

4 days after sentencing of socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk:

Ukrainian government reinters another Nazi collaborator

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The fascistic Ukrainian regime under President Volodymyr Zelensky has repatriated the remains of the founder of the fascist Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), Yehven Konovalts, from the Crooswijk cemetery in Rotterdam, where his body has lain since his assassination by Soviet agent Pavel Sudoplatov in 1938.

Konovalts' OUN was subsequently led by the Nazi collaborator Andriy Melnyk, from whom Konovalts was inseparable. The OUN went on to collaborate in the Holocaust of European Jewry and the Nazi war of extermination against the Soviet Union, in which at least 27 million people were murdered. Konovalts was himself a remorseless fascist and a collaborator with German imperialism in Ukraine since the Civil War that followed the 1917 October Revolution, in which he fought against and was defeated by the Bolsheviks.

Konovalts' reinterment, as part of the Ukrainian state's campaign to create a "Ukrainian pantheon of national heroes," occurred only four days after the district court in the city of Pervomaisk sentenced Bogdan Syrotiuk, the 27-year-old socialist leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, to a 15-year prison term for "high treason", based on six articles that were published on the *World Socialist Web Site*.

The two events are directly linked. The Ukrainian state's indictment against Syrotiuk claims that his articles that documented the crimes of Ukrainian fascists against both the Jewish and Ukrainian people are criminal because they "reinterpret national heroes and historical figures," such as Konovalts, and make "comparisons with fascists and Nazis." But Syrotiuk's articles were accurate. The only "reinterpretation" of the legacy of Konovalts and the OUN is being carried out not by Syrotiuk but by the fascistic Ukrainian state in its drive to re-brand these genocidal Nazi criminals as "national heroes."

The political truth of Syrotiuk's exposure of Ukrainian fascism—with which all credible historians are in basic agreement—was exposed by the reinterment ceremony conducted for Konovalts, which resembled nothing so much as a Nazi torch-lit celebration, the historical memory of which lives in infamy in the minds of billions of people.

Under the cover of darkness and accompanied by members of the fascist Azov Regiment bearing torches, Konovalts' remains were wheeled to the threshold of Ukrainian Greek Catholic Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ in an Austin armored car and gun carriage from WWI, the kind with which Konovalts, once an officer of the Sich Riflemen division of the Austro-Hungarian Army, would have been familiar.

Draping the black banners of the Azov over the coffin in salute, the fascists bore it on their shoulders into the cathedral, where the founder of Azov, the "white general" Andriy Biletsky, declared that the current generation of fascists had the duty to "complete the work of the colonel and all our great predecessors, the struggle for a great, powerful and

united Ukraine."

The open Nazi references were obvious to all. But subtle ones were also exposed.

University of Ottawa Professor Ivan Katchanovski, whose book documents the role of fascist agents provocateurs in the 2014 Maidan coup, noted the significance of the date. "Zelensky's sanctioned torchlit reburial of fascist OUN leader & Nazi collaborator by neo-Nazi-led Azov's on August 14 88 years after his assassination just 'happen' to coincide with '14/88' neo-Nazi symbol that means 14-word white supremacist slogan & 'Heil Hitler.'"

Dr. Marta Havryshko, Visiting Assistant Professor of Holocaust Pedagogy and Antisemitism Studies at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clarke University, herself a refugee in the United States from the war, excoriated the proceedings:

Apparently, victory now requires a little ritual work with human remains. Whatever it takes. Soldiers sporting runes and Nazi symbolism, discreetly tucked beneath Ukrainian uniforms, gathered at night—the traditional shift for the forces of darkness. They lit their torches, to open a portal to the other world. And then came their White Leader Andriy Biletsky. Necromancy. Night. The forces of darkness. Torches. Fire. A gateway to the beyond. At this point, all that was missing was a pentagram... Biletsky swore an oath: "Before the ashes of the Colonel, I swear to carry his cause through to the end and build the Ukraine he dreamed of." A charming promise—until you ask what kind of Ukraine Konovalts actually dreamed about. His vision was of an authoritarian state with himself as its leader. It was also supposed to be monoethnic. The methods later employed by the OUN and UPA against ethnic minorities included mass violence and ethnic cleansing; Ukrainian nationalist formations and individuals also had varying forms of collaboration with Nazi Germany, including participation in Holocaust-related persecution and killing.

The fascist nature of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and its leaders, Konovalts, Melnyk, Stetsko, Bandera and others, as well as their hatred of democracy is beyond dispute. To cite only a few examples out of hundreds which could easily be provided, we can simply quote them and their publications, in their own words.

In the first issues of the OUN journal *Rozbudova Natsii* (Building the Nation) published in 1928, the OUN declared itself an opponent of democracy and rational thought itself.

Attacking liberal democrats, I. Stobar declared that "the cornerstone of

their ideology is the equality and free will of the person, then this is done in the conviction that the human person is above all everywhere and always essentially the same, and the being itself is good (only the modern social order is evil). It is enough, they think, to put everyone on the same page, to give everyone freedom, and heaven will come on earth, and there will be 'agreement, peace and silence' among people ..."

