 70
 - Narrative III. "Crimea, Donbas and South-East of Ukraine Should Belong to Russia" 76
 - Narrative IV. "The USSR was a powerful empire, and Stalin was a hero" 79
 - Narrative V. "All Ukrainian nationalists were fascists" 82
 - Narrative VI. "Ukraine forgot about the victory over Nazism" 85
- Authors and project team 88**

Introduction

Volodymyr Yermolenko

Oksana Iliuk

History is not something that happened a long time ago. It is not only about dates, bronze monuments, forgotten heroes and anti-heroes. It is not only about something we learn from school textbooks.

History is about something that keeps on going around us. The past is woven into us as personal memory. Essentially, we are the history that happened to us, and the stories we tell about ourselves.

Ukrainian historian Yaroslav Hrytsak likes repeating a phrase by L. P. Hartley¹ that history is a different country. In it, things are not the same as those we are used to. It speaks a different language, uses other words and other meanings.

This opens the way for a tempting desire to force history to speak as you need it. This tempts some people to torture it, because for the larger part of human history different forms of torture were the queen of evidence. The more defenseless someone or something is, the easier it is to use torture.

History is defenseless because it is not able to defend itself. It can be protected only by people. These people should preferably be those who know history better than others.

It so happened that history became the core of Russia's current aggression against Ukraine. In order to give sense to this aggression, to make it understandable for people, the Kremlin tells those people stories about history. In this way, the dead began to rule over the living, and the past began to rule over the future. For each act of aggression, some specific narrative was "adapted" to justify Russia's "rights".

The illegal annexation of Crimea was justified by the statement that Crimea "always belonged to Russia", and that it is the "sacred place of Russian Christianity". Russian aggression in Donbas was justified by the statement that Donbas found itself part of Ukraine "by accident", and that it is populated only by "Russian-speaking" people that risk being exterminated by approaching Ukrainian "Nazis", because, anyway, all Ukrainians are "Nazis". Attempts to bring the "Russian World" to Odesa or Kharkiv were justified by the messages that a mythical "Novorossiya" has existed on these lands since the 18th century, and that these territories would have not been Ukrainian had it not been for the Russian tsars. The "morale" of pro-Russian "fighters" in Donetsk and Luhansk was fueled by the statement that Ukraine forgot about the victory over Nazism because it became "fascist" itself. Hence, Russian propaganda stated that the same hatred should be applied to it as to the "German Nazi invaders" almost 80 years ago.

1 See his story *The Go-Between*.

All these narratives make up the puzzle of something that we call “Russian historical propaganda” in this book. This propaganda is not always purely “disinformation”, not always “fake news”, but it is something significantly larger and more complicated. It uses a mixture of facts and fictions, knowledge and manipulations. This is precisely propaganda in its new form – an attempt to put through one’s narrative and devalue your opponent’s narrative by using simplistic and unambiguous statements, often backed by strong emotions. This is how Russia carries out the “re-vision of history”, imposing its own vision based on complete denial of Ukrainian and, more broadly, European attempts to demonstrate the complexity of historical developments.

This re-vision does not contain “half-tones”, doubts or ambiguities. It does not argue that history is multiple, that it is often not logical, that layers from different times and geographies are intertwined in it.

At the same time, Russian propaganda, as always, attacks proactively. It accuses everybody else of falsifying history. It says that others – the Ukrainians, the Europeans, the Americans – turn history into a farce, and only the Russians tell the truth, putting everything back into place. Annexation of territory is preceded by *annexation of history*.

In this book, we are *not striving* to respond to one mythology with another mythology. We are not striving to provide the Ukrainian “counter-narratives” and the Ukrainian “counter-propaganda” in response to Russian propaganda. We are willing to demonstrate that *everything is complex and complicated*. Because truth is complex, and it often consists of numerous factors, and a lot of different rivers flow into it.

We studied the main narratives of Russian historical propaganda that are popular in the Russian and Ukrainian segments of the Internet. To do this, we used big data analysis for which over 850,000 posts in VK and 16, 000 posts in Facebook were selected (period: from January 1, 2016 through April 1, 2019). Out of them, we selected “target” posts (containing key history-linked words we were interested in), i.e. 248, 000 posts from VK and 2,500 posts from Facebook. Out of this array of information, we selected the most popular posts and topics, which were analyzed and used to formulate the key narratives.

In order to receive responses to these narratives, we turned to Ukrainian historians whom we trust. There is Yaroslav Hrytsak, one of the most recognized Ukrainian historians and among the most influential Ukrainian intellectuals. And there is the research project, *LikBez. Historical Front* (Kyrylo Halushko, Yana Prymachenko, Henadii Yefimenko, Serhii Hromenko, Ivan Homeniuk) that has been carefully explaining various pages of Ukrainian history for a long time.

A short description of the main topics in this book can be found in the *Executive Summary* section. But, of course, the devil is in the detail, and that is why we strongly encourage you to read the full version of the book.

Executive summary

The book, *Re-Vision of History: Russian Historical Propaganda and Ukraine*, contains analysis of the key narratives of Russian historical propaganda about Ukraine, and the response of Ukrainian historians to these narratives.

For the purposes of analysis of the Russian narratives, we selected over 850,000 posts in VK and 16,000 posts in Facebook (period: from January 1, 2016 through April 1, 2019). Out of this information, we selected our “target” posts (containing the history-related key words we were interested in), which included 248,000 posts from VK and 2,500 posts from Facebook. Out of this array of information, we selected the most popular posts and topics, which were analyzed and used to formulate the key narratives. The work with big data was performed by the **Singularex** company; the data were analyzed and classified by the *Internews-Ukraine* analysts **Oksana Iliuk**, **Olena Sorotsynska**, and **Artur Kadelnyk**.

The response of historians consists of two parts. First, there is an analysis by experts of a historians’ project called *LikBez. Historical Front* (**Kyrylo Halushko**, **Yana Prymachenko**, **Hennadii Yefimenko**, **Serhii Hromenko**, and **Ivan Homeniuk**).

Second, we conducted an interview with **Yaroslav Hrytsak**, one of the most recognized Ukrainian historians and public intellectuals, professor of the Ukrainian Catholic University.

All sections have a similar structure: the text is divided into six main narratives with respective messages and sub-messages.

Narrative I. “Ukraine is a failed shadow of Russia”. In this narrative, Russian historical propaganda claims that Ukraine is an “outskirt” of Russia, and the word “outskirt” [*okraina*] allegedly gave the name to the country; that Russia is the successor of Rus’; and that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has no grounds for independence.

The response by historians provides a detailed analysis of the toponym *Ukraine* and its connection with the terms *krai* [border] and *kraina* [country]; it furthermore argues that the name *Ukraine* was used as early as in the 12th century. The primary sense of the word *Ukraine* is closer to the word *country* than to *okraina* (“outskirt”). The historians also argue that the debate about the “successor” of Rus’ (Russia, Ukraine or Belarus) is meaningless, since the medieval communities of Rus’ did not conceive themselves in “national” terms. Ukrainian historians also provide arguments in favor of independence of the Ukrainian Church, both related to the church’s history (Kyiv received Christianity from Constantinople), and to the modern logic of Eastern Christianity (sovereign states usually receive their autocephalous church).

Narrative II. “Ukraine is an artificial project of the West”. In this narrative, Russian propaganda maintains that Ukraine is a “fictional” state, that it is a “project” of Western countries aimed at weakening Russia. They claim that “Ukraine was invented by the Poles and the Austrians”, that “the Ukrainian language was created artificially”, and that “Ukraine took away the lands that belonged to others”.

Ukrainian historians, in their response, point out that any state is a “project” and “invention” because it is a product of collective imagination and concurrence of different factors. Russia itself is a “project”, even a later one than Ukraine: whereas the political “project” entitled Ukraine was formed in the middle of the 17th century with Khmelnytsky’s uprising, the political “project” Russia was formed at the end of the 17th – early 18th century, during the era of Peter the Great. The question in general is not whether the country is a “project” or not, but to what extent these “projects” are viable and sustainable. The Ukrainian political project that survived wars, Holodomors, repressions and external aggressions, proved its right to life. As to the point that Ukraine took away lands belonging to others, Ukrainian historians draw attention to the difference between the state concept of Ukraine (local community that forms its own state) and of Russia (empire). The lands that were allegedly “given” to Ukraine by the Russian Empire or the USSR were, in fact, lands where the majority of the population was ethnic Ukrainians and, therefore, the emergence of Ukraine as a state is completely in line with the modern principle of self-determination of nations.

Narrative III. “Crimea, Donbas, and South-East of Ukraine belong to Russia”. In this narrative, Russian historical propaganda builds on its favorite statements that Crimea and Donbas allegedly always belonged to Russia, and the south-east of Ukraine is, in fact, “Novorossiya”.

In their response, Ukrainian historians claim that Crimea belonged to Russia only for 5.6% of its written history (instead, it belonged to the Crimean Khanate for 11.4% of its history); Russians constituted a relative majority in Crimea only for 4% of its written history, and the absolute majority only for 2.5%. Donbas traditionally had its own regional identity although again the majority of its population – at least in rural territories – were and still are Ukrainians. The myth about “Novorossiya” is related to the history of colonization of the Black Sea and the Azov territories by the Russian Empire in the 18th century; however, the principal driving force of that colonization was Ukrainian peasants, and not Russians.

Narrative IV. “USSR was a powerful empire, and Stalin was a hero”. Another narrative of Russian propaganda glorifies the Soviet past and creates a new cult of Stalin. According to Russian statements, it was the USSR that created Ukraine, transformed it from a backward country into a progressive industrial state.

Ukrainian historians argue that the statement about the Soviet industrial “breakthrough” ignores one substantial detail: the huge tragic price of that industrialization. Industrialization took place everywhere in Europe in the 20th century, and it had so many victims in the USSR alone: in Ukraine alone it had approximately 1 million victims of the 1921 famine; nearly 1 million victims of the 1917–1921 civil war; 3,900,000 people who died during the 1932–1933 Holodomor; approximately 1 million victims of the 1946 famine – and this list can be continued. The statement that the USSR created Ukraine turns everything upside down: it was the reality of the Ukrainian national movement that forced the Bolsheviks to seek compromise, to create the USSR as a federation, and to introduce the policy of “Ukrainization” in the 1920s.

Narrative V. “All Ukrainian nationalists were fascists”. This is one of the most important statements of Russian historical propaganda. Basically, it claims that all

nationalists in the 1930s – 1940s were “fascists”, and they were all Hitler’s “servants”. It is furthermore maintained that the *Glory to Ukraine!* slogan is a borrowed translation of the Nazi salutation, *Heil Hitler!*

According to the arguments put forward by Ukrainian historians, the question about the closeness of Ukrainian integral nationalism of the 1930s to fascism at that time is widely debated and is related to the question of various types of nationalisms of the 1930s – 1940s. As to collaborationism of Ukrainian nationalists with the Nazis and their participation in Nazis’ crimes, it can be said that some episodes that are hyped by Russian propaganda were debunked a long time ago, and some were debunked recently. It is important that, according to the decision of the Nuremberg Tribunal, neither the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists nor the Ukrainian Insurgent Army were recognized as criminal organizations. Ukrainian historians emphasize that the Nazis were not interested in the Ukrainian independence movement, and hence the leaders of Ukrainian nationalists were sent to prison. However, another important conclusion is that the opening of Ukrainian archives thanks to de-communization can make it possible to probe deeper into the involvement or non-involvement of Ukrainian nationalists in crimes committed by the Nazis. As to the *Glory to Ukraine!* slogan, Ukrainian historians argue that it appeared as early as the 1917–1921 independence period, and its roots go back to the 19th century, to Taras Shevchenko’s works.

Narrative VI. “Ukraine forgot about the victory over Nazism”. An important element of Russian historical propaganda is an attempt to devalue Ukraine’s role in the victory over Nazism. One of the messages claims that the new Ukrainian memory policy ignores the “great victory”. Another narrative argues that it was the Russians who liberated Europe from Nazis.

In their response, Ukrainian historians emphasize that Ukraine stepped away from the Soviet interpretation of the 1945 victory, because 1) for Ukraine, the war started not in 1941, but in 1939, 2) Ukraine stresses not only the importance of victory, but the huge number of victims caused by this war, including the unjustified victims who perished at the hands of the Soviet regime itself. Approximately 7,000,000 representatives of Ukraine fought for the Red Army, which makes up approximately 23% of the entire size of the Armed Forces of the USSR. The overall losses of the Red Army totaled 8.6 million people, of which Ukrainians accounted for nearly 3.5–4 million. As to portraying Russia as the only “liberator” of Europe, Ukrainian historians emphasize that out of all Soviet republics, Ukraine and Belarus suffered the most as a result of the war. Furthermore, the Russians were by no means the only ones who fought against Nazism – Ukrainians accounted for 22–23% of the Red Army, and they performed many heroic deeds; 2,000 Ukrainians received the title of ‘Hero of the Soviet Union’.

**I. “Outskirts”, “Russia’s shadow”, “fascists”:
Russian historical propaganda
about Ukraine**

Narrative I

“Ukraine is Russia’s failed shadow”

An important narrative of Russian historical propaganda is the statement that Ukraine cannot be an independent state because it has always been part of the “Russian World” (“Russkiy mir”).

Let us elaborate on the messages of this narrative in more detail.

Message 1²

“Ukraine is ‘outskirts’ of Russia”

Oksana Iliuk

“The Ukrainians do not exist as a nation” – this is the beginning of a post in the community *RN/Nation: Freedom: Motherland/* in the Russian social network VK³. The author of the post believes that an attempt to make a statement about the separate Ukrainian nation is a manipulation. The goal of such statements is to “tear off part of the Russian lands from Russia, and weaken Russia in the future”. Posts containing similar messages are rather popular in VK⁴.

Russian commenters often try to profit from the fact that the name of Ukraine (*Ukrayina*) originates from the word *okraina* [outskirts]. They only differ regarding the hypotheses whose *okraina* it is – the outskirts of Poland or Russia. Some Russian historians claim that Galician Ukrainophiles began to use the name *Ukraine* only in 1899⁵. The author of the post “What does Ukraine have to do with this?” claims that the name *Ukraine* was artificially separated from the word *okraina* in order to claim that Ukraine is an independent country, and not part of Russia⁶.

2 See the response of Ukrainian historians: p 32 – Likbez, p 66 – Hrytsak

3 <https://vk.com/@-15667008-net-takoi-nacii-kak-ukraincy>

4 <https://vk.com/soutukraine>

5 Okraina – Ukraina / LiveJournal // <https://narvasadataa.livejournal.com/10263.html> <https://narvasadataa.livejournal.com/10263.html>

6 What does Ukraine have to do with that? / Narodnyy Korrespondent // <https://nk.org.ua/obshchestvo/prichem-zdes-ukraina-188047>

Message 2⁷

"Russia is the successor of Rus; Ukrainians are 'Russians'"

Message 2a

"Ukrainians are Russians"

Oksana Iliuk

"There is no ancient Ukrainian nation, and it has never existed," is another point of Russian historical propaganda.

According to this point, there was one nation living on the lands of the entire Rus' that had a common culture, language, and history since the 9th century, and which has been called "Russian" since then. Pro-Russian publicist Oles Buzina shared this point in various messages referring to his mental connection with the unified "Russian" people: "I call myself both a Ukrainian and a Russian, because a Ukrainian for me is a kind of Russian. Before the [Bolshevik] revolution, it was called a tri-une Russian nation consisting of Little Russians, Belarussians, and Great Russians"⁸. "Everyone believing they are Ukrainians are deceived Russians," he states in one of his posts⁹.

The author of one of the posts in the community RUSSIAN REVIEW||RUSSIA||PUTIN in VK claims that Ukrainians and Russians were one nation that was divided artificially, and the Ukrainian idea was artificially imposed from the outside¹⁰.

On the other hand, there is a popular idea of Ukrainians and Russians being "brotherly nations". "The Russian and the Ukrainian people have never quarreled. We are brothers," Vladimir Putin once said¹¹. The interesting point about this statement is that it enters in clear contradiction with the statement about "non-existence" of Ukrainians. Indeed, only two separate nations can be "brothers" to each other.

Message 2b

"Only Russia is the successor of Kyivan Rus'"

Artur Kadelnyk

An important statement of Russian historical propaganda says that Russia is the only successor of medieval Kyivan Rus'.

7 See the response of Ukrainian historians: p 33 – Likbez, p 68 – Hrytsak

8 <https://www.facebook.com/buzina.org/photos/a.191375387591848/2280812408648125/?type=3&th eater>

9 https://vk.com/wall347260249_412171?reply=412342&thread=412175

10 https://vk.com/pyckoe_no_pycku

11 Putin: Russians and Ukrainians never had a fight / regnum // <https://regnum.ru/news/2593339.html>

The Russian version of Wikipedia describes the following order of legal succession of Russian statehood: “ancient Russian state (Kyivan Rus’) – apanage principalities – Russian (*Russkoe*) Tsardom – Russian Empire – Soviet Union – Russian Federation”.

This idea is also frequently voiced in Russian social media. For instance, a post¹² in the community *Donetsk, Luhansk, Novorossiya* (25,000 views in the Russian social media VK) reads that in the era of Kyivan Rus’ Kyiv was a city on the periphery of the state since the geographic center of Rus’ was in the area between Smolensk and Moscow.

Russian propaganda also uses the idea of “large-scale movement from the north to the south”. According to this statement, starting from the last third of the 11th century and as a result of internecine quarreling over the Kyiv throne and constant invasions by nomads, the majority of the population of Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Pereiaslav principalities moved to the north. Respectively, the “Rus’” allegedly moved to the territory of contemporary Russia. Therefore, the Russian propaganda says that only Russia deserves to be called the successor of Kyivan Rus’ while Ukraine and Belarus lost this right.

Message 3¹³

“Ukrainian church has no right to independence”

Artur Kadelnyk

After the Tomos on autocephaly was granted to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the Russian media commented that it had been granted with violations and, therefore, the fact of its granting is allegedly invalid and makes the Ukrainian church subordinate to Constantinople. Russian propaganda argues that there is only one canonical church in Ukraine – the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, which is subordinate to the Russian Orthodox Church. In the opinion of Russian “media” (or rather propaganda outlets) like *Russia 1*, *RT*, *Regnum* and others, the Tomos was granted to schismatics and, thus, it has legitimized the schism instead of healing it. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate is allegedly the only one that may exist in the territory of Ukraine since it is “supported” by a larger number of people than those supporting the newly-created Orthodox Church of Ukraine.¹⁴

Russian information outlets also refer to the fact that Moscow church leaders continued to bear the title of “Metropolitans of Kyiv” for many centuries. They try to prove that the contemporary borders of the states have no impact on the church borders, and the Russian Orthodox Church is just a continuation of the same Orthodox Church of Rus’. This fact was voiced, among other things, by Ukrainian pro-Russian academic Petro Tolochko in one of his interviews¹⁵.

12 https://vk.com/wall-66621324_2020132?w=page-66621324_53227127

13 **See the response of Ukrainian historians: p 36 – Likbez**

14 <https://www.facebook.com/buzina.org/posts/1913704665358903>

15 Petr Tolochko: “Having received the tomos, Ukraine lost. Let’s hope temporarily” / Oles Buzina // <https://buzina.org/golos-naroda/3214-tolochko-tomos.html?fbclid=IwAR34nBu2UE2lpA6UxoIlmDSnbotj0DpSHeHQhpWrjAnV2vdEW7bkTdnOuPM>

Narrative II

"Ukraine is an artificial project of the West"

Russian historical propaganda often puts forward the idea that Ukraine has never existed as an independent state, and it is a "project" of foreigners who "invented" Ukraine in order to weaken Russia. Most frequently, this statement refers to Austrians and Poles as "inventors" of Ukraine. Let's elaborate on these messages in more detail.

Message 1¹⁶

"Ukraine was invented by Poles and Austrians"

Olena Sorotsynska

According to some Russian sources, Bohdan Khmelnytsky [*the leader of Cossack rebellion against Polish Rzeczpospolita in the 17th century – Ed.*], when he signed a treaty on the "reunification" of Ukraine with Russia, believed that he was "Russky". It is argued in these Russian sources that other residents of the "outskirts" had the same opinion, which is the origin of the name Ukraine and its link to "outskirts" or "periphery" [*okraina*]. No one called themselves "Ukrainians", some Russian or pro-Russian authors argue, because everyone, in the words of ancient chroniclers, belonged to the "russkyi" people.¹⁷

The invention of the "Ukraine" concept, according to statements made by some Russian authors, belongs to a Pole, Jan Potocki. It is alleged that in his work, *Historical and Geographic Fragments on Scythia, Sarmatia, and Slavs* (1795), he said that Ukrainians have a different origin than Russians. Later his idea, these authors say, was developed by another Pole, Tadeusz Czacki.

Another statement made by Russian propaganda is that "Ukraine" is an Austro-Hungarian project. This statement is advocated by an Odesa-born author, Anatolii Vasserman, who is popular in the Russian media: "*In the 19th century, Ukraine was invented there [in Austria], starting from the eastern slope of the Carpathians – Galicia – where techniques were used for playing off one Russian against another Russian...*"¹⁸, he says.

16 See the response of Ukrainian historians: p 38 – Likbez, p 70 – Hrytsak

17 As Russian Empire procreated Ukrainian nationalism / Ambassadorial Prikaz // <http://www.posprikaz.ru/2016/11/kak-rossijskaya-imperiya-porodila-ukrainskij-nacionalizm/>

18 Anatoli Vasserman: Ukraine was invented by the Austrians in the 19th century / newslab.ru // <http://newslab.ru/article/309227>

There is another popular opinion in the Russian Internet that *"the Ukrainian flag is a flag of Lower Austria, and the anthem was stolen from the Poles, "Poland Has Not Yet Died". It is also said that "the history of Ukraine is distorted, stolen from the millennia history of Rus' because before the 1917 revolution neither such state nor such nationality had ever existed, but instead there was only a frontier line of territories between Russia and Poland that was called 'ukraina', and in Polish – 'Ukraina'¹⁹ [...]". Then: "the Ukrainian coat-of-arms is merely a simple brand mark (or brandiron) [...]"²⁰, and it "has nothing to do with state symbols and heraldry as such"²¹.*

Message 2²²

"The Ukrainian language is artificial"

Oksana Iliuk

Claiming that Ukraine was created by the Poles, Austrians, or other foreigners, Russian propaganda disseminates similar statements also with regard to the Ukrainian language. Some argue that the Ukrainian language had its origins in Russian, but later separated itself from it, while others promote the idea about artificial creation of the Ukrainian language by the Poles, Austrians, or Jews. In the opinion of the authors of such narratives, the Ukrainian language is a "delusion"²³.

