

Agitational and propagandistic activities of soviet underground members and partisans in the Lviv region (1942–1944)

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Abstract.

The purpose of the article is to undertake a rigorous analysis of the strategic preparation and practical implementation of agitation and propaganda initiatives orchestrated by Soviet underground networks and partisan detachments operating within the Lviv region during the period of German occupation. **The methodology of the research** employs a carefully considered synthesis of fundamental scientific methods and specialized historical inquiry approaches, directed towards the identification, detailed description, and critical explanation of the underlying causes and mechanisms driving the aforementioned agitation and propaganda activities executed by participants in the Soviet underground-partisan movement. **The scientific novelty** of this study lies in the primary introduction into public scholarly discourse of previously unexamined archival sources drawn from the holdings of the Central State Archive of Public Associations of Ukraine and the State Archive of the Lviv Region. These primary materials facilitate a critical reassessment of established ideological tenets within Soviet historiography and afford an opportunity for a more objective evaluation of the principal agents engaged in the military-political contestation unfolding in the German-occupied rear—specifically within the territory constituting the former Lviv Region of the Ukrainian SSR, which formed an integral part of the "Galicia" District under the General Government of occupied Polish lands. **The conclusions** of this investigation demonstrate the circumscribed presence of Soviet partisan and underground organizations within the Lviv region. Emphasis is placed on their tenuous connections with the indigenous Ukrainian populace, a circumstance attributed to the biographical trajectories of the movement's organizers and a significant portion of its participants, who predominantly originated from the eastern regions of the USSR and the Ukrainian SSR or comprised local Polish individuals. The study further elucidates the organizational and propagandistic interdependencies between Soviet underground combatants and partisans, and the Polish anti-Nazi resistance movement, which espoused pro-Soviet ideological orientations. Particular scholarly attention is devoted to the pivotal role played by the latter in the initial developmental phases of the Soviet underground in Lviv and its immediate vicinity during the years 1942–1943. The article provides a detailed analysis of the diverse forms and methodological approaches characterizing the agitation and propaganda activities undertaken by Soviet underground operatives and partisans in the Lviv region throughout the German occupation, alongside an assessment of their discernible impact on the local population. It is posited that contemporary instruments designed for the study of modern public opinion are ill-suited for accurately gauging the nature and extent of communicative influence on public consciousness during the exigencies of the Second World War. Nevertheless, through the synthesis of data concerning the dissemination of printed propaganda materials and publications, it can be asserted that Soviet underground structures engaged in systematic endeavors to shape the socio-political attitudes of the local, notably Polish, population — through explicit appeals for resistance against the Nazi occupation regime and, more specifically, through targeted opposition to the OUN–UPA. While the overarching objective of broadening the social base of support for Soviet formations and augmenting their numerical strength via intensive informational and psychological influence — primarily through the medium of printed propaganda — was not fully realized, from a historical vantage point, certain latent strategic aims were partially accomplished. This was particularly evident during the spring and summer of 1944, through the intensification of Ukrainian–Polish antagonisms.

Keywords: agitation, German occupation, ideology, Lviv region, World War II, propaganda, Soviet partisans, Soviet underground fighters, Ukraine.

Агітаційно-пропагандистська діяльність радянських підпільників та партизан на Львівщині у 1942–1944 рр.

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Анотація.

Метою статті є проаналізувати підготовку та ведення радянськими підпільними групами та партизанськими загонами агітації та пропаганди на Львівщині. **Методологія** статті опирається на комплекс загальнонаукових методів та методів спеціальних історичних досліджень виявлення, опису й пояснення причин агітаційно-пропагандистської діяльності учасників радянського підпільно-партизанського руху. **Наукова новизна:** вперше вводяться в публічний науковий обіг архівні матеріали фондів Центрального державного архіву громадських об'єднань України та Державного архіву Львівської області, які дозволяють спростувати ідеологічні постулати радянської історіографії та спробувати об'єктивно оцінити основних учасників військово-політичного протистояння у німецькому тилу – на території колишньої Львівської області Української РСР як частини «Галичини» – Генеральної губернії окупованих польських земель. **Висновки.** Доводиться нечисельний характер партизанських та підпільних організацій Львівщини. Акцентовується на відсутності у них вагомого зв'язку з українським населенням через біографії організаторів та частини учасників радянського руху опору (походили із східних районів СРСР та УРСР чи були місцевими поляками). Розкривається організаційний та пропагандистський зв'язок між радянськими підпільниками і партизанами та польським антигітлерівським підпіллям, яке підтримувало прорадянські ідеї. Особливо наголошується на визначальній ролі останніх у початках формування радянського підпілля у Львові та околицях в 1942–1943 рр. Аналізуються форми та методи агітаційно-пропагандистської діяльності радянських підпільників та партизан на Львівщині в роки німецької окупації та її вплив на місцеве населення та обґрунтовуються висновки, що для оцінки характеру й масштабів комунікативного впливу на суспільну свідомість періоду Другої світової війни не можна застосувати дослідницький інструментарій, що використовується при вивченні сучасної громадської думки. Разом з тим, на основі узагальнення тиражів друкованих засобів пропаганди та публікацій можна говорити про системні спроби радянських підпільних структур вплинути на суспільно-політичні настрої місцевого, особливо польського населення, як через заклики до боротьби із нацистським окупаційним режимом, так особливо до протидії ОУН–УПА. Основної мети у розширенні соціальної бази підтримки радянських формувань й зростанні їхньої чисельності масованій інформаційно-психологічний вплив насамперед засобами друкованої пропаганди не досягнув, але, з історичної ретроспективи, певні свої приховані завдання, через загострення українсько-польських антагонізмів, досягнути вдалося, особливо в період весни–літа 1944 р.

Ключові слова: агітація, Друга світова війна, ідеологія, Львівщина, німецька окупація, пропаганда, радянські партизани, радянські підпільники, Україна.

