

Imperialist propaganda and Ukrainian Jews

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Members of the Ukrainian national guard Azov regiment, activists of the Azov civil corp, and the far-right radical group Right Sector take part in a rally to mark Defender of Ukraine Day, in Kyiv, Ukraine, October 14, 2016.

Since it began, 2022 has been a year of intense U.S. imperialist saber rattling against Vladimir Putin and the Russian government. The U.S. military-industrial complex and Western media have pushed a narrative that any Russian incursion into the Ukraine is an invasion. Prior to the start of actual Russian military action, the U.S. propaganda machine [sensationalized for months](#) that a “Russian invasion is imminent.”

As we have [previously written](#), Russia is not the true aggressor in this situation. Since an alliance of fascists and military brass couped the popularly elected government in 2014, Ukraine and its imperialist allies have waged literal and economic warfare against the two Donbass republics. Struggle-La Lucha has thoroughly covered the real reasons behind this aggression. Any Russian military operation in the Ukraine is really an act of self-defense against nearly a decade of [war and provocation](#) from NATO and the Ukrainian government.

In recent weeks, in addition to the fever-pitch saber rattling, another disturbing trend has developed in the media in regard to the Ukrainian Jewish community. The U.S. and their allies have used this war crisis as an opportunity to push Zionist ideology and muddle history. The aim of this media blitz has been to falsely compare Russia and Nazi Germany, with the hopes of pushing more Jews towards Zionism. This strategy is as insidious as it is cynical. What makes this propaganda beyond despicable is the long history of Ukrainian nationalist collaboration with Nazi Germany and the present alliance between the government and neo-Nazis.

Personal note

In 1905, a young Ukrainian Jewish woman arrived at Ellis Island, New York. Her

name was Anna Goldstein. Jacob Goldstein, Anna's father, decided it was time to move his family after pogroms devastated his village. Ukraine was part of the Russian Empire at the time, where anti-Semitic pogroms were as common as the sunrise. That young woman, Anna, was my great grandmother.

Fewer than 15 years after my great grandmother left her small village in the Ukraine, the Bolshevik revolution led Russia into a new era. It is important to realize that the Tzar's oppression of the Jewish community was a significant contributing factor to the Bolshevik revolution. My community was tired of the violence and the hate. It was for that reason that many Jews took up arms against the Tzar in the revolution of 1917.

That revolution led to the formation of the USSR, a socialist state that fought for the rights of all oppressed people inside and outside of its borders. Less than 40 years after that revolution, the vile specter of fascism and hatred would haunt Ukraine and the surrounding area again. Eventually, it would be the troops of the USSR that destroyed that specter and liberated Jews from Nazi concentration camps.

Ukraine and the Holocaust

In 1941, there were just under three million Jews living in what is now known as Ukraine. That same year, Nazi Germany gained control of most of the western part of the USSR as part of Operation Barbarossa. This offensive was a violation of the non-aggression pact between the two countries and resulted in the Nazi occupation of Ukraine.

Almost immediately after Nazi forces occupied the western USSR, Adolf Hitler ordered the formation of SS death squads. These death squads were called "einsatzgruppen" and were particularly brutal in the Nazi-occupied regions of Eastern Europe. These death squads went to work immediately, targeting the Jewish community, as well as all other Soviet citizens in Ukraine, with confinement, torture,

and murder.

Starting on Sept. 16, 1941, Nazi forces commenced an extermination campaign against the city of Mykolaiv, Ukraine. Within two weeks, over 35,000 people were murdered, the majority of them Jewish. Towards the end of the Mykolaiv massacre, the most infamous Nazi massacre of Jews occurred.

In a single day – a **single day** – Nazi forces killed 33,771 Jews in the [Babi Yar ravine](#) outside of Kiev. This author's extended family were some of the many who fell at Babi Yar. The Babi Yar massacre was followed by a violent campaign of terror against all Soviet citizens in the area that resulted in approximately 150,000 deaths. Many were Jews. Many were not.

It would be dishonest to discuss these atrocities without discussing Ukrainian collaboration with the Nazi occupiers. German Nazis were unfortunately not the sole perpetrators of these crimes against humanity. In fact, many of these massacres were carried out by Ukrainian Nazis. Large movements of Ukrainian Nazis branding themselves as “nationalists” enacted constant horrors against Jewish, Ukrainian, and Russian people in the region. These groups included the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgency Army (UPA).

Both of these organizations espoused fascist and anti-Semitic ideology, and openly collaborated with Adolf Hitler's forces. Tens of thousands of Jews, Poles, and Russians were slaughtered at the hands of these groups. Many of their leaders ultimately joined SS police battalions. This included the [massacre of 6,000 Jews in Lviv](#) by the Ukrainian People's Militia, a wing of the OUN, immediately after the city fell to Nazi forces.

The remaining years of the war would see a litany of atrocities carried out not only by the Nazi army, but by the OUN and the UPA. The horrors inflicted by these groups and their leaders cannot be understated. When the holocaust ended, the

Nazis and their Ukrainian allies had killed over [one million Ukrainian Jews](#). The Jewish population in Ukraine was nearly halved.

Unfortunately, and inexplicably, today the Ukrainian government [lauds](#) many of the [OUN and UPA's leaders](#) as national heroes. In 2010, outgoing right-wing Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko awarded UPA leader Stepan Bandera the "Hero of Ukraine" award. Bandera was a virulent and violent anti-Semite who organized many pogroms against the Jewish community during World War 2. Yushchenko's successor, Viktor Yanukovych, officially repealed the award. However, the Ukrainian parliament has attempted [twice](#), in 2018 and 2019, to reinstate the award. The 2019 attempt was championed by Servant of the People, current President Volodymyr Zelensky's political party. As recently as Jan. 1, 2022, various Ukrainian nationalist organizations led [mass marches through Kyiv](#) in celebration of nazi-collaborator Bandera's birthday.