The Russian information agency *Rex* published an article that was shared actively by users of Russian social networks VK and OK. The article explains that the "Ukrainian language is a weapon in the hybrid war". The authors of the article draw parallels between the past and the present, commenting on the quotas on the Ukrainian-language content for radio and television. In their opinion, "artificial" implantation of the language characterizes the Ukrainian language as a hybrid "brain programming" technology²⁴.

Message 3²⁵

"Ukraine took away lands belonging to others"

Olena Sorotsynska

Russian historical propaganda often claims that the lands that belong to Ukraine today are, in fact, not Ukrainian lands. Information outlets that promote this idea

19 "Ukraine" is an Austrian-Hungarian project. Galicia was populated by Khazars in the late 19th century / Livejournal // <https://simonovkon.livejournal.com/110133.html>

20 <https://simonovkon.livejournal.com/110133.html>

21 https://pikabu.ru/story/simvolika_dlya_svidomitov_2525761

22 See the response of Ukrainian historians: p 40 – Likbez, p 73 – Hrytsak

23 https://vk.com/wall347260249_412171?reply=412342&thread=412175

24 Ukrainian 'language' is a tool of hybrid war/ REX // http://www.iarex.ru/news/62698.html?utm_source=smm-ok&utm_medium=social&utm_term=main

25 See the response of Ukrainian historians: p 41 – Likbez

allege that these lands belonged to other states that were artificially added to Ukraine, which were a "gift" from the Russian Empire or the USSR.

They say, for instance, that the lands that were "joined by Stalin" should not belong to Ukraine since it is difficult to clearly define their ethnic affiliation. A well-known Russian politician, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, once said, "*Forget the stupid word 'Ukraine'; this is all Russia*"²⁶. A Russian historian and publicist, Aleksandr Dmitrievskiy, claimed that "*Ukraine as a state which emerged not on nobody's lands: its territory in different eras belonged to Russian, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian empires as well as to Rzeczpospolita and other states*"²⁷. In his opinion, "*former owners [...] will, sooner or later, recollect what they used to own*". Already back in 2010, pro-Russian essayist Oles Buzina was also predicting the "disintegration" of Ukraine²⁸.

26 https://vk.com/wall-66621324_708757

27 Hungary suggested that it and Poland should divide Ukraine // <http://19rus.info/index.php/vlast-i-politika/item/101085-vengriya-predlozhila-polshe-razdelit-ukrainu>

28 <https://www.facebook.com/buzina.org/posts/1568105683252138>

Narrative III²⁹

“Crimea, Donbas, and South-East of Ukraine should belong to Russia”

One of the principal Russian historical narratives legitimizes Russia’s “ownership” of Crimea and Donbas as well as the south-east of Ukraine. It maintains that Putin did not take away lands belonging to others, but re-united “originally Russian lands”³⁰.

Let’s us look into these messages in more detail.

Message 1

“Crimea has always belonged to Russia”

Message 1a

“Crimea has always been a Russian territory”

Olena Sorotsynska

“Return to the native harbor”: this is how illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 is called by many Russian media outlets³¹. In order to demonstrate the inseparable connection between Russia and Crimea, a “documentary” was created and broadcast on Russian TV: *Crimea. Coming Home. Special Coverage*³².

In his “Crimean address”, Putin mentioned that “...in the heart, in the mind of people, Crimea has always been and still is an inseparable part of Russia”³³. In the same address, he hinted directly at Russia’s intention to interfere in Ukraine’s domestic affairs in order to protect the interests of millions of Russians and Russian-speaking people living in Ukraine³⁴. “For Russia, Crimea, ancient Korsun, Khersones, and Sevastopol have huge civilizational and sacred significance. It is similar to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem for those who confess Islam or Judaism”³⁵, the Russian president said.

The myth about Crimea as a territory that has always been part of Russia is based on the earlier annexation of the Crimean Khanate by the Russian Empire in 1783. But the idea of the “always Russian” Crimea also seduced pro-Russian European politicians who repeat it when talking about the “historical justice” of Crimea’s return. For instance, according to Russian propaganda media outlet RT, Valéry Giscard

29 See the response of Ukrainian historians: p 43 – Likbez, p 76 – Hrytsak

30 Putin started uniting the Russian Lands / RAN // <http://bit.ly/2R0nxkp>

31 Five years ago, Crimea returned to the native harbor / Parliament Newspaper //

<https://www.pnp.ru/politics/5-let-nazad-krym-vernulsya-v-rodnyuyu-gavan.html>

32 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4x_1Ek4nSYc

33 Full text of Vladimir Putin’s address on Crimea / RT // <https://russian.rt.com/article/24532>

34 Full text of Vladimir Putin’s address on Crimea / RT // <https://russian.rt.com/article/24532>

35 V. Putin: Crimea where prince Vladimir was baptized has sacred meaning for us / Pravoslavie.

RU // <https://pravoslavie.ru/75632.html>

d'Estaing, former president of France, believes that from the time of conquest of Crimea by Russia in the 18th century, *"only the Russians lived there"*³⁶. Václav Klaus, former president of the Czech Republic, was quoted by Russian media as saying that *"Crimea never belonged to Ukraine, and you know it. Crimea always belonged to Russia"*³⁷. Yukio Hatoyama, former Prime Minister of Japan who, despite the official position of his country, visited Crimea, also emphasized the *"legitimacy of the referendum"* [of 2014] held on the peninsula³⁸.

Message 1b

"Russia betrayed citizens of Crimea after the collapse of the USSR, so now it's rectifying that mistake"

According to this message, after the USSR collapsed, the Russian Federation had to fight for Crimea and "return" it as its part. According to this message, President Yeltsin made a mistake when he kept the status quo in Crimea, and that he "betrayed" the citizens of Crimea with this decision. On March 18, 2014 Putin said that the residents of Crimea complained that they were passed *"as a sack of potatoes"* in 1991 because *"Crimea is originally Russian land, and Sevastopol is a Russian city"*³⁹.

The Chair of the Russian Duma, Viacheslav Volodin, said Ukraine had to pay compensation for the losses inflicted upon Crimea when it belonged to Ukraine: *"Ukraine treated Crimea very, very indecently; the fundamental rights of the citizens of Crimea were violated – the right to their language, the right to education in the native language, and [Ukraine] ruined the economy of Crimea and Sevastopol – this was practically annexation"*⁴⁰. Therefore, Russia is trying to show that Ukraine, which became a victim of Russian occupation and aggression, is an occupant and aggressor itself. Hence, it is said that Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea is a response to "Ukrainian aggression".

Message 1c

"Transfer of Crimea by Khrushchev was a 'formal' and arbitrary decision"

The transfer of Crimea to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic by Nikita Khrushchev in 1954 is interpreted by Russian propaganda as a "mistake", "formality" or even an illegal act.

36 Ex-president of France Valéry Giscard d'Estaing: Return of Crimea to the RF is historical justice. March 3, 2015 / RT // <https://russian.rt.com/article/77430>

37 <https://inosmi.ru/world/20150127/225864244.html> 21/01/2015

38 <http://0s.ojuwcltsou.cmlle.ru/20150311/1052047994.html>

39 Full text of Vladimir Putin's address on Crimea / President of Russia // <https://russian.rt.com/article/24532>

40 Volodin suggested compensation should be paid for "distractive policy of Ukraine" in Crimea / Novaya gazeta // <https://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/2019/03/15/150030-volodin-predlozhit-dobitsya-kompensatsii-za-razrushitelnyu-politiku-ukrainy?print=true>

Valentina Matvienko, Speaker of the Federation Council of Russia's Federal Assembly, said that *"...at that time, it was a violation of the Constitution... and this decision had to be adopted at a referendum by citizens of the country and approved by the country's Supreme Council [of the USSR]"*⁴¹.

In the opinion of Russia's high-ranking officials, during the transfer of Crimea to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the "right to self-determination" of the local population was totally ignored. The LDPR party leader, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, thinks that the 1954 "formality" was a "tragedy" and even a "crime"⁴². Putin also mentioned that, as a result of Khrushchev's decision, Russia was "robbed" of its property⁴³.

Therefore, the so-called "referendum" of 2014 was supposed, according to Russian propaganda, to restore the "historical justice"; Russian "defenders" *"could not leave Crimea and its residents in distress, because otherwise it would have been real betrayal"*⁴⁴.

Message 2⁴⁵

"Donbas and 'Novorossiya' are part of the 'Russian World'"

Khrushchev is not the only target of shattering criticism of Russian propaganda. Vladimir Lenin gets a lot of it as well, and even Joseph Stalin, otherwise praised by many Russian propaganda outlets, is criticized for "giving Donbas to Ukraine"⁴⁶. The Russian president repeatedly accused Bolshevik leaders that they, following logic he cannot understand, gave to Ukraine those territories that "historically" were south of Russia. He is confused, among other things, by the fact that these lands were given away to Ukraine without taking into consideration the ethnic composition of citizens: *"the borders were defined in an absolutely arbitrary way and not always justified. For instance, Donbas was transferred to Ukraine"*⁴⁷. Therefore, following the Kremlin's logic, things that are happening today are legitimate as they involve the return of territories that were unfairly taken away in the past.

The Donbas affiliation to the "Russian World" is also emphasized by separatist leaders. For instance, Pavel Gubarev, a political figure in occupied Donbas, said in his open letter to the newly-elected President of Ukraine said: *"We are NOT Ukraini-*

41 Khrushchev's mistake: In spring, Federal Council recognizes transfer of Crimea to Ukraine illegal / MK RU // <https://www.mk.ru/politics/2014/12/23/sovfed-vesnoy-priznaet-nezakonnoy-peredachu-kryma-ukraine-v-1954-godu.html>

42 Crimean bridge is a symbol of the unity of the people / VSP.ru // <http://www.vsp.ru/2017/10/24/ldpr-krymskij-most-simvol-edinstva-naroda/>

43 Full text of Vladimir Putin's speech on Crimea / President of Russia <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>

44 <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>

45 **See the response of Ukrainian historians: p 47 – Likbez, p 76 – Hrytsak**

46 How Stalin presented Donbas to Ukraine / Rossiya Navsegda // <http://rossiyanavsegda.ru/read/1876/>

47 Putin criticized Lenin for the idea of equality of republics with the right to leave the USSR / Intefax // <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/491443>

ans. *We are NOT zombies. We are Russians*⁴⁸. "Ex-prosecutor of Crimea" Poklonskaya argued that "...the point of no return with regard to the territorial affiliation of Donetsk and Luhansk republics has been passed. These territories are part of the Russian World"⁴⁹.

In the Russian and pro-Russian segments of the Russian social network VK that we analyzed, a lot of posts address the issue of "bringing back lands that were originally Russian". For instance, the following post was quite popular: "A joke about the most burning issue. Yulia Tymoshenko announced she intends to bring Crimea back, and Putin answered: You have already brought Crimea back to us, now you have to bring back the South East of Ukraine"⁵⁰.

"*Malorossiya and Novorossiya are our original territories*,"⁵¹ reads one of the posts in the VK [*Malorossiya has been used in Russian 19th century discourse to designate Ukraine; Novorossiya is used now to designate Ukraine's Southern and Eastern parts – Ed.*] For some people, like Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, "*the entire territory of contemporary Ukraine is Russia's historical land*"⁵²; this post received approximately two thousand likes, which shows clear support.

Some Russian sources say that the majority of residents in Donbas and South-Eastern Ukraine identified themselves as ethnic Russians. According to the calculations of the web-site Nakanune.RU, "*Novorossiya's population is more than 80% Russians*". Then: "*In Novorossiya, the number of Russians was understated [by Ukraine] on purpose, whereas the number of 'Ukrainians' was overstated in order to improve the statistics for Ukraine in general, and for justifying forceful Ukrainization*"⁵³, that is why "*Donbas realizes its Russian nature is stronger than others*"⁵⁴.

The message of Donbas belonging to the "Russian World" can be seen in one of the most popular posts in the Russian social network VK. The post was dedicated to the death of pro-Russian separatist combatant Motorola, "*one of the symbols of the 'Russian national liberation war in Novorossiya', who protected 'the Russian land of Donetsk from Ukrainian occupiers*"⁵⁵. Hence, we can see both conscious distortion of discourse when the Ukrainians are called "occupiers" and "aggressors" on their native land.

Despite such attitudes, there is an opposite opinion: it refers to the *Ukrainian nature* of the territories occupied by Russia. The message, which is popular on the Russian Internet, says that currently, there are two Ukraines: one is with the capital city in Kyiv where "fascists" are ruling; and the second one with the capital city in Donetsk,

48 We are not zombies, we are Russians: open letter of P.Hubarev to V.Zelenskyy / DNR LIVE // <http://dnr-live.ru/myi-ne-zombi-myi-russkie-otkryitoe-pismo-p-gubareva-v-zelenskomu/>

49 The point of no return is passed: Poklonskaya announced the beginning of the return of Donbass to Russia / Tsar Grad // https://tsargrad.tv/news/tochka-nevozvrat-projdena-poklonskaja-objavila-nachalo-vozvrashteniya-donbassa-v-rossiju_190705

50 https://vk.com/wall-54012242_578245

51 https://vk.com/wall-54012242_633264

52 https://vk.com/wall-66621324_708757

53 How many Russian people are there in Novorossiya and in Ukraine, or How Kyiv statistics are lying / Nakanune.RU // <https://www.nakanune.ru/articles/19122/>

54 <https://www.nakanune.ru/articles/19122/>

55 https://vk.com/wall-57424472_118866

“clean, correct, fair, and legitimate”, based on “the union with Russia and its people”⁵⁶. Combatant Givi is called a “hero of Ukraine” since he did, Russian propaganda says, more to defend Ukraine from “fascist scum”⁵⁷.

Message 3⁵⁸

“Ukraine in 1991 and ‘DPR’ and ‘LPR’ in 2014 were created in a similar way”

Olena Sorotsynska

The main idea of this message is that the grounds for emergence of the so-called “Luhansk People’s Republic” and “Donetsk People’s Republic” were similar to those of Ukraine’s independence. According to this message, in 1991 Ukraine became independent in the same way as the self-proclaimed “republics” did in 2014. The argument is that Ukraine and the so-called “LPR” and “DPR” received their independence facing a deadly threat from a coup d’etat. The Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic adopted the Independence Act on August 24, 1991 after the putsch that happened in Moscow a few days before. In the opinion of Russian historical propagandists, “Donbas” began to act only after the Kyiv “junta” removed the “legitimate president” [*that is, Yanukovych – Ed.*] from power and in this way violated the Constitution of Ukraine. According to them, this fact acted as a catalyzer for self-identification of the people of Donbas, the Russian propaganda says; it is reminder about the right provided for in the UN Charter which Ukraine, in its turn, exercised in 1991⁵⁹.

56 https://vk.com/wall-66621324_2040971

57 https://vk.com/wall-57424472_132979

58 **See the response of Ukrainian historians: p 48 – Likbez**

59 A little bit more about the DPR and LPR // <https://bit.ly/2ltfGlq>

Narrative IV

"USSR was a powerful empire, and Stalin was a hero"

Russian historical propaganda often stresses that the USSR was a powerful industrial and military empire. According to some Russian propaganda messages, the USSR transformed itself from a poor country into a powerful industrial giant, a global super-state, while today's Ukrainians neglect its achievements although they continue to use its potential. Within the framework of this narrative, a new cult of Stalin is created as the "winner" in the war, "scientist", "industrializer" and the real "creator" of Ukrainian statehood.

Message 1⁶⁰

"The USSR was a powerful empire, but Ukrainians neglected its achievements"

Artur Kadelnyk

Russian media and Russian public figures often glorify life in the Soviet Union and the power of this state. They believe that Ukraine, as other post-Soviet countries, unjustifiably neglects its Soviet past. They try to see the glory of the USSR in a lot of areas, from household issues to military power and the ability to suppress other states.

A large part of such statements about the positive sides of life in the Soviet Union is based on the nostalgia of the generation that was able to live in the USSR. Most frequently these voices refer to the atmosphere of total trust between people and virtual absence of crimes: "the keys [from the apartment] could be left under a doormat", "a faceted glass was never stolen from a soda machine"⁶¹), low prices for food items and stability of "sausage for just 2 rubles 20 kopecks", "imagine the economy if the price was indicated immediately on the goods, and it was not changed for years"), the high level of overall culture of the population, and the best education system in the world. Similar statements are made by the writer Zakhar Priliepin, in one of VK's communities, where his post about soda-selling machines as a symbol of the Soviet era had over 100 shares.

People who share these messages also refer to large-scale projects that the Soviet Union implemented or wanted to implement. For instance, the website Politikus.ru mentioned "Stalin's plan of transforming nature", i.e. the plan to change the climate

60 See the response of Ukrainian historians: p 50 – Likbez, p 79 – Hrytsak

61 https://vk.com/wall-54012242_1161671

in the European part of the USSR through massive planting of protective forest strips⁶² that allegedly had no counterparts in the world.

Some media and commenters also frequently try to create the myth that everything heroic in the history of Ukraine was connected to the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. “the Ukrainian authorities were not able to achieve proper results”, because “everything built during the last one hundred years was built by the Communists⁶³,” one of the messages reads.

A powerful cult of Stalin began to develop recently in the Russian media. It is frequently emphasized how important this person was for the “USSR’s success”, and that during the period of his rule the country achieved its highest development. One of the messages is that it was due to his military genius that the USSR was able to win World War II, and only due to Stalin’s genius was the Soviet Union able to re-build itself after the war. People who share this line of thought also mention the “high moral qualities” and “incredible stamina” even in the most difficult situations. For instance, when Stalin refused to exchange his son for Field Marshal Paulus.⁶⁴

It is also often claimed that the Stalin period in the USSR was a period of extraordinary progress⁶⁵, which was achieved thanks to Stalin’s managerial genius. This was precisely the period of large-scale industrialization, allegedly the largest in the history of humanity. According to this message, the Soviet Union transformed itself from a retarded agrarian country into the most developed global economy, which became an example for others and was able to become a decent competitor for the USA and other Western countries. According to Russian propaganda statements, during Stalin’s rule the size of the population increased significantly in the Soviet Union while the death rate decreased, and illiteracy was almost eliminated. Moreover, it is often stressed, the Soviet Union created a nuclear bomb thanks to achievements in science and economics and in order to ensure nuclear parity with the USA⁶⁶. In comparison, since Ukraine’s independence, the birth rate has fallen and the country has faced depopulation, Russian propaganda says.

Message 2⁶⁷

“Bolsheviks and Stalin created Ukraine”

Olena Sorotsynska

In an attempt to impose their historical narratives, some Russian information resources repeat that the USSR was a powerful empire that gave lands to its republics. Some Russian or pro-Russian sources claim that it was due to the USSR’s generosity

62 The last punch of Stalin / Politicus.ru / <https://politikus.ru/articles/politics/56411-posledniy-udar-stalina.html>

63 Ukrainian "historian" plans to destroy the memory of Russian cities / MediaSol // https://vashinovosty.mediasalt.ru/ukrainskiy_istorik_planiruet_unichtozhit_pamyat_o_russkih_gorodah

64 Another Stalin / RT // <https://russian.rt.com/opinion/404455-limonov-drugoi-stalin>

65 <https://postnauka.ru/courses/56286>

66 USSR under Stalin: facts / newsland // <https://newsland.com/user/4297665210/content/sssr-pri-staline-tolko-fakty/4201861>

67 **See the response of Ukrainian historians: p 80 – Hrytsak**

that the post-Soviet republics received a significant share of their lands. More specifically, they say that Stalin "presented" Bessarabia, Zakarpattia, Crimea and Galicia to the Ukrainian SSR.

Writer Oles Buzina who is often quoted by the Russian media, wrote back in 2012 that *"no Ukraine in its contemporary borders would have ever existed if the so-called 'Soviet project' had not emerged. [...] And the three greatest Ukrainian 'hetmans' are not Sahaidachny, Khmelnytsky, and Vyhovsky but... Lenin, Stalin, and Khrushchev. The first attached Donbas to Ukraine having destroyed the Donetsk-Kryvyi Rih Republic. The second – thanks to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and victory in the Great Patriotic War – extended Ukraine's lands to Galicia. And the third added Crimea to all this disputable property⁶⁸".*

68 <https://www.facebook.com/buzina.org/posts/2141541085908592> 676 likes, 237 shares

Narrative V

“All Ukrainian nationalists were fascists”

Russian propaganda very often tries to emphasize the shared “*ideas, interests, and goals*” of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and those of fascists and Nazism. It stresses that they were “*brothers in spirit*”⁶⁹. According to some Russian propaganda sources, “*OUN leaders emphasized repeatedly after Hitler came to power that Ukrainian nationalism is synonymic and practically identical in terms of spirit to Hitler’s Nazism and Italian fascism*”⁷⁰. Furthermore, “*Bandera supporters were fighting to create a state of the fascist type, in which Ukrainian nationalists would have power over the Ukrainian people*”⁷¹.

Let’s look into the messages of this narrative in more detail.

Message 1⁷²

“UPA were Hitler’s collaborators”

Message 1a

“UPA served Hitler”

Olena Sorotsynska

Russian historical propaganda often claims that there was no difference between the Ukrainian nationalism of the 1930s–1940s and German Nazism. It is often said that those who believe they are Ukrainian nationalists today are, in fact, “*spiritual descendants of military criminals, fascists, and Nazis*”⁷³. Ukraine, after the Revolution of Dignity of 2014 is, in the eyes of Russian propaganda, a place where fascism is back.

One of the messages says that OUN and UPA members “*were the principal executors in Lviv death camps where 120,000 Jews were killed*”⁷⁴. It is also said that although “*the role of simple servants of Arian masters was prepared for them, OUN leaders continued close cooperation with the occupying authorities*”⁷⁵.