The problem statement. The Russian Federation is actively engaged in a global information war, with significant focus directed towards Ukraine and its own populace. Within Ukraine, this multifaceted campaign seeks, inter alia, to obfuscate and rationalize its aggressive military actions, while simultaneously endeavoring to fragment Ukrainian society from within, cultivate an atmosphere of panic and erode trust in the nation's defensive capabilities, and propagate the concept that existence beyond the «Russian world» is untenable. These actions by the Russian Federation are not unprecedented; the Soviet Union, from which Russia claims succession, extensively deployed a comprehensive system of state communist propaganda to achieve its objectives. It is evident that analogous propaganda and agitation are presently being executed by Russia within Ukraine, notably through its clandestine operatives situated both within and beyond the territories under the jurisdiction of the Government of Ukraine, with their activities centrally coordinated from Moscow.

In this context, the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war necessitates a critical reassessment of the historical experiences of the Soviet partisan and underground movement, examined both within the broader all-Ukrainian context and through the specific lens of individual regions – a subject that has yet to be subjected to comprehensive scholarly scrutiny. Of particular academic salience is the

regional context of Lviv Oblast, warranting a more granular examination predicated upon the introduction into academic discourse and contemporary interpretation of archival materials pertaining to the Second World War period, housed within the Central State Archive of Public Associations of Ukraine and the State Archive of Lviv Oblast. This will facilitate a more informed comparative analysis of partisan activities in relation to the exigencies of preparing for contemporary warfare in Ukraine.

The purpose of the article is to conduct a source-based and historiographical analysis of the preparation and implementation of propaganda and agitation efforts by Soviet underground groups and partisan units in Lviv Oblast, with the aim of identifying their intrinsic nature, geographical and temporal scale, and consequential impact on the public opinion of the local population.

The analysis of sources and recent researches. With the aim of a critical reevaluation of the existing data, primary sources were consulted, leading to the initial introduction into public scholarly circulation of archival materials from the party collections of the Central State Archive of Public Organizations of Ukraine (hereinafter – CSAPO of Ukraine) – fond P-1 (Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine), cases 151, 415, 416, and the State Archives of Lviv Region (hereinafter – SALR) – fond P-3 (Lviv Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine), case 78; fond P-183 (Groups of Underground Organizations in Lviv Region), cases 2, 3, 9, 10, 78, 107, 112, 114, 115. This facilitates a critical reassessment of Soviet historiography through the refutation of numerous ideological postulates and prevalent propaganda clichés.

In particular, the dominant approach within Soviet historiography concerning the agitational and propagandistic activities of underground groups, partisan units, and formations comprised a conflation of content derived from the press and the purported appeals of the underground and partisan movement, aimed at exposing both the «hated by the Soviet people bloody German-fascist occupation regime... the destruction of the Hitlerites» and «their accomplices – Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists» (Hryhorovych, D., & Denysenko, P., & Nemiatiy, V., 1976, p. 95). Authors of that historical period formulated conclusions demonstrably divergent from historical truth regarding «the historic role in mobilizing workers to fight against fascist invaders» (Demianchuk, I., 1956, p. 101).

D. Viedienieiev rightly notes that during the Soviet era, the historical narrative of the partisan movement became one of the most idealized, «lacquered» aspects of the war. Certain facets of the partisan-underground movement were entirely tabooed (Viedienieiev, D., 2011, p. 214), some of which are disclosed in this study.

The inaugural significant scholarly contribution from an independent Ukrainian historiographical perspective on this topic is the monograph by A. Chaikovskiy «The Unknown War: The Partisan Movement in Ukraine 1941–1944 in the Language of Documents, Through the Eyes of a Historian» (Chaikovskiy, A., 1994). The author introduced new documents and archival sources into academic circulation for the first time, shedding light on previously suppressed themes related to Soviet partisans' activities.

Volume 12 «Ukraine in the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War» (Koval, M., 1999) of the 15-volume series «Ukraine Through the Ages» analyzes, among other things, the partisan «second front» – the chapter dedicated to the activities of Soviet partisans. Besides roughly establishing the real number of underground participants – thereby debunking the myth of the «nationwide» involvement – Koval identified organizational missteps, illustrated the dynamics of development, explored the participation of Red Army soldiers, and analyzed the ethnic composition of partisan units in Ukraine.

The first comprehensive historiographical study of the resistance movement in Ukraine was the work of M. Slobodianiuk «The Anti-Fascist Resistance Movement in Ukraine During the Second World War in National Historiography» (Slobodianiuk, M., 2018). In addition to analyzing Ukrainian scholarship on the anti-fascist resistance, the author conceptualized the resistance movement as a phenomenon and presented his overall vision of it. A significant contribution to the study of the Soviet partisan movement in Ukraine was made by A. Kentii.

His work with A. Hogun «...To Create Unbearable Conditions for the Enemy and All His Accomplices...»: Red Partisans of Ukraine, 1941–1944: Little-Known Pages of History. Documents and Materials» (Hogun, A. & Kentii, A., 2006) highlights previously unexplored and largely negative – and even forbidden in Soviet times – aspects of the partisan movement.

A year earlier, A. Kentii, together with V. Lozynskiy, published «A War Without Mercy and Compassion: The Partisan Movement Behind the Wehrmacht's Lines in Ukraine (1941–1944)» (Kentii, A. & Lozynskiy, V., 2005). In addition to detailing the organization and progress of partisan activities, the work includes an analysis of the propaganda and agitational work of Soviet partisans. Later, Kentii and Lozynskiy co-authored «Soviet Partisans 1941–1944: Light and Shadows» (Kentii, A. & Lozynskiy, V., 2010). The book discusses the organization and struggle of the Soviet resistance in Ukraine, emphasizing its ideological function. Despite its popular science format, the use of previously unknown archival documents (including German) and testimonies of participants and witnesses significantly enriches domestic scholarship. The ideological struggle in Ukraine during World War II is the focus of V. Shaikan's monograph (Shaikan, V., 2010). The chapter «Agitational and Propaganda

Work of the Communist Party Among the Population of Occupied Ukrainian Territories» addresses the role of agitation and propaganda in the Soviet partisan movement, though it primarily focuses on large formations and only tangentially touches on the western Ukrainian context.

