

Ukraine repatriates the remains of Nazi collaborator Andriy Melnyk

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Almost three years after the Canadian parliament celebrated the Waffen SS veteran Yaroslav Hunka with honours and standing ovations, Ukraine has elevated his political boss to the status of “national hero.”

In a hastily organized ceremony in Kiev’s National Military Cemetery on May 24, Ukraine’s political and military leadership re-interred the ashes of the WWII Ukrainian nationalist, fascist leader and Nazi collaborator Andriy Melnyk and his wife Sofia. Melnyk had been buried in Luxembourg since his death in exile in 1964.

The chairman of the Israeli Holocaust memorial site Yad Vashem, Dani Dayan, publicly raised concerns about the ceremony in honor of the Nazi collaborator. He was promptly added to a notorious Ukrainian blacklist called Myrotvorets, which has close ties to the Ukrainian government, for allegedly spreading “Russian-fascist propaganda narratives.”

Melnyk led one faction of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, the eponymously named OUN-M, from 1939 until his death, advocating the establishment of a fascist Ukrainian ethnostate subordinated to Nazi Germany. His OUN-M forces enthusiastically collaborated in the Holocaust of European Jewry and in the Nazi war of extermination against the Soviet Union. The OUN-M-affiliated newspaper, *Krakivski Visti*, described the onslaught as “the most justified war in history” while celebrating Adolf Hitler as “the greatest leader of the 20th century.” When the Nazis lost WWII, Melnyk and other fascist collaborators effortlessly adapted themselves to the Cold War campaign of American, British and Canadian imperialism to destroy the Soviet Union.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, two years after the expiry of his own legal mandate, announced on May 19 that the remains of Melnyk and soon other fascist nationalists, such as Yehven Konovalts, would be repatriated and reburied within days as part of a government plan to establish a “pantheon of national heroes.”

Zelensky cynically declared that “The Ukrainian people deserve their historical memory—and we are strengthening this true memory,” adding that figures such as Melnyk were “deeply respected.”

On X, the Ukrainian president, who has been celebrated by the media as the spearhead of Western democracy, praised the Ukrainian Nazi collaborator, writing, “Colonel Andriy Melnyk returned to a different Ukraine—not the one he had been forced to leave, but the one he had dreamed of. He dreamed of it—as did thousands of other such significant Ukrainian figures. I thank all those who are truly doing their best to ensure that our Ukrainian national memory remains a living memory. I am grateful to everyone who has worked to make such returns of great Ukrainian figures possible and to give the Ukrainian People their own pantheon of heroes.”

What a pack of lies! The rushed reburial of the Nazi collaborator Melnyk is about forgetting and falsifying historical truth.

The Crimes of Andriy Melnyk

Andriy Melnyk’s abiding obsession was the physical and political destruction of the Soviet Union, which emerged out of the 1917 Bolshevik-led socialist revolution. In this he made common cause with Polish, German, American and Canadian imperialism.

Arising out of the defeated army of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, his Sich Rifleman were absorbed into the Ukrainian nationalist army under the three bourgeois Ukrainian republics formed during the Civil War. His first act was the suppression of the Bolshevik Arsenal Uprising in Kiev in January 1918. Melnyk later swore allegiance to the Hetmanate and then Petliura’s Directory, both of which fought against the Soviet Red Army.

His soldiers participated in the anti-Jewish pogroms during the Civil War, in which as many as 200,000 were murdered. Both Ukrainian nationalist and White Russian armies were motivated by the smear of “Jude-Bolshevism” – that the Russian Revolution was the work of a Jewish conspiracy. This was an ideology which Melnyk’s Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), founded in 1928 and would take up with enthusiasm.

The OUN’s theoretical journal, *Rozbudova Natsii* (Building the Nation), as well as other OUN writers, such as Mykola Stsiborskyi and Mykhailo Kolodzynskyi, made plans for an ethnically “pure” Ukraine free of Russians and Jews, constructed on a genocidal, fascist basis. In issue #8-9 “Jewry, Zionism and Ukraine,” Yuri Milyanich wrote that “Jews are the enemies of the Ukrainian independent national idea” and “In the fight against Jewry, which is hostile to us in every respect, we must develop the most advantageous forms for solving the Jewish question.”

OUN’s plans could only be taken up with the assistance of German imperialism, for whom the anti-communist Ukrainians were seen as useful tools to fulfill Germany’s own irredentist ambitions. In 1923, Melnyk’s “Ukrainian Military Organization” (the precursor organization to the OUN) enlisted as an espionage and sabotage agency of the Weimar Republic, the Abwehr, spying on and assassinating Polish officials. Melnyk was imprisoned as a German spy from 1924 to 1928. This relationship with the German state would continue into the Nazi period. Andriy Melnyk was elected the leader of the OUN after the 1938 assassination of Yehven Konovalts by Stalin’s NKVD.

It was the tactical question of the OUN’s relationship to Nazi Germany which occasioned the split in OUN between the “Melnykites,” who favoured subordinate relations, and the followers of Stepan Bandera, the “Banderites,” who accepted cooperation but hoped that they could exploit the Nazis to create their own fascist state.

From the outset of WWII, the OUN gave the Third Reich every assistance. Melnyk appealed to Adolf Hitler on multiple occasions, begging for his Ukrainian nationalist troops to be permitted “the honour of taking part in the crusade against Bolshevik barbarism,” a crusade which murdered more than 27 million Soviet people.

