

Introduction: The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in Post-Soviet Ukrainian Memory Politics, Public Debates, and Foreign Affairs

Andreas Umland and Yuliya Yurchuk

This special section is dedicated to recent developments in the remembrance, interpretation, and contestation of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), and especially of its radical “Bandera wing,” as well as the latter’s military arm, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), in contemporary Ukraine.¹ It is the first of—so far—two special *JSPPS* sections on this topic.² These English-language collections run in parallel to a related larger 2016–2018

¹ See, earlier in this journal, on the same topic, the following review essays on Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera: The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist. Fascism, Genocide, and Cult* (Stuttgart: *ibidem*-Verlag, 2014), by: Oleksandr Zaitsev, “De-Mythologizing Bandera: Towards a Scholarly History of the Ukrainian Nationalist Movement,” *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* 1, no. 2 (2015): 411–20; André Härtel, “Bandera’s Tempting Shadow: The Problematic History of Ukrainian Radical Nationalism in the Wake of the Maidan,” *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* 1, no. 2 (2015): 421–28; and Yuri Radchenko, “From Staryi Uhryniv to Munich: The First Scholarly Biography of Stepan Bandera,” *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* 1, no. 2 (2015): 429–58. This introduction does not list many of the previous scholarly studies on this section’s topic in as far as most of the relevant articles and books are listed in the footnotes of the following four papers. Instead, this essay’s footnotes list a number of works illustrating the larger political context of the section’s findings. We are very grateful to Julie Fedor for her extremely careful and patient final editing of the contributions to the special section (including this introduction). Responsibility for any remaining imprecisions and misinterpretations here and below lies, however, solely with the respective texts’ author/s.

² *JSPPS* herewith invites proposals of further special sections for its subseries “Issues in the History and Memory of the OUN.” Such proposals’ contents and composition should follow the example of the two *JSPPS* paper collections introduced here.

multi-author Russian-language project comprising four special sections on the history and memory of the OUN-UPA in volumes 13-15 (issues 26-29) of the Bavaria-based web-journal *Forum noveishei vostochnoevropeiskoi istorii i kul'tury* (Forum for Contemporary East European History and Culture), with contributions by, among others, Timothy D. Snyder, Yaroslav Hrytsak, John-Paul Himka, Myroslav Shkandrij, Grzegorz Motyka, Oleksandr Zaitsev, Kai Struve, Heorhii Kas'ianov, Per Anders Rudling, and others (some of them are also contributors here).³

The USSR's collapse brought about not only the collapse of political and economic structures but also the marginalization, in most successor countries, of a partly neo- and partly post-Stalinist Soviet system of meaning, including a body of established knowledge about the different Soviet nations' "shared" past. In the post-1991 turmoil, the peoples of the former Soviet republics began to look not so much for commonalities as for differences in their past experiences. In this way, each nation started its own search for history—an unsurprising choice insofar as the writing of pointedly national histories is part and parcel of nation-building processes. What became a special characteristic for history-writing in many post-Soviet societies was, however, its heavy focus on these nations' real and imagined particular experiences of World War II as parts of their national memory that could serve to distance these societies from their Soviet legacies. Indeed, debating the Soviet war myth took center-stage in the new history politics of several post-communist nations.

A purposefully selective and partially falsified memory of World War II that uncritically celebrated the Russian-led "Great Patriotic War" was not only central to the historical mythology and political legitimacy of the USSR.⁴ It also played an important role

³ See <http://www1.ku-eichstaett.de/ZIMOS/forumruss.html> (accessed 16 August 2017). Also, Per Anders Rudling (National University of Singapore) is, at the moment of the finalization of this special section, preparing a collection of his previously published papers on the OUN for re-publication in the related *ibidem* Press book series, *Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*.

⁴ The importance and function of the Soviet war myth are outlined in, among other works, Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the*