The source study aspect of the Soviet partisan movement in Ukraine is addressed in the monograph by L. Kovalska «A Source Study Discourse on the History of the Soviet Resistance Movement (1941–1945)» (Kovalska, L., 2015). Among other things, the author categorized and structured data on written sources related to the Soviet partisan movement.

The image and status of Soviet «people's avengers,» largely shaped by Bolshevik propaganda, effectively conferred upon them a position often interpreted as impunity. One of the less studied facets of this is illuminated by V. Ginda and O. Lysenko in the most recent publication within domestic historiography concerning the Soviet partisan and underground movement (Ginda, V. & Lysenko, O., 2024).

An article by V. Hulay, published eleven years prior (Hulay, V., 2014), focuses on the communicative mechanisms through which Soviet underground fighters and partisans exerted influence on the socio-political situation within the former Lviv region. A broader context of armed confrontation in Galicia – encompassing the role of Soviet partisans – is unveiled in his co-authored article with V. Maksymets (Hulay, V. & Maksymets, V., 2021).

The review of contemporary historiography concludes with a conceptual observation by Ternopil-based historian V. Starka, who posits that the utilization of the term «Resistance Movement» in reference to Eastern Galicia necessitates a clear distinction between those who combated the Nazis as part of Soviet underground-partisan formations and those who did so as part of the Ukrainian nationalist underground, namely the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the Ukrainian People's Self-Defense. For the former, he proposes the term «Ukrainian Soviet Resistance Movement» (or «Pro-Soviet Resistance Movement»), and for the latter – «Ukrainian National Resistance Movement» (Starka, V., 2012).

In general, it can be stated that Ukrainian historians have exhibited a diminished interest in the topic of the Soviet underground and partisan movement within the «Galicia» district, notwithstanding the fact that archives still contain numerous unpublished documents that could enrich and expand the historical retrospective of both the scholarly issue and the region's history during the Second World War.

The results of the research. At the initial stage of the German-Soviet war, a foundational propagandistic significance for the deployment of the pro-Soviet resistance movement was vested in the address to the Ukrainian people by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, The Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR, and The Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine, publicly disseminated on July 6, 1941. This address invoked the traditions of Ukrainian partisans as a mobilizing factor (Vovk, O., 2010, p. 44).

Concurrently with the organization of a centralized leadership structure for the Soviet partisan movement, a spontaneous, «unauthorized» resistance movement manifested in the occupied territories. According to I. Kapas, this phenomenon was propelled by both voluntary and coercive factors. Foremost among the voluntary motivations was the patriotism exhibited by a segment of the population possessing an active socio-political stance, who found the inhumane policies of the enemy unacceptable. The coercive factors encompassed the existential threat posed by the Nazi occupying authorities, apprehension regarding the potential return of the Bolsheviks, and anxiety concerning prospective future repressions for remaining in the occupied territory – whether directed at individual citizens or their families (Kapas, I., 2016, p. 126).

Within the regional context of the Lviv region, Soviet historiography underscores that in the spring of 1942, groups of Polish communists led by A. Khmelevskyi and Z. Kholianek, who had been parachuted in from Soviet territory, successfully landed in the vicinity of Lviv. They facilitated the activation of the Polish anti-Nazi underground with a pro-Soviet orientation (Brechak, I., 1974, p. 81). However, it is our assessment that this particular issue warrants a separate, comprehensive investigation and falls outside the purview of the present inquiry.

It is pertinent to note that the higher Soviet party-state leadership accorded a rather significant role to the Lviv region – even during periods of setbacks on the Eastern Front of the Second World War. This is substantiated, for instance, by the decree of the State Defense Committee of the USSR «On the Partisan Movement in Ukraine» No. 2403, dated October 11, 1942, which designated Lviv region as one of the oblasts where the creation of operational groups of the Ukrainian Headquarters of the Partisan Movement (UHQPM), composed of three to five party and Soviet officials from the state apparatus of the Ukrainian SSR, was planned.

Furthermore, it is necessary to critically evaluate the assertions of V. Zamlynskyi, a prominent Soviet historian on this subject, concerning the early origins and purportedly self-organized character of the underground movement in the Lviv region. Specifically, he claimed the emergence of groups in various settlements as early as the autumn of 1941: in the town of Krasne (Busk district), organized by

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former member of the Communist Party of Western Ukraine (CPWU) I. Dubas; in the village of Uhry (Horodok district) by S. Hrehil; in the village of Luky (Horodok district) by D. Rybak; in the village of Vyryv (Kamianka-Buzka district) by M. Protsyk; in the village of Sasiv (Zolochiv district) by P. Kundius; in the town of Stryi by V. Hrytsiak; and in the towns of Zhovkva, Stebnyk, among others (Borodin, O. & Mishchenko, H. & Zamylnskyi, V., 1976, p. 51).

Overall, during the German occupation, relatively small underground partisan organizations and groups did emerge and operate within the Lviv region. However, these warrant more detailed consideration.

The Ivan Franko People's Guard

The most extensive clandestine organization operating within the territory of the Lviv region was the People's Guard, which, subsequent to the cessation of the Second World War, was officially recognized by the Lviv Regional Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine as the Ivan Franko Lviv Regional Underground Organization.

The genesis of this organization can be traced to the autumn of 1942, a period during which disparate underground cells, composed of communists and Komsomol members, coalesced into a unified underground-partisan structure known as the People's Guard of the Western Regions of Ukraine. During the summer of 1943, this formation underwent a name change, becoming the Partisan Movement of the Western Regions of Ukraine (Varyahina, V. & Vakulenko, H., 1979, pp. 3–4). It is noteworthy that alongside the aforementioned designations, alternative appellations such as the People's Avengers' Guard, the Franko People's Guard, and the Partisan Council of the Western Regions of Ukraine were also employed. For the purposes of this analysis, the designation «People's Guard» will be consistently utilized (note by A. Shcheglov).