69 Ukrainian nationalists should remember what they are / Russian spring // <http://0s.oj2xg5tfonxgclttou.cmle.ru/news/1548878032>

70 Ukrainian nationalists must remember what they are / Russkaya Vesna // <http://0s.oj2xg5tfonxgclttou.cmle.ru/news/1548878032>

71 Bandera came and did not bring order. Which role did Bandera really play in the OUN / Ukraina. RU // <http://0s.ovvxejljnzqs44tv.cmle.ru/history/20190101/1022188005.html>

72 See the response of Ukrainian historians: p 52 – Likbez, p 82 – Hrytsak

73 Ukrainian nationalists should remember what they are / Russian spring // <http://0s.oj2xg5tfonxgclttou.cmle.ru/news/1548878032>

74 Bandera supporters were blood hounds of Abwehr / KONT // <https://cont.ws/@zll11/911292>

75 <https://cont.ws/@zll11/911292>

Some people in Russian social media describe OUN members as extremely cruel: *"Sometimes the Germans themselves were impressed with the atrocities of their minions."*⁷⁶

One of the descriptions of the "UPA atrocities" is very similar to another well-known case invented by Russian propaganda in recent history. *"When irregular fighters came to the village the next day, they saw piles of distorted bodies in the houses of villagers lying in pools of blood. In one of the houses, on a table with unfinished food and bottles of moonshine, there was a dead one-year old child whose naked body was nailed to the table with a bayonet. Cruel people put an uneaten pickled cucumber into its mouth"*⁷⁷. This allegedly "historical episode" of World War II could perhaps be the basis for the story about the boy *"in panties and T-shirt"* who was *"like Jesus, nailed to an information board"...* *"right in front of his mother"*⁷⁸, i.e. a story about a "crucified boy" in Sloviansk in 2014 that became one of the most famous Russian fake news items of recent times.

According to Russian propaganda messages, on the day of adoption of the Act of Proclamation of Ukrainian Statehood, the Ukrainian Nachtigall Battalion, headed by Roman Shukhevych, shot more than 3,000 Polish residents of Lviv, including 70 world renowned scientists; approximately 7,000 Ukrainians, Russians, and Jews were killed allegedly *"in a savage way"*. At that time, according to some Russian sources, Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi held a church service in honor of *"the invincible German army and its chief leader Adolf Hitler"*⁷⁹. It is stressed that the blessing of the Head of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church became the beginning of mass extermination of peaceful residents by squads of Bandera supporters, SS members, UPA and Nachtigall fighters. The nationalists allegedly started doing this work so that even Hitler was shocked by their atrocities and issued an order to *"bring matters under control with that gang"*⁸⁰.

Message 1b

"UPA spread terror and fear among the local population"

Olena Sorotsynska

According to one message of Russian propaganda, the main method of UPA's influence on people living on lands they controlled was terror, fear, and intimidation. *"The deeds of Bandera supporters and other nationalists in terms of their bloodiness and brutality by far exceed the most inhuman deeds of Taliban and Caliphate,"*⁸¹

76 <https://cont.ws/@zll11/911292>

77 <https://cont.ws/@zll11/911292>

78 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYDqvqcapkQ>

79 https://zen.yandex.ru/media/filin_dmitry/ukraina-raskol-sviatoi-stepan-bandera-ili-deti-zlobnogo-karluka-18-5cb1d0a9055e1f00b3ef4e69

80 https://zen.yandex.ru/media/filin_dmitry/ukraina-raskol-sviatoi-stepan-bandera-ili-deti-zlobnogo-karluka-18-5cb1d0a9055e1f00b3ef4e69

81 <https://cont.ws/@zll11/911292>

reads an article on the website Cont, where different authors publish their texts. UPA members, according to another article, “were sawing prisoners as wood”⁸².

The OUN Security Service, according to some Russian outlets, tortured the civilian population cruelly if it suspected that someone was not loyal to OUN-UPA. It also carried out brutal “purges” of its own squads destroying all “unreliable” members and that was the reason why the latter allegedly switched sides to the NKVD⁸³.

Message 1c

“Carpathian Sich is a Nazi Ukrainian organization”

Olena Sorotsynska

“The mysteries” of Carpathian Ukraine: how Nazi puppets were building their “state”; “Ukraine celebrates a newly-invented “independence anniversary”, the 80th anniversary of Carpathian Ukraine”⁸⁴ – these are some examples of headlines used by some Russian media outlets to describe what they call another Ukrainian “fascist project”, “Carpathian Ukraine”.

Some Russian sources identify OUN with the Carpathian Ukraine, saying that this state was the “product of the Abwehr”. “On September 4, 1938 a gathering took place in Uzhgorod, called by the Organization of the Ukrainian Nationalists, which created the Ukrainian National Defense (UNO). This was the Nazi centre that later created so-called Carpathian Ukraine”⁸⁵, reports the “Novorossiya” information agency. According to this outlet, the later occupation of this Carpathian Ukraine by Hungarians can be explained by preferences given by Hitler: Hungarians were more valuable allies for the Germans than OUN and, therefore, he let Hungary occupy these lands.

“The country of the victorious Euromaidan, which claims it has ‘no fascism’, continues to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the independence of pro-German Carpathian Ukraine,” says Russian outlet *Rus’ Yedinaya*. According to this source, these celebrations show the “sturdiness of the Ukrainian fascist idea”, which, allegedly, flourishes today.

82 Bandera supporters working for SB were sawing prisoners as wood // <https://varjag-2007.livejournal.com/2082665.html>

83 Were Bandera supporters heroes? / newslanland // <http://newslanland.com/user/4296648056/content/byli-li-banderovtsy-geroiami/4005420>

84 “Тайны” Карпатской Украины: как нацистские марионетки свое “государство” строили / Новороссия // <https://novorosinform.org/764723>

85 “Secrets” of the Carpathian Ukraine: how the Nazi puppets built their “state” / Novorossia // <https://novorosinform.org/764723>

Message 2⁸⁶

“‘Glory to Ukraine!’ slogan is a copy of the Nazi slogan ‘Heil Hitler!’”

Oksana Iliuk

The “Glory to Ukraine!” slogan is an important topic of discussion in the Russian social network VK. Some VK users often disseminate the statement that the “Glory to Ukraine!” greeting, which became widely popular during the Euromaidan of 2013–2014, is related to “the development of Ukrainian Nazism”⁸⁷. Russian propaganda claims that the Nazi greeting *Sieg Heil!* that gave rise to the *Heil Hitler!* slogan⁸⁸ later became a model for the *Glory to Ukraine!* For instance, this is the statement issued by the community “Ukraina. Rossiyskyi Vzgliad” (Ukraine. Russian View)⁸⁹. Due to the popularity of this slogan, “Ukrainian Nazism” allegedly received a new boost: “The neo-Nazi greeting, *Glory to Ukraine!* and the response *Glory to Heroes!* will become the official greetings in the Independent [Ukrainian] army,”⁹⁰ one of the messages reads.

86 See the response of Ukrainian historians: p 58 – Likbez

87 “Heil Hitler” or “Glory to Ukraine”: shy is FIFA right in a debate with neo-Nazis / Ukraina.ru // <https://ukraina.ru/exclusive/20180710/1020587632.html>

88 Myths about the origin of Ukraine and Ukrainians. Myth 9. “Glory to Ukraine! Glory to Heroes!” / Voennoe obozrenie // <https://topwar.ru/147996-mify-o-proishozhdenii-ukrainy-i-ukraincev-mif-9-slava-ukraine-gerojam-slava-heil-hitler-sieg-heil.html>

89 https://vk.com/club70155198?w=wall-70155198_66%2Fall

90 Greetings of the neo-Nazis “Glory to Ukraine!” And the response “Glory to Heroes!” Will become an official greeting in the army of Nezalezhnaya / Arkhan // <https://ik.arhano.ru/archives/11743>

Narrative VI

“Ukraine forgot about the victory over Nazism”

An important strategy of Russian historical propaganda is to “annex” the victory over Nazism and point to Russia as the only “real” winner, which “really” values it. To this end, two main messages are used: the statement that Ukraine neglects the heritage of victory and devalues its significance, and the statement that in reality it was the Russians who freed Europe from Nazism.

Let’s elaborate on these messages in more detail.

Message 1⁹¹

“Ukraine neglects the 1945 victory”

Olena Sorotsynska

According to the messages of Russian historical propaganda, Ukraine “does not value anything related to the Great Victory”; moreover, Ukrainians “send people to prison for a St. George ribbon, prohibit the Victory flag, and congratulate veterans of the Great Patriotic War together with those who were shooting them in the back during the war”⁹².

“Re-writing” history textbooks, refusal to use the “Great Patriotic War” as a concept, banning the St. George ribbon, celebrating May 8 as the Day of Memory and Reconciliation “together with the entire Europe” – all this, in the opinion of Russian propaganda advocates, “is an important part of the Ukrainian cargo cult, which lets local ideologists and the whole nationalist community believe they are part of Europe”⁹³. Leonid Slutsky, Chair of the State Duma Committee on International Affairs, says that “refusal to celebrate May 9 as the Victory Day in Ukraine is a “side effect of European integration” and “historical amnesia”⁹⁴ while “Kyiv MPs behave as vassals of the West, forgetting their own history in doing this”⁹⁵.

91 See the response of Ukrainian historians: p 60 – Likbez, p 85 – Hrytsak

92 South East of Ukraine will demonstrate the power of Russian people on Victory Day, May 9 will become a landmark // <https://nahnews.org/1010761-yugo-vostok-ukrainy-pokazhet-mosh-russkogo-naroda-v-den-pobedy-eto-9-maya-budet-znakovym>

93 <https://ria.ru/20190509/1553358446.html>

94 Kyiv’s idea to refuse to celebrate May 8 was called “historical amnesia” by the State Duma/ TASS // <http://tass.ru/politika/1850298>

95 <http://tass.ru/politika/1850298>

Message 2⁹⁶

"Ukraine bans St. George ribbons but people continue to wear them"

This message emerged in Russian media outlets after an interview with Nestor Shufrych, a Ukrainian politician, to the TV channel NewsOne. In this interview, Shufrych said that Ukrainians have no right to reject the symbol of victory. He also showed a gap in the law, *"One of the bouquets of carnations that I put on the Unknown Soldier Tomb today was bound with a black and an orange ribbon separately"*⁹⁷, he said, hinting that in this way these two separate strips of ribbon actually did form the St. George ribbon, which Russian propaganda turned into the major symbol of Russian/Soviet victory in 1945.

One of the most popular Facebook posts on the Immortal Regiment campaign in 2018 says that Ukrainian citizens latently continue this victory cult. *"Developments in all cities and towns of Ukraine showed that the predominant number of reasonable citizens are ready to oppose the actual occupying colonial regime of Panamanian Sumerian-patriots. Half a million people went out onto the streets!"*⁹⁸, this post reads.

Message 3⁹⁹

"Russians liberated Europe from Nazism"

Russian propaganda sources often repeat that it was Russia that "freed" Europe from "fascist" occupation. They say that *"the minds of Europeans have been re-shaped for decades regarding the role of the USSR and Russia in the history of the 20th century"*¹⁰⁰. This, in the opinion of Russian propagandists, is done in order to *"send Russia to the backyard of history"*¹⁰¹. Though Russian propaganda sources provide all kinds of resistance to such "injustices" by giving constant reminders as to who saved Europe from the "fascist" invasion. One of the jokes popular in VK says how an imaginary "grandma" of Angela Merkel was afraid of the "Russian" army¹⁰².

Russian officials were also indignant at Poland's decision to pull down a monument to Soviet soldiers. For instance, members of the State Duma of Russia's Federal Assembly issued an official address to European Parliaments asking them to denounce the adopted law¹⁰³. Even more, Russian outlets are packed with plenty of narratives

96 See the response of Ukrainian historians: p 61 – Likbez

97 The way to bypass the ban on St. George ribbons / Moskovsky Komsomolets // <https://www.mk.ru/politics/2018/05/10/na-ukraine-primdumali-kak-oboyti-zapret-na-georgievskie-lenty.html> <http://stopcor.org/shufrych-obiyshev-zaboronu-na-koloradski-strichki/>

98 <https://www.facebook.com/buzina.org/posts/1806731772722860> 1100 likes, 219 shares

99 See the response of Ukrainian historians: p 62 – Likbez

100 Europe forgot about who was the one to free it from fascism / RIA Novosti // <https://ria.ru/20150428/1061370070.html>

101 <https://ria.ru/20150428/1061370070.html>

102 https://vk.com/wall-54012242_780162 1839 likes, 297 shares

103 <http://0s.orqxg4zooj2q.cmle.ru/politika/4426035>

saying that *“the Poles and Poland owe a debt of gratitude for all their wealth to Stalin personally, the USSR and its legal successor – the Russian Federation”*¹⁰⁴. *“If the USSR had not freed Europe, Poland and the Poles would have been in the past now,”*¹⁰⁵ Russian media says, hinting at the fact that Western countries were striving for a new division of Poland while Stalin managed to “save” Poland’s independence.

104 How Stalin defended the interests of Poland / Voennoe obozrenie // <https://topwar.ru/4132-kak-stalin-otstoyal-interesy-polshi.html>

105 Historian Mikhail Myagkov: If the USSR had not liberated Europe, Poland and the Poles would become history / Komsomolskaya pravda // <https://www.tumen.kp.ru/daily/26378/3257823/>

II. Response from
Ukrainian Historians:
**Project “LikBez.
A Historical Front”**

Narrative I

“Ukraine is Russia’s failed shadow”

Message 1¹⁰⁶

Ukraine is “outskirts” of Russia

Kyrylo Halushko

The message that Ukraine is the “outskirts” of Russia mixes two different historical issues, both with regard to content, historical periods and contexts.

1) The first issue is how the modern Ukrainian national project of the 19th century developed and how the name “Ukrainians” established itself.

As of the beginning of the 19th century, Ukraine was divided between the Romanov and Habsburg empires. However, the era of romantic nationalism and the establishment of Kharkiv Imperial University in 1806, with *inter alia* German lecturers, changed this situation. New intellectual fashions, including studying folk culture, language and traditions, became popular among Ukrainian intellectuals. The name “*malorosy*” [“Little Russians”] began to sound outdated and incompilant with the status of people living in the country called “Ukraine”, which was visibly reflected in the folklore of these people. Kharkiv was the center of the Sloboda Ukraine Governorate of the Russian Empire (until 1834). Local intellectuals suggested a simple decision, according to which “*malorosy*” living in “Ukraine” should be called “Ukrainians”. This suggestion did not cause any resistance in the intellectual community. Furthermore, a clear connection between “Ukrainians” and “Cossack people” was in line with the previous vision of Ukraine in European geography and local popular vision.

On the other hand, at the end of the 19th century, intellectuals and Ukrainophile Galician politicians carried out intentional “rebranding”: they changed the name of Galician Ruthenians (an old name of Ukrainians since Middle Ages and the official name of Ukrainians in the Austro-Hungary, *Ruthenen* in German) to “Ukrainians” in order to support the trans-border Ukrainian political project, that stretched between the Austro-Hungary and the Russian Empire. For eastern Ukrainians, the name “Ukrainians” positioned the local people more clearly with regard to the Russian imperial idea. This name crossed out the official [in the Russian Empire] name of “*malorosy*” (Little Russians). Galician Ukrainophiles supported this idea in their own contexts in order to ensure their clear separation from local “Moscowphiles” who – with Russian support – propagated the unity of Ruthenians with the Russian people (Russians). In view of the obvious ethnic and cultural similarity of Ruthenians and Little Russians, they needed a common historical self-name. The ethnographic maps of Europe of the 19th – early 20th centuries, namely British maps in various editions, contained the inscription “Ruthenians, or Little Russians” in one contour, and after 1920 they used the word “Ukrainians”.

¹⁰⁶ See the analysis of this message p. 10

2) The second problem is the etymology of the name "Ukraine" as such, and its connection with the issue of "*okraina*" (outskirts, periphery). A parallel can be drawn with the Scottish Borders; it is not possible to say here whose border or *okraina* [outskirts] it was – that of England or that of Scotland. The etymology of the name "Ukraine", from the first mentions of it (1187, Kyiv Chronicle), really meant "outskirts", "border", "frontier", and in the majority of senses it meant the "battle border" or "military border".

But whose "border" was it? This is the key question. In the Middle Ages, this word meant the "border of the Rus' land". However, according to the sources of that time, the "Rus' land" meant, for 300 years before the 13th century, the lands around Kyiv, the capital and the "oldest city" of the Rurik dynasty empire. In other words, the medieval "ukraina" was, in fact, the "outskirts of Ukraine", "okraina of Ukraine".

The "battle border", and the idea of the "defense of the native land" added an emotional connotation to this word, which achieved a new level of popularity in the 17th century, during the Cossack era. This civilizational frontier, which divided the Christian and Islam worlds, and went through the territory of contemporary Ukraine, had a universal European meaning. The main actors on this frontier – the Cossacks who became the national stereotype – gave rise to the saying "Ukraine is where the Cossack is". From the 17th century Western European map publishers began publishing "maps of Ukraine or the Cossack Land", which show territory identical to that of today's Ukraine. These maps show a self-sufficient phenomenon, a country with its "provinces", and not the "outskirts" of something else. Look, for example, at the German map "Ukraine or Cossack Lands" of the early 18th century¹⁰⁷. Senses changed, and since the 17th century Ukraine has emerged not as "outskirts" or "periphery" of something, but as a country on its own.

Message 2¹⁰⁸

"Russia is the successor of Rus'; Ukrainians are 'Russians'"

Message 2a

"Ukrainians are Russians"

Kyrylo Halushko

An attempt to prove that Ukrainians are "Russians", "*ruskie*", is an old problem. The Russian imperial historical model stressed the existence of a medieval "*ruski narod*", which later split into various "tribes". However, according to this model, that split did not deprive those tribes of common national and religious unity, therefore, they allegedly have to be re-united and re-integrated.

¹⁰⁷ http://likbez.org.ua/homann_1712.htm

¹⁰⁸ See the analysis of this message p. 11

The Soviet scheme modified the Russian model, based upon the Soviet interpretation of Marxism. First, it said, there existed a "*drevnerusskaya narodnost*" (old Rus' people). According to Soviet ethnography, *narodnost* is a pre-modern, feudal stage of an ethnicity, followed by a "bourgeois nation". As a result of hostile takeovers that took place in the 13th-14th centuries, this *narodnost* allegedly split into the Great Russian, Ukrainian (Little Russian) and Belarussian ethnic groups. Then, during the early modern age (16th-17th centuries), these ethnic groups were transformed into separate nations, and in a socialist society they (together with the other 150 ethnic groups present in the USSR) were supposed to be melted into the "united Soviet people" on the basis of Russian culture.

In other words, during the Soviet era, Ukrainians emerged conceptually as the nation [for Soviet historiography], destined to "join the brotherly Russian people" and dissolve itself under the common name of the "Soviet people".

Since 2012 this scheme has undergone synthetic modification in the official Russian historiography (i.e. in the historiography loyal to the Russian authorities, as well as in messages of Russian politicians). The post-Soviet concept, which still included the existence of the "separate Ukrainian nation" made way for the previous one, which saw only one Russian/Ruski nation. However, the sequence of phenomena and their causes remained the same. Conspiracy versions of the causes of "Ukrainian separatism", which were popular in Russian nationalist writings in the early part of the 20th century, came back. These conspiracy theories said that "Ukrainian separatism" was inspired by Western intrigues (Austro-Hungary, Germany, later NATO, and the U.S.) in order to ruin Russian national unity.

What forms the basis of this proclaimed unity of Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarussians, is the idea of existence of the old Rus' community dating back to the 9th-13th centuries, with a common language, culture, and religion. A linguistic theory about the existence of the common language of Eastern Slavs at that time emerged in the 20th century. It was based on the available common language in texts, which was supposed to confirm ethno-cultural (ethnic) unity.

However, the facts deny this assumption. The common language was the language of written culture and books: Church Slavonic. This was the language of the inventors of the Slavic Cyrillic alphabet, St. Cyril and St. Methodius, i.e. the Old Bulgarian language. In ancient Rus' it performed the same functions as Latin did in Western Europe, and it was not a spoken language.

Today, for example, Michael Mozer, a well-known Austrian specialist in Slavic studies, denies the existence of a common language spoken by Eastern Slavs.

A process of development of ancient dialects of future standardized Slavic languages took place after the year 700 among Croatians, Czechs, Russians, Ukrainians, etc. This observation denies the ethnic and cultural unity of the population of Kyivan Rus'.

The Confessional unity of Orthodoxy in Rus' lands was evident until the late 13th century. However, in 1299 the Kyiv Metropolitan, Greek in origin, kept his title of the Kyiv Metropolitan but moved from Kyiv to Vladimir-on-Klyazma. This move created a crisis in the traditional eparchial structure: a separate Halych metropolity was set up in the kingdom of Rus' in Western Ukraine (1302), then the Vilnius metropolity

was created within the framework of the Great Duchy of Lithuania (1417, more details below). After the Union of Florence (1439) and self-proclaimed autocephaly of Moscow, the variants of Orthodoxy on the lands of today's Ukraine and today's Russia differed considerably until the second half of the 17th century. Following the Union of Brest (1596) a part of Ukrainians took the Uniate version of Christianity (now called Ukrainian Greek Catholic).

Message 2b

“Only Russia is the successor of Kyivan Rus”

Kyrylo Halushko

In contemporary academic research, everything that took place on the territory of Eastern Europe before the middle of the 10th century is believed to be hypothetical if synchronous sources do not confirm it. We know the routes taken by the Scandinavians across Eastern Europe, but we do not know on which territories the name of Rus' was used, except for Kyiv. Perhaps, it was used earlier somewhere else, but there are no sources confirming this fact.

The term “Kyivan Rus” is, in fact, academic and is absent in sources. However, it was actively used [in Russian historiography] to defend the Russian imperial historical approach, according to which Kyivan Rus' was later followed by a Muscovite Rus'. In other words, Russian historiography claimed that there was a *translatio imperiae* (a transferal of the empire). But the point is that the lands of contemporary central Russia were called Rus' for the first time in sources in 1238, whereas Kyiv, according to the chronicle from the early 12th century (despite all doubts as to its accuracy in it's the depiction of facts), was called “the Mother of Rus' cities” from 882. This is an obvious “traumatic experience” for the Russian historical model.

