Vladyslav Verstiuk
THE BOLSHEVIK EXPANSION AND OCCUPATION OF UKRAINE (DECEMBER 1917 – FEBRUARY 1918)

ABSTRACT

The article presents an overview of the background and course of the first of four Russian-Ukrainian wars during the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921: the war unleashed by the Russian Bolsheviks in late 1917. The author shares the story of the Bolsheviks' political manipulations which preceded the military invasion; he talks of the Bolsheviks' public hypocrisy, which combined recognition of the right of nations to self-determination with unacceptable demands of Ukrainians. The Bolshevik strategy was to portray the attack on the Ukrainian People's Republic as an internal Ukrainian conflict – the struggle of the "proletariat" against the "bourgeois Central Council". It examines the process of creating a puppet Soviet government of Ukraine, under the cover of which troops from Russia led the occupation of the republic, with the emphasis put on the theme of "red terror" that was widely used by the Bolsheviks during the war. Then attention is drawn to the similarity of approaches to warfare in contemporary Russia of today and a century ago.

KEYWORDS:

Ukrainian People's Republic, Bolshevik Russia, Russian–Ukrainian war, red terror

VLADYSLAV VERSTIUK

historian, PhD, professor, and department head at the Institute of History of Ukraine, the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. He is also a full professor at the Ukrainian Free University in Munich and visiting researcher at the University of Warsaw. His main field of expertise is the history of Central and Eastern Europe in the first half of the twentieth century, with an emphasis on the 1917–21 Ukrainian revolution, including the opposition of the Ukrainian People's Republic to White and Red Russia, the red terror, the war against communism, and the occupation of Ukraine by Soviet Russia.

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6023-0471

The war unleashed by Russia against Ukraine in 2022 amplified the issue of Russian-Ukrainian relations manyfold. Previously, these relations were presented as friendly and even fraternal. Although one "sister" was older and one was younger, a positive assessment of relationships dominated for the most part, while negative elements were considered exceptions rather than the norm. Not surprisingly, the current war has wiped out such views. Behind congenial talk about friendship of peoples – the great Russian history and culture and its exceptional influence on the history and culture of Ukraine – lurk predatory Russian nationalism, imperialism, and the communism of Soviet times, stained with the blood of peoples who, for various reasons, ended up in the orbit of the Russian authorities. The kind of orbit from which, as if from a prison, it is incredibly difficult and dangerous to escape. Ukrainians have attempted such escapes several times. In the early modern times, hetmans Ivan Vyhovs'kyi and Ivan Mazepa were eager to do just that, while in the twentieth century the call for independence became a symbol of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–21. The revolutionary impulse was so strong that Russia had to wage several wars to reoccupy Ukraine. This article deals with the first of them – the shortest one – which nevertheless crystallized all the deceit of the Russian Bolshevik propaganda: the cynicism of political leaders, who publicly said one thing and did another; their attempts to present blatant aggression as internal struggle within Ukrainian people, or as fraternal assistance to workers in their fight against nationalism; and finally, the incredible brutality of the military operations, mass terror against the civilian population, and complete lack of morality. Contemporary Russia has inherited a big portion of this legacy, which has become its ancestral feature and is being actively used today.

* * *

The seizure of power by the Bolsheviks in Petrograd in late October of 1917 opened a new chapter in the history of the revolution. The conflict between the Ukrainian Central Council (Rada) and the Provisional Government was immediately followed by overt armed struggle with the Bolsheviks. The withdrawal of the Bolsheviks from the *Mala Rada*,[1] as well as the Central Rada's condemnation of the uprising in Petrograd, confirmed that these forces followed different trajectories. On 5 November 1917, the organ of the Ukrainian Social-Democratic Workers' Party, the *Workers' Newspaper*,

1 *Mala Rada* (Minor Council): a permanent part of the Ukrainian Central Council (*Velyka Rada*, or General Council), which in its entirety met only periodically at General Assemblies (sessions). The *Mala Rada* had the same powers as the *Velyka Rada* and was composed in proportion to the factions of the General Council.

tried to list the differences between the Bolsheviks and the Ukrainian revolutionary democracy,

> [...] and when we seemed to be marching together against our common enemies, we never merged. We stood for the Ukrainian Democratic Republic and Federation (Union) with other parts of Russia. They [Bolsheviks] were completely opposed to our demand... They are still, if not openly hostile, then completely indifferent to the vital national-cultural and political needs of our proletariat. Our differences have always been significant. But now these political differences stand out powerfully. They are getting on the agenda of the political struggle in Ukraine.[2]

The national liberation movements, including the Ukrainian variant, were supported by the Bolsheviks only as an accompanying force in the struggle against the Provisional Government. After the Bolshevik Party came to power, these movements were regarded exclusively as bourgeois-nationalist counter-revolution. Despite Marxist-Leninist rhetoric about the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination, it was obvious that the national liberation movement and the Bolsheviks used different ideologies: the former aimed to create a sovereign nation-state and saw a nation subordinated to the unity of political will as the basis of its ideology; on the other hand, the latter recognized only class principles, considered the nation a historical anachronism, and juxtaposed the principle of national sovereignty against the principle of international class unity and the universal proletarian revolution.

