

The Many Versions of Herr Doctor Novosad's Biography: Ukrainian Resistance and Collaboration

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"Undetermined" Ukrainians: Post-War Narratives of the Waffen SS "Galicia" Division. By Olesya Khromeychuk. Nationalisms across the Globe, vol. 11. Bern: Peter Lang, 2013. xx, 197 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. \$64.95, paper.

The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands. By Alexander Statiev. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2013. xvi, 368 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Illustrations. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$32.99, paper.

Sometimes, my high school German-language teacher, Herr Doctor Myron Novosad, would ask me a question. Having no idea what he had just said, I would ask him to repeat it. He would then hit his forehead and apologize, "Oh, sorry, that was Italian," or "Ay, ya, yi, that was Ukrainian." The significance of Novosad's quadrilingualism hit me only a decade later when I was researching a dissertation on right-bank Ukraine. He was retired when I interviewed him in the mid-1990s. In the living room of his tract house in suburban Chicago, Novosad told me, nervously, that he was born in a Galician village and in 1943 signed up for the Ukrainian Waffen SS. He survived the Battle of Brody, when most of the battalion was wiped out, because, he said, he had been in Berlin, in an officers' training course. After the war, he lived in displaced persons (DP) camps in Italy and Germany. He explained that he had joined the SS because he wanted revenge for the Soviet collectivization of his father's farm. I asked him why he didn't join the Ukrainian resistance. He replied that he wasn't the kind of guy to live in a forest, and, as a foolish young man, he liked the German uniform.

Novosad didn't say much else. Nor did I ask him any hard questions. He has since died, and recently I looked up Novosad's file in the International Tracing Service (ITS) archive, a small portion of which is duplicated at the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. This file gave a different version of Novosad's wartime history. In his 1951 application to immigrate to the United States, Novosad said that he joined the Waffen SS in January 1945. He claimed he was not a volunteer but was conscripted by German authorities. Novosad also stated that he peacefully sat out the previous war years as a university student in L'viv/Lemberg. U.S. officials apparently bought this far-fetched story, or pretended to. Novosad was awarded not only a visa to the United States but a scholarship to study German literature at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

I squared the inconsistencies between Novosad's ITS file and the version he told me by telling myself that Novosad had told me the truth, while he lied to State Department officials (for obvious reasons). It is funny that I assumed that the elusive truth was mine alone. Reading Olesya Khromeychuk's monograph, *"Undetermined" Ukrainians*, I realized that Novosad most likely lied not only to me but had been fabricating his biography since the day in 1945 that he took off his cherished uniform. I learned from *"Undetermined" Ukrainians* that there was a 50 percent chance that Novosad was not from Galicia and a 90 percent chance he did not originally consider him-

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self Ukrainian. He might have fought for one of the competing Ukrainian nationalist forces, the Orhanizatsiya Ukrayins'kykh Natsionalistiv members supporting Andrii Melnyk (OUN-M) or Stepan Bandera (OUN-B). He could have later served in German police forces and been involved in special actions against Jews, reprisals against other civilians, and the routing of Soviet partisan forces. He might have fought against Polish partisans and attacked villages perceived to be Polish. He could have joined the Waffen SS in 1943 or in 1944 or, indeed, the Galician Waffen SS in 1945.

What is clear from Khromeychuk's history is that the version Novosad told me was the standard account offered by most men held in the British-controlled DP camp in Bellaria, Italy, in 1945. These men, Khromeychuk recounts, were questioned first by British and then by Soviet investigators. The version that most DPs supplied, and which Novosad wrote on his migration application, grew out of a negotiation with British authorities. The standard and safest answer to the question of how you ended up in German uniform at the end of the war was as follows: I am from Galicia (not parts of pre-1939 Soviet Ukraine). I am Ukrainian (not Polish, Jewish, Czech, Romanian, Hungarian, Russian, Belarusian, or any mixture). I was forced to join, or I decided to sign up for the Waffen SS as revenge for Soviet collectivization. I was never a fascist. *I just wanted my nation to be free and independent, and I hated communism.* As interrogations are often tutorials, the DPs learned quickly to stress their life-long anticommunism, an equally ardent love of their nation, and a principled belief in national self-determination, all ideas that won the approval of their British handlers. Since very few men arrived in Italy with their documents intact, and the British were distrustful of Soviet investigators who did have documentation and names of perpetrators, no one questioned the DPs' version of events—neither in 1946–47, when the issue of whether to send the men to the USSR, as Soviet officials requested, was being debated, nor in the fifties, when the former DPs sought to emigrate to North America.

Khromeychuk's work complements Alexander Statiev's *The Soviet Counterinsurgency*. Both monographs are refreshing in that they are postnational histories of collaboration and insurgency in occupied territory during and after World War II. Both authors approach old histories and memoirs with a healthy skepticism and seek to transcend the contentious and ongoing Cold War-era debates about whether Ukrainian combatants were willing executioners or freedom fighters. Cold War histories were largely influenced by people such as Novosad who had a pointed interest in portraying the Soviet occupation as just as bad as, if not worse than, the German occupation in order to justify a tactical alliance with German forces as a means to an independent Ukraine. Khromeychuk and Statiev work systematically to get behind these assumptions—in Khromeychuk's case, to show how these narratives were created, and perpetuated, and in Statiev's history, to trace the statistical reality behind charges of Soviet mass repression and national persecution in the occupied territories.