Of course, it is possible to erase the adjective *Kyivan* from the name of medieval Rus', [as Russian propaganda tries to now do], but the “Rus' lands” will stay where they were – on Kyiv, Chernihiv and Pereiaslav lands. Their borders were described earlier by Soviet scholars (Arseniy Nasonov, Boris Rybakov, Pyotr Tolochko)¹⁰⁹.

That is why it does not matter for Ukraine whether the Rus' should be or should not be called Kyivan. It was, nevertheless, in Kyiv.

109 Halushko: Rus' – Ukraine – Malorossiya: name and territory // <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0tzbSwD66ygSTdmckljS0dmOUE/view>

Message 3¹¹⁰

“Ukrainian church has no right to independence”

Kyrylo Halushko

First, since the time of the Christianization of Rus', Kyiv Metropolitans were traditionally subordinate to Constantinople. Therefore, the Kyiv Church was initially connected to Constantinople, and not to Moscow.

Kyiv received its first Christian baptism from Constantinople in 988–989. During the following centuries, Christianity was moving with great difficulty to the north and north-east of Kyiv. It was usually connected with uprisings by pagans and bloody suppression of rebellions. After 1240 (the Mongol invasion, which destroyed Kyiv's higher political status), the situation changed. In 1299, the Greek Metropolitan of Kyiv moved to Vladimir-on-Klyazma and then to Moscow, which strengthened the political ambitions of Moscow princes. The territories not conquered by the Mongols – kingdom of Rus' in Western Ukraine and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which in mid-14th century included the majority of Ukrainian lands, wanted to have their own Orthodox Metropolitan. Therefore, the Galician Metropolitanate was established and existed in 1302–1347 and 1371–1401, as was the Vilnius Metropolitanate, which existed with breaks between 1317 and 1458. In 1448, the Moscow Eparchy split from Constantinople and was non-canonical (unrecognized by Constantinople) for a century. Yet, even after Moscow's autocephaly (self-governance) was recognized in 1589, the Kyiv Metropolitanate was still under the governance of Constantinople until 1686.

It is a historical rule in Eastern Christianity that a sovereign state, sooner or later, receives the autocephaly of its church. This can be seen as a delayed recognition of the state's sovereignty, which implies a right to church self-governance within the framework of the Orthodox tradition. The Moscow state, after its own patriarchate was proclaimed (1448), waited for a century until the canonicity of its church was recognized by Constantinople. Autocephaly was granted to Orthodox churches even in those states where the majority of the population is not Orthodox (Czech Republic and Slovakia). When after 1921 Orthodox believers in Western Belarus and Volyn found themselves in the new Polish state, the local church organization also received autocephaly and independence from the Russian Orthodox Church.

As to the transition of Kyiv Metropolitanate into subordination to the Moscow Patriarchate in 1686, the historical facts state that it was made possible thanks to a bribe given to the Patriarch who was, therefore, “dismissed from office” for corruption – or “simony” – the selling of church positions. Now, 350 years later, the time has come to revise the decisions made through that corruption. The church is usually never in a rush. So, in this story politics, tradition and practice are intertwined.

110 See the analysis of this message p. 12

It is also important to remember that although officially Prince Volodymyr brought Christianity to the "entire Rus'", a huge state, he actually Christianized only Kyiv and Novgorod. Novgorod was baptized with "iron and blood" and in contemporary central Russia uprisings against baptism ("uprisings of the magi") took place as late as at the end of the 11th century. Pagan symbolism can be seen on the coins of Russian principalities until the 15th century.

In other words, only Kyiv was Christianized on "mutual assent". It, therefore, became the sacred city of Kyivan Rus'; today, this city is the capital of Ukraine.

In Kyiv, Christian communities had existed several decades prior to Volodymyr officially bringing Christianity here, as a result of close relations with Constantinople. It is believed that Prince Askold (mid-9th century) was Christian, but there is very little information about him. There is no doubt that Princess Olga (945–960) was a Christian. In other words, Kyiv Christianity possesses history that is several hundred years longer.

Back then, Volodymyr could believe that he Christianized the Rus' land (official name of the state), but the "Rus' land" was, at that time, limited to the territory around Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Pereiaslav. This is central Ukraine today. Christianity needed more time and had more problems reaching the territory of what is contemporary Russia.

But what is important today is not so much the validity of "canonical" arguments, but rather recognition or non-recognition of current circumstances and existence of independent states today.

Narrative II

“Ukraine is an artificial project of the West”

Message 1¹¹¹

“Ukraine was invented by Poles and Austrians”

Kyrylo Halushko

Two mutually contradictory statements are regularly present in official Russian propaganda:

1) The Ukrainian nation exists, but all its achievements were accomplished only “together with Russian people”, while other people only oppressed them (this is the Soviet concept).

2) The Ukrainians do not exist as a distinct nation, therefore a claim that they exist is seen, in line with a conspiracy theory matrix, as Polish, Austrian or American “in-trigues”, subversive activities on the part of the West (this is the Russian imperial concept).

Russian propaganda tries to prove the artificial nature of Ukrainian identity on the basis of the old name of Rus', which allegedly united everyone. However, the word *Rus'* was used for the first time to designate the territory of contemporary Russia only in the mid-13th century. Even self-designations were different: in the old Rus', no “*russkie*” as a nation existed. Ruthenians lived in the territory that later became Ukraine, and from approximately the 15th-16th century, Russians started calling themselves “*russkie*”. An interpreter was needed in Moscow to communicate with the Ruthenians [*from today's Ukraine – Ed.*]. Khmelnytsky called himself the “*ruski* sovereign and monarch”, that is, the ruler of Rus'. It is unlikely that he had any claims upon the lands of modern-day Russia, he only repeated local historical tradition [*widespread on the lands of today's Ukraine – Ed.*]. Furthermore, it is clear that “*ruski*” in his title did not indicate ethnic affiliation but was merely an adjective.

The word *Ukraine* referred, in the 17th century, to the same territory that was formerly called the “Rus' land”. It can be found in the documents of hetmans as an unofficial name of the lands of *Viysko Zaporizke* [*Cossack Army; also used as an administrative concept to name the territory of Ukrainian lands. – Ed.*]. This is how it is named in European cartographic works, namely those by Guillaume de Beauplan in 1648, and Johann Homann (1714) (“Ukraine, or the Cossack Land”). “Ukraine” is

¹¹¹ See the analysis of this message p. 13

a very widespread name in European geography in the 18th century, so there was no need to "invent" it.

However, the self-designation "Ukrainians" did, indeed, come later, and is connected to the modern Ukrainian national renaissance of the early – mid-19th century, and the "Kharkiv Romantics" group. Eventually, it became a trans-border common self-designation for Ruthenians and Little Russians.

It is wrong to believe that "Ukrainian separatism" was invented by the Poles. As early as in the 16th century nobody – neither Poles nor Ruthenians/Ukrainians – doubted that there a difference between Ruthenians (current Ukrainians) and Muscovites (current Russians). This difference was something so evident that it did not demand any additional evidence. Therefore, Polish authors that Russian propaganda refers to as the "inventors" of Ukraine, were only justifying this old well-known fact under new historical circumstances.

Let me now turn to the accusation that Austro-Hungary "invented" Ukrainians. In fact, after the ban in the Russian Empire on the Ukrainian language and printing (1863, 1876), the center of the promoting Ukrainian identity moved to Lviv [*then part of the Austrian/Austro-Hungarian Empire; at that time the city was called Lemberg – Ed.*]. The Austrian state, which enjoyed more freedom than the Russian Empire, and considered the Ruthenian (Ukrainian) language to be one of the ten official languages. It allowed the printing of books, press, and education in the Ukrainian language.

For Russia, which supported the pro-Russian movement of Moscowphiles in Galicia, these developments in Austro-Hungary looked like the propagandizing of "Mazepism" ("Ukrainian separatism"). However, independent Ukraine presented the same threat for the integrity of Austro-Hungary as for the integrity of the Russian Empire. Therefore, both empires were hostages of one another in Ukrainian and Polish issues.

Russian propaganda also claims that the Ukrainian blue-and-yellow flag originates from the "flag of Lower Austria" or "Sweden's flag" that Mazepa "copied" after in 1798. In fact, Ukraine's flag originates from the heraldic colors of the Galicia/kingdom of Rus' of the 13th-14th centuries. The Ukrainian coat of arms [*Tryzub, the Ukrainian trident – Ed.*] is the family symbol of the Kyiv Prince Volodymyr, which was depicted on his coins of the late 10th century, and is well known from archeological sources. The Ukrainian anthem follows the theme of the new renaissance that was popular among the national movements of the mid-19th century (Poles, Lithuanians, Serbs): "the Motherland has not yet died". There was most probably a Serbian influence on the anthem's author, Pavlo Chubynsky, who was in close contact with participants of the Serbian liberation anti-Turkish movement. Note that the Russian anthem, "Боже, царя храни" (God, Save the Tsar), can also be seen as copied from the British anthem "God Save the King".

Message 2¹¹²

“The Ukrainian language is artificial”

Kyrylo Halushko

It is impossible to suddenly “invent” a language spoken by 35 million mostly illiterate peasants in the early 20th century.

Today’s linguistic studies¹¹³ point towards uninterrupted development of the Ukrainian language since the disintegration of the Slavic linguistic unity of the 5th-6th centuries. This development went through the stage of proto-Ukrainian dialects and then to the emergence of the modern standard literary language. Before Ukraine’s incorporation by the Russian Empire people living on Ukrainian lands used the bookish (non-colloquial) Old Ukrainian language, which was close to Church Slavonic. However, with the spread of the general imperial business language, the Ukrainian book language died, and only the colloquial language remained.

This colloquial language took its printed literary form in 1798 (in *Aeneid* by Ivan Kotliarevsky). Further on, its literary forms and styles were developed by the builders of the Ukrainian modern national project of the 19th century. Back in 1837, Izmail Sreznevsky (the “Kharkiv Romantics” group) claimed that the Ukrainian language was distinct from Russian. The same statement was made by the commission of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences in the early 20th century.

The lack of dissemination of the Ukrainian language in certain areas was caused by the official bans on its use in education and applied sciences in the Russian Empire (Valuev Circular of 1863 and Ems Ukaz of 1876). Russian propaganda claims that the Ukrainian language was the language of only “one social group”; however, first, this “group” consisted of 35 million people, and second, in the 19th century the Ukrainian language was developing in various genres and Ukrainian literature was highly-developed, as it gave birth to elite products.

Standardization of a language (both orthography and graphics) is the task of the state that defines social norms. Therefore, when Ukrainians were stateless, the orthography of the Ukrainian language had various standards (so-called “kulishivka”, “zhelekhivka” etc.). There were also ideas (in Galicia) to introduce Latin graphics into the Ukrainian language, but they did not take root as Ukrainians historically and culturally belong to the Cyrillic tradition.

Russian propaganda also states that the Ukrainian language is the “Russian language” which was “Polonized” and “humiliated”. But languages are often subject to foreign influences, and the Ukrainian language is no exception. It was subject to influences from Bulgarian in the 10th-12th centuries; from Polish in the 16th-17th centuries; from Russian in the 18th-19th centuries; from English in the 20th-21st centuries. The Russian language is subject to foreign influences too.

¹¹² See the analysis of this message p. 14

¹¹³ See the analysis of contemporary linguistic conceptions in: Moser M., *New Contributions to the History of Ukrainian Language*. Edmonton, Toronto, 2016

Message 3¹¹⁴

“Ukraine took away lands belonging to others”

Kyrylo Halushko

The problem here is not in the interpretation of different international legal treaties concluded in recent centuries, but in the Russian imperial syndrome that fails to see the phenomena of national sovereignty, or is unable to reflect upon them.

Russia and Ukraine have different sources of legitimacy of their state lands. Russia is a successor of imperial state constructions. Ukraine is a result of national self-identification on the territory where Ukrainians constitute the majority of the population. This was proclaimed and partially implemented in 1917–1919. In those years, the Ukrainian People’s Republic (UNR) was created in the territory with a dominating share of *malorosy*/Ukrainians in the population (according to the official statistics of the Russian Empire). On the other hand, the Western Ukrainian People’s Republic (ZUNR) was created in those territories where Ruthenians/Ukrainians constituted a majority [*in the former Austro-Hungarian empire – Ed.*]. In 1919, they formed a united state. To conclude, regardless of the fact as to whether independent Ukraine exists or not, Ukrainian lands include Transcarpathia, Bukovyna and Galicia anyway. Various combinations of borders of other states on its territory do not play a very important role in this respect.

It’s also important to remember that contemporary Russia and contemporary Ukraine have different interpretations of history. The official and school textbook history of Russia is a story of Russian statehood, and not of the people or the country. From this angle, it is not clear what (territorial and chronological) borders this nation has, and where the country ends geographically. Apparently [from the standpoint of the official history of Russia], it is not limited to the current borders of the Russian Federation.

In this Russian discourse, there is no history of Russians as citizens of contemporary Russia. There is no history of the peoples of Russia. There is no history of relations between the other peoples in Russia with the Russians themselves. There is no chronotope of Russia as a state and a country. This is a specific trait of imperial discourse: it has no logical or understandable borders or limits.

Instead, “the history of Ukraine” is the history of the cultural layer of the modern Ukrainian state.

There is one good example: Hungary. Magyars gained their Motherland at some historical moment, but the course of Hungarian history also includes the history of a province of the Roman Empire called Pannonia. It is there because the focus is put here on the history of the territory and, respectively, on different cultural layers connected with this territory.

¹¹⁴ See the analysis of this message p. 14

In 2012, Ukrainians ceased to exist in official Russian ideology. They were transformed into "defective Russians". This Russian historical discourse erases both the borders and the chronology of contemporary Russia. Because, according to [Russian] school textbooks, the first three hundred years of history of Russia take place in Kyiv. But today, for the last 30 years, it is another country and another state. Of course, there are controversies in interpreting the post-Soviet past, but Russian propaganda simply lacks an understanding of the causes of the emergence of post-Soviet nations.

Narrative III

“Crimea, Donbas, and South-East of Ukraine should belong to Russia”

Message 1¹¹⁵

“Crimea has Always Belonged to Russia”

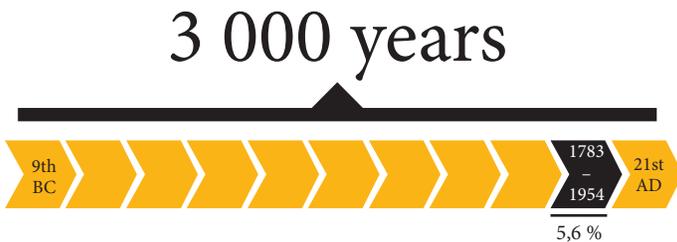
Message 1a

“Crimea has always been a Russian territory”

Serhii Hromenko

Contrary to widespread myths, neither Crimea as a whole, nor any part of it, ever belonged to Rus’. Therefore, it makes no sense to seek any foundations here for the idea that Crimea “always” belonged to Russia. The Crimean Khanate was dismantled only in Spring 1783, and St-Petersburg annexed its territory, after which the peninsula remained in the Russian Empire for 134 years, until spring 1917. Then, during the 1917–1920 revolutionary mess, Crimea was controlled by various “Red” and “White” Russian governments. From Spring 1918 to Autumn 1919, Crimea was occupied by German or French armies. Then, for the next 34 years, until 1954, Crimea became a part of Soviet Russia, with a break for German occupation which lasted from Autumn 1941 to Spring 1944.

Hence, Petersburg and Moscow together possessed Crimea in total from 1783 to 1954, i.e. 171 years but, actually, taking into account the period of occupation, this period was 3.5 years shorter. Therefore, out of 3,000 years Crimea’s written history (9th century B.C. – 21th century), it was part of Russia for only 168 years, which accounts for 5.6% of Crimean written history.



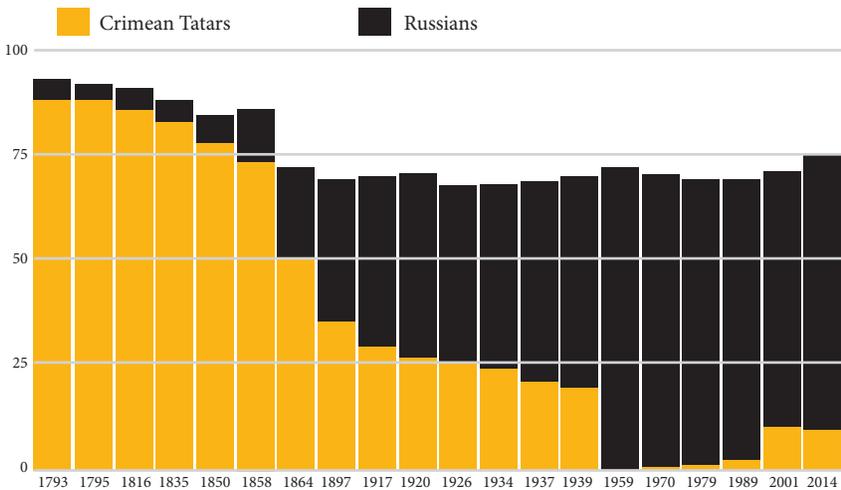
¹¹⁵ See the analysis of this message p. 16

The “Russian Crimea”, as we see, does not look very “deep” historically against the background of the existence of the Crimean Khanate, which existed for 342 years (1441–1783), i.e. 11.4% of Crimea’s written history.

A permanent Slavic population appeared on the peninsula no earlier than in the 13th century. Before the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Empire it was barely noticeable; since, furthermore, not all these Slavs were Russians, it would be contrary to the facts to say that Crimea was “originally Russian land”.

For nearly a century after Crimea’s annexation by the Russian Empire (1783–1860), Crimea was the “Orient in miniature”. That is, a typically Turkic-Muslim province of Russia, where the Russians accounted for only an insignificant part of the population. The Russians were represented mostly by government servants and soldiers (until the 1830s) and later also by landed aristocracy. At the same time, the Crimean Tatars, as the indigenous people, formed the overwhelming majority of the population, despite the unfriendly government and gradual emigration.

It was only after the Crimean War (unsuccessful for Russia), that the Russian government began to force the local population to move in large groups to the Ottoman Empire. There was a paradoxical situation in the 1860s: more Crimean Tatars were living in the diaspora than in their Motherland. At the same time, the number of Russian colonizers increased. But it was only at the beginning of the 20th century (no earlier than in 1901) that the share of Russians living in Crimea became bigger than the share of Crimean Tatars. And even in that situation, until the deportation of Crimean Tatars (1944) Russians did not constitute the absolute majority on the peninsula, as is the case now.



Therefore, the Russians in Crimea became the majority only as a result of administrative pressure on the part of the imperial and Soviet governments on the Crimean Tatars (from manipulations with statistics to genocide through deportation), and not because they were “originally” there. Out of three thousand years of the written history of Crimea (9th century B.C. – 21st century), the Russians were a relative ethnic majority on the peninsula at only 4%, and an absolute majority for only 2.5% of entire Crimean history.

Message 1b

“Russia betrayed citizens of Crimea after the collapse of the USSR, so now it rectifies that mistake”

Serhii Hromenko

Let me begin from events before the collapse of the USSR. Back on November 19, 1990 Leonid Kravchuk and Boris Yeltsin signed a treaty in Kyiv between the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Article 6 of this treaty confirmed mutual respect for borders in effect at that time, according to which Crimea belonged to Ukraine, and not Russia, according to the constitutions of both Soviet Republics applicable at that time. Therefore, in 1991 the peninsula was not “transferred” anywhere, and Crimean residents were not “betrayed”: as of that moment it had been part of Ukraine for almost forty years.

Statements made by the Russian Parliament in 1992–1996 that Crimea was “not Ukrainian” were unilateral documents. In all bilateral agreements between Kyiv and Moscow, the Ukrainian affiliation of the peninsula was never doubted. After the “big” Agreement on friendship, cooperation, and partnership was signed between Ukraine and the Russian Federation in 1997 (it came into force in 1999), official Moscow put aside its claims for the Crimean Peninsula. Until 2013, the Russian leadership did not publicly express its claims to Crimea, and it was only after Ukrainian President Yanukovich was removed from office [*after Euromaidan in 2014 – Ed.*], that Russia took its words back.

The most important thing is that during the referendum on Ukraine’s independence on December 1, 1991, a majority of residents of Crimea (54.2%) voted in support of Ukraine’s independence from the Soviet Union. This vote legitimized the sovereignty of the new state, which included the territory of the peninsula.

Message 1c

“Transfer of Crimea by Khrushchev was ‘formal’ and arbitrary”

Serhii Hromenko

In the first half of 1954, Crimea, then an oblast of Russia, was incorporated into Ukraine. The reasons for this transfer have not been identified clearly until today, and they continue to be debated by historians. However, despite Russian myths spread widely recently this act, first, was not an individual “royal present” from Nikita Khrushchev and, second, it was not reduced to one document of dubious legitimacy.

The process of integrating Crimea into Ukraine lasted more than six months, and it went through all the stages necessary in accordance with the legislation of that time (January 25: meeting of the Presidium of the Communist Party’s Central Committee; February 5: Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR advising the transfer of Crimea to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic; February 19: decision of the

Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR; April 26: laws of the Supreme Council of the USSR, etc.). And even despite the fact that the legitimacy of the Decree of the Supreme Council's Presidium of February 19 can be doubted with reason, Crimea was still incorporated into Ukraine in accordance with the Constitution of the Soviet Union, even if *de jure* this happened later, on May 12.

Later, the Ukrainian affiliation of Crimea and Sevastopol was confirmed in the 1978 Constitution of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

According to the census conducted in independent Ukraine in 2001, 60% of respondents in Crimea and Sevastopol called themselves Russians, 24% called themselves Ukrainians, and 10% called themselves Crimean Tatars. 77% of the residents of the region, however, believed their native language was Russian. The Russian language was clearly predominant on the streets and outdoor advertising.

Therefore, contrary to Russian propaganda statements, the Russian language faced no threats in Crimea. Use of this language was never restricted by legislation. On the contrary, the core place of the Russian language in Crimea was guaranteed by the Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC in Ukraine), in Articles 10–13.

