

# Historian Timothy Snyder whitewashes the crimes of the Ukrainian far right

David North  
26 May 2022

*This article was originally posted on Twitter.*

The ubiquitous Timothy Snyder popped up in Davos to opine that the loss of historical consciousness has eroded the foundations of democracy. But as the leading pro-war NATO propagandist, Snyder has contributed to the falsification of the historical record.

For the past decade—in line with the political imperatives of the US-orchestrated 2014 Maidan coup that overthrew the elected pro-Russian government—Snyder has sought to manufacture a rosy narrative of Ukrainian nationalism as a heroic struggle for democracy.

This narrative has required a cosmetic makeover of Ukrainian history and politics, in which the central role of fascist Stepan Bandera, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and its military wing, the Ukrainian Partisan Army (UPA), has been airbrushed away.

But the brazenness of this manipulation of the historical record is exposed by Snyder's own extensive writings on Bandera, OUN, UPA and Ukrainian fascism. He contributed many articles on this subject to the *New York Review of Books*.

In an article published in the February 24, 2010 issue of that publication, "A Fascist Hero in Democratic Kiev," Snyder expressed serious concern about then-Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko's conferring the highest state honor of "Hero of Ukraine" upon Stepan Bandera.

Commenting on the protests of the chief rabbi of Ukraine, large numbers of Ukrainians, and even the president of Poland, Snyder wrote:

It is no wonder. Bandera aimed to make of Ukraine a one-party fascist dictatorship without

national minorities. During World War II, his followers killed many Poles and Jews.

Snyder devoted his essay to explaining the historical background of Bandera's rehabilitation. Still capable of writing history, rather than propaganda, Snyder reviewed the reactionary origins and ideology of this central and persistent force in Ukrainian nationalism.

The dominant influence that shaped Bandera's politics was the fascism of Benito Mussolini. "Young terrorists such as Stepan Bandera," Snyder wrote, "were formed not by the prewar empires, but by fascist ideology and the experience of national discrimination in Poland."

Snyder reviewed Bandera's and OUN's involvement in terrorist assassinations aimed at eliminating advocates of Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation. "The main targets of their assassination attempts were Ukrainians and Poles who wished to work together."

After Hitler came to power in 1933, Bandera "saw the Nazis as the only power that could destroy both of their oppressors, Poland and the Soviet Union. OUN activists were in contact with German military intelligence."

Bandera welcomed Hitler's invasion of Poland in 1939 and the Soviet Union two years later. The OUN and UPA collaborated with the Nazis in the implementation of the Holocaust. Snyder wrote:

Some of these Ukrainian nationalists helped the Germans to organize murderous pogroms of Jews. In so doing, they were advancing a German policy, but one that was consistent with their own program of ethnic purity, and their

own identification of Jews with Soviet tyranny.

The Nazi regime took Bandera into custody, but he was not treated as an enemy of the Third Reich. “Like other east European nationalists of stature,” according to Snyder, “he was being held in reserve for some future contingency when he might be useful to the Nazis.”

The UPA did not limit its killings to Jews. In 1943-44, according to Snyder, “UPA partisans murdered tens of thousands of Poles, most of them women and children.” Despite these crimes, the OUN hatred of the Soviet Union and communism made it attractive to the US and Britain.

As the Cold War began, some OUN-B members and UPA fighters were recruited by British and American intelligence, and then dropped by parachute in doomed missions across the Soviet border.

As for Bandera, Snyder wrote: “He remained faithful to the idea of a fascist Ukraine until assassinated by the KGB in 1959.”

Snyder noted in his 2010 essay that Ukraine’s then outgoing pro-US President Yushchenko, “regards as a hero [Bandera] a man whose political program called for ethnic purity and whose followers took part in the ethnic cleansing of Poles and, in some cases, in the Holocaust.

... In embracing Bandera as he leaves office, Yushchenko has cast a shadow over his own political legacy.

After writing this essay, Snyder dropped from his historical work any reference to Bandera and the OUN. In *Bloodlands*, published in October 2010 on the subject of genocide in Ukraine and East Europe, there are only two fleeting single-sentence references to the OUN, and none on its role in the Holocaust. Stepan Bandera is referenced once by his last name only,

without any identification of his position, ideology or policies.

For reasons best known to Snyder himself, he chose to remove from his writing on Ukrainian history any further discussion of the OUN’s central role in the genocidal destruction of Ukrainian Jewry.

Snyder’s transformation from historian into a purveyor of Ukrainian nationalist propaganda has earned him the acclaim of the media. But he should ponder the warning of Mark 8:36: “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”



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