The Bolsheviks came to power in Petrograd in the wake of the growing radicalization of society. The weak democratic state institutions of post-Romanov Russia proved incapable of overcoming the giant tangle of unresolved social problems that resulted in the February Revolution. Delaying their solution, including of that of the national issue, led to the fall of the Provisional Government. In 1917 in Russia, socialist and anti-bourgeois sentiments grew and strengthened, and Bolsheviks skilfully combined them with the communist doctrine, anti-war propaganda, and criticism of the government; finally, they used them all when seizing power.

The populism of the first Leninist decrees (on Land, on Peace, on Workers' Control) is obvious. Manipulating the social instincts of soldiers, workers, and peasants contributed to the complete breakdown of the old social system. Soldiers were exempt from the need to comply with military

2 Mykola Hordijenko, 'Naši i jichni zavdannja', *Robitnyča hazeta*, 177 (1917).

duty; workers, instead on focusing on productive labour, were offered a chance to settle the score with their employers; peasants were given the right to appropriate the property and land of others with impunity. After October 1917, the Revolution took the form of an apocalypse when destructive forces took hold of constructive ones. Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev made a note of this peculiarity of the Russian revolution:

> the greatest paradox in the fate of Russia and the Russian Revolution is that liberal ideas, ideas of law, as well as ideas of social reformism, have proved utopian in Russia. Bolshevism turned out to be the least utopian, the most realistic, the most appropriate to the situation as it developed in Russia in 1917, and the most faithful to certain primordial Russian traditions [...] and Russian methods of governance and dominating violence.[3]

After the seizure of power in Petrograd, the Bolshevik leadership considered it a primary task to extend its power to the territory of Russia and Ukraine; furthermore, it perceived the Central Rada as one of the real opponents in the struggle for power. A series of political strikes were directed against the Rada. First of all, ideological war broke out, which aimed to discredit the Rada and prove to the masses the counter-revolutionary and bourgeois nationalism of the Ukrainian authorities. On 26 November, RadNarKom the Ukrainian Council of People's Commissars (*Rada Narodnykh Komisariv, or Radnarkom*) published an appeal to the population reporting on the counter-revolutionary uprising of generals Aleksei Kaledin, Alexander Dutov, and Lavr Kornilov, who were flooded with demagogic accusations in an attempt to disrupt the peace process, take away power from the Soviets, take away land from the peasants, and force soldiers and sailors to shed blood for the profits of Russian and allied capitalists. These "counter-revolutionaries" included the "bourgeois Central Rada of the Ukrainian Republic", which was accused of waging "a struggle against the Ukrainian Soviets, helping Kaledin to gather troops on the Don, and preventing the Soviet authorities from sending the necessary military forces to the land of the fraternal Ukrainian people to suppress the Kaledin rebellion".[4] This was the first call, the first threat.

At first, the Bolsheviks counted on the peaceful absorption of Ukraine. Their plan was voiced by Joseph Stalin. On 24 November, he gave an interview dedicated to Ukraine to the Petrograd newspaper *Izvestiia*

3 Nikolaj Berdjaev, *Istoki i smysl russkogo kommunizma* (Moskva: Nauka, 1990), p. 104.
4 *Sobranie uzakonenij i rasporjaženij pravitel'stva za 1917–1918 gg. Upravlenie delami RadNarKoma SSSR* (Moskva, 1942), pp. 45–46.

VTsIK in which he demanded to hold a referendum in Ukraine on the issue of self-determination. As emphasized by the NarKom (People's Commissar) of the National Affairs in Russia, the *RadNarKom* would reckon only with a government established on the basis of a referendum. Also, the NarKom immediately announced that power in Ukraine should belong to the Councils of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. Together with the UTsR (Ukrainian Central Council) – and without it if it refused – the councils should convene the All-Ukrainian Congress of Councils to resolve the issue of power and relations with Russia. According to Stalin, this was the only way to communicate the will of the masses; without it, the *RadNarKom* refused to recognize the power of UTsR as legitimate. This plan did not work out: the Central Rada eventually agreed to hold a congress in Kyiv that – as we know – supported the UTsR. The local Bolsheviks' forces attempt to prepare an armed attack on Kyiv also failed because it was prevented by the actions of the Ukrainian armed forces.