Before 2013, in Crimea 89.4% of school pupils received their education in the Russian language, while 7.4% and 3.1% received it in the Ukrainian and the Crimean Tatar languages, respectively. Out of nearly 600 schools on the peninsula before its illegal annexation by Russia, only 15 had the Crimean Tatar language as the language of instruction, and only 7 had Ukrainian. Out of more than 500 pre-school educational institutions, only 11 were Ukrainian, and the Crimean Tatar language was only used in one institution. In higher educational institutions, only 5% of classes were taught in Ukrainian, the rest were in Russian. Before the 2014 annexation, the share of university students who were educated in Russian in Crimea (ARC) totaled 83.1%, and even more in Sevastopol (86.7%). For technical schools and colleges, this indicator reached 94.5%, and 100% in Sevastopol. Only two Crimean universities trained teachers of the Crimean Tatar Language and Literature.

Over 80% of printed mass media were published only in the Russian Language, and only one state newspaper on the peninsula was totally Ukrainian – *Krymska Svitlytsia* [Crimean Parlor]. Only 7% of TV programs on state Crimean television were in the Crimean Tatar language. A Similar situation could be observed in other spheres as well.

Therefore, the collapse of the USSR did not mean any “tragedy” for Russian-speaking people in Crimea. Moreover, the Russian language and culture were totally predominant in Ukraine’s Autonomous Republic of Crimea, at the expense of other languages, including Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar. Unfortunately, Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea only strengthened this.

Message 2¹¹⁶

"Donbas and 'Novorossiia' are part of the 'Russian World'"

Hennadii Yefimenko

The "Russian World" is the construction of the new era, which to a large extent repeats the ideas of the elites of the Russian Empire before the 1917 revolution. At that time, Russian elites defined Ukrainians as "Little Russians", a part of the Russian nation, which also included "Great Russians" and "Belarussians". In those conditions, no debate could even take place as to whether the territory of the Donetsk Coal Basin was Russian or Ukrainian.

When the Bolsheviks took power, they aimed strategically at "amalgamation of the nations", which actually meant Russification of the lands that they controlled. Yet at the same time, the Bolshevik leaders understood the objective trend of ever stronger national movements. They did not object to those movements formally, and even used them for their own purposes. That is why the Ukrainian statehood created during the era of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR) was preserved in the Soviet form. This applied to the territory of Ukraine as well. The main principle for setting up the Ukrainian SSR was based on the national composition of the population, as well as on the language used in its respective lands. In the larger part of Donbas, Ukrainians prevailed, which is why these territories were included in the Ukrainian Soviet state.

In 1920, due to economic factors, the Kremlin agreed to unite the entire Donbas under Soviet Ukraine. However, already in October 1925, those areas of Donbas populated in the main by Russians (Shakhtynsky District), together with Taganrog District, where the majority was made up of Ukrainians, were transferred to Russia. The border between Ukraine and Russia formed in 1925 remained unchanged until today. Therefore, even if a "historical mistake" was made, it was about including Taganrog District into Russia in 1925, contrary to the principles of the time and to the fact that the majority of the population in this district was Ukrainian.

The Soviet leadership was striving to turn Donbas into a "melting pot" for creating the "Soviet people" and took tough repressive measures against the Ukrainian movement in it. This, indeed, weakened the Ukrainian element of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, now most frequently associated with the designation "Donbas". However, even after all the assimilation measures taken by the Soviet government, the absolute majority of the population of these oblasts, according to the 1989 census, identified themselves as Ukrainians.

¹¹⁶ See the analysis of this message p. 18

Kyrylo Halushko

Let me now talk about the naming and chronology of the history of Odesa, Katerynoslav, Pavlohrad, Sevastopol, Simferopol [on which Russia builds the statement that nearly a half of modern-day Ukraine, the so-called "South-East" or "Novorossiia", are in fact "Russian" – Ed.] as well as other places. Here we encounter the so-called "Alexander the Great problem". This problem poses the question as to how we can define the identity of numerous "Alexandrias". For instance, should Macedonia or Greece claim their rights to ownership of Egypt's Alexandria or Alexandria Oxiana (located on Amu Darya River in Central Asia)?

If yes, then should London (Londinium) and York (Eboracum), which were founded by the Romans, belong to Italy, and should New York (or New Amsterdam as it was earlier called) belong to the Netherlands? Furthermore, should all significant cities in Latin America belong to Spain or Portugal? Such examples can be continued endlessly: they can show how senseless it is to claim political "ownership" over lands referring to foreign "founders" of towns, fortresses or factories.

Message 3¹¹⁷

"Ukraine in 1991 and 'DPR' and 'LPR' in 2014 were created in a similar way"

Hennadii Yefimenko

In order to analyze this message, let us look at the sources of today's Ukrainian state, at its declaration of independence. On August 24, 1991 the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic proclaimed the Declaration of Independence of Ukraine. The motivation for proclaiming this act included the "*deadly danger hanging over Ukraine with regard to the coup in the USSR on August 19, 1991*". The text referred to the attempted coup in the USSR, whose list of founders formally also included Soviet Ukraine (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic).

In the USSR, Ukrainians were a subjugated nation, but still a nation. In 1945, Soviet Ukraine became one of the founders of the United Nations. From establishment of the USSR in 1923 and to the end of its existence in 1991, the Constitutions of the USSR (1923, 1936, and 1977) stressed the right of Soviet republics to leave it. Ukraine did exercise this right on August 24, 1991.

The first wording of the Independence Act spoke about *restoration* of Ukraine's independence proclaimed by the Ukrainian Central Rada in January 1918. However, in 1991 the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic consisted in the main of Communists, for whom the Ukrainian Central Rada, hostile to Bolsheviks, remained hostile. Therefore, in order to avoid disagreements, independence was *proclaimed*, and not restored. Moreover, on August 22, 1992, the president of Ukrainian People's Republic in exile, Mykola Plavchuk, transferred his powers to the newly-elected Ukrainian president, Leonid Kravchuk.

¹¹⁷ See the analysis of this message p. 20

Therefore, today's Ukraine combines both national and Soviet uninterrupted traditions of Ukrainian statehood of the 20th century. Its independence was proclaimed by the then legitimate members of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Nothing of this kind happened when the so-called "LPR" and "DPR" were proclaimed.

Narrative IV

“USSR was a powerful empire, and Stalin was a hero”

Message 1¹¹⁸

“The USSR was a powerful empire, but Ukrainians neglected its achievements”

Kyrylo Halushko

The USSR perished because of the inefficiency of its economic model and the artificial nature of its ideology. Russian modernization led to a dead-end, and the task of overcoming its consequences remains a difficult economic and social problem. Enclaves of Soviet industrialism today create barriers for the progress of newly-independent states, and Donbas is an expressive example of such an enclave. As of 2014, five million people lived in the area of this perished economic model. As their lives were often hopeless, the easiest way was to encourage Soviet nostalgia in these people and call upon them to support “separatism” imposed from outside. Similar examples can be found in many new post-Soviet states – from Latvia and Estonia to Kazakhstan.

Russian propaganda also stresses that the collapse of the USSR and Ukraine’s independence led to the depopulation of these lands. This is manipulation: depopulation started in 1986 as the birth rate began to decrease from the time of the Chernobyl accident, and decreased even further in the 1990s during the economic crisis. These figures should be taken together with the periodical waves of demographic dynamics, caused by the demographic crises of the 20th century (two World Wars, Holodomor), as well as the change of the family model in the latter part of the Soviet era.

Different evaluations exist as to whether the USSR succeeded in becoming a superpower. Indeed, the former Russian Empire did become (under the name of the Soviet Union) one of the two superpowers in 1945 (the other being the US). Yet, the experience of being a superpower was specific for different nations in the USSR. Today, as Ukraine is independent, it cannot look positively at how the Soviet totalitarian regime became a superpower. Ukraine paid a very high price for this Soviet “high goal”: a) approximately 1 million victims of the 1921 famine; b) approximately 1 million victims of the Russian civil war in 1917–1921, whose victim was, among others, the Ukrainian People’s Republic; 200,000 Ukrainian political emigrés in the 1920s; 3,900,000 people who died during the 1932–1933 Holodomor (which was recognized as an act of Genocide against the Ukrainian people by the Verk-

¹¹⁸ See the analysis of this message p. 21

hova Rada of Ukraine and several foreign states); approximately 1 million victims of the 1946 famine; bloody suppression of the resistance movement in Ukraine (the Ukrainian Insurgent Army) from 1944 to 1950s; massive political repressions in the 1920–1950s against Ukrainian intellectuals, political figures, church clergy, and even Soviet Ukrainian public figures. In other words, Russian propaganda here neglects any moral and ethical assessment, preferring instead the support of the idea of the “superpower which destroyed fascism”.

Today, this is the logic supported by Moscow. Scholars in Europe and America usually call this logic “persistent colonialism”.

The countries that split from the USSR (Russia) cannot, and should not, see such priorities as necessary, as they have no claims to the “superpower” status, and do not want to use this “status” to justify the acts of genocides and massive repressions that took the millions of human lives.

Message 2¹¹⁹

“Bolsheviks and Stalin created Ukraine”

– see the response to this message in the interview with Yaroslav Hrytsak, p. 80)

¹¹⁹ See the analysis of this message p. 22

Narrative V

“All Ukrainian nationalists were fascists”

Messages 1¹²⁰

“UPA were Hitler’s collaborators”

Message 1a

“UPA served Hitler”

Yana Prymachenko

The Soviet propaganda machine tried to represent the Organization of the Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) as Hitler’s puppets. This is a continuation of an old statement made by Russian propaganda that always denied the independence aspirations of Ukrainians, seeing in it a German/Austrian hand at least from World War I.

No one insists that OUN-UPA were innocent, including with regard to the Holocaust. However, first, this does not annul the fact that OUN and UPA made up the Ukrainian national liberation movement that fought against the Nazis and Bolsheviks. Second, according to the decision adopted by the Nuremberg Tribunal, neither OUN nor UPA were recognized as criminal organizations. Third, the problem of responsibility of various actors during the war remains open and requires microhistorical research. This research is now taking place in Ukraine after the archives of the Soviet special services were opened. Fourth, the Ukrainian situation is not unique but rather typical for Central European countries. Poland went through similar processes after the publication of the book by Jan Gross, *Neighbors*. Such discussions are also taking place in the Baltic States.

It is true that the support police delivered Jews to places of execution. Ukraine recognizes this fact. However, the Ukrainian support police was named “Ukrainian” not because of its ethnic composition, but based on the territorial principle. In addition to the Ukrainians, who prevailed, there were also representatives of other ethnic groups. Ideologically, the composition of the support police was extremely diverse, and not purely “nationalistic”. It also included former Soviet prisoners of war, and the local population. For them (especially for prisoners of war) joining the police was a way to survive: prisoners of war were often dying from hunger in the camps. In other words, this phenomena had nothing to do with the ethnic origin of the people.

120 See the analysis of this message p. 24

Today, Ukraine is moving away from the principle of collective responsibility typical for totalitarian regimes, and is focusing on individual responsibility for specific crimes.

Let's look at this message in its key episodes that were identified.

Episode 1: **OUN and Nazis crimes**

It is true that during a certain period OUN had sympathy towards the Nazis and wanted to cooperate with them to restore Ukrainian statehood. But let's not forget that before 1939 Nazi Germany had not yet committed the terrible crimes of the Holocaust and mass killings. It was the USSR and Stalin, who was the notorious “leader” with regard to mass extermination of people at that time.

From the very beginning, the Germans did not see Ukrainians nationalists as potential partners. They believed that these Ukrainian nationalists had no political weight. It is true that nationalists welcomed financial and material support from the Abwehr and were even ready to cooperate. Yet, Germans offered cooperation only on an individual and not on institutional basis. They did not take OUN seriously as an integral organization: it just did not exist for them as such.

Did nationalists participate in the crimes committed by Nazis? Every episode requires careful investigation and the opening of the archives of Soviet special services in Ukraine facilitates this research.

Some statements made by Russian propaganda have been already refuted. For instance, participation of Bukovyna kurin – an armed group of OUN(m) – in the mass shooting of Jews in Babyn Yar was refuted. According to the latest research, the *kurin* arrived in Kyiv in November 1941, and could not participate in the executions that took place on September 29–30¹²¹.

Latest studies also show that the story that people who were involved in the Ukrainian support police went en masse (up to 5,000 people) and joined UPA in March 1943, which allegedly formed the nucleus of the insurgent army, also contradicts the facts. At present we know that only approximately 1,000 people tried to do this, but the majority of them failed to go through the filtration process and left UPA.

Contrary to the statements of Russian propaganda, UPA and nationalists never served as guards at Nazi concentration camps. A special service was created for this purpose: Wachmannschaft SS. The backbone of this service was formed by Soviet prisoners of war; there were indeed a lot of ethnic Ukrainians among them, but they had no connection to UPA or OUN.

Let me now address the issue of the Holocaust. The Ukrainian Institute for Holocaust Studies *Revival* (Tkuma¹²²), which is headed by Ihor Shchupak was created

121 В.Р. Нахманович. Буковинський курінь і масові розстріли євреїв Києва восени 1941 р. // Український історичний журнал. – 2007. – № 3 (474). – С. 76–97. – <http://www.kby.kiev.ua/komitet/ru/history/art00044.html>

122 See for more details: <http://tkuma.dp.ua/ua/>

in 2000, and in 2002 the Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies (UCHS, УЦБІГ¹²³), headed by Anatolii Podolskyi, was established.

The Babyn Yar Committee also works in Ukraine. It deals with preserving the memory of that tragedy¹²⁴.

In 2018, Ukrainian scholars presented a concept¹²⁵ of the Memorial Museum of Babyn Yar that can be seen on the web-site of the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

At present, the degree of involvement of OUN and UPA in Holocaust crimes is a subject of academic discussion. The fact that Ukraine has opened access to archives of special services makes the task of scholars looking for the truth significantly easier.

Episode 2: **OUN, Germans, and the Nachtigall Battalion**

Yana Prymachenko

OUN's cooperation with German intelligence and counter-intelligence began from the times of the Weimar Republic. OUN hoped that on the eve of the war with the USSR, Germany would help it to form its own army. Yet, the Germans did not have plans to provide such support. The Nachtigall and Roland Battalions were created from among Ukrainians in February 1941; they are also known under the name "Ukrainian Nationalist Detachments". However, they were disarmed and interned as politically unreliable in August of that year.

On June 30, 1941 the Nachtigall Battalion occupied the strategic objects in Lviv abandoned by the Red Army, and joined the proclamation of the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian State. The battalion was led from the Ukrainian side by the would-be UPA Commander-in-Chief Roman Shukhevych. He was the person who announced the demarche on behalf of the battalion after the Germans arrested OUN (b) leaders Stepan Bandera and Yaroslav Stetsko.

The statement that the battalion was involved in shooting of Polish and Jewish intelligentsia in Lviv was widely disseminated by Soviet propaganda in order to discredit Theodore Oberländer, a professor at the University of Königsberg, and a specialist in USSR issues. In 1953–60, Oberländer held a ministerial office in the government of the Federal Republic of Germany; during the war he was a liaison officer in the Nachtigall Battalion.

The question as to whether the battalion was involved in that shooting was examined by the Nuremberg Tribunal on February 15 and on August 30, 1946. At that time, the Prosecutor-General of the USSR, Roman Rudenko, failed to provide convincing evidence. In 1960, the Supreme Court of the German Democratic Republic accused Oberländer and the Nachtigall Battalion of shooting intelligentsia in Lviv on July 3–4, 1941. The respective "evidence" was collected very quickly, and even a book was published, *The Truth about Oberländer*. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in absentia as a military criminal. In 1966, at Poland's request, the Hamburg

123 <http://www.holocaust.kiev.ua>

124 <http://www.kby.kiev.ua/komitet/ua/>

125 bit.ly/2noE47x

prosecutor’s office carried out a new investigation of this case. It was established that the crimes were committed upon the orders of SS Brigadeführer Schengardt. The adoption of this decision meant that Oberländer and the Nachtigall Battalion were rehabilitated; however, Konrad Adenauer dismissed him from his office.

The issue of Nachtigall’s involvement in the Jewish pogrom in Lviv on July 1 is still debated today. The opening of the archives of the Soviet special services (one of the elements of the current Ukrainian de-communization policy) will make it possible to carry out comprehensive research on this issue.

It has been an old Soviet method in general to try to put the blame for Nazi crimes exclusively on members of OUN.

Episode 3: **Role of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky**

Yana Prymachenko

The relationship between Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky [*the Head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church – Ed.*] and OUN, especially with Bandera’s faction, were not straightforward. On the one hand, he praised efforts to revive the independence of Ukraine and strived to support it through every means. On the other, he did not accept OUN’s methods. He did not accept Nazi methods either: on January 14, 1942 Metropolitan Sheptytsky wrote a letter to Hitler, in which he criticized Nazi policy regarding Ukraine.

At the early stages of the war, sympathies towards Germans were natural among residents of Western Ukraine. They had positive experience of Austrian rule and expected the Germans would support them in the restoration of Ukrainian statehood. At the same time, hatred for the Bolsheviks was an obvious consequence of the Soviet occupation of 1939–1941, as a result of which more than 900,000 people were deported from Western Ukraine, including more than 200,000 Ukrainians, 600,000 Poles, and more than 80,000 Jews who had earlier escaped from Central Poland. This means that more than 10% of the entire population of this region was deported by the Soviets.

The killing of prisoners in Lviv prisons, which was committed by the NKVD during the retreat of the Red Army, was the real shock for the residents of Galicia. The dead bodies of prisoners had signs of inhuman torture. Therefore, the hostile attitude of local citizens towards the Bolsheviks is entirely understandable.

Throughout his entire life, Andrey Sheptytsky remained faithful to the principles of Christian morality. On November 21, 1942 he addressed believers of the Greek Catholic Church with a pastoral message, *Do Not Kill!*, in which he condemned homicide and referred to the Sixth Commandment. He condemned the killing of Jews. He was personally hiding 150 Jews, mostly children, in St. George’s Cathedral in Lviv. Among those whom he saved was the would-be Israeli Air Force rabbi, David Kahane.

On November 1, 2013 the U.S. Anti-Defamation League – a human rights organization fighting anti-Semitism – awarded the Jan Karski Prize to Andrey Sheptytsky posthumously for his courage and heroism in saving Jews during World War II. This is the first step to recognizing him as Righteous Among the Nations.

Message 1b

“UPA spread terror and fear among local population”

Yana Prymachenko

The Ukrainian nationalist underground movement continued its fight in the Soviet Union without external support up till 1954. This would have been impossible without general support from the local people.

During the establishment of the insurgent army in 1942–1943, OUN was cruel [to its opponents] as it incorporated everyone who agreed to join but disarmed the remaining detachments. This approach was in line with OUN’s programme principles and nationalist worldview. They believed that anarchy was the worst evil for Ukraine. In the opinion of OUN members, it led to the defeat of the Ukrainian national liberation fight in 1917–1921. Therefore, OUN tried from the very beginning to create a single monolithic and disciplined army.

In their fight against Bolsheviks after 1944, the OUN Security Service did show excessive cruelty. It was linked to the infiltration of a large number of Soviet spies into the underground movement, and brutal actions taken by the NKVD to undermine the system of the OUN Security Service for identifying spies. It was, therefore, rather a consequence than a cause. It was also a battle of two security services: NKVD methods provoked respective cruelty from OUN.

The OUN Security Service was suspicious about both local activists, and people from Eastern Ukraine sent to Western Ukraine by the Soviet leadership. In 1947 the actions of the OUN Security Service were criticized by OUN’s leadership, so this practice was stopped. Let me also remind that the handing over of low-ranking OUN members to the NKVD was often achieved through blackmail: the NKVD threatened to deport the entire family of a particular person.

In the situation whereby the West was unwilling to fight against the Bolsheviks, the leadership of OUN and UPA decided to wind down their armed fight and go underground.

The amnesty announced by the Soviets in 1944–1946 could have benefited OUN, as this could have helped them legalize their existence and continue their underground fight. However, Stalin’s promise to pardon all who will “sincerely admit and regret their crimes” was, as always, a lie.

Apart from promising an amnesty, the Soviet leadership also threatened local citizens by saying they would be deported if they helped UPA by giving its members food, clothes, etc.

On September 1949 UPA military commander Roman Shukhevych ordered insurgents to wrap-up their activities and turn to underground work. The military phase was brought to an end, though resistance lasted until 1954.

Episodes of sporadic fighting took place until the early 1960s.

Message 1c

“Carpathian Sich is a Nazi Ukrainian organization”

Ivan Homeniuk

As of 1918, the lands of today’s Transcarpathian oblast of Ukraine belonged to the Hungarian kingdom of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The local population, primarily Ukrainians, which constituted the majority on these lands, as well as Slovaks, Jews, Romanians, felt increased administrative and cultural pressure from the Hungarian authorities.

After the empire collapsed, local Ukrainian citizens mostly supported the re-integration of Transcarpathia with Ukrainian lands located to the north from the Carpathian Mountains. A decision to proceed with this re-integration was taken at the congress of representatives of the region’s communities in Khust. During that period, a self-proclaimed Hutsul republic had been created in the eastern parts of the Transcarpathia, which tried to join the Western Ukrainian People’s Republic. But the absence of its own army and the weakness of the Ukrainian states from the other side of the Carpathian Mountains meant this Hutsul republic fell under occupation by Czechoslovakia and Romania.

In these circumstances, the local elites, as well as representatives of Transcarpathian emigrés in the US, agreed on a proposal to integrate these lands with Czechoslovakia. Local Ukrainian citizens were divided into three groups, according to their political sympathies: those who backed the idea of Ukrainian statehood; those who supported the return of these lands to Hungary; and those who believed that the local population is a part of the Russian people. To strengthen its power in the region, the Czechoslovak authorities used their administrative and financial instruments to support controversies between these political factions. Besides, the region felt influence from Hungary and Poland. These countries had territorial claims towards Czechoslovakia and, therefore, encouraged destabilization in this country.

In the late 1930s, the political struggle in Czechoslovakia intensified significantly. Politicians from Slovakia and Transcarpathia demanded autonomy, to fulfill the respective promises made in 1918–1919. It was precisely at that period that the Ukrainian organizations of Transcarpathia set up a united political force called the Ukrainian National Association (UNO). A concentration of political forces also occurred in Czech and Slovak lands. In 1938, young patriotic Transcarpathian Ukrainians legally created the organization of people’s self-defense called “Carpathian Sich”. It helped the Czechoslovak army to protect the region from attacks by Hungarian and Polish terrorists.