That same year, Yehven Onatskyi wrote the first of many glowing reports on fascist Italy, some of which were to be reprinted in the Ukrainian Canadian newspaper *New Pathway*, which is still published in Edmonton, Alberta and remains the leading Ukrainian newspaper in Canada. Writing proudly of the fascist origins of the Ukrainian nationalist movement, he declared, "Many Ukrainian nationalists began to call themselves fondly Ukrainian fascists and sought support from Italian fascists. They did not see that between Ukrainian nationalism and Italian fascism there is an impassable chasm that can be filled only by time and stubborn hard work." This "hard work" meant the construction of a Ukrainian fascist state for the then stateless Ukrainian expatriates, as the basis for the super-exploitation of Ukrainian labour.

For his own part, Konovalts was no writer. He was simply a militarist gangster. His own career parallels that of his close collaborator Andriy Melnyk, whose own reinterment occurred in May.

From Berlin, later Geneva and finally in fascist Rome, Konovalts oversaw the intelligence collaboration between the UVO, the Ukrainian Military Organization (the precursor organization to the OUN) and Germany beginning in 1923 and lasting, with some short breaks, until his death in 1938. Ukrainian nationalists, acting as the proxies of German imperialism, undertook an espionage and terrorist campaign against Poland from 1929 to 1938, assassinating Polish officials. Poland at that time was in control of what the OUN considered to be Ukrainian majority ethnic territories in Volhynia and Galicia. Except that these territories were also inhabited variously by Poles, Russians, Jews, Romanians, Hungarians, Roma and other peoples.

When OUN ideologist Mykola Stsiborskyi took a Jewish wife in 1934, Konovalts condemned the union, infamously declaring that "If nationalism is waging war against mixed marriages insofar as conquerors (especially Poles and Russians) are concerned, then it cannot bypass the problem of mixed marriages with Jews, who are indisputably if not greater, then at least comparable, foes of our rebirth."

Stsiborskyi himself was no shrinking violet when it came to threatening Jews and others to whom he was not married. He would write in 1939 that "It must be assumed that a large part of these Muscovite-Polish and other newcomers who have settled in Ukraine will be materially and physically exterminated in the early days of the revolution. ... such an elimination of hostile colonization will cause cries from various factors about 'humanism,' 'legality,' etc. The state government will not take this hypocritical demagoguery into account... Where the forest is cut down, wood chips will fly!" (Stsiborskyi, Mykola Orestovich, *Zemel'ne pytannia* (1939), p. 85.)

Stsiborskyi's book, *Natiokratia* (National Ideology) which extolls the virtues of an ethnically "pure" Ukrainian one-party state under a single, fascist leader, is widely sold today in Ukraine, and the "democratic" President Volodymyr Zelensky has been photographed promoting updated versions of Stsiborskyi's nationalist, racist ideology, bound in black, and bearing the Ukrainian version of the Nazi "*Wolfsangel*" in silver.

Much like today, the clientelist relationship established between the OUN and the Nazis was based on the promotion of a mono-lingual, mono-ethnic Ukraine which would expel non-Ukrainians or reduce them to a completely subject status.

The military efforts of Ukrainian fascists and nationalists were then directed against the Soviet Union, which had emerged from the October Revolution and remained a workers' state, although it underwent a bureaucratic degeneration under Stalinism. By invading the Soviet Union,

the Nazis sought to destroy the workers' state, both to undermine the working class internationally and to acquire the vast resources of the former Soviet Union to continue their campaign of world conquest. Today's Russia emerged out of the Stalinist destruction of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy. Yet the hatred of all things Russian on the part of the Ukrainian fascists has remained. Their nationalist ideology still serves to dress up the material interests of imperialism which, once again, seeks to bring the resources of the entire region under its direct control today.

And, like today, the nationalist ideology, trumpeted at high volume, covered up the brutal exploitation of Ukrainian workers and the plunder of Ukraine's resources. Where the fascist OUN-M collaborated in the transfer of Ukrainian slave labour (*Ostarbeiter*) to Nazi Germany and the seizure of Ukrainian grain and livestock to feed the Nazi war machine while Ukrainians starved, today's gangsters in Kiev are busy selling off Ukraine's farmland and mineral wealth to private equity in Europe and the United States, and herding old men into vans to be carted off to the front, where their lifespans can be measured in hours.

The Ukrainian state campaign to rebury the remains of Nazi war criminals and collaborators as "heroes" and its ongoing attempt to bury alive a principled socialist opponent in a Ukrainian dungeon based on trumped up charges are two expressions of the same process.

World capitalism can only resolve the crisis thrown up by its own development by a descent into fascist barbarism. It requires the plunder of Eurasia and the appropriation of its immense wealth. But this policy cannot be pursued without suppressing the growing dissent within the working class and among young people, above all, those who turn to socialism and fight for historical truth. The fight to free Bogdan is a fight against the rehabilitation of fascism and imperialist war. Support the campaign today by signing the petition, making a donation and submitting a statement to the Ukrainian courts and the WWS.

The World Socialist Web Site urges its readers to add their names at wsws.org/freebogdan. Write to the Pervomaisk City District Court at inbox@pm.mk.court.gov.ua and the Nikolaev Court of Appeal at inbox@mka.court.gov.ua, with a copy to freebogdan@wsws.org, demanding that the sentence be thrown out and Bogdan freed at once.



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