Having accepted that they would achieve nothing in this manner, the Bolshevik leaders placed a bet on overt military aggression and began issuing ultimatums to the Ukrainian authorities.[5] Lenin and Trotsky prepared a Manifesto to the Ukrainian People Containing Ultimatums to the Central Rada, in which they basically repeated the accusations that had already been expressed in the Proclamation from November 26th. The manifesto-ultimatum was sent to Kyiv on 3 December 1917. Its brutal and unacceptable language addressed to Central Rada was obvious, and its rejection was exactly the reaction the *RadNarKom* was expecting. After all, the decision regarding the military intervention in the affairs of Ukraine was approved days before the ultimatum. In his *Notes on the Civil War*, Volodymyr Antonov-Ovsiienko wrote about this quite frankly: "The collision with the Rada seemed absolutely inevitable, and in my presence and at the direction of Smolny, comrade Krylenko sent to Kyiv ...the ultimatum".[6]

5 In 1923, Mykola Skrypnyk, a Bolshevik leader, wrote and published *The Historical Outline of the Proletarian Revolution in Ukraine*. Despite all the Bolshevik orthodoxy that permeated this work, he admitted that "the Central Rada and its General Secretariat completely dominated in Kyiv". It was a laboratory where new military units were formed, which were then sent by the Central Rada to all regions of Ukraine. There, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie "sold" the workers and finished off the workers' leaders with terror, as was done with Leonid Pyatakov and others. From Kyiv, the influence of Ukrainian social patriotism and Ukrainian Central Rada spread to other cities in Kyiv region and Podillia, Volyn', Kremenchuk, and Katerynoslav regions. In Katerynoslav, it was exactly then that the Haidamakas seized power, letting only Cossacks pass through Katerynoslav on their way to the Don. In Odesa, the Bolshevik's *Rumcherod* (Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of the Romanian Front, Black Sea Fleet, and Odesa oblast) was in power; concurrently, there were also military units sympathetic to the Ukrainian Central Rada. In Mykolayiv, where the Bolsheviks constituted an unstable majority, the Menshevik minority hindered the development of the Soviet system and made the advance of Ukrainian nationalists possible. On the southwestern front, the Bolshevik units that constituted the predominant military force, and even the neutral units, were spontaneously discharged and then passed through Kyiv, where the Central Rada disarmed them; and the more the Rada did so, the more spontaneously they walked towards Kyiv, constantly getting into fights and even real battles with military units remaining under the influence of the Central Rada. These were times of enormous confusion and decomposition in the Ukrainian Central Rada, even though almost all of Ukraine, including both villages and cities, was under its actual power". Mykola Skrypnyk, 'Načerk istoriji proletarsńkoji revoljuciji na Ukrajini', *Červonyj šljach*, 2 (1923), 89–117 (here: 84).

6 Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski o graždanskoj vojne*, 4 vols (Moskva: Vyssij voennyj redakcionnyj sovet, 1924–1933), I (1924), p. 48.

The first echelons of Bolshevik troops arrived in Kharkiv on 9 December under the command of Nikolai Khovrin and Rudolf Sivers. They were supposed to transit to the Don to fight general Kaledin's troops – at least, that was the original explanation for their arrival in Kharkiv. The local RevKom (Revolutionary Committee), led by the Bolshevik Artem (Fyodor Sergeiev), instructed the Soviet units not to engage with "any hostile action against the Kharkiv Soviets". According to Volodymyr Antonov-Ovsiienko, "the local Bolsheviks united forces [with the Kharkiv Soviets] in the RevShtab (Revolutionary Staff) and did not find it possible to come into conflict with Central Rada".[7] Mykola Chebotariv, who led the Ukrainian armed forces in Kharkiv in late 1917, also mentioned the Ukrainians' cooperation with the Kharkiv Bolsheviks. He wrote that Artem and Moisey Rukhimovich, "the leaders of Kharkiv Bolshevism were willing to talk to us, Ukrainians, and we willingly settled more than one issue".[8] However, this did not stop Rudolf Sivers, and by his order, in the early morning of 10 December, the Ukrainianized armoured division was disarmed. Mykola Chebotariv mentioned that this was done in secret. After a rally organized by the representatives of the city party organizations to protest against the pogrom behaviour of the Bolshevik army, negotiations began regarding the presence of Bolshevik troops, who upon arrival in Kharkiv initially declared that they would stay there for a short time. "The discussion between the Bolshevik army and the Ukrainians dragged on until late at night, about half past two", writes Chebotariv. "Suddenly, an assistant commander of the armoured division entered the room where the meeting was taking place. He was white as a sheet... I just glanced at him and realized that a disaster had befallen the armoured division and the developments were not in our favour. He had barely managed to sit down when the sound of machine-gun fire came from the city, followed by cannon blasts. I turned to the representatives of the Antonov army with a question: 'What is the meaning of this? Have we not decided to wait with any action until 9:00 in the morning?' And this representative folded his legs and, blowing cigarette smoke, said 'What's the point in saying anything now when the machine guns and cannons have spoken'.[9]

On 11 December, the commander of the Russian Soviet troops, Volodymyr Antonov-Ovsiienko, arrived in Kharkiv. The city had become a springboard for the Russian troops. They were tasked with overseeing strict order in the city. The headquarters of Rudolf Sivers' platoon turned into a place for lynching. Antonov-Ovsiienko mentioned a member of