Obviously, Germany also had its interests in the region, but local Ukrainian politicians were independent in their actions; documental evidence does not confirm the influence of the Abwehr or other Reich institutions. Transcarpathian Ukrainians kept their commitment to the Czechoslovak Republic, which finally gave it promised autonomy in October 1938. Only after Slovakia proclaimed its own independence on March 14, 1939, and after Germany had annexed Czech lands on March 15, did the Parliament (Sojm) of the autonomous region proclaim the independence of Carpathian Ukraine. On March 14 Hungary started open military aggression in order

to occupy the region. On March 14–15 Transcarpathia was jointly defended by the Czechoslovak army and “Carpathian Sich”; then only soldiers of “Carpathian Sich”, which became the army of the independent Ukrainian state, continued resistance.

Hitler had given secret approval to the Hungarian occupation of Carpathian Ukraine, because Germany never supported its independence. Moreover, Reich officials called on the Hungarian aggression not to be resisted. The government of Carpathian Ukraine asked for protection from aggression, addressing all potential allies: Germany, Romania, Great Britain, France, the US. Destruction of the legally proclaimed independence of Carpathian Ukraine was approved by Hungary’s allies, Germany and Poland as well as by the USSR. Warsaw and Moscow were afraid of the independent Ukrainian state, however small it might be. Germany was not interested in this independence, although it supported the independence of Slovakia. The occupation of Transcarpathia by Hungary was carried out in an atmosphere of terror and war crimes; thousands died as a result.

Message 2¹²⁶

“‘Glory to Ukraine!’ slogan is a copy of the Nazi slogan ‘Heil Hitler!’”

Yana Prymachenko

The salutation *Glory to Ukraine! Glory to Heroes!* was first used during the Ukrainian national liberation fight in 1917–1921, long before the Nazis came to power in Germany.

The would-be slogan first appeared in 1840 in a poem written by Taras Shevchenko *To Osnovianenko*, which contained the following words, *Here is, people, our glory / Glory of Ukraine!*

In the late 19th century, it began to be used by the student community in Kharkiv. The response to the call *Glory to Ukraine!* was *Glory on the whole land!*

The greeting became widely popular during the Ukrainian revolution [of 1917 – Ed.]. From 1917, it was used by the squads of the black Cossacks of the Army of the Ukrainian People’s Republic, in the form *Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the Cossacks!* In 1918, during the rule of Hetman Skoropadsky, the greeting was transformed into *Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the Hetman!* In general, during 1918–1922 the Army of the Ukrainian People’s Republic had different variations of responses to the *Glory to Ukraine!* salutation, including: *To Ukraine – Glory!; Glory Forever!; Faith and Glory!*

After the defeat of the national liberation fight [1917–1921], the salutation was revived in the community of Ukrainian youth in emigration. It became widely popular in the Ukrainian Nationalists League, established in 1925 in Czechoslovakia. The League became one of the co-founders of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN).

¹²⁶ See the analysis of this message p. 27

The greeting *Glory to Ukraine! Glory to Heroes!* was widely used in the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), which referred to the legacy of the Army of the Ukrainian People’s Republic.

In the 1990s, after the declaration of Ukraine’s independence, the greeting began to slowly return to public space. It achieved the highest level of its popularity during the Euromaidan of 2013–2014. The Ukrainian society that rose in revolt against the neo-imperialistic policy of the Kremlin turned itself into the anti-colonial legacy of the Ukrainian liberation movement. The greeting *Glory to Ukraine! Glory to Heroes!* that was brought to the Maidan by today’s right-wing political forces, lost its nationalistic connotation. The Euromaidan united different citizens of Ukraine regardless of their ethnic, linguistic, religious, social and economic, age and ideological differences around the common idea of a better life in their country.

In 2018, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine legitimized the salutation already used in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, *Glory to Ukraine! Glory to Heroes!* It received official status in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and National Police. Ukraine is, in this way, distancing itself from Soviet heritage and reviving the traditions of the Ukrainian People’s Republic.

Narrative VI

“Ukraine forgot about the victory over Nazism”

Message 1¹²⁷

“Ukraine neglects the 1945 victory”

Yana Prymachenko

The statement that Ukraine allegedly neglects the 1945 victory can be refuted if we look into Ukrainian legislation. According to the respective Ukrainian law¹²⁸, May 9 [celebrated in the Soviet Union as the day of victory over Nazi Germany – Ed.] is a state holiday, Victory Day. Furthermore, in order to commemorate all victims of World War II, Ukraine also celebrates May 8 as the day of memory and reconciliation. This commemoration is in line with the European practice and the culture of penitence. This law was adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on April 9, 2015 as part of the de-communization package, to replace the previous law¹²⁹. The new wording of the law not only expands the chronological framework of the war, which corresponds to generally known historical facts, but also reflects the experience of the Ukrainian people in World War II as de facto a stateless nation.

These days, Russian aggression against Ukraine is using the symbolic field of the “Great Patriotic War” to support its aggression. Therefore, Ukrainian legislators rejected a number of Soviet symbols and practices. However, in order to preserve the memory about the victory over Nazism in Ukrainian society, the new law provides for commemoration and ceremonial events, including: a guard of honor serves near the Eternal Flame in Kyiv, the Tombs of the Unknown Soldier and the Unknown Sailor; flowers and wreaths are laid on monuments and memorials. The law also provides for normalization, preservation and construction of monuments and memorial signs for the participants and victims of World War II, as well as state support for research aimed at identifying the names of killed and missing persons, reburials of soldiers killed during World War II. Desecration of World War II monuments and their destruction is punished in accordance with the law.

Ukrainians remember the high price they had to pay in that war, caused by the geopolitical ambitions of Hitler and Stalin. The signature of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on August 23, 1939 opened the way to World War II. The estimated number of victims fluctuates between 10 and 14 million people. But the calculation process is complicated because of the lack of access to archive materials. The main information about the composition of the Red Army is kept in the Central Archive of the

¹²⁷ See the analysis of this message p. 28

¹²⁸ See for more details: <http://www.memory.gov.ua/laws/zakon-ukraini-pro-uvichnennya-peremogi-nad-natsizmom-u-drugii-svitovii-viini-1939-1945-rokiv>

¹²⁹ <https://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1684-14>

Ministry of Defense (CAMD) of the Russian Federation. At present, only Russian war historians have access to it.

According to various estimates, human losses suffered by Ukraine during World War II total from 5 to 14 million people. Recent estimates made by Ukrainian historians and demographers show that during the war the population of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic fell from 42.4 million (June 1941) to 32 million people (May 1945). This means that Ukraine lost 10.4 million people, including from 3.3 to 2.8 million soldiers who served in the Red Army. 2.4 million people were taken to Germany from the territory of Ukraine and used as forced labor. During the war, 714 cities, 28,000 villages, 419,000 manufacturing facilities were destroyed. 330,000 works of art, historical artifacts and collections were taken out of Ukraine. Therefore, the human price of this victory was very high for Ukraine.

Message 2¹³⁰

“Ukraine bans St. George ribbons but people continue to wear them”

Yana Prymachenko

The “great victory” idea was constructed only recently, and all symbols linked to it, for instance, the “St. George ribbons”, are also a recent invention.

The Soviet military decoration system had neither a St. George ribbon nor a corresponding medal. During World War II, Russian imperial symbols, including the St. George ribbon, were used by the Russian Liberation Army (ROA) headed by General A. Vlasov, by Cossack unions of ataman P. Krasnov, and other Russians who collaborated with the Nazis.

The St. George medal was founded by Catherine II in 1769 to award the top ranks in the Russian Army. In 1807, a counterpart for soldiers was instituted: the Badge of Honor of the Military Order of St. George, which in 1913 was renamed the Cross of St. George. The Bolsheviks eliminated all pre-revolution orders, medals, and badges in 1917.

However, during World War II, Stalin started using the old imperial symbols as a sign of the heroic legacy of the Russian army. This was supposed to raise spirits and patriotism in the Red Army. The “St. George” ribbon was renamed the “Guards” ribbon, and was described as a “corded silk moiré ribbon, orange with three length-wise black strips on it”.

It is the Guards ribbon that became a symbol of the Soviet victory over the 3rd Reich. After the Battle of Stalingrad on November 8, 1943 the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR established the “Order of Glory”, whose style resembled that of the Cross of St. George. On May 9, 1945 the “Medal For Victory over Germa-

130 See the analysis of this message p. 29

ny in the 1941–1945 Great Patriotic War” was founded. The Guards ribbon was also used on it. In the 1960s, it became one of the official symbols of victory.

After the collapse of the USSR, the old symbols of Tsarist Russia were slowly returning to public space. In 1992, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation restored the Order of St. George and the Cross of St. George, and in 2008 it approved their statute. The St. George ribbon became one of the attributes of these decorations. The first people who received those awards were soldiers who took part in provocations in South Ossetia and attacks on Georgia.

Introduction of the St. George ribbon as a symbol of victory was supposed to combine the heroism of the Russian Empire and the USSR in order to create a universal Russian symbol. Russia started using history as an instrument in the political fight in the post-Soviet area.

After the annexation of Crimea and Russian aggression in Donbas, the St. George ribbon completely transformed itself into the symbol of the “Russian World” and Russian imperial neo-colonial policy. That is why in 2014–2015 Ukraine refused to use it as the symbol of victory; Belarus and Kazakhstan did the same. In 2019, they were joined by Uzbekistan.

Since Russia is not giving up on its attempts to destabilize the situation in Ukraine, in 2017 Ukrainian legislators amended the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences that envisage punishment (fines or administrative arrests) for the public use, demonstration or wearing of St. George ribbons¹³¹.

However, these provisions do not apply to the cases provided by Article 4 of the Law “On Condemning Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and Prohibiting Propaganda of Their Symbols”. It takes beyond the scope of the ban images and use of the Guards ribbon on original battle banners; on state decorations given to individuals before 1991; museum exhibitions, private collections, and private archive collections; documents created before 1991. The ban on the guards ribbon does not apply to textbooks, research, education and training materials, and works of art provided that this does not lead to the propagandizing of the criminal nature of the totalitarian communist regime.

Message 3¹³²

“Russians liberated Europe from Nazism”

Yana Prymachenko

Attempts by Russia to get exclusive ownership of the victory over Nazism do not correspond to historical facts. Ukraine, together with Poland and Belarus, paid one of the highest prices in this war. The military contribution was substantial: there were approximately 7 million Ukrainians who fought for the Red Army, which is approximately 23% of the overall size of the Armed Forces of the USSR. The total

¹³¹ See for more details: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2031-19>

¹³² See the analysis of this message p. 29

losses suffered by the Red Army came to 8.6 million persons, including nearly 3.5–4 million Ukrainians.

The number of Ukrainian citizens in the Red Army was constantly changing. In 1941, Ukrainians accounted for 15–20% (second after Russians). In 1942, as many Ukrainians were taken captive, and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was occupied, their number decreased dramatically. At the beginning of 1944, during the liberation of Ukraine's territory, many Ukrainians were mobilized and their share in the Red Army increased to more than 22%.

Neither should one forget about the qualitative indicators. Approximately 2.5 million Ukrainians received military decorations and medals for their participation in the Great Patriotic War. 2,000 received "Hero of the Soviet Union" stars [*the highest military decoration in the USSR – Ed.*] for exceptional courage. Ivan Kozhedub received it three times; 32 Ukrainians received it twice. The group of flag bearers who raised the Victory flag over the Reichstag was led by a Ukrainian, Oleskiy Berest.

The contribution made by Ukrainians to the victory over Nazism was recognized internationally when the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was recognized as a member of the UN. Ukrainians also fought in the armies of other state members of the Anti-Hitler Coalition. For instance, in the early stages of World War II, the Polish army (approx. 1 million people) had nearly 106–112 thousand ethnic Ukrainians. During the September campaign, 8,000 Ukrainians who were citizens of Poland died in the battles against Nazis.

There were 40,000 Americans of Ukrainian origin among the U.S. soldiers who participated in Operation Overlord (landing of allies in Normandy). A total of 80,000 Ukrainians served in the American army. The number of Ukrainians in the Canadian army, according to various sources, totaled from 35,000 to 50,000. From 1940, 5,000 Ukrainians were fighting in the French Foreign Legion.

Russian propaganda is indignant that monuments to Soviet soldiers are pulled down in Poland. Yet, it is important to remember the context. Poland became the first victim of German aggression; however, this aggression would have been impossible if the USSR had not signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on August 23, 1939 that untied Hitler's hands. Secret protocols confirm that Stalin wanted to re-integrate all territories into the USSR that had earlier belonged to the Russian Empire.

Dismemberment of Poland was celebrated by the joint Soviet-German parade that took place on September 22, 1939 in Brest. On March 5, 1940 the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party adopted a decision to exterminate 25,700 Polish prisoners of war without trial and investigation.

In August 1944, during the offense by the Red Army, the Polish Armia Krajowa (Home Army) held the Warsaw Uprising against the German invaders. However, the Soviet leaders were deliberately not fast enough to support their allies who, at the same time, were their political opponents too. When the Red Army did enter Poland, it was followed by the Polish National Liberation Committee (PNLC). Its members were Polish communists loyal to the USSR. They were supposed to govern Poland but, in fact, they were mere implementers of Stalin's will.

In this context, the "liberation" of Poland looks like a very ambiguous story.

III. Response from
Ukrainian Historians:
Yaroslav Hrytsak

Narrative I

“Ukraine is Russia’s failed shadow”

Message 1¹³³

“Ukraine is ‘outskirts’ of Russia”

Saying that the word “Ukraine” means “outskirts”, especially the “outskirts of Russia”, is one of the fundamental mistakes made. It is based on a wrong assumption, namely that all words are monosemantic. But they are not.

The word “Ukraine” has two meanings. Literally speaking, this is a cut-off territory; “Ukraine” (*Ukrayina*) has its roots in the word *cut* (*krayaty*), and country (*krayina*). The meaning of this word depends on the standpoint, from which you are looking at this land. If you’re look at these territories from the outside, from Warsaw or Moscow, this is “outskirts”. If you’re look at it from the inside, this is your country (*krayina*).

Ukraine was first mentioned in 1187, in a chronicle story about the death of a Pereyaslav prince for whom “Ukraine cried a lot”.

The question is: who cried in this quote: the outskirts or the country? Obviously, the country. This means that the word “Ukraine” was in many cases used as the name of the territory.

We know a lot of similar cases. For instance, the word “Deutschland” comes from the native name of local tribes, the old German word “*tuit*”, which meant “locals”. In other words, “Deutschland” means a country of local people. This is a pattern that is very often repeated. When you are asked who you are, you say: I am a local, I come from this land. I do not have to denote myself more precisely because I know who I am. A tribe gets its name not from itself, but mostly from others, from its neighbors. Therefore, for example, the name “Deutsch” is not repeated in any of the neighboring languages. For the French, they are Allemands, for the English they are Germans, and for the Slavs they are *nimtsi*, німці (literally: “speechless” people, who do not understand our language).

So, “Ukraine” could mean both a country and the outskirts. We do not know how regularly one or the other name was used... However, we can assume that the term “Ukraine” was used not very often since there was no need to use it.

Up till the 17th century, we had only one important text where the word “Ukraine” was used to designate a “country”. This is the Peresopnytsia Gospel, but it mentioned “Hebrew Ukraines” [україни іудейські], which meant “Hebrew countries”. However, in the majority of texts from the 16th-18th centuries this word was used to denote a territory where Cossacks lived. This was the land on the frontier be-

¹³³ See the analysis of this message p. 10

tween the populated lands and the steppe, and in this sense it is “outskirts” of the populated lands, facing the steppe.

After all, we can say that “Rus’”, “Rusyns”/“Ruthenians”, and “Rus’ lands” were used more frequently. However, these words, as I have already said, had a predominantly religious meaning. Saying, “I am rusky”, meant “I am not a Catholic, or Muslim, or Jew”. These two notions – “Rus’” and “Ukraine” – were used in parallel for a very long time, although I presume that “Rus’” was used more frequently.

Still, the term “Ukraine” began to be used very actively during the period of Bohdan Khmelnytsky’s reign [*Cossack rebellion against Polish Rzeczpospolita in mid-17th century* – Ed.]. Khmelnytsky’s era led to this dramatic change when the Cossack name “Ukraine” was transformed into a concept that denotes a big land, so-called Ukraine on “both banks of the Dnipro River”. And, which is important, this territory included even Lviv while its ultimate border in the west was the Sian River: “Run you, Pole, it is our land up to the Sian” [*a Ukrainian proverb; Sian is a river running along the Polish-Ukrainian border and in Eastern Poland.* – Ed.]. And then in Cossack manuscripts of the 18th century, Ukraine was already referred to as the “Fatherland” in our understanding of this word, written with a capital letter. At that time, the word “Fatherland” no longer meant something you inherited from your father. It began to denote a wider territory, the land that the nobles were obliged to defend with their swords, instead of which they received the right to rule this country. This understanding of Fatherland also came from the West. There is an Italian and a Latin word, *patria*, in the sense we can still find in Virgil’s texts – *dulce pro patria mori* (it is sweet to die for the Fatherland). Research shows clearly how this notion emerges in the Old Polish language of the 16th century under the influence of Italian. The Polish nobles (*szlachta*) believed Rzeczpospolita was their Fatherland. Cossack *starshyna* [*Cossack military and political elites* – Ed.] wanted to have the same privileges as the *szlachta* because they also defended the borders of Rzeczpospolita from the “unfaithful” people. When the noble elites refused to grant this status to Cossack *starshyna*, Cossacks started an uprising and created their own state. This state was Ukraine, the territory that Cossacks defended with their swords from enemies, Catholics and Muslims.

When the Cossack state disappeared and was taken over by the Russian Empire, the word “Ukraine” did not vanish. It is regularly used in folk songs as a symbol of a distant and dreamt of land where people can live in liberty and freedom. It was a rural utopia. Then it became a notion of high culture restored by the Romantics, primarily Taras Shevchenko. His vision of Ukraine as a land free from national and social oppression became the cornerstone of the Ukrainian national idea.

That is why it is difficult to talk about Ukraine as a single concept. It had different meanings in different periods, and it appeared and disappeared at different periods. It is important to remember that it was also used simultaneously with “Rus’”. However, for an entire century – from Shevchenko’s birth to the beginning of World War I – Ukraine gradually replaced “Rus’”. Although Hrushevsky still combined these two terms, coining the concept of “Rus’-Ukraine”, and “Rus’” became inapplicable after the war and revolution. This was logical since the religious community disappeared, and its place was taken by a modern society, which needed a national, not a religious name.

Message 2¹³⁴

“Russia is the successor of Rus’; Ukrainians are ‘Russians’”

Russian propaganda often states that Ukrainian lands were always called “Rus’” and “Russia”, and, therefore, have to belong to today’s Russia. But there are very few old maps to verify how these lands were really called in the past. It is another important element of our region: until a certain period, there were few or even no maps, as there were not many books. Significant mapping of this territory started as late as in the 18th –19th centuries. Before that time, the maps describing these territories were produced in the West. There were no local maps, or we have no information about them.

Second, when we look at maps produced in the West, we see that there is no single Rus’ marked there. One of the first maps of this territory was a map by Fra Mauro, a Portuguese monk, dated approximately 1450. On it, there are seven different lands called Rus’. Moreover, all of them have strange names. For instance, “White Rus’” did not mean modern Belarus [*Belarus literally means “White Rus’” – Ed.*]; rather, *white* at that time could refer to a territory that did not pay tribute.

Third, if you look at Beauplan’s map [from *17th century – Ed.*] – and this is already “a map of *Ukraine*” – you will be surprised, because the only territory called “Russia” was Galicia [*in today’s Western Ukraine – Ed.*]. “Russia” is a Latin name, and it was used to denote contemporary Galicia, and not contemporary Russia, which Beauplan called “Moscovia”.

All these examples illustrate the statement that should be called “a historian’s golden rule”: the past is a different country, and everything there is done in a different way. In particular, the toponyms used in the past are not identical to the toponyms used now. Modern Russia and ancient Rus’ are two different notions. Saying that Russia is a direct heir to Rus’ is the same as saying that Romania is an heir to Rome. But if Romania is an heir to ancient Rome, what should we do with Italy?

There were traditional communities in the past. Today, there are modern nations. When communities become nations, they often change their names. For instance, the former Roman state becomes Italy; the former “Litvins” become Belarussians; “Zhmutud” become Lithuanians, “Ruthenians” of the former Rzeczpospolita and Austro-Hungarian Empire become Ukrainians, and “Muscovites” become Russians.

Old names were very persistent. But it does not mean that there was a mess in people’s heads. When in the 19th century, residents of Kyiv Region were asked who they were, they answered, “We are Ruthenians (*Rusyny*)”. But when they were asked if they were similar to Russians, they were offended, “No, we are not Muscovites! (*Moskali*)”. For them, their Rus’ and Muscovy were very different.

There is one more thing to be remembered: “Rus’” is the name that came to this territory from the outside. Most likely, this was the name Varangian princes called

¹³⁴ See the analysis of this message p. 11

themselves. They came here and established their rule over the territory with a polyethnic population.

Of course, there were a lot of Slavic people living there. But Slavs were not alone: there were also Ugro-Finns ("Chud and Ves"), and steppe people. Ancient Rus' was not a national state. It was built according to a different principle. As one prominent author said, in this it was not important which language peasants spoke, but rather on which land they worked, and how many taxes they could pay. The majority of countries at that time were non-national and non-ethnic, because they lived according to a simple scheme: someone comes, establishes the rule, and collects taxes from this territory.

That is why if someone says that "*Rus*" was a Russian state, it means that this person does not know history or does not understand it. "*Rus*" was first of all a political elite of Scandinavian origin. This was a general rule of those times – elites had a different origin than the majority of the local population. For instance, look at the Normans during the Norman conquest of England (those Normans had the same Scandinavian origin as the *Rus*). However, even when the elites were of the same origin as the local population, they pretended they were of different origin in order to emphasize their difference from "common people". A classic example is the nobility of Rzeczpospolita with their Sarmatian myth. They pretended they originated from royal Sarmatians who, in their turn, originated from biblical Japheth while the peasants, it was said, were plebeians who originated from Ham.