Conversely, Kozyt'skyi (2021) posits that no Bolshevik underground infrastructure existed in Lviv during the German occupation of 1941–1944. This assertion directly challenges a fundamental Soviet historiographical narrative concerning the «organizing and guiding» role of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in the resistance against Nazism. Instead, the city witnessed the operational presence of Ukrainian and Polish underground networks, alongside a smaller, discrete group of Polish socialists and communists. This latter group adopted the name People's Avengers' Guard and, from August 1943, the Partisan Council of the Western Regions of Ukraine. Predominantly composed of Poles and Polonized Jews, with a limited number of Russians and Ukrainians, this contingent reportedly lacked proficiency in written Ukrainian (Kozyt'skyi A., 2021, p. 272).

At its formative stage, the People's Guard exhibited a significant degree of influence from the Polish pro-Soviet underground, even adopting its nomenclature (Varyahina, V. & Vakulenko, H., 1979, p. 31). However, a distinction was introduced: while the Polish counterpart was termed « People's Guard» (in Polish «Gwardia Ludowa»), the Ukrainian organization appended the suffix «... of the Western Regions of Ukraine».

Archival evidence indicates the pivotal role played by a leader of the Polish Workers' Party (PWR), «Franek», in the organizational consolidation of the Soviet underground in Lviv. This individual, arriving in Warsaw from Moscow, provided the leadership of the People's Guard with directives, ideological materials, and financial resources to facilitate their activities (Hulai, V., 2014, p. 109).

A central command structure for the underground organization – the regional command – was established. This entity integrated previously autonomous cells – combat units and sabotage groups – operating across various districts within the region. These district-level groups were administered by local commanders.

The stated objective of the People's Guard was to «assist the Red Army and fight by all available means against the German-Fascist invaders and Ukrainian-German and Polish nationalists for the restoration of Soviet power» (CSAPO of Ukraine, f.1, d. 22, c. 151, p. 7 [translated by the author]). This articulation underscores the organization's adherence to Soviet propagandistic tropes, exemplified by the designation «Ukrainian-German nationalists», which – on territories with a significant Polish population – was aimed at escalating interethnic tensions and suppressing the Ukrainian independence movement. The operational zones of the organization's partisan activities encompassed the Lviv, Zolochiv, Horodok, Vynnyky, Rava-Ruska, Kamianka-Buzka, Busk, and other districts within the region.

Significantly, Ivan Kyrilovych (operational pseudonym «Ryshard»), a commander within the operational headquarters of the partisan movement in the Western regions of Ukraine established in 1943, was transferred to the Intelligence Department of the 1st Ukrainian Front on May 28, 1944. Subsequently, he assumed command of a reconnaissance group under the same department, which was deployed via parachute into the German rear near Lviv on June 17, 1944, and remained active until July 27, 1944 (Bulavin, O., 2017, p. 62; SALR, f. P–183, d. 1, c. 114, p. 161).

The Partisan group «Patriots of the Slavs»

Within the territories of the Busk and Kamianka-Buzka districts of the Lviv region, the partisan group known as «Patriots of the Slavs» operated. Significantly, its formation was facilitated by members of the aforementioned People's Guard. Archival evidence indicates that in December 1942, clandestine operatives of this organization established contact with naval junior lieutenant V. Popov. It is noteworthy that the majority of the group's membership and its nucleus comprised non-local individuals, including V. Makarov (Kursk Oblast), V. Hrishin (city of Gorky), V. Yuriev (city of Novorossiysk), P. Klepikov (Voronezh Oblast), and M. Liubicheva (Krasnodar Krai), all of whom were escapees from captivity. The leadership of the group was vested in Popov, with Tadeusz Majewski, a Polish national, serving as the chief of staff. The organizational structure of the "Patriots of the Slavs" encompassed three distinct units, each consisting of ten individuals, with one unit being exclusively composed of Polish members. According to archival records, on December 25, 1944, Popov's partisan group ceased its independent operations and integrated into the «Death to Fascism» partisan detachment of the Naumov partisan formation (TsDAGO of Ukraine, f. 1, op. 22, d. 415, pp. 118–124).

Zolochiv Underground Sabotage Detachment. In November 1941, an underground detachment comprising six individuals was organized by P. Kundius, a military physician and Bolshevik, following his escape from a Soviet prisoner-of-war camp situated in the village of Sasiv (Zolochiv district, Lviv region). During its initial phase of activity, the group facilitated the transfer of Soviet servicemen and civilians who had escaped German captivity to Soviet-controlled territory. By May 1942, the detachment had expanded to include 21 partisans. The responsibilities of chief of staff were undertaken by H. U. Stanovskyi, a native of Pervomaïsk in the Mykolaiv oblast and an escapee from German captivity (CSAPO of Ukraine, f. 1, op. 22, d. 415, p. 124).

Subsequently, in November 1942, a Polish self-defense group under the leadership of S. Kalitsynskyi integrated into the detachment. Kundius appointed Kalitsynskyi as the group's armament chief, with the majority of the personnel being of Polish origin (CSAPO of Ukraine, f. 1, op. 22, d. 415, pp. 103–105).

In October 1942, the *clandestine organization «Liberation of the Motherland»* was founded in the Hlyniany district of the Lviv region. The impetus for its establishment originated from two communists who had previously held local administrative leadership roles during the «First Soviets» period (1939–1941): V. Dorozhko, the former head of the Hlyniany district department of public education, and I. Holovchenko, the former people's judge of the same district. Notably, both individuals were non-local, having originated from the eastern regions of Ukraine. They subsequently formed an initiative group primarily composed of former local party activists. Archival documentation records a total of 46 members within the organization, comprising 6 non-local individuals and 40 local residents. Contemporary reports characterized these members as being «from the most dedicated segment of the Soviet and kolkhoz local activists, staunch Soviet patriots of the Socialist Motherland, indoctrinated by the Bolshevik party during the period of Soviet power in 1939–1941». This underground network maintained liaison with the People's Guard through one of its members, Ye. Ivantsev (SALR, f. P–183, d. 1, c. 114, p. 11).

