German general spends 80th anniversary of the defeat of Hitler's Wehrmacht with Ukrainian neo-Nazi commander

Clara Weiss
14 May 2025

The German General Major Christian Freuding, who is in charge of the German Bundeswehr's (army) "Situation Command Ukraine" was photographed on May 9 shaking hands with the Ukrainian Neo-Nazi commander Oleg Romanov. May 9 marks "victory day" in the former Soviet Union: it was the day (May 8 in Western European time) that Hitler's Wehrmacht, which had invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, with the largest combat forces in world history, signed a definitive surrender and ended all military operations.

In the four preceding years, the German Wehrmacht, with the assistance of collaborationist forces such as the Ukrainian fascists of the Ukrainian Nationalist Organization (ONU), had murdered 27 million Soviet citizens. Among them were between 1.5 million and 2 million Jews, many of them from Ukraine, and some 3 million non-Jewish Ukrainian civilians.

The picture could only be understood as a political provocation and an insult to the memory of the victims of fascism.

Proudly posted by Oleg Romanov, it shows him and Freuding jointly holding a shirt, advertising the Paskuda Group. Romanov writes, "Celebrating the day of the victory over Nazism with general major Christian Freuding," adding a German flag.

A brief look at the Paskuda Group and Romanov reveal the sinister meaning of this statement and picture.

The Paskuda Group, which Romanov commands, is a specialized drone and anti-tank unit. It forms part of Ukraine's 3rd Separate Assault Brigade which is reported to have emerged out of a battalion of the notorious Neo-Nazi Azov Regiment. The Paskuda Group has acquired considerable prominence and is critical to Ukraine's war strategy as drones have come to play an essential role in the combat operations, especially for the outmanned Ukrainian forces. Like many so called "elite" units that are staffed with fascist elements, the Paskuda Group has been armed by NATO and fully integrated into the military. It has a large presence on social media and many of its YouTube videos, which glorify its military actions and display Nazi insignia, have received millions of views.

Moss Robeson, a prominent blogger on the Ukrainian far-right, reported that a decorated member of the Paskuda Group, visited the memorial site of the Auschwitz death camp in Poland in June. In an evident effort to mock the victims of Auschwitz, the shirt displayed a Hitler quote, "Where we are, there is no place for anyone else." Oleg Romanov liked the post of this picture on X/Twitter. At least 900,000 Jews, 300,000 Poles, 100,000 Soviet POWs and thousands of other victims of fascism were gassed, tortured or starved to death at Auschwitz.

Nor can there be any doubt about Romanov's own fascist orientation.

The same Instagram profile that Romanov used to post the picture with Freuding also shows Romanov in 2015 wearing a t-shirt of the Neo-Nazi Azov Battalion. Azov played a central role in the February 2014 coup, that toppled the government of Viktor Yanukovych, which had sought to balance between Russia and NATO, instead installing a regime that was completely oriented toward Ukraine's integration with NATO.

The coup, financed and backed by US and German imperialism, triggered a civil war in the country's east between pro-Kiev forces and Russian-backed separatists. This civil war took thousands of lives even before the full-scale invasion by Russia in February 2022. Fascist fighters from Azov played a central role in what was called the "anti-terrorist operation" in the Donbass. Some of the earliest pictures by Romanov depict him in that

© World Socialist Web Site

combat zone. Later ones, including from 2021, show him with tattoos that are associated with the far-right, most notably the Sonnenrad, a fascist insignia.

In 2024, Romanov, who is nicknamed “Romakha”, gained even more notoriety in Ukraine when he ordered that civilians who set military vehicles on fire be killed right away. He stated, “As battalion commander, with the consent of the highest leadership, relying on wartime conditions and combat immunity, I give verbal permission to my soldiers to shoot these animals on the spot. Such traitors must be eliminated on the spot.”

Ukraine has seen a significant uptick of attacks on military vehicles amid mass desertions on the front line. While some acts of sabotage no doubt are supported by Russia as part of its war strategy, in many cases, civilians or soldiers are acting out of despair and hatred with regard to a war that threatens their own lives and that of their families. It is estimated that half a million Ukrainians have already died in the war, with many more maimed and wounded, figures comparable to the bloodletting of World War I and World War II.

For a German general like Freuding to openly associate himself with this Neo-Nazi is a clear provocation. It also underscores, yet again, the true character of the war in Ukraine. Far from representing a war “in defense of democracy,” it is a predatory imperialist undertaking. Having deliberately provoked Russia’s invasion, the imperialist powers have been taking advantage of the confusion created by the nationalist and reactionary policies of the Putin regime to wage a proxy war against Russia and accomplish what the Nazis failed to accomplish in World War II: To establish full control over the vast raw material resources of the former Soviet Union.

From a historical standpoint, the role of German imperialism in this criminal undertaking is particularly sinister. Freuding, who has a doctorate in political science, will be very well familiar with the history of Nazis’ collaboration with Ukrainian fascists. It was a centerpiece of their plans to occupy Ukraine, slaughter its Jewish population, and dismember the Soviet Union. As historians have now widely documented, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists of Stepan Bandera, was instrumental in the persecution of the Jewish population, in particular. Ukrainian fascists also killed thousands of Ukrainian workers, farmers and young people, who opposed fascism. It is in this tradition that Romanov and his ilk stand.

Freuding openly associates himself with Neo-Nazi elements not despite but because of this history and their politics. Last year, he was one of the main cheerleaders in NATO for the Ukrainian invasion of the Russian region of Kursk, which saw the biggest tank battle in history in 1943. In videos frequently posted by the official channel of the German Bundeswehr, Freuding can be seen discussing the current state of the conflict, while pointing at a map of Russia and Ukraine, and resembling nothing so much as a Wehrmacht general discussing combat operations in the early 1940s.

As in World War II, the alliance with far-right forces is central to the efforts by the imperialist powers to wage war on Russia and suppress opposition within the working class. At the same time, the promotion of Ukrainian Neo-Nazis, especially since 2014, has been a critical component of the legitimization of fascist forces inside the imperialist countries themselves. In 2014, the US and Germany utilized fascists from the Azov Battalion to help install a government that, for the first time in Europe since 1945, included an openly Neo-Nazi party, Svoboda. Today, in the US, the fascist Donald Trump is in the White House, routinely using language associated with Adolf Hitler’s movement.

In Germany, the ruling class has embarked on the largest re-armament program since the fall of the Third Reich and the neo-fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD) has been built up as the largest opposition party in parliament. And in Gaza, the genocide of the Palestinian people by the Zionist regime, clearly modeled after the crimes of the Nazis, has received the full backing of the imperialist powers.

Against this background, Freuding’s insult to the memory of the millions who were murdered by German fascism must be understood not only as a provocation but as a statement of policy: No less than in World War II, German imperialism will rely on fascist forces to achieve its goals. It falls to the working class to prevent such a disaster, by reviving its own traditions of socialist revolutionary internationalism.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site