The general rule is that foreign elites assimilate within three or four generations. This can be very clearly seen from the names of Kyivan princes. The dynasty founder was Rurik (Eric), his son was Igor (Ingvar), and his wife was Olga (Helga). Then, Igor and Olga's son already had a Slavic name, Sviatoslav, their grandson was Volodymyr, their great grandson – Yaroslav, and so on. Rus' was a territory ruled by Slavonized "*Rus*' Normans", the Rurikids. And since there were a lot of such principedoms, "*Rus*" was plural. The majority of these principedoms over several centuries collapsed under the pressure from close or far neighbors, and in the late 16th – early 17th century the Rurik Dynasty itself faded away. Then, the name *Rus*' becomes a synonym for the church – this is the only structure that survived all the changes. And when this church was reformed in Rzeczpospolita in response to the challenge of the Catholic West, its educated elite brought the name *Rus*' to the Moscow Tsardom and, later, to the empire.

In other words, there is a connection between Rus' and Russia, but it is very indirect, very incidental, ultimately like the one between Romania and Rome. It cannot be refuted, but it cannot be absolutized either as the Kremlin's propaganda tries to do. This is because part of the Rus' heritage belongs not only to the Russians, Ukrainians or Belarusians, but also to the Poles, Lithuanians, and even Swedes. Does this mean they also have to belong to Russia? If so, then why wouldn't Romania claim its rights to Rome and Italy?

Narrative II

“Ukraine is an artificial project of the West”

Message 1¹³⁵

“Ukraine was invented by Poles and Austrians”

Yaroslav Hrytsak

All countries are “projects”. There is no nation that emerged naturally, as all social reality is constructed. If everything around us stayed natural, we’d all still be living on forest trees.

The question is not whether the nation is a “project” or not. The question is whether this project is sustainable, viable, and whether it’s able to survive.

I always tell my students that an iPhone is a construction that is not “normal”. Someone created it. However, this is one of the most viable constructions that currently exist in the world.

There is a discussion about when and under which circumstances nations emerged. Yet, in the 20th century nations became the norm. The main global organization is now called “the United Nations”, and not, for instance, “United Empires” or “United Monarchies”.

Ernest Gellner in his classical work *“Nations and Nationalism”* offered a tentative estimate: there are approximately two thousand ethnic groups and about two hundred nations in the world. In other words, the chances that an ethnic group will turn into a nation are low: 1 in 10.

Based on this estimate, the Ukrainian project has been quite viable. Its chances were rather low, among other things, because of all those restrictions and repressions this project endured in the 19th and 20th centuries.

As to the statement that the Ukrainians were deliberately “invented” by the Austrians or Poles, let me propose a full list. According to different narratives, Ukraine was created by: a) Poles; b) Austrians; c) Germans; d) Jews (as they say, Jewish-Bandera supporters, *“zhydobanderivtsi”*, and prior to Bandera – Jewish Mazepa supporters, *“zhydomazepyntsi”*); e) Bolsheviks. But where and when all these “creators of the Ukrainian nation” could act together? This common action was impossible.

Let me put it a different way: why did it happen that in the 19th, and especially in the 20th century, there were a lot of non-Ukrainian states and politicians that in

¹³⁵ See the analysis of this message p. 13

one way or another were interested in “project Ukraine”? If someone is interested in “project Ukraine”, this means that there was something in this project, something worth investing in.

I will not go into detail here. I will only repeat the words of a British historian, Dominic Lieven, that the history of the World War I depended on developments around Ukraine more than on anything else in the world. The Ukrainian factor meant, first and foremost, control over large natural and human resources available on Ukrainian lands. Those who controlled them had better chances of winning. It was the same during World War II. Read what Hitler was saying about Ukraine, to what extent he connected his success to control over Ukrainian resources.

However, in order to receive control over Ukrainian resources, it was necessary to do something with them. Sticks alone were not enough – carrots were also necessary. Some say that Hitler would have won the war if the Germans had put not a swastika but a Ukrainian trident on the gates of Kyiv. Yet, if he had done that, Hitler would not have been himself. Instead, Stalin played the Ukrainian card better than Hitler. On the one hand, he destroyed Ukrainians in millions, and on the other – he made Ukraine one of the founding members of the UN.

The Ukrainian question becomes manifest during wars and revolutions. However, in periods of peace attempts were made to hide it and pretend it does not exist.

If you remember, back in 1990–1991 Thatcher [the then UK Prime Minister] and Bush [the then U.S. President] came to Kyiv to say that they do not want to see Ukraine an independent sovereign state. I would, therefore say, that project “Ukraine” looks weird because Ukraine emerged to a large extent not due to, but despite, [external] political support. The Ukrainians simply decided for themselves: enough is enough. We do not want to be used in the games of others any longer – we want to be ourselves and be masters of our own destiny. And this was a very natural decision.

By the way, Russia is also a constructed project. Moreover, Russia as a project emerged later than Ukraine, and is more problematic than the Ukrainian one. Whereas Ukraine’s construction started with Cossacks and the Khmelnytsky era, Russia was constructed during the era of Peter the Great. I will remind you that in the early 19th century one prominent Russian figure suggested that Russia should be re-named “Petrovia”. Because the Russian reality before and during/after Peter’s reign was very different.

Before Peter the Great, Russia was not a nation. It was part of the so-called *Slavia Orthodoxa* – the Orthodox world, where the residents spoke different Slavic dialects, had some rudimentary understanding of their history but no idea about their borders and no literary language because literature as such was very poor. This was a traditional community united by one thing – the Orthodox faith, “Rus’ faith”. It was similar to the Muslim world, which resists the concept of the nation and believes this concept is sinful because nations and nationalism ruin the unity of this world.

The nation is a fundamentally Western construct similar to democracy, Parliament or iPhone. It was exported from the West, like an iPhone. Ancient Rus’ did not have a concept of the nation. It did not have instruments of nation-building, because the main instrument for nation-building is imagination, and imagination is impossible without reading books. Books provide shared senses and a feeling of belonging to a

common space that is wider than the village you live in. Yuri Slezkine said a brilliant phrase, "Nations are book-reading tribes". If you take books away, there will be only tribes, not nations.

If we catalogue books that were circulating in the Orthodox world from the Christianization of Rus' and up to the Peter the Great era, we will see that their number remained more or less the same. This number was equal to the total number of books in a library of an average Byzantine monastery.

The invention of the printing press changed something, but not much. While in the 150 years after the printing press was invented 6 million books were printed in the Catholic West, in Eastern Europe the number was a maximum of 40 thousand. Therefore, Rus' had no tools to create a nation.

The same is valid about educational centers. For a very long time, there was no university or college in the territory of former Rus'. In the West, they appeared back in the 11th century. By the 15th century, the network of universities reached Krakow, the border with the Orthodox world, but it did not cross that border.

The first Orthodox educational centers appeared between the 15th and 16th centuries in Ostroh, Lviv, and Kyiv. Why? Because there was great pressure exerted by Catholicism, to which Orthodoxy had to respond. Standing up to a stronger adversary is possible only when you master his/her weapon. And the main weapon of Catholics was education and books. Therefore, it is not surprising that Orthodox brotherhood schools and the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy trained students using the Jesuits' curricula, and each of them had a printing house.

In Russia, this movement started much later, and it only under Peter the Great that the need was felt to respond to the Western challenge. That is why Russia of the Peter's times is a product of Westernization of Rus' – the same as Ukraine and Belarus. Yet, in Ukraine this Westernization started earlier and went much further than in Russia and Belarus. In Russia, only the elites were Westernized, while common people continued to live in the same old way. In Ukraine, Westernization went to the very grassroots level, to the folk culture. No wonder that the first Westernizers of Rus' during the times of Peter the Great were people coming from "*Little Russia*" [*Malorossia, Lesser Rus*], i.e. from Ukraine.

Westernization in our part of the world is identical to modernization. The Orthodox world did not have enough power and effort to modernize itself. Modernity came here with the West as a response to the challenge from the West. Russia never managed to accomplish this modernization, although it tried to do it several times. The last time was under the presidency of Gorbachev and Yeltsin. Now, the Kremlin has invented a name to call that failure to modernize: the "Russian World". The Russians say that they cannot live any other way because they are a separate civilization, they will go a different way and have their own *Sonderweg* [*special way – Ed.*]. They also argue they have other values, so they can arrest people without investigation and a court ruling, dispose of the opposition, and annex lands belonging to other countries.

The Russian nation has never freed itself from its empire. They have not managed to understand clearly where the borders of their nation end and the lands of their

neighbors begin. They continue to think that their neighbors have territories that belong to them, the Russians.

Second, the empire is not only about territories and power over other nations. It is also about seeing citizens as subjugated people using the formula, "I will do with them whatever I want to". The nation is not a community, it is a society. In other words, it is a union of citizens aware of their rights and ready to defend them.

By and large, Ukraine has so far not succeeded in this. But it's not giving up. It does not see the West as an enemy. Besides, the Ukrainians will not allow someone to turn them into subjugated people. In this regard, they are more similar to the Austrians, Poles, Americans or Jews than to Russians.

Message 2¹³⁶

"The Ukrainian language is artificial"

Yaroslav Hrytsak

All languages are artificial. Languages are not 'natural' phenomena: though par-lances and dialects are natural. There was a dispute in the past as to why Hebrew is a language, and Yiddish is a dialect. The best answer was given by a professor and a teacher of Yiddish: a language is a dialect protected by an army. Modern Hebrew is one of the most artificial languages in the world because it was created consciously in the 20th century. However, it is the language of Israel and its army, which makes it viable.

All languages are constructs and most modern languages were constructed in the 19th century. This was the century when grammars and glossaries were written and published. This applies to Russian and to Ukrainian as well. The question is on which basis were they constructed, around which nucleus or nuclei.

One of the main nuclei of the Russian language was the Old Slavonic language. This was the language of elites – the language used by Lomonosov and Trediakovsky, with complex, pretentious and laborious constructions. But one has to make a significant correction here: Russian elites did not speak that language. The majority spoke French. Look at the language used by the Russian beau monde in Tolstoy's *"War and Peace"*, or the language of letters exchanged by Pushkin's Eugene Onegin and his beloved Tatiana: it was French. One can assume that Lomonosov's language was so laborious because no one ever really spoke it. Pushkin made the revolution when he started writing in the language of ordinary people. Since then, a new nucleus was added to the Russian language.

In the Ukrainian language, there is also a great difference between the language of Hryhoriy Skovoroda [*18th century Ukrainian philosopher and poet – Ed.*] and the language of Shevchenko [*major Ukrainian poet of the 19th century – Ed.*]. However, the role and place of the nucleus of Church Slavonic in it was much smaller than in Russian. The modern Ukrainian language was based on the vernacular of Poltava

¹³⁶ See the analysis of this message p. 14

Region. But that vernacular was not suitable for expressing more complicated, more modern things. That is why abstract and conceptual vocabulary in the Ukrainian language is mostly of Galician origin. It is not because the Galician people were especially inclined to abstract things, but because there was an unofficial Ukrainian academy of sciences in Galicia – Shevchenko Scientific Society in Lviv. However, it was Galician only by location: money for its establishment was given by a Ukrainian landlady from the Russian empire. She was asked to do so by Ukrainians from the Russian empire, and the Society was headed for 20 years by a historian from Kyiv, Mykhailo Hrushevsky. In any case, the Ukrainian language not only has two nuclei, it is also built on a consensus between the Poltava dialect and Galician bookish language, which, like Polish, had been much influenced by Latin and German.

We know much less about what was going on before this stage of construction of the Ukrainian and Russian languages, and which dialects were spoken, for instance, in the 12th or 14th centuries. We have too few texts, and we can only use indirect data. For instance, a scribe re-writing a Church Slavonic text could make occasional mistakes and slips of the pen in accordance with his dialect. Based on those slips of the pen, we can draw conclusions that there were certain elements of gravity between the contemporary Ukrainian language and the vernacular spoken on our land in that period.

We have even fewer texts from the era when Rus' lands went through their cultural and national renaissance in the late 16th-17th centuries. We can see that there were so many words borrowed from Polish and German that the Ukrainian language could have become a Western Slavic, and not Eastern Slavic, language. In other words, it would have been closer to the Czech or Polish languages than to Belarussian or Russian.

However, being part of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union changed the development vector dramatically. In the Russian Empire everything was done to prevent the development of the Ukrainian language. It was banned twice, and it never became the language of schools or the church, not to mention the army. The Ukrainian language "did not and could not exist", as the Russian Empire said.

In the Soviet Union, it was never formally banned; in the 1920s, during the Ukrainization period, it had even seen very good development. However, from the 1930s, another trend became visible, which consisted in the biggest possible approximation of the Ukrainian language to the Russian language. This was made by destroying all those elements in the Ukrainian language that made it most different from Russian. Second, everything was done to decrease the social status of the Ukrainian language. Analysis of Soviet census data shows very clearly that high-status groups had a low share of Ukrainian-speaking people: that was a clear proportion. It was possible to make a good career only with the Russian language. Ukrainian was degraded to the status of a spoken language of aboriginal peasants. These facts are obvious, but they are denied by Russian propaganda, which states that the Ukrainians were really willing to assimilate themselves. However, there are statistics for all socialist countries, not only for the USSR but beyond; according to these statistics, Ukraine was last in terms of the number of publications in the native language per capita. Books were taken away from the Ukrainians so that they ceased to be a nation and became a tribe.

That policy had all the signs of a "linguocide". It also did a disservice for the Ukrainians in another respect: since the Ukrainian language was persecuted and denigrated in status, it turned into a sacred national thing for committed Ukrainian patriots. These patriots believe that language is the main national criterion. In fact, it is not. Had it been so, Croats and Serbs would not be separate nations today, and there would have only been one Serbian-Croatian nation. Bernard Shaw once aptly said that the English language divides two nations, the Americans and the Brits. A lot of other similar examples exist.

However, in our region, for some reason, we focus on language. We have this concept that a nation is its language. This sounds especially prominent in the Russian context, in which there is the idea that the Russian nation stretches as far as the Russian language is spoken. This is very similar to the concept developed by the Germans during the Hitler era. They said that the German "Reich" was where German was spoken. If this was so, then the Carpathians could also be called German territory because Carpathian Germans lived there. The Black Sea area can also be called German territory because there were German colonists. Today's Russian way of thinking is, therefore, very similar to the German concept when a nation is mixed with the language. This is a concept of "*Volk*" – the nation that is formed on the basis of a language, which is contrary to the French or American political concept of the nation.

Narrative III

“Crimea, Donbas and South-East of Ukraine Should Belong to Russia”

Message 1

“Crimea Has Always Belonged to Russia”¹³⁷

Crimea has been Greek land. And then Crimean Tatar land, depending from what moment in history we count. But it is certainly not Russian land because the Russian element emerged there at a very late stage. Crimea was not controlled even by Rus'. It is a territory that has its own history. Therefore, it makes no sense to say that it was “always” Russian.

Message 2¹³⁸

“Donbas and ‘Novorossiya’ are Parts of the ‘Russian World’”

The same story is valid for Donbas. Donbas was neither Ukrainian nor Russian; it was regional. This is a region that never had a strongly developed national identity. Every government that tried to control that region had huge problems because this was a mining region. Mining is always linked to extreme exploitation and to high levels of crime. In places where oil, gas, diamonds are mined, there are always criminal structures involved in this activity.

Compare it to the Gold Rush in California or with diamond mining in Africa or to similar cases, and you will see the same thing. Some call it “carbon democracy”: the more carbon-based resources [*coal, oil, gas, diamonds, etc.* – Ed.] that are produced, the more lawless a region is, as mining is a source of big revenues.

On the other hand, huge numbers of people live here in conditions of permanent risk because working in mines is dangerous. You can never come into conflict with these people because they spend every day of their life on the edge of life and death, and when they are on the surface they fear nothing.

No one was ever able to “swallow” these lands. It was not done by the Russian Empire and, moreover, not by the Soviet Union. Ukraine inherited this challenge.

The Southern and Eastern parts of Ukraine, which Russian propaganda calls “Novorossiya”, were colonization lands. The Russian Empire, in particular Catherine II, ac-

¹³⁷ See the analysis of this message p. 16

¹³⁸ See the analysis of this message p. 18

tively invited the best colonizers: Germans, Greeks, and Jews. Yet, the main colonizers were Ukrainian peasants. These peasants had a very strong need for land, facing a serious land shortage. These lands were massively colonized by the end of the 18th century. Since the end of the century, almost every region in this territory, except in cities, was mostly Ukrainian-speaking.

What happened with the demographic situation here? After Crimean Khanate was destroyed and annexed by the Russian Empire, this territory became ethnically Ukrainian. It was colonized by peasants, and peasants made up the majority.

When the democratic principle becomes dominant, when not the minority but the majority becomes a decision-maker, Ukrainians began to decide the destiny of these lands. There is a difference between top-down and bottom-up colonization; this bottom-up colonization is done by common people. The "Novorossiya" project, on the contrary, presumes top-down colonization [*an imperial colonization by Tsarist Russia – Ed.*], which broke against the popular concept of bottom-up [Ukrainian] colonization.

"Novorossiya" was not sustainable in the same way as Russian or Soviet modernization were not sustainable. The failure of the "Russian Spring" and the entire "Novorossiya" project in 2014 showed this clearly.

One more thing: the idea that "some countries own territories which are actually ours" is a principle applicable in the 1920s–1930s or World War II. Today's world is, on the contrary, built on respect for borders, which gives up the idea that some of 'our lands' exist, which mistakenly belong to other states.

A classic example is Alsace and Lorraine, the lands at the core of French-German conflicts for more than 50 years from 1870 and up to World War II. However, after World War II Europe saw French-German reconciliation when it was decided that the border should not be questioned. The idea of the Coal and Steel Community was developed, which allowed the joint use of these territories. This was confirmed by the French-German reconciliation when De Gaulle and Adenauer shook hands during the service in Reims Cathedral, the key place for French identity where, historically, kings were crowned.

Modern Europe's main principle is that borders are inviolable. They are not perfect, we can dislike them, but they should not be violated. If we follow the logic used by contemporary Russia, then the Poles could say that there are large territories in Ukraine that belong to Poland – up to the Dnipro, up to Kyiv. They could say that Kyiv is a Polish city, as in the 17th–18th centuries the predominating language in Kyiv was Polish. Or they could say that Kyiv has "always" been Polish territory. Imagine what they could say about Lviv.

Yet what happened in Ukrainian-Polish relations? In the 1950s an elite emerged which said that for the sake of the Polish cause it had to be acknowledged that Vilnius is a Lithuanian city, and that Lviv is a Ukrainian city. This is what Jerzy Giedroyc said.

We did not hear such voices from the Russian side. Only a few intellectuals expressed that.

We could expect something similar to Giedroyc's position from somebody like Solzhenitsyn. Instead, Solzhenitsyn wrote "*How Should We Build Russia?*" where he said, 'There are our territories in Kazakhstan and in Ukraine. And we should not let them go'.

The problem is that Russia and Russian intellectuals keep on thinking in terms of the 1920–30s as if no war and no tragedies took place. They still think that they 'can do it again' and 'can repeat' [*a popular slogan in today's Russia, hinting that Russia can "repeat" its victory of 1945 against the West – Ed.*]. This is an archaic way of thinking, but it is also a dangerous way of thinking because if we go this way, we will have continuous zones of conflicts again in Europe, or even the entire world. This could lead to another big war.

Narrative IV

“The USSR was a powerful empire, and Stalin was a hero”

Message 1¹³⁹

“The USSR was a powerful empire, and Ukrainians neglected its achievements”

Yaroslav Hrytsak

There is no doubt that the Soviet Union was a modernization project. It had great achievements in terms of transforming a former agrarian society into an industrial country.

However, this happened in almost all countries of the “old world”, including Western Europe and North America. Moreover, it happened there a) at a much lower price, b) with a much lower number of victims, and c) much more successfully.

Therefore, the industrial capacity of the Soviet Union, if we count it on the basis of gross product per capita, was rather weak. The modernization capacity of the Soviet project was doubtful because it did not create innovation structures. The only exception was, perhaps, the Military-Industrial complex. This is why the USSR was sometimes called Upper Volta (an African country) but with nuclear missiles.

Second, the Soviet industrialization system was not sustainable; it could deliver short-term results, but it had no prospects of achieving long-term objectives.

There is a general rule: when one starts modernizing a backward nation, then the more backward a country, the more “breathtaking” results one achieves at the initial stages. This is exactly what is going on in China now.

But then the question comes: what next? Will a country maintain this trend? Communism showed that it failed to maintain this trend in all countries. Its industrialization exhausts its potential very quickly.

The most important thing is that the Soviet leadership missed the transition from the industrial to post-industrial era. This transition started in the West in the 1960s. Western societies have now been post-industrial for a very long time. The principal share of gross national product is now produced not with the vapor from factory pipes, but with the vapor from a cup of coffee. In the 1960s, Khrushchev promised to catch up and overtake the U.S. in terms of steel production and other indicators characterizing development of heavy industry. But he did not understand that he

¹³⁹ See the analysis of this message p. 21

was urging the country to run in the opposite direction than the direction in which the developed world was moving.

Ukraine saw the collapse of Soviet industry in the 1990s. Yet, since the 2000s it has seen a transition to the post-industrial era. As in the West in the 1960s, the principal share of its gross national product is now in the service sector of the economy. Therefore, it is not living on Soviet industrial reserves as it has created an alternative for it.

By the way, one cannot understand where the first and second Maidans came from, and we certainly cannot even understand the Zelensky revolution without taking this transition into consideration. Because all over this world it leads to the emergence of a new middle class and a new generation that is no longer willing to tolerate an authoritarian regime, as it striving for changes and demands respect for human dignity.

Message 2¹⁴⁰

“Bolsheviks and Stalin created Ukraine”

There is a well-known discussion between Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin in 1918. In this debate, Rosa Luxemburg accused Lenin, that his approach to the revolution was wrong. One of the accusations from Rosa Luxemburg was that Lenin was flirting with Ukrainian nationalism.