The principal objective of the «Liberation of the Motherland» underground was not primarily focused on acts of sabotage but rather on «profound explanatory work, educating the populace in the spirit of internationalism and the concerted struggle of working people of all nationalities against the common adversary – fascism; exposing the barbaric nature of Hitler's «new order» and the perfidious role of the Ukrainian-German nationalists; disseminating information to the population regarding the successes of the Red Army and the partisan movement in their fight against Hitler's Germany; refuting deceptive enemy propaganda, and bolstering faith in the victory of the peoples of the Soviet Union, united by amity, over the bloc of fascist states fractured by internal contradictions» (SALR, f. P–183, d. 1, c. 107, pp. 5–14 [translated by the author]).

In addition to their primary focus on propaganda and agitation, members of the organization engaged in minor acts of sabotage, including isolated assassinations, damage to communication infrastructure, the spoilage of food and property, and disruption of railway transport. Following the Red Army's occupation of the Hlyniany district in July 1944, the leaders of the underground organization reported their activities to the district committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine (CP(b)U) and provided materials documenting the activities of OUN–UPA (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists – Ukrainian Insurgent Army) members. A significant number of the surviving underground members subsequently assumed leadership positions within local communities in the post-war period. However, the leader, V. Dorozhko, was assassinated by OUN–UPA members in 1944 (CSAPO of Ukraine, f. 1, op. 22, d. 416, pp. 38–42).

Considering the aforementioned details, one can generally concur with D. Chobit's assertion that «...the Soviet partisan movement in Ukraine inflicted less harm on the Hitlerites and more on the local population, creating unbearable living conditions for them. Sabotage, terror, and deliberate provocations incited repressions from the occupiers. The constant looting of peasants by partisans and punitive actions by German troops generated fear, anger, and uncertainty...» (Chobit, D., 2019,

p. 127 [translated by the author]), particularly in the context of the Lviv region as part of the «Halychyna» district within the German General Government of occupied Polish lands.

Agitational and Propaganda Activities of Soviet Underground Fighters and Partisans

Beyond combat, sabotage, and reconnaissance operations, Soviet partisan formations and detachments in occupied territories engaged in significant information and propaganda dissemination among the local populace. This multifaceted endeavor, which we contend is best characterized as agitational and propaganda activity, warrants recognition as a distinct and crucial component of the broader Soviet partisan movement (Salata, O., 2013, p. 70).

Drawing upon the work of political scientist L. Smola, propaganda can be defined as the systematic exertion of influence on the consciousness of individuals, groups, and society at large to achieve a predetermined outcome within the political sphere (Smola, L., 2014, p. 553). Similarly, historian L. Kutska identifies a notable convergence between the terms «propaganda» and «agitation,» emphasizing their conjoined usage during the Soviet era, particularly within official documentation (Kutska, O., 2017, pp. 5–7).

In turn, sociologist O. Markozova defines provocation as the dissemination of specific viewpoints, factual data, and political or other information – including rumors or deliberately fabricated data – with the explicit aim of shaping public opinion. Markozova further distinguishes propaganda from ordinary information dissemination by highlighting the intent to manipulate public consciousness through the selective presentation of pertinent data (Markozova, O., 2015, p. 597).

Within the Lviv region, the primary modality of partisan agitational and propaganda activity involved the distribution of printed materials, encompassing newspapers, brochures, articles, appeals, and leaflets.

The People's Guard established an organized system for the production of printed agitational and propaganda materials. Notably, Informburo bulletins, received via radio transmission, were transcribed, translated into both Ukrainian and Polish, duplicated using cyclostyle machines, and subsequently disseminated among the local population as well as German soldiers. Two periodical newspapers were published: «Borotba» («Struggle,» in Ukrainian) and «Głos wolności» («Voice of Freedom,» in Polish), alongside various leaflets that were circulated throughout Lviv and the surrounding region. The biweekly publication of «Głos wolności» was initiated by partisans in Lviv in late 1942 and continued until December 1943, with a total of seven issues released (Brechak, I., 1974, p. 87; Varyahina, V. & Vakulenko, H., 1979, p. 40).

The inaugural issue of «Borotba» appeared on March 1, 1943, featuring a fervent appeal: «... We call upon all living forces of the Ukrainian and Polish peoples to unite in a common front under the glorious slogan «For our freedom and yours» (Brechak, I., 1974, pp. 87–88 [translated by the author]). The newspaper's opening article, titled «A Common Cause Against a Common Enemy,» declared: «A noose is tightening around our people. The only salvation is in struggle... In this struggle, our people march in close unity with the other peoples of the Soviet Union against the common enemy – Hitlerite Germany. Millions of Ukrainians are fighting in the ranks of the invincible Red Army, which delivers deadly blows to Hitlerite Germany, clearing the path to the liberation of peoples oppressed by fascism; they also fight in the ranks of the partisans, who disrupt the German army's rear in every corner...» (Makivka, S., 1963, p. 117 [translated by the author]).

The issue dated July 15, 1943, proclaimed: «Let us remember: the People's Guard is a military organization of the Ukrainian people on the Galician lands, an organization created by the necessity of the times, born from the very depths and bound to them for life or death; therein lies the guarantee of its development, its strength and invincibility» (Varyahina, V. & Vakulenko, H., 1979, p. 33 [translated by the author]).

The newspaper «Borotba» was published in Ukrainian with a circulation of 500 copies or more. In August 1943, the aforementioned publications ceased. This cessation, in our assessment, was likely attributable to the growing size of the organization and the geographic expansion of its operational activities. This interpretation is further supported by the renaming of the organization from the «People's Guard» to the «Partisan Council of the Western Regions of Ukraine.» Subsequently, a decision was made to consolidate publications into a single newspaper, «Partyzan» («Partisan»), which was issued in both Ukrainian and Polish and included the section «Partisan Movement of the Western Regions of Ukraine.»

«Partyzan» and «Borotba» functioned as de facto battle bulletins, disseminating calls for resistance against the fascist occupiers and the Ukrainian underground movement. These publications also featured information regarding the successful operations of the Red Army and promoted the living conditions in settlements liberated by Soviet forces, alongside the policies implemented by the Soviet government and the Communist Party. Furthermore, reports and orders issued by J. Stalin were circulated through these channels (SALR, f. P–183, op. 1, d. 3, p. 34).