7 Ibid., p. 54.
8 *Vyzvol'ni zmahannja očyma kontrrozvidnyka: dokumental'na spadščyna Mykoly Čebotariva*, ed. by Volodymyr Sidak (Kyjiv: Tempora, 2003), pp. 22–23.
9 Ibid., p. 25.

the revolutionary court, a certain sailor Trushin, who "thought that every softie deserved to be killed". However, the commander himself wrote that the "fantasy of the philistines" led to the extreme exaggeration of the scope of shootings "that were taking place near the seventh kilometre outside the city of Kharkiv".[10]

Concurrently, a group of delegates who had left the Kyiv Congress of Councils arrived in Kharkiv. Under the protection of the Soviet troops in Kharkiv, an alternative All-Ukrainian Congress of Councils was staged in a hurry on 11–13 December. Eighty-nine councils and military revolutionary committees were represented by 200 delegates. Although there were more than 200 Soviet councils in Ukraine at the time, the legitimacy of the Congress, unlike the Congress of Councils in Kyiv in Kyiv, did not raise doubts. The Congress was entirely in the hands of the Bolsheviks. Therefore, it welcomed the uprising in Petrograd and the policy of the RadNarKom; it also proclaimed the Soviet Councils' establishment of power in the UNR and elected the Central Executive Committee (TsVK) of the Soviet Councils of Ukraine, which in turn created the People's Secretariat – the Soviet Government of Ukraine. Some problems arose during the establishment of the government. One of its members, Vasyl' Shakhray, observed with irony that no surnames of the people's secretaries were known in Ukraine, although they were selected based on the principle of "if possible, [those] with Ukrainian surnames".[11]

Volodymyr Zatons'kyi mentioned that:

> the people's secretaries called themselves the government, but their attitude to it was a bit humorous. And really, what kind of a government was it without an army, practically without territory, since even the Kharkiv Council did not recognize us? There was no apparatus, we needed to do everything from scratch. At the time there was a great simplicity of customs, and confusion with understanding certain things was also evident. For example, we were not able to separate the functions of the people's secretary of finance from the duties of a cashier. In general, everyone had a complete commissariat – or a secretariat, as it was called back then – in their pocket. I arrived when the government had already been formed. It was decided not to elect the Head of the Government. And so, we lived without the head.[12]

10 Ibid., p. 55.
11 Vladyslav Verstjuk, *Ukrajins'ka Central'na Rada: Navčal'nyj posibnyk* (Kyjiv: Zapovit, 1997), p. 228.
12 Volodymyr Zatons'kyj, 'Uryvky z spohadiv pro Ukrajins'ku revoljuciju', *Litopys revoljuciji*, 4 (1929), 139–72 (here: 159).

Even the Kharkiv Bolshevik Committee and the Kharkiv Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies were unwilling to recognize the authority of the "government". Interesting details about this fact were left by Yevgenia Bosch: "The lack of active support from Kharkiv's leading comrades made the work of the Soviet government in Kharkiv very difficult. Had there been a different attitude from the top party administration in Donets'k-Kryvyi Rih oblast, there would have been no interruptions in the work of the TsVK, since it wouldn't have been necessary to move to Kyiv immediately after the fall of the Central Rada, and in the future it won't be necessary for the TsVK and the People's Secretariat to roam around, moving from one city to another".[13]

Other councils in Ukraine were not in a hurry to recognize the TsVK and the People's Secretariat, while in Petrograd they were welcomed as a formation of a "true people's Soviet power in Ukraine" and a "genuine Government of the people's Ukrainian Republic"[14]. The demands for