Lenin replied in the following way: ‘Have you looked at the map of elections, where the constituent meetings were held in the autumn of 1917? Was it a coincidence that Ukrainian, and not Russian, socialist parties won in the Ukrainian provinces? How can you ignore the territory where the majority of people vote not for us, but for the Ukrainians?’

Lenin and the Bolsheviks tried to make concessions to the national question. That is why what the Soviet Union did was not a product of its good will. This was a forced trade-off in order to preserve Soviet power in this territory. Since national movements, for instance, peasants’ movements, were strong in the periphery of the former Russian Empire, the Bolsheviks were forced to consent to creation of the USSR, although initially this was not their plan – they were centralizers and against a federal state. Yet, they became the only Russian party that was ready to take this step. The Whites were strongly against this. This was the factor that, in the opinion of several historians, became one of the reasons why the Bolsheviks were able to win, and the “Whites” lost in that battle.

The defeat of the “Whites” is similar to Hitler’s defeat in the sense I mentioned earlier: if a political force wanted to win in Ukraine, it had to take into consideration the Ukrainians and the Ukrainian question.

I will repeat it again: creation of the USSR in general and of the Ukrainian SSR in particular was a union of two forces – the Russian Bolsheviks in the center and na-

¹⁴⁰ See the analysis of this message p. 22

tional movements in the periphery. None of these two forces had sufficient power to establish a unilateral control over non-Russian periphery. Hence comes the “indigenization” policy of the 1920s. In the Ukrainian case, this was the Ukrainization policy, and of all indigenization policies it was the most ambitious.

Yet, what was this union [between Bolsheviks and Ukrainians]? It was a union of completely different forces that wanted to look at each other through a rifle gun-sight. Each of these forces believed that this union was a temporary compromise solution, and sooner or later it would collapse.

In principle, it came to its end in 1929 after the wind-down of Ukrainization and the beginning of Stalin’s plan. The Soviets destroyed the resistance of Ukrainian villages, organized artificial Famine, repressions, and so on. But this could have been done only before World War II, when the Ukrainian question was a domestic one.

Yet, when the war began, the Ukrainian question became a foreign issue, not a domestic one. Everyone tried to manipulate it. As I have said, Stalin turned out to be the most skillful player in the Ukrainian card game.

In short, the Ukrainian question was so important that no one could afford to a) ignore it b) lose the battle for it. And the fact that Stalin “united” these lands was an attempt to control the Ukrainian question. On the one hand he tried to establish Soviet ownership over it and, on the other, to control it.

Yet, it appeared that despite all those attempts to control Ukraine it was the most uncontrolled territory in the USSR. The Ukrainian movement in the Soviet Union was one of the strongest national movements. It was especially strong in Western Ukraine, in Galicia where the nationalist underground resistance movement waged armed resistance until the late 1940s. Even after this movement was defeated, Soviet Ukraine remained a problematic territory.

For example, the Ukrainian question was one of the main reasons for the Soviet invasion in Prague in 1968. The Communist Party elite of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic insisted that if the Soviet Union did not intervene with its tanks, these elites would not guarantee that Ukrainians would stay within the Soviet Union. The years of 1989–1991 demonstrated this very well. Ukraine, on the one hand, seemed to be a pacified territory when the times were calm. Yet when the times were turbulent, and an external challenge emerged – a war or a communism crisis – the Ukrainian question was once again on the agenda. Eventually, the Ukrainians abandoned the Soviet Union and their retreat was the last nail in the Soviet Union’s coffin. That is why Stalin’s “re-unification” of Ukrainian lands was one of his greatest miscalculations.

Let me sum up: concessions to Ukraine in the USSR were not the Bolsheviks’ good will. This was an attempt to be pragmatic in dealing with the circumstances. It was an attempt to keep control over these territories, without which it was not possible to maintain power in the very core of the USSR.

Narrative V

“All Ukrainian nationalists were fascists”

Message 1¹⁴¹

“UPA were Hitler’s collaborators”

Yaroslav Hrytsak

It would be strange to say that an army, whose main symbol spent three years in a Nazi concentration camp, was collaborationist. This would be a strange form of collaboration.

During the war, collaborationism, unfortunately, was a norm, it was universal. Resistance was the exception. This is logical, because every human being has his or her personal life. There is no price people are not ready to pay for their life or the lives of their nearest and dearest, especially if collaboration offers such a chance. Therefore, we have to distinguish between forced and voluntary collaboration.

What does this mean? The level of collaborationism is not determined by the willingness of citizens to collaborate because almost everyone collaborates. The level of collaborationism is determined by the extent to which the occupying authorities allow this collaboration. The Germans did not want to see Ukrainians as allies. Being “*Untermenschen*”, Ukrainians did not deserve this status. If they were allowed to collaborate, it was very limited and allowed on certain conditions: no Ukrainian state was allowed, no Ukrainians were allowed to serve in top posts (they were taken by Germans).

Collaboration was allowed, in the first place, in the police because someone had to do the dirty work. The dirty work consisted of exterminating Jews. Since the Ukrainians were seen as “*Untermenschen*”, this work, Nazis believed, “suits them best”. By the way, the Germans treated the Belarusians and Baltic peoples in the same way. Therefore, in order to protect the psychological health of German soldiers or officers, the police were used for the dirtiest campaigns.

The then “Ukrainian” police force was ethnically not completely Ukrainian. It consisted of different groups and strata, including former Red Army soldiers. It was “Ukrainian” only by name. It had no freedom of action since it was managed by German officers.

In other words, collaborationism existed, but compared to Western Europe, it was very limited. Russia was lucky that it was not occupied. If it had been occupied, I assume there would have been “Russian police” as well.

¹⁴¹ See the analysis of this message p. 24

We do not have so many examples of Polish collaborationism, but this did happen because Hitler did not admit the idea of Polish collaboration at all. Hitler thought that Poland simply had to be destroyed.

For the same reason, Jewish collaborationism was almost absent. However, there is a disputed argument that the Judenräte [*Jewish Councils created by Nazis in Eastern Europe to govern Jews in ghettos. – Ed.*] had a collaboration element.

Now let us imagine the worst-case scenario, that Hitler won the war. If that had happened, he would say that the biggest collaborationists with the Soviet Union would have been Ukrainians. Because Ukrainians were rather well represented on the frontline and in top positions.

In other words, for Ukrainians, collaboration was a choice without a choice. Ukrainians would be called collaborationists anyway, no matter who would have won the war.

Another question is: were members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists fascists? There is no definite answer to this question. If we study it from the deeper academic way, the question is very complicated.

On the surface, there is a well-known 'Hitler argument': in a difficult dispute one who wants to destroy the opponent will call him/her a Fascist or Hitler supporter.

But from the academic point of view, the question should be framed in the following way: to what extent was the Ukrainian movement fascist, or trying to be fascist, and to what extent was it not?

In the 1930s, after the Holodomor (this is very important), after the stepping up of repressions against Ukrainians by the Polish government, and especially closer to the end of the 1930s, Ukrainians had developed a strong inclination toward fascism. Not to [German] Nazism but rather to [Italian] fascism. The majority of public figures at that time believed that the model for nationalists was Italy, and not Hitler. The reason was simple: fascist Italy was religious whereas German Nazism was anti-religious.

That was a general trend, and that trend was getting stronger closer to 1939. In 1939 we can see clear influences of fascism on the practices and ideology of the OUN. It was possible that it would have become entirely fascist if the Germans had not put an end to it. Because the Germans were not interested in the existence of Ukrainian fascism.

There is a text to which little attention is paid in Ukraine, a text by Alexander Watt *My 20th Century*. In this text he, a left-wing liberal, writes about the 1930s, and says, sadly, that around 1939 all options had disappeared, except for fascism and communism. People adopted one or the other option, and this was a general trend. In the Ukrainian case, the fascist option was most represented by Dontsov who, like Mussolini, was a socialist before the war.

Surprisingly, almost paradoxically, the evolution of the Ukrainian nationalist movement towards fascism was stopped by Hitler himself. Hitler was not interested in having another fascism on this territory, especially where the Germans wanted to rule undividedly. Choosing their allies between moderate and radical nationalists, Nazis always chose moderate nationalists, this was a general rule. That is why they picked up Horthy, and not Szálasi, Kubiiovych, and not Bandera.

My second point is that the fascist-oriented trend of Ukrainian nationalism did not work when applied in Eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian nationalists did not think about Galicia or even Western Ukraine. They cared about the greater Ukraine, including Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Donbas. When they went there, they understood that Dontsov ideology did not work there. Local people were Ukrainians, but they did not accept the ideology which said 'Nation above all!' They were more interested in social issues – an 8-hour working day, dissolution of collective farms, etc. Then young Ukrainian nationalists, under the influence of their experience, began to demand revision of Ukrainian nationalist ideology.

After the war, they emigrated to Western Europe, and they had conflicts with Bandera because Banderites did not accept this evolution. They believed that those nationalists-revisionists fell under the influence of Soviet propaganda or were NKVD agents. Then, these two branches had a radical breakup.

So, the Ukrainian nationalist movement evolved in line with a general direction typical for the Europe of that time. When Marxism-Leninism was at its peak, in the 1920s, the Ukrainian movement was on the left side. When the situation in Europe changed, it moved to the right. During the war, the situation changed again, and it moved to the left.

The Ukrainian movement was not a *thing in itself*, it did not function in a vacuum; it reflected general circumstances around it. Those circumstances were not even Ukrainian or Russian: they were global.

Message 2¹⁴²

“‘Glory to Ukraine!’ slogan is a copy of the Nazi slogan ‘Heil Hitler!’”

Yaroslav Hrytsak

The slogan “Glory to Ukraine” is not borrowed from the Nazi slogan “Heil Hitler!”. If it contained “Glory to a leader”, then maybe yes. There was such an attempt; the first one who tried to introduce it were not even Bandera supporters but Melnyk supporters [*another branch of the OUN, Organization of the Ukrainian Nationalists – Ed.*]: they had the slogan ‘glory to the nation, glory to the leader’. But it was not generally adopted.

The slogan ‘Glory to Ukraine! Glory to Heroes!’ does not belong to the OUN. This slogan appeared earlier, during the 1917–1918 revolution, long before Hitler.

Note that there are two widespread slogans: ‘Glory to Ukraine! Glory to Heroes!’ and ‘Glory to the Nation! Death to Enemies!’ Whereas the former slogan became popular during the Maidan protests, the latter one did not take root. It happened because the first slogan does not have a xenophobic connotation. It is neutral, whereas the second it obviously xenophobic. It did not become popular.

¹⁴² See the analysis of this message p. 27

Narrative VI

“Ukraine forgot about the victory over Nazism”

Message 1¹⁴³

“Ukraine forgot about the victory over Nazism”

Yaroslav Hrytsak

Ukrainians do not want to forget about victory. But we want to remind people that the war began in 1939, and not in 1941 [as Soviet and Russian propaganda state]. The Ukrainian factor in this war was present not from 1941, but from the very beginning, from 1939. Otherwise, the Soviet army would have not occupied Western Ukraine, Western Belarus, and the Baltic states, and there would have not been victims on a mass scale on this territory. Jan Gross, in his study of Sovietization of former Polish territories, mentions that the number of victims in the Soviet occupation zone was 3–4 times higher than in the German zone.

If Hitler had not started the war against the USSR in 1941, Stalin would have remained the biggest exterminator of people. This was the bloodiest dictatorship. The Ukrainians do not want to forget about 1939. But 1939 is very close to 1933 [*the year of Holodomor and Stalin's repressions – Ed.*], only six years away. Those Ukrainians who fought in the Red Army remembered what was going on in Ukraine in 1933.

There is a lot of evidence that Stalin was suspicious about the Ukrainians in the army, that he believed they did not want to fight, that they let themselves get imprisoned by the Germans on a mass scale.

Of course, his suspicions were, in the majority of cases, groundless. The Ukrainians were good fighters, which can be seen from statistics of military awards and the number of Ukrainians who received the distinction of ‘Hero of the Soviet Union’. However, at least in summer 1941, when the Red Army endured one defeat after another, Stalin was at some point partly right.

There are diaries and letters of German soldiers from the Eastern front. One German officer who was in Ukraine in summer 1941 wrote that the Ukrainians gave a hospitable welcome to the Germans. It looked like the Ukrainians were ‘the last nation in Europe that still loves us,’ he said.

There were reasons for that. It was not love for Germany. It was the hope of many Ukrainians that the German army would liberate them from Stalin and Stalin’s re-

¹⁴³ See the analysis of this message p. 28

gime. Of course, they found that this was an illusionary hope. Hitler turned out to be even worse than Stalin.

Yet, the dislike for Stalin stayed unchanged. One of the main differences between Russia and Ukraine today is in the attitude of Russians and Ukrainians towards Stalin. While many Russians are positive about Stalin and see him as a victorious leader, Ukrainians are in the main negative towards him and associate him with the Famine and repressions.

Whereas for Russians, the "Great Patriotic War" is now the major reference point in history, for Ukrainians this reference point was, over the last 10–15 years, *Holodomor* [artificial Famine of 1932–1933]. In all Ukrainian regions, there is a consensus on three points: a) the Famine existed, b) it was artificial; and c) its nature in Ukraine was that of genocide.

The second point is that we have now a new horrible figure about the war: 42 million victims. It illustrates what other soldiers said, especially those who were on the frontline. I always refer to one of the best books about World War II, or the "Great Patriotic War" as it was called in the Soviet Union – the memoirs of Nikolay Nikulin. He was a worker in the Hermitage who served as a young artilleryman during the war. He described what was going on at the frontline at that time. German offensives were stopped, literally, with Soviet bodies. In his words, the German military "knife" was going through Soviet territory as if through "butter", and the only way to stop it was to get it rusted, to "saturate" it with the blood of soldiers. He described what insane orders were given – squadron after squadron, division after division were sent to their deaths. After the war, he met with German veterans. They told him how German machine gunners went mad on the frontline since they were exhausted by the killing, because regardless of how many were killed, Soviet soldiers kept coming and coming, as if they were doomed to death.

In 1975, he visited the battlefield of one of the fights in which he took part. What impressed him most (and this was the reason why he started writing his memoirs) was the mass of unburied remnants of the killed soldiers he saw. As if they had been killed twice: first physically, and then through amnesia.

The Soviet Union was not able to win without throwing so many dead bodies against the German offensive. One of my friends shared the words of his father, a field commander, 'One has to be put to trial for such a victory'.

Nikolay Nikulin writes that none of the soldiers shouted *For Stalin* [as was stated by Soviet propaganda – Ed.] during attacks. People were screaming "Mama" or using swear words. Nikulin is Russian, and I do not know whether he had any pro-Ukrainian sympathies. But his standpoint is close to the current Ukrainian position.

He predicted what would happen after the majority of veterans or soldiers who were on the frontline pass away; together with them their frontline truth about the war will disappear, he said. Who was writing mostly about the war in the USSR? Those who were in the home front, who sent people to be massacred on the frontline: NKVD officers, commanders in chief, etc. In that history, Stalin and Zhukov will be the main heroes.

In the Ukrainian context, an important book, the closest to Nikulin's memoirs, is written by Fedir Morhun. He calls this war the 'Stalin-Hitler genocide of the Ukrain-

ian people'. Morhun was not a nationalist, he was born in Donbas and was the first secretary of the Poltava Region Committee, and that is why his text deserves special trust. As a Soviet person, he hated official Soviet propaganda.

That is why the attempt by the Ukrainians to have their own truth is much closer to the frontline truth than the official "truth" coming out of the Kremlin.

Authors and project team

Kyrylo Halushko is a PhD, a Senior Research Fellow of the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. He has worked as a coordinator of the civil society project *LikBez: Historical Front* since 2014. Mr. Halushko is an ethno-sociologist, a columnist, a writer, and a member of the Public Council under the President of Ukraine. He was an organizer and a compiler of over 30 publications on history, including a 10-volume popular history of Ukraine (*History without Censorship*), and he visited 40 towns of Ukraine and the military activities zone in the east with lecture projects. Mr. Halushko is an author and a co-author of more than 10 textbooks and monographs. He specializes in the problems of history of nationalism, memory policy, and cartography history.

Ivan Homeniuk is a history researcher (Kyiv), author of the books *Mischiefs of Eastern European Clio* (2011) and *Heralds of World War II. Border Conflicts in Central Eastern Europe. From Collapse of Empires to Gliwice Provocation* (2017). The sphere of his research interests includes history of Western Ukraine and Central Eastern Europe in the first half of the 20th century, collaborationism, and far-right movements.

Serhii Hromenko is a PhD and a columnist. Before 2014, he lived in Crimea. Currently, he works as a columnist for the *Radio Svoboda* Ukraine. Mr. Hromenko is an author of five and a co-author of six books about history of Ukraine and Crimea.

Yaroslav Hrytsak is the Ukrainian scholar, historian and public intellectual, professor of the *Ukrainian Catholic University*. He is the author of more than 500 academic publications on historical topics. He is known for his books *Essays in Ukrainian History: Making of Modern Ukrainian Nation, Passions around Nationalism, Where is the World Heading to, A Prophet in His Country. Franko and the Community* and others.

Oksana Iliuk is an analyst of *Internews Ukraine* NGO, a researcher in the field of disinformation, social media, and communication security. She was a student of the University of Groningen (the Netherlands), and took part in several academic exchanges. Ms. Iliuk is a Research Fellow of the Estonian-Ukrainian program, *Resilient Ukraine*, the *International Center for Defense and Security (ICDS)*, and the author of over 20 articles in scientific and analytical publications.

Artur Kadelynyk is the Projects Coordinator of *Internews Ukraine* NGO. He is the head and a founder of *Diplomatic Center* NGO, a journalist-analyst of the *International Courier*, an author and researcher in the field of propaganda and information security.

Yana Prymachenko is a PhD and a Senior Research Fellow of the *Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine*. The sphere of her research interests includes history of World War II and memory policy. She is an author of more than 100 academic and publicistic articles. She also co-authored a number of ac-

ademic and factual books, including *War and Myth: Unknown World War II* (2015), *In the Arms of Fear and Death: Bolsheviks Terror in Ukraine* (2016), *History of the Ukrainian Army* (2016), *Soviet Ukraine: Illusions and Catastrophes of the "Communist Paradise"* (2017), *From the Reichstag to Iwo Jima. In the Flames of War. Ukraine and Ukrainians in World War II* (2017).

Olena Sorotsynska is an analyst, a historian, a public figure, the European Youth Ambassador, co-founder of the *Step Forward* NGO, a participant and organizer of international schools, training sessions, and youth exchanges. She studied in the *University of Glasgow* (Scotland, UK) in the Central and Eastern European Studies (CEES) program, graduated successfully as a Master of History and Archeology, and completed a certified program on History of Diplomacy in the National University of *Kyiv Mohyla Academy*. Ms. Sorotsynska is an alumna of the Internship Program in the *Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine* (2018), received the MacFie Bequest 1st Prize (University of Glasgow, 2017) and an award of the All-Ukrainian Competition of Academic Papers of the *Ministry of Education and Science* in the sphere of Gender Studies (2017).

Hennadii Yefimenko is a PhD, a Senior Research Fellow of the Institute of History of the *National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine*, born in Luhansk oblast. Mr. Yefimenko is an author of numerous publications about the history of Soviet Ukraine during 1917–1939. The sphere of his of research interests includes national cultural policy in Ukraine, relations between the UkrSSR and the Kremlin, teaching, and Holodomor.

Volodymyr Yermolenko is a Ukrainian philosopher and writer, director for analytics at *Internews Ukraine*, editor-in-chief of *UkraineWorld.org*, journalist at *hromadske.ua*, doctor of political studies at *EHESS, Paris*. He wrote the books *Narrator and Philosopher*, *Distant People and Close People*, *The Ocean Catcher*. His latest book, *Liquid Ideologies*, won the *Yuri Sheveliov Prize* for the best Ukrainian book of essays, and Ukrainian Book of the Year award in political studies and non-fiction. He has published articles and essays in numerous international media outlets.

Project team:

Team Leader **Natalya Pedchenko**

Book editor **Volodymyr Yermolenko**

Project coordinator **Oksana Iliuk**

Design **Tetiana Kabakova**

Translation (Ukrainian-English) **Valeria Mendez**

English language editor **Peter Dutczyn**

Internews Ukraine is an organization that has expertise in media, communications, education, and consulting. Innovation, professionalism, and efficiency are three pillars of our organization. Serving the Ukrainian society has been our enduring priority since 1996.

UkraineWorld is an initiative aimed at bringing together key Ukrainian and international experts and journalists interested in Ukrainian issues, as well counteracting propaganda and disinformation. UkraineWorld produces various materials (analytic articles, infographics, podcasts, video explainers, etc.) to put fresh Ukrainian issues high on international agenda. The initiative is implemented by Internews Ukraine under support by Internews Network.

The Civic Synergy Project aims at strengthening public participation in the implementation of European integration (EI) reforms in Ukraine through institutional capacity building and boosting of activities of the Ukrainian Side of the EU-Ukraine Civil Society Platform (UA CSP) and the Ukrainian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF UNP).

The International Renaissance Foundation (IRF) is one of the largest Ukrainian charitable foundations that has been developing an open society in Ukraine since 1990 where everybody has a sense of dignity, citizens are involved in the formation of the state, and the authorities are transparent and responsible. We work on the development of Ukraine in which human rights are securely protected and positive changes work for the benefit of the citizens.

Likbez. Historical Front (since 2014) is an informal association of Ukrainian historians who promotes history. Formats: web site, book publications, public and video lectures, documentaries, expert support for media projects.

Singularex is a consolidation of data scientists and analysts. Since 2013, we have been providing full social-media intelligence and analytics services for businesses, governments and non-profit organizations in Ukraine and abroad. We collect and analyse data to develop it into insights.



Інформаційне видання

Ре-візія історії

Російська історична пропаганда та Україна

(англійською мовою)

за редакцією Володимира Єрмоленка

Дизайн та верстка Андрія Чернявського

Підписано до друку 10.10.2019. Формат 70x100/16.
Умов. друк. арк. 7,9. Папір офсетний. Друк офсетний.

Виготівник ПП "Фірма "Гранма"
м. Київ, просп. Повітрофлотський, 94А
Свідоцтво про внесення до Державного реєстру
видавців, виготівників і розповсюджувачів видавничої продукції
ДК №4135 від 11.08.2011 р.