Ukrainian nationalist henchmen enthusiastically staffed Nazi concentration camps. An OUN-controlled organization, the “Ukrainian Central Committee,” was established in the Krakow offices of the

Abwehr. Its newspaper, *Krakovski Visti*, would publish a flood of antisemitic incitement. Its managing editor, Mikhaïlo Chomiak, was the grandfather of former Canadian Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, who today acts as an adviser to the Zelensky government.

The OUN-M campaigned for the creation of the 14th Waffen SS Galizien Division, which massacred Ukrainian Soviet partisans, Poles and suppressed the Slovak national uprising.

OUN-M members, organized into Nazi Schutzmannschaft auxiliary police battalions, followed the Wehrmacht as it advanced into Ukraine in 1941. In Kiev, the OUN participated enthusiastically in pogroms, including the infamous slaughter at Babyn Yar, in which 33,771 Jews were murdered and their bodies thrown into a pit. OUN police hunted down Jews and Soviet partisans, rounding them up and sending them to the extermination camps. Others were shipped to Nazi Germany to serve as forced laborers, so-called “Ostarbeiter,” essentially slaves.

When the war began to turn against the Nazis after the defeat in the Battle of Stalingrad in early 1943, OUN members in the local police began to defect to the UPA, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, which continued murdering partisans, Jews and Poles but with the “independent” goal of forming a Ukrainian fascist state.

When it was clear that the war was lost for the fascist cause in early 1945, Melnyk pivoted and sent greetings to the advancing Allies, with whom OUN-M and OUN-B made carbon copies of the intelligence and counter-insurgency relationships they had maintained with the Abwehr.

From 1945 into the mid 1950s, British and American intelligence ran OUN members as operatives inside the Soviet Union, waging a guerilla war in an attempt to overthrow it from within, while plotting its nuclear annihilation from without.

Andriy Melnyk led the OUN-M until his death in 1964, traveling frequently to Canada and the United States to whip up anti-Soviet bigotry and spread nationalist poison. He could only do so because the truth about the Holocaust and the Nazi war of extermination and their involvement in it was suppressed.

The opening up of Soviet archives in the wake of the dissolution of the USSR by the Stalinist bureaucracy, as well as the declassification of CIA files and the collection of eyewitness testimony has provided historians with irrefutable evidence as to the criminal and fascist political character of Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism in the 20th century.

The ruling class is attempting to sweep all of this aside.

Behind the repatriation of Melnyk’s remains

The reburial of Melnyk comes at a critical point in the political crisis in Ukraine.

Imperialism’s proxy war against Russia in Ukraine has exhausted the Ukrainian working class, and popular opposition is growing. More than 500,000 young men have been killed, with 3.7 million internally displaced and 5.6 million have been made refugees, including more than 540,000 draft-aged men who have fled the country. The hated TRC, Territorial Recruitment Centers, which press gangs young men avoiding conscription into the armed forces of Ukraine is being fought with physical force by civilians.

The Zelensky regime has been profoundly discredited by a series of corruption scandals that have revealed that Zelensky’s closest entourage has shamelessly enriched itself through the war.

Under these conditions, Ukraine’s ruling class is doubling down on its long-standing efforts to construct a pseudo-history which covers the past crimes of Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism in a thick coat of whitewash, in preparation for the commission of new crimes. This is the culmination of a

process in which openly fascist forces, such as the Azov Battalion, and its commanders have been completely integrated into the armed forces of Ukraine. Stepan Bandera has been declared a national hero, and monuments to him and other Nazi collaborators have been erected across Ukraine.

For the Ukrainian oligarchy, the elevation of Nazi collaborating Ukrainian fascists is becoming ever more central to the ideology and justifications of the war. Tellingly, articles of the Ukrainian Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotiuk exposing the crimes of the Ukrainian fascists during World War II—including both the wing under Stepan Bandera and Melnyk’s Waffen SS-Galicia division—have been central to the case of the prosecution which seeks to indict him for “state treason under martial law.”

But though they are of immense significance in Ukraine, the political implications of Melnyk’s reburial are not only a Ukrainian issue. They carry an ominous historical and political significance for the entire world. In reburying this Nazi criminal as a hero, the ruling class is attempting to reanimate the political corpse of Nazism.

Canada’s celebration of the Waffen SS officer Hunka still occasioned an international scandal in 2023. Yet the political rehabilitation of Melnyk has been completely whitewashed by the capitalist press in 2026. The *New York Times* euphemistically described the blood-soaked Nazi as a “divisive 20th Century hero”! In the German press, which is beating the drums for greater German involvement in the war against Russia, the coverage was even more muted and glossed over Melnyk’s fascist crimes almost entirely.

If the Holocaust and the Nazi war of extermination as well as their perpetrators are now merely “divisive,” it is because the capitalist international of death and destruction is uniting around a policy of global mass murder. World imperialism has committed and covered up another genocide—that of the Palestinians—and the emerging fight for an imperialist redivision of the world is spreading from Russia to new fronts in Iran, the Caribbean and the Arctic. The celebration of the fascist war criminal Melnyk by the Ukrainian oligarchy is part of the systematic rehabilitation of fascism worldwide, as the ruling class prepares for even greater crimes as part of its descent into a new world war.



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