13 Evgenija Boš, *God bor'by* (Moskva: Gosizdat, 1925), p. 166.

14 This seems to have been the first case of formation of a fictitious government by the Bolsheviks; later on, however, they actively used similar practices. In late November of 1918 in their territory in Kursk, they created the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of Ukraine, which they used as a cover to launch a new attempt at seizing Ukraine. Somewhat later, in early December of 1918, following a decision approved by Moscow, the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of Lithuania was established as part of the Red Army convoy. On 16 December, this Government published a manifesto regarding the establishment of the Lithuanian Soviet Republic. In late December, following the same scenario, the Belorussian Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government emerged. On 1 January 1919, it proclaimed the formation of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Belorussia. The Lithuanian and Belorussian republics existed for only a brief period of time and were later "reformatted" by the Bolsheviks into the united Lithuanian-Belorussian Soviet Republic, which, in turn, being an artificial entity, could not survive for long. In a confidential letter dated November 29th, 1918, addressed to the commander of the Red Army, Jukums Vācietis, Lenin explained the actual purpose of forming such governments as follows: "With the advance of our troops to the West and toward Ukraine, regional provisional Soviet governments are being created; they are designed to strengthen the councils on the ground. The circumstances are good in the sense that they deprive the chauvinists in Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estland of the ability to consider the movement of our units an occupation and create a favourable atmosphere for further advance of our troops. Otherwise, our troops would find themselves in an impossible situation throughout the occupied regions, and the population would not meet them as liberators. In view of this, we ask you to instruct the officers of the relevant military units to ensure that our troops fully support the provisional Soviet governments of Latvia, Estland, Ukraine, and Lithuania. Of course, [this should apply to] only Soviet governments" (Vladimir Lenin, *Voennaja perepiska. 1917–1922 gg.* [Moskva: Ogiz Gospolitizdat, 1987], pp. 102–03). Clearly, within a narrow circle of close comrades, Lenin called things by their proper names, that is, he recognized the fact of the occupation of Ukraine by Russian troops. For a while, the Government was located in the city of Sudzha; it moved to Kharkiv only in January, when Sudzha was occupied by the Bolsheviks. The Kremlin-appointed head of the Government, Ch. Rakovsky, did not hide the nature of the Government and the purpose of its establishment, or the purpose of the Soviet Army's presence in Ukraine. Upon his arrival in Kharkiv, he prepared and distributed the following document for internal use: "1. The Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of Ukraine was established by the resolution of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (TsK RKP); the Government represents the RKP and unconditionally carries out its orders, as well as the orders of the TsK RKP. 2. The Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of Ukraine does not constitute an independent entity; nor has it established or intends to establish its own independent command; it calls the Revolutionary Military Council of the Kursk Direction group the "Revolutionary Military Council of the Ukrainian Soviet Army" solely for the purpose of referring to the Soviet Army of Ukraine, and not to the offensive of the Russian troops, that is, to continue the policy which was initiated by the formation of the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of Ukraine. This renaming did not and does not entail any change in substance, especially since the personnel of said Revolutionary Military Council is determined not by us but by the central institution of the RSFSR; tacitly, it is understood to be the same Revolutionary Military Council of the group of troops on the Kursk line, only with a different slogan for Ukraine" (Vladyslav Verstjuk, 'Novyj etap revoljucijno-vojennoho protyborstva v Ukrajini', in *Revoljucija v Ukrajini: polityko-deržavni modeli ta realiji (1917–1920). Polityčna istorija Ukrajiny XX stolittja*, ed. by Valerij Soldatenko and Vladyslav Verstijuk, 6 vols [Kyjiv: Heneza, 2002–2003], II [2002], p. 328). In late 1919, when the Bolsheviks invaded Ukraine for the third time, they created *VseUkrRevKom*, which acted as the supreme authority. In the summer of 1920, *GalRevKom* was created in Kyiv; this organization proclaimed the establishment of Soviet power in the territories of Eastern Galicia and appointed itself the supreme body of power. (Mykola Lytvyn, 'ZUNR i Halyc'ka SRR u heostratehiji bil'šovyc'koji Rosiji', *Ukrajina: kul'turna spadščyna, nacional'na svidomist', deržavnist'*, 18 [2009], 101–18). In the same summer of 1920, during the Soviet-Polish War, the Bolsheviks established the Provisional Revolutionary Polish Committee in Smolensk, at the rear of the frontline. The task of this Committee was to "to build the foundation for the Polish Soviet Republic".

a referendum dissipated like smoke – they were simply forgotten. RadNarKom promised "the new government of the fraternal republic full support of all kinds in its struggle for peace, as well as in terms of the transfer of all lands, factories, plants, and banks to the working people of Ukraine".[15] This help did not last long. The commander of the Russian Soviet troops, Volodymyr Antonov-Ovsiienko, established contact with and actively took care of the TsVK and the People's Secretariat. His troops helped to requisition the premises of the newspaper Yuzhny Krai, which housed the TsVK and the People's Secretariat.

There is no doubt that the TsVK and the People's Secretariat were puppet formations of Red Petrograd. Thanks to them, the RadNarKom managed to formally distance itself from the events in Ukraine, presenting them as an internal conflict between the Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and the Central Rada. On 17 December, the TsVK of the Councils of Ukraine published a manifesto declaring the overthrow of the Central Rada and General Secretariat; the next day, it created a regional committee to combat the counter-revolution. The Ukrainian-Bolshevik conflict was rapidly shifting from the ideological and political spheres to the level of overt military actions.

In accordance with Lenin's ultimatum, Soviet Russia and the UNR had been in a state of war since 6 December 1917. However, the ultimatum failed to provoke the kind of public support expected by its creators, Lenin and Trotsky; on the contrary, it raised a tidal wave of protests in both Ukraine and Russia. On 4 December 1917, the Second All-Russian Congress of the Councils of Peasant Deputies, which had taken place in Petrograd in late November to early December 1917, split for political reasons into left and right factions. The right-wing section adopted a special resolution concerning the ultimatum, in which it was noted that "the declaration of war on the domestic Russian front is criminal and shameful hypocrisy generated by the Council of People's Commissars". The Congress unanimously expressed its indignation to the RadNarKom, demanded that an immediate end be put to the fraternal bloodshed, and urged the soldiers and sailors to refuse to advance toward the self-determined borders of Ukraine. The Congress also warned the RadNarKom that by causing the massacre it [the RadNarKom] would bear responsibility to the people and the Constituent Assembly. The Congress sent greetings to the "Ukrainian Council and the Ukrainian Congress of the Councils of Peasants', Workers' and Military Deputies, which defended the integrity of the rights of the free

15 Sovet Narodnych Komissarov, 'Privetstvie raboče-krest'janskomu pravitel'stvu Ukrainy ot Soveta Narodnych Komissarov RSFSR. 16 dekabrja 1917 g.', *Izvestija CIK i Petrogradskogo Soveta rabočich i soldatskich deputatov*, 254 (1917).