«Partyzan» was issued bi-monthly with a print run of 1,200 copies. Additionally, underground activists received Polish-language literature from Warsaw, which they subsequently distributed among the local population (SALR, f. P-3, op. 1, d. 78, pp. 159–161).

A prominent figure in the Soviet underground of the Lviv region, S. Makivka, recounted in his memoirs that on November 25, 1943, a new underground newspaper, «Partyzan», was launched, announcing: «Today, citizens of the western regions of Ukraine receive the first issue of a partisan newspaper in these regions – «Partyzan». The further publication of «Borotba» as the organ of the People's Guard is discontinued...» (Makivka, S., 1959, p. 94 [translated by the author]).

On March 9, 1944, a leaflet titled «To the Citizens of the Lviv Region,» issued by the underground organization People's Guard, stated: «The invincible Red Army is destroying the might of the German army on all fronts of right-bank Ukraine. The front has moved 100 km closer to our city from the direction of Ternopil to Lutsk. The day of liberation of our region from the yoke of the German invader is near. But these historic moments, when every Soviet patriot rejoices that the end of the Hitlerite tyrant's rule is finally approaching, are overshadowed by tragic events – shameful crimes committed by Ukrainian nationalist scum under the banner of the UPA 68, Bandera, Melnyk, and Bulba. These so-called «insurgents,» armed by the Gestapo, are killing peaceful Polish citizens – workers and peasants, intellectuals, Polish women and children, day and night. Crime spreads with impunity – entire lower village administrations are involved in this Hitlerite «work»: village heads, sołtys officials, mayors, and also members of the so-called «Ukrainian police». Thus, Hitler's minions, expelled from Volhynia by the Red Army, are turning our region into a pitiful arena of interethnic strife» (Leaflets of the Party Underground..., 1961, pp. 279–280 [translated by the author]).

As this evidence demonstrates, the propaganda and agitation conducted by the Red partisans were aimed not only at fostering support for the establishment of the Communist Soviet regime but also at instigating interethnic hostility between Ukrainians and Poles.

The «guardsmen» operated without regular communication with the leadership of the broader Soviet partisan movement, with the exception of a meeting in early 1944 with a representative of the Naumov partisan detachment staff, operating under the alias «Ryszard,» who provided guidance for enhancing partisan and sabotage operations. Following the «liberation» of Lviv by Soviet troops on July 27, 1944, the organization was disbanded, and its armaments were surrendered to the Red Army (CSAPO of Ukraine, f. 1, op. 22, d. 415, p. 91).

The Zolochiv underground sabotage unit did not produce its own propaganda materials. Its interactions with representatives of the People's Guard in the town of Brody were infrequent. The People's Guard supplied them with propaganda materials such as «Partyzan», «Borotba», «Nowyny dnia» («News of the Day»), and leaflets, alongside occasional instructions and directives. According to the assessment of the Ukrainian Partisan Movement Headquarters, the unit exhibited insufficient combat readiness and inactivity, particularly in the realm of propaganda dissemination. Despite the presence of communists and Komsomol members within its ranks, no party or Komsomol organizational work was conducted, and not all members engaged with the literature provided by the «People's Guard» (CSAPO of Ukraine, f. 1, op. 22, d. 415, p. 114).

Archival reports concerning the activities of the «Patriots of the Slavs» provide limited specific examples of their purported «mass propaganda activities,» beyond this general assertion. The sole documented instance of such activity is a brief report detailing an anti-fascist rally held in February 1944 in the village of Berbeky, Kamianka-Buzka district (a settlement subsequently evacuated and destroyed by Soviet authorities post-World War II to facilitate the creation of an aviation test range – A. Shchehlov). During this rally, partisans elucidated the successes of the Red Army's offensive operations to the villagers. The rally concluded with a clash involving German soldiers who attacked the partisans (CSAPO of Ukraine, f. 1, op. 22, d. 415, p. 117). Based on this limited evidence, it can be inferred that the partisan group did not engage in organized propaganda dissemination among the local population.

In contrast to the aforementioned groups, the relatively small underground organization «Liberation of the Motherland» conducted comparatively active propaganda activities, albeit on a modest scale. Notably, the thematic breadth and the quality of the produced materials are significant, particularly considering they were authored by the organization's leader, V. Dorozhko, under the pseudonym I. Tyrsa. The most intensive period of propaganda material distribution occurred in 1944, coinciding with the discernible westward movement of the front and the increasing likelihood of the German occupation's end, with the territories of Galicia anticipated to fall under Soviet control.

The initial stages of their propaganda efforts involved the manual copying of leaflets by organization members. Subsequently, they established a printing capability utilizing typewriters. One typewriter was situated in the village of Zhydovychi, while another, equipped with Polish typeface, was located in the village of Turkotyn (SALR, f. P-183, op. 1, d. 107, p. 7). Archival data indicates a substantial volume of propaganda material produced in 1944, totaling 20 distinct items and 3,192 copies distributed over a four-month period (SALR, f. P-183, op. 1, d. 112, p. 54).

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In total, archival records mention approximately 10,000 leaflets as the purported quantity produced and distributed by members of the «Liberation of the Motherland» (SALR, f. P-183, op. 1, d. 107, p. 7). An illustrative example of a high-quality leaflet with clear local relevance is one dated May 12, 1943, bearing the slogan «Another Shameful Betrayal»: «At the beginning of May this year, new documents of shameful betrayal and treachery to the fascists by the people of Western Ukraine appeared in the Lviv press and on the radio. Despicable and hated by the whole people, traitors – V. Kubyovych and V. Kurmanovych – announced their speeches, in which they called on citizens and youth to join the SS division «Galicia», which supposedly would fight for some «future of the people». Anyone who is somewhat familiar with the history of Ukraine knows that these shabby gentlemen have sold Ukraine many times before. At one time, their predecessors – Konovalets, Levytskyi, and other scoundrels – invited the Germans to our lands... The Ukrainian people, with the help and support of the Slavic nations (Russians, Belarusians and others), gave these scoundrels a good thrashing, driving them out of Ukraine. But they continued their dirty work. Together with the academic bandit Efremov, Durdukivskyi, Chekhivskyi, and others, under the name of the so-called ULU (Union for the Liberation of Ukraine), they sold Ukraine piece by piece to various bourgeois states, aiming to restore the land's landlord-capitalist system and take control over the people. These traitors continuously sent spies and saboteurs to Soviet Ukraine to hinder state-building and undermine its strength...» (Leaflets of the Party Underground..., 1969, p. 111 [translated by the author]). This leaflet clearly demonstrates attempts to distort historical facts and propagate the Russian version of Ukraine's history.