Also in 2019, the Kiev City Council [renamed two city streets](#) after notorious Ukrainian Nazi collaborators, Nil Khasevych and Ivan Pavlenko. Pavlenko was personally responsible for the murder of Jews during World War 2 and eventually commanded an SS battalion. Khasevych was a leader in the OUN and one of the most famous Nazi propagandists of the time. It should be noted that Vitali Klitschko, the Mayor of Kiev who championed these proposals, is still in office.

As can be seen, the Ukrainian government has continued to honor fascists, particularly since 2014. This has not changed even with the election of a Jewish president, Volodymyr Zelensky.

Contemporary neo-Nazi movements in Ukraine and government collaboration

Corporate media today would have us believe that Russia is an inherent threat to Jewish life. There is no doubt that at the turn of the 20th century, the Russian Tzar

and his empire were a grave threat to Jewish life. However, times have changed. The only threat to Jewish life in this conflict is the fasicst Ukrainian government filled to the brim with Nazi collarborators.

As if the incessant historical praise of World War II-era Nazis wasn't enough, the Ukrainian government has continued to support various neo-Nazi militias and political parties in the present day. Ever since the Euromaidan of 2014, the Ukrainian government has been heavily influenced, if not controlled, by the [fascist movement](#).

Just three years ago, *The Nation* published a [telling exposé](#) on the growing nature of the fascist movement in Ukraine. The article describes large scale neo-Nazi marches with thousands of tiki torches and Nazi flags. However, the level of neo-Nazi infiltration in the current government coupled with NATO funds and arms getting to neo-Nazi militias is even more concerning.

Since 2014, NATO has consistently trained and equipped the Azov Battalion, a fascist militia operating in the Donbass republics. This militia's goal has been clear: to rid Ukraine of any "ethnic impurity." This presumably includes Jews, Russians, and even progressive Ukrainians. In 2019, the Azov Battalion was officially integrated into the Ukrainian National Guard.

As if that wasn't enough, the current leader of the Ukrainian National Police, Vadim Troyan, is a veteran of the Azov brigade and a known neo-Nazi collaborator. Troyan consistently encourages his troops and deputies to study Stepan Bandera and carry on the proud tradition of "Ukrainian nationalism," which is really just Nazism.

It would seem that the current Ukrainian government is simply a revival of the pro-Nazi organizations of the 1940s.

So, should Jews support the governments of Ukraine and their NATO allies?

Well, the answer is simple. No.

For the record, Israel should be included in that no.

Beginning around Feb. 21, mainstream media and multiple Jewish media outlets were blitzed with stories encouraging Ukraine's roughly 300,000 Jews to emigrate to Israel because of the impending "Russian invasion." These stories originated from the statements of several prominent rabbis to media outlets like the [New York Times](#) and [Washington Post](#). These rabbis include the Chief Rabbi of Israel and a prominent Rabbi in Odessa.

It should be noted, both of these rabbis are IDF veterans and support right-wing Zionist ideology. The implication of these articles and [those alike](#) is that Vladimir Putin is built in the mold of Adolf Hitler and that the fascist state of Israel is the only safe place for Jews.

Given all of the historical and present connections between Ukrainian nationalists and the fascist movement outlined in the article, that assertion is far from the truth. This is not to say that Ukrainian Jews aren't under threat. They certainly are. This threat just isn't from Russia. It is from the fascist aligned Ukrainian government and its neo-Nazi militias. These are organizations that openly wave swastika flags and call for new pogroms against the Jewish community.

There is also a sick irony in that idea that Israel is this place where war is as common as the air we breathe. The Israeli government commands one of the most aggressive and vicious militaries and police forces on the planet. No country bombs or attacks its neighbors more than Israel. There is no better demonstration of this than the Israeli military offensives against innocent Palestinian people in [2014](#) and [2021](#). To this day, Israel continues to launch [unprovoked attacks](#) on countries like Syria, all on behalf of the [U.S. ruling class](#).

As if this warfare on the Arab world wasn't enough, Israel's constant disdain for its own people, whether it be 18-year-old Israeli communist [Roman Levin](#) who refused to continue serving in a military that enforced apartheid against Palestine, or Ehtiopian Orthodox Jewish teenager Solomon Tekah, who Israeli police [brutally murdered](#) in 2019.

As a global Jewish community, we need to be honest with ourselves. Why do we swallow whole the propaganda of countries like the U.S. and Israel when these countries could give a damn about us? Neither of these two countries care about the welfare of the Jewish community, or any other oppressed community for that matter.

Russia is not the enemy of the Jewish community. Palestine is not the enemy of the Jewish community. The Donbass republics are not the enemy of the Jewish community. Fascism is the enemy of the Jewish community. Imperialism is the enemy of the Jewish community.

We must resist both. That means refusing to support a NATO-backed Ukrainian fascist war. That means questioning the use of Israel as a cudgel to turn us against our brothers and sisters in the Donbass and Palestine. That means analyzing the true nature of past Ukrainian nationalist movements and the current fascist-friendly Ukrainian regime.

Emigration to Israel won't keep the Jewish community safe. Only solidarity will. We must do better.



<https://www.struggle-la-lucha.org/2022/03/01/imperialist-propaganda-and-ukrainian-jews/>