Ukrainian people".[16] The left-wing section of the Congress was concerned about the situation in Ukraine and formed a special group of delegates for negotiations with the Ukrainian Central Rada via telegraph, "for the purpose of [gathering] preliminary information and immediate cessation of possible bloodshed". On 8 December, Congress sent a special delegation headed by the left-wing representative of the Socialist Revolutionary Party (Esers), Prosh Proshyan, to Kyiv, in hope of reaching a mutual understanding with the leaders of UNR.

On 14 December, the All-Ukrainian Central Election Commission (VTsVK), whose leadership was already in the hands of the Bolsheviks, examined the issue of relations with Ukraine. Without discussion, it approved the measures proposed by the RadNarKom by a majority vote; however, at the meeting the Menshevik, Boris Moiseyev introduced the following resolution: "To declare illegal the actions of the People's Commissars, who arbitrarily declared war on Ukraine, bypassing the VTsVK, and did not report it to the VTsVK upon entering the state of war".

At that time, when the country was looking forward to the opening of the Constituent Assembly, and the Bolsheviks desperately needed the support of the All-Russian Congress of the Councils of Peasants' Deputies to expand the social base of their power, they did not dare to cause immediate escalation of the conflict with Ukraine. An interview with Stalin, who was the person responsible for the national affairs within the Bolshevik leadership, appeared in Petrograd newspapers. In it, Stalin attempted to convince the public that there was no conflict between the Ukrainians and the Russians, and it was hard to find anything to challenge that; instead, in his opinion, there was a conflict between the Councils of Workers', Peasants', and Soldiers' Deputies on one hand, and the General Secretariat on the other. In fact, Stalin gave a new ultimatum, this time not to the Central Rada but to the Ukrainian people, who were asked to "call to order their General Secretariat or re-elect it in the interest of finding a peaceful solution to a dangerous conflict". Stalin did not hide [his intentions] and even threatened that if the changes desired by the Bolsheviks did not take place and everything remained as it was, the blood of the fraternal peoples would be shed.[17] It is worth noting that in mid-November 1917, when speaking at the Congress of the Finnish Social-Democratic Workers' Party, Stalin advocated for full freedom in terms of self-determination by the Finnish and other peoples of Russia. "No guardianship, no supervision of the Finnish people! Such

16 *Ukrajins'ka Central'na Rada. Dokumenty i materialy*, ed. by Valerij Smolij, and others, 2 vols (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1996–1997), II (1997), p. 22.
17 Iosif Stalin, 'Otvet tovariščam ukraincam v tylu i na fronte', *Pravda*, 213 (1917).

are the guiding principles of the Council of People's Commissars policy", he assured. In the case of Ukraine, however, custody and supervision were still needed.

Thus, according to Stalin, the problem was not the aggressiveness of the RadNarKom but the counter-revolutionary nature of the Ukrainian government. He developed the same thought in the article "What is the Ukrainian Council", published in Pravda on 15 December. Stalin accused the Central Rada of all possible sins: alliance with Aleksei Kaledin and the French military mission, disruption of peace, betrayal of Socialism, and deception of the masses and bourgeoisie. While Stalin was creating a propaganda smokescreen in the media, Lenin, in his secret directives, explained the real reason behind the Bolsheviks' interest in Ukraine. Here is his telegram to Kharkiv, addressed to Volodymyr Antonov-Ovsiienko and Sergo Ordzhonikidze: "For God's sake, take the most energetic and revolutionary measures to send bread, bread, and bread!!! Otherwise, Petrograd might 'kick the bucket'. Special trains and squads. Collect and gather. You should convoy trains. Notify on a daily basis. For God's sake!"[18]

Upon the return of the delegation of the All-Russian Congress of Councils from Kyiv, where the delegates held conversations with Mykhailo Hrushevsky, Volodymyr Vynnychenko, Mykola Porsh and other political figures, the Council of People's Commissars was forced to recognize that it was "advisable to open business negotiations with the Council" in Vitebsk or Smolensk.