In our analysis, and as previously noted, the propaganda materials exhibited a commendable level of quality. Their intended audience comprised specific social strata within the population, towards whom the partisans directed their core messages. These messages aimed to galvanize resistance against the German occupation, dissuade collaboration with or support for the OUN-UPA, expose the atrocities committed by the German occupying forces and participants in the national resistance movement, present «Polish landlords» and the priesthood in a negative light, extol the virtues of Soviet power, and underscore the perceived inevitability of its victory in the war. The materials incorporated appeals for unity and disseminated Soviet patriotic sentiments, the socio-political ideals of the Soviet Union, depictions of Soviet heroism, and narratives of the sacrifices endured by the Ukrainian people at the hands of the German invaders and Ukrainian nationalists.

Various propagandistic techniques were employed in the leaflets. A prevalent method was the «Argumentum ad hominem» – «poisoning the source» or «personal attack» – which permeated virtually all the disseminated materials. This approach consistently aimed to discredit all adversaries of Soviet power. Illustrative examples include phrases such as «German scoundrels... fascist invaders...» (ubiquitous across most materials), «Gentlemen, subservients, and priests carry out their shameless treacherous propaganda...» (from the leaflet «To Citizens of Western Ukraine»), «Hitler's hirelings from the Central Committee... and other traitors to the people» (from the leaflet «To the volunteers of the SS division and their families»), and «forest bandits from the so-called UPA..., traitors and agents of fascism» (from the leaflet «Death to the German occupiers») (SALR, f. P-183, op. 1, d. 115, pp. 37, 44, 55). Regarding the UPA, the propagandists consistently utilized the methods of «conditional reflex» and «labeling», invariably associating the organization, its activities, structure, leadership, and ideology with the German occupation regime.

Alongside the aforementioned technique, the method of repeated emphasis – «Ad nauseam» – was deployed both to negatively portray opponents and to underscore the inevitability of their punishment, the triumph of the Red Army, the permanence of Soviet power, and the validity of its ideological tenets. Slogans such as «Death to Hitler,» «Death to the traitors of the Ukrainian people,» «Glory to the Red Army!», and «Glory to Stalin!» (the «slogan» method) were frequently reiterated.

Capitalizing on the population's fear for their lives and future, as well as the pervasive uncertainty surrounding the war's trajectory, the «Argumentum ad metum» (appeal to fear) method was applied. Specifically, this involved instilling fear of retribution for cooperating with the occupation authorities and for enlisting in the ranks of the UPA or otherwise supporting the nationalist movement. An example includes the statement, «The time is not far off when the traitors of Ukraine, the Polish and other peoples, will answer harshly for their people» (from the leaflet «Galicians») (SALR, f. P-183, op. 1, d. 115, p. 112).

Typically, the «Appeal to Fear» was employed in conjunction with the method of prejudice and the method of appealing to popular opinion (the prevalence of which was often fabricated). This involved portraying the Soviet way of life and Soviet power in a positive light, as the bringers of liberation and salvation, and presenting their support as widespread, particularly among the Ukrainian populace. Examples include «All peoples have gone and are going at the call of the Red Army!» (from the leaflet «Death to the German occupiers») and «Your place is with the people of Soviet Ukraine, which is your Homeland!» (from the leaflet «Urgent tasks for the youth») (SALR, f. P-183, op. 1, d. 115, pp. 55, 60).

The «Don't be late!» or «inevitable victory» method was primarily utilized in propaganda directed against the Ukrainian insurgent movement, featuring calls to cease resistance, particularly in 1944 as the battlefield drew nearer. This was often preceded or applied in conjunction with the «join the masses» method. For instance, the leaflet «Urgent tasks for the youth» stated: «Those who have sinned and disgraced themselves by associating with the UPA can still wash away their guilt... help the advancing Red Army... Those who do not leave the UPA bands will forever tarnish themselves and their families» (SALR, f. P-183, op. 1, d. 115, p. 60).

An idealized and heroic public image of Soviet leadership and the Red Army was consistently constructed in contrast to the German occupation forces and the members of the OUN-UPA, and less frequently, the former Polish authorities, to whom the «demonizing the enemy» method was applied. An example concerning the German occupiers from the leaflet «Save yourself, fight the enemy» reads: «Frenzied Hitlerites... completely destroy Ukrainian villages, taking cattle, property, and people. They use the men they deported for hard labor until they die of starvation. The fascists destroy women, the elderly, and children just as they did to the Jews... Fascism consistently carries out the policy of exterminating other nationalities.»

Alongside «demonization,» the «swearing» method was employed, using pejorative language such as «...beggars, scoundrels, and idlers... swindlers from the camp of Ukrainian nationalists» and «...Galician butchers, SS men, and various scum of the nationalist, anti-people bourgeois scum» (regarding members of the UPA in the leaflets «Comrades, peasants» and «Once again about the Ukraine the Galician bourgeois nationalists want») with the aim of reinforcing preconceived negative attitudes (SALR, f. P-183, op. 1, d. 115, pp. 56, 70, 76).

The «dictate» method was universally applied, with partisans directly instructing the population on the actions they should undertake: «form partisan squads... disarm and kill the leaders of the UPA... destroy the tracks... destroy the wagons... kill the Germans and their lackeys,» and so forth. Consequently, the Ukrainian independence movement, alongside the Nazi occupation regime, became a primary target of the information-psychological influence exerted by Soviet underground groups and partisan detachments in the region.