Khromeychuk gives a careful, judicious account of the whitewashing of the Ukrainian SS division. In December 1945, only 9,190 DPs were listed as Ukrainian. That number rose to 106,549 by June 1947. To be a Ukrainian from Galicia was to have indeterminate status, and that was the golden ticket to the west. Statelessness meant one did not get sent to the USSR, and that is apparently the choice ninety-six thousand men made. Khromeychuk finds a purposeful overlooking of the individual histories of the men who landed in British DP camps after the war. The Waffen SS, for example, attracted urbanites, World War I vets, and former officers of the Russian civil war, many of them with fascist, antisemitic tendencies; yet British reports noted that the DPs were "simple peasant types" seemingly ignorant of the reality of the Nazi war machine. They were "not conscious of having done any wrong," and their support

of the Germans was “incidental and not fundamental” (109). They were motivated by a naive desire for an independent Ukraine. The British investigators also showed a troubling inability to do basic research. When asking DPs about their origins, they were told the names of villages “so small they could not find them on the largest maps” (111). They described the men as a “homogeneous group” (109), a phrase that justified no further investigations into individuals who clearly had politicized pasts working with the Nazis, despite the fact that Soviet commissioners handed British officers files on such people. In the end, the British investigators wrote their report recommending the DPs not be sent to the USSR based on interviews of two hundred out of eight thousand men. A 1986 Canadian report exonerating the Galician Waffen SS derived most of its data from this flawed 1947 report.

Khromeychuk finds that as a division, the “Galicia” probably committed no war crimes but that a good number of individuals in the division most likely participated in war crimes as combatants in earlier police and military formations. She argues that British officers, Canadian officials, and North American émigré groups deliberately obscured this more complicated history “to portray the division members as innocent, displaced political refugees from lands which were annexed by the USSR” (133). Much of this cleaned-up history now haunts the streets of Kiev and other Ukrainian cities, where not just nationalists but all sorts of people view Ukrainian wartime insurgents as forces that cooperated with German occupiers expediently and heroically on the path to an independent Ukraine.

Statiev more directly targets the history of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (Ukrains’ka Povstans’ka Armiia, UPA) and other groups he labels “insurgents.” Statiev refutes the historiography’s neat dichotomy between foreign usurpers persecuting the national freedom fighters of Ukraine and the Baltic states. Rather, he characterizes the conflict as a civil war fought on the village level, neighbor against neighbor. He provides numbers transformed into charts from archival and secondary sources to show that Ukrainians and Balts made up not only most of the insurgents but also the majority of counterinsurgents (in destruction battalions and village militias). Taking advantage of Soviet amnesties, captured insurgents often switched to Soviet counterinsurgent forces. They were extremely effective at finding hideouts, naming secret informants, and convincing insurgents to give up the fight. Taking on the assumption that Soviets, as ethnic outsiders, came to pacify the borderlands and destroy national allegiances, Statiev shows that insurgents killed civilians far more often than they killed combatants, often using German-style mass reprisals against villages and families in retaliation for “collaborating” with Soviet forces by joining collective farms or the Red Army. “Not a single village should recognize Soviet authority,” UPA leader Roman Shukhevych reportedly decreed. “The OUN should destroy all those who recognize Soviet authority. Not intimidate but destroy” (131).

Statiev analyzes the battles between insurgents and counterinsurgents not in terms of morality and principles but on the level of strategy and rationality. He rules, for example, that for Soviet leaders, deportation was a good tactic. In 1940–41, it cleared out Polish landowners and thus freed up territory for popular land reform measures. After 1944, deportation sent away people likely to join the insurgency. Moreover, he argues, the deportations were judicious. Statiev finds that ex-pat historians exaggerated the number of people deported by up to 300 percent. The archival records show that about the same proportion—2–4 percent of the population—was exiled from the new territories as from the old Soviet territories in the 1930s during collectivization. He also refutes the notion that deportation was a colonization policy to remove Balts and Ukrainians and transplant Russians. He finds that the proportion of Lithuanians actually grew, from 71 percent to 79.3 percent between 1941 and 1959, thanks in part to the genocide and removal of Jews and Poles. These facts are brutal,

as were the tactics, Statiev admits, but he argues they should not be overlooked in accounting for eventual Soviet success in winning over populations. Statiev argues that Soviet leaders understood that military battles were not the only ones to win, that they could counter instability with yet another instability—a revolution from above intended to split rural society along class lines and win over the beneficiaries of Soviet programs. The major winning tactic was a sweeping, if temporary, redistribution of property, intended to gain peasants' support before pushing them, unhappily, into collective farms.

Statiev's and Khromeychuk's contributions are significant. They fundamentally question the dominance of the national over other kinds of historical framing in the early postwar history of the annexed territories. Khromeychuk argues that the debate over "collaboration" in Ukraine has created an "impoverished form of politics, representing historiography designed to either celebrate or condemn" (162). Statiev maintains that encapsulating the counterinsurgency in the post-1939 Soviet territories in singularly national terms overlooks the economic, political, tactical, and social factors that allowed the Soviet state to successfully win over large portions of the population, including among them thousands of former insurgents. It is gratifying to see how these two authors have coaxed their histories out of the shallows of long-held assumptions and toward greater accuracy and complexity.