The RadNarKom's proposal was examined by the General Secretariat on 22 December. The review uncovered a certain divergence of opinions among the secretaries. Volodymyr Yeshchenko believed that the proposal of the Council of the People's Commissars was nothing more than a manoeuvre to buy time for the organization of the Council's troops.[19] Mykola Porsh's position was close to Volodymyr Yeshchenko's. Oleksandr Shul'hyn, Mykhailo Tkachenko, and Mykola Shapoval formulated requirements that, in Porsh's opinion, should be set as prerequisites for the negotiations. Finally, it was decided to charge Volodymyr Vynnychenko with conveying an official answer. On 24 December, the reply was sent to Petrograd.

18 Lenin, *Voennaja perepiska*, pp. 32–33.

19 Volodymyr Yeshchenko was absolutely right. The Council of the People's Commissars made every effort to consolidate troops against the UNR. Take, for instance, a telegram from Lenin to Nikolai Krylenko, dated December 11th, 1917, and published for the first time only in 1970: "... convey the order to the most energetic people so that they organize, as soon as possible, a big number of completely reliable troops in Kharkiv, and so that there is forward movement without any obstacles or other considerations. We are extremely concerned about the not sufficiently energetic movement of troops from the front to Kharkiv. Take all measures, including the most revolutionary, for the most vigorous movement of troops, and a large number of them, to Kharkiv" (ibid., p. 25).

The General Secretariat agreed to send its representatives to Vitebsk, provided that the Russian side fulfilled the following requirements:

- Immediate cessation of the military operations and withdrawal of Soviet troops from the territory of the UNR;
- official recognition of the Council of the People's Commissars of the UNR and a statement of non-interference in its internal affairs;
- establishment of a federal connection between Ukraine and Great Russia through the mutual understanding of self-determined republics;
- the struggle against the counter-revolution in one of the republics, which threatens the rest of the republics, must be conducted with the consent of the states concerned;
- the inadmissibility for any republic to interpret the counter--revolutionary tendencies of the other.[20]

On December 30th, 1917, without publishing the response of the General Secretariat, Pravda informed its readers that the RadNarKom "deems the Rada's response vague" and "assigns all responsibility for the continuation of the civil war to the Rada". It was hardly possible, even if one so desired, to characterize the position of the Ukrainian Central Rada as vague, but RadNarKom could get away with it, since it had – at last – finalized its own position. On 13 January 1918, it was Stalin again who announced this position in Pravda: "1. The Council of People's Commissars has not been negotiating with the Kyiv Rada and is not going to negotiate; 2. The Kyiv Rada has got itself mixed up with general Kaledin and is negotiating treacherously with the Austro-German imperialists behind the back of the peoples of Russia. The Council of People's Commissars considers it permissible to carry on a merciless fight with this Rada until the complete victory of the Soviet Councils of Ukraine".

It would not be fair to say that the Ukrainian government did nothing to stop the aggression. Within historian circles, it is widely believed that one of the prominent mistakes of the Central Rada was its unwillingness to create its own army because Mykhailo Hrushevsky and Volodymyr Vynnychenko presumably did not understand the importance of having an army. This point of view is not entirely correct. It would be more accurate to say that Hrushevsky and Vynnychenko did not foresee that an army would have to be used on the internal front, especially against the ideologically related left-wing political forces to which the Bolsheviks belonged.

20 *Ukrajins'ka Central'na Rada*, p. 67.

This turn of events really caught them by surprise. Under these conditions, the Central Rada approved the law of the "Free Cossacks". As early as 22 November, Symon Petliura signed an order to form multiple Haydamats'ki kureni, or three battalion-size units in the cities of Yelisavethrad, Oleksandrivs'k, Kherson, Birzula, Kryvyi Rih, and Tiraspol, on the basis of the disbanded regiments of the old Russian army.

On 15 December, the General Secretariat formed a Special Defence Committee of Ukraine (Mykola Porsh, Symon Petliura, Volodymyr Yeshchenko). On 18 December, it appointed Colonel Yuriy Kapkan as the Commander of the entire Ukrainian army to fight the Bolsheviks. On 26 December, the General Secretariat approved a resolution establishing the UNR army on the basis of voluntary and paid service. Ukrainian troops carried out a number of preventive measures to disarm especially dangerous Bolshevik-minded units, starting with the Second Guards Corps. In addition, the All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee on the South-Western and Romanian fronts was liquidated. No matter how much the Bolsheviks sought to undermine the Central Rada, these fronts did not pose a direct threat toward the end of 1917; at the same time, they did not provide substantial support either.

Thus, some efforts to master the military apparatus had taken place, but they clearly turned out to be insufficient. Without liquidating the Kharkiv "Government", without banning the Bolshevik party that acted quite legally and played the role of a fifth column, the Ukrainian Central Rada put itself and the Ukrainian People's Republic in an extremely precarious position.