Soviet historiography, in an effort to underscore the significance of partisan agitation and propaganda's impact, cited favorable statements from the Nazi occupation administration in the «Galicia» district. Notably, they referenced a report from the head of the propaganda department in Lviv, Raish, which stated that in numerous areas of the Lviv region, «propaganda is actively operating, leaflets and proclamations are being spread among the population. Despite the fact that these incidents are of a local nature, they must be responded to sharply» (Varyahina V. & Vakulenko, G., 1979, pp. 39–40).

In the post-war period, the communist authorities retroactively initiated the renaming of the «People's Guard of Avenger» to the «People's Guard named after Franko,» while simultaneously downplaying its predominantly Polish composition. Bolshevik propagandists were tasked with portraying the history of this group as having been internationally diverse and exclusively communist in its political orientation from its inception. Party historians began to assert that the «People's Guard named after Ivan Franko» purportedly included not only Poles but also numerous Russians, Ukrainians, and representatives of other nationalities. A fabricated history of their combat activities, which progressively acquired increasingly epic proportions, was constructed year after year (Kozitsky, A., 2021, p. 274).

Further in-depth scholarly investigation is warranted into the activities of Polish national and pro-communist underground groups in the western regions of Ukraine. For the former, V. Starka proposes the designation «Polish national underground,» and for the latter – «Pro-Soviet Polish Resistance Movement» (Starka, V., 2012, p. 298).

Conclusions. The introduction of valuable archival sources from the Central State Archive of Public Organizations of Ukraine and the State Archive of Lviv Region, coupled with a critical evaluation of Soviet historiography, allows for the filling of a significant scholarly lacuna. This concerns the analysis of the preparation and execution of agitation and propaganda by Soviet underground groups and partisan units in the Lviv region, specifically in relation to the nature and scale of their influence on local public opinion, an aspect largely overlooked by Ukrainian researchers. These primary sources contribute to broader scholarly inquiries into the activities of Soviet partisans in Ukraine. Given the specific historical context of the region and the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine, research into Soviet underground propaganda activities offers valuable insights for understanding the nature of Russian neo-imperialism, its contemporary propaganda methodologies, and their potential impact on the population.

1. The partisan and underground organizations operating within the Lviv region were numerically relatively small. Despite this limited size, the mere existence of these groups and their exerted influence on the local population, alongside their preparations for the eventual Soviet occupation, warrant scholarly consideration. In certain instances, they successfully managed to either

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persuade a segment of the population or, at the very least, signal the presence of individuals supportive of the Red Army and Soviet modes of life within the region. This involved preparing a select number of trusted individuals for future leadership roles and the subsequent «sovietization» of the area following the cessation of hostilities. Furthermore, their intelligence gathering activities during the German occupation contributed to enhancing the effectiveness of the struggle against the Ukrainian nationalist underground.

2. Notwithstanding the inherent operational difficulties, the Soviet underground units in the Lviv region managed to establish a discernible level of agitational and propaganda work, demonstrating a trend towards both qualitative and quantitative improvement in their disseminated materials. In this regard, the People's Guard stands out for its territorial reach and the sheer volume of materials distributed, while the «Liberation of the Motherland» organization is noteworthy for the quality of its production despite its small size. The primary agitational tools of the People's Guard were printed publications, notably newspapers such as «Borotba» («Struggle»), «Holos svobody» («Voice of Freedom»), and «Novyny dnia» («News of the Day»), later succeeded by «Partyzan» («Partisan»). These publications served not only as platforms for anti-German and anti-OUN–UPA messaging but also functioned as virtually the sole source of information, presented from a Soviet perspective, regarding global events and the Eastern Front of the German-Soviet War. A monthly circulation exceeding 1,000 copies was considered a relative success. The underground organization «Liberation of the Motherland,» primarily through the efforts of its leader and experienced propagandist V. Dorozhko, generated relatively high-quality content, although its dissemination remained limited geographically to the Hlyniany and Peremyshliany districts of the region.

3. Despite their limited membership and the challenging operational conditions, the quantity and diversity of the aforementioned agitation materials can be considered to have exerted some degree of influence on the local population, at the very least signaling the presence of Soviet power adherents. This impact was further amplified by the contacts established and the dissemination of newspapers published by members of the People's Guard. Conversely, the «Patriots of the Slavs» and the Zolochiv Underground Sabotage Detachment did not engage in significant agitational and propaganda activities.

4. Accurately assessing the effectiveness of partisan and underground propaganda and its impact on the civilian population is not feasible due to the inherent limitations in applying the research methodologies typically employed to study public opinion in a democratic society under wartime occupation. However, it can be stated that there was no substantial or rapid expansion of the support base and membership of underground groups and organizations. Simultaneously, it is crucial to emphasize the systematic efforts undertaken by Soviet underground fighters to reshape the socio-political attitudes of the region's population, particularly among individuals of Polish nationality, with the aim of combating not only the Nazi occupation but also the Ukrainian nationalist resistance movement. This ultimately contributed to the intensification of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict within the region.

5. The partisan and underground organizations operating in the Lviv region did not conform to the traditional understanding of «partisan» movements. Despite their lack of established connections with the central partisan movement in Ukraine, they were primarily organized by individuals who were not native to the region – including communists and Komsomol members who had not been successfully evacuated, Red Army soldiers who had escaped from medical facilities, and individuals who had been liberated from German captivity or forced labor. These organizations generally lacked organic support from the local population of the region. The notion of widespread local support for the Soviet partisan and underground resistance against the Nazi occupation in Lviv is therefore a historical myth.

6. Soviet partisans and underground members did not maintain close collaborative ties with the Polish anti-German underground, despite the latter's pro-Soviet leanings. At the outset of their activities, the Soviet groups were subject to the dominant organizational and propaganda influence of the Polish resistance, a factor that contributed to the escalation of Polish-Ukrainian confrontation in the region. Polish-Soviet cooperation commenced at the organizational level during the initial formation of the underground and persisted through sabotage and military collaboration, even in the face of certain ideological divergences. A salient example of this is the Zolochiv underground sabotage unit led by P. Kundius, the majority of whose members were Polish and who harbored general hostility towards their Ukrainian neighbors, particularly the Ukrainian independence movement in the region.

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