By the end of December, up to 20,000 sailors, soldiers, and Red Guards had been sent from Russia to Ukraine, mainly to Kharkiv. These were the squads of Nikolai Khovrin, Rudolf Sivers, Aleksandr Yegorov, Anatolii Zheleznyakov, Reinholds Bērziņš, and Yurii Sablin; all of them were under the command of Volodymyr Antonov-Ovsiienko. On 13 December, Bolshevik troops seized the station of Lozova; on the 18th they seized Pavlohrad, and Synel'nykovo on the 21st. For some time until the end of December, the Russian Bolshevik troops were wary of carrying out active offensives. Their commander explained this by the absence of "any Ukrainian troops at the disposal of the Soviet Ukrainian authorities".[21] Vasyl' Shakhray, who headed the military Soviet Secretariat, was

21 Vladyslav Hrynevyč, and Ljudmyla Hrynevyč, *Slidča sprava M.A. Muravjova: dokumentovana istorija* (Kyjiv: Instytut istoriji Ukrajiny, 2001), p. 216.

of a similar opinion.[22] Therefore, the idea of creating Red Cossacks units to counter the Free Cossacks (the former ones headed by the Bolshevik Vitaliy Prymakov) was hastily implemented. In early January 1918, the Red Cossacks counted only 700 fighters and could not carry out any independent operations; however, the existence of these units gave the People's Secretariat the grounds to present them as an army supported by the Secretariat.

On 25 December, Volodymyr Antonov-Ovsiienko ordered a general offensive by the Bolshevik troops against the UNR, with the aim of capturing Kyiv. The plan was to simultaneously attack from different directions: from Bryansk and Kursk to Vorozhba-Konotop; from Gomel to Bakhmach, and from Novozybkov to Novhorod-Sivers'kyi. The main attack was supposed to come from Kharkiv, first toward Katerynoslav, and then through Poltava toward Romodan. At first, the Bolshevik forces did not have a substantial advantage, but the majority of the Ukrainianized units within the old army turned out to be demoralized and not ready for combat. As the Bolshevik units approached, the Ukrainianized units declared their neutrality. That is why, having realized that the old but Ukrainianized army was not capable of active combat, the Ukrainian authorities tried to find an alternative by creating a new army comprised of volunteers and Free Cossacks.

After Kharkiv, the first city to fall to the Bolsheviks was Katerynoslav. Ahead of the battle, the city prepared an uprising of workers and units that supported the Bolsheviks, which were joined by the Ukrainianized Pylyp Orlyk Regiment. Only the 134th Theodosian Regiment (1000 soldiers), which remained loyal to the Central Rada, and Ukrainian volunteer formations (the Katerynoslav Haydamats'kyi kurin' and Katerynoslav kurin' of the Free Cossacks) were able to oppose the rebels.[23] Toward the evening of 26 December, they managed to get the situation in the city under control; however, the next day the Bolshevik units led by Pavel Yegorov entered Katerynoslav. The Ukrainians were forced to leave the city. The Katerynoslav kurin' of the Free Cossacks, headed by Havrylo Horobec', left for Kyiv, where its members joined the local Free Cossacks, who were destined to resist the armed offensive initiated by the Bolsheviks in mid-January. Katerynoslav was followed by Oleksandrivs'k (on 2 January) and Poltava (on 6 January).

22 "What kind of 'Ukrainian Minister of War' am I when I have to disarm all the Ukrainianized units in Kharkiv because they do not want to join me in defence of the Soviet authorities? The only military prop in our fight is the army that Antonov brought to Ukraine from Russia, and that army considers everything Ukrainian to be hostile and counter-revolutionary". This is how Heorhiy Lapchyns'kyi related Shakhray's words in his memoirs. See Heorhij Lapčyns'kyj, 'Peršyj period Radjanskoji vlady na Ukrajini', *Litopys revoljuciji*, 1 (1928), 159–75 (here: 171).

23 Isaak Mazepa, *Central'na Rada-Het'manščyna-Dyrektorija. Ukrajina v ohni j buri revoljuciji, 1917–1921*, 2 vols (Praha: Probojem, 1942), I, p. 39.

On 13 January, an armed Bolshevik uprising broke out in Odesa. Squads of Bolshevik-sympathizing soldiers, sailors, and Red Guards captured the district headquarters, railway station, telephone station, post office, telegraph, and treasury. On the same day, however, the Haydamaks, under the command of Viktor Poplavko, recaptured the headquarters of the district from the Bolsheviks. In response, following the orders of the Bolshevik Revolutionary Committee, the cruisers Symon and Rostyslav and the mine carrier Almaz opened cannon fire on the city. Rumcherod[24] proclaimed itself the supreme authority on the Romanian front and in the Odesa region. In the early morning of 16 January, the Bolshevik forces began a new offensive. From the Romanian front, a battalion of the 657th Infantry Regiment arrived to help the rebels. Because of the fierce battles and heavy losses on the part of Ukrainian forces, the Haydamaks were forced to send a delegation to the City Council with a request for mediation in negotiations with the Bolsheviks. As a result of the agreements reached, 200 first sergeants and junkers were captured by the Bolsheviks. The Ukrainian formations were disarmed and the power in the city passed into the hands of the Bolshevik Revolutionary Committee. In such a manner, Soviet power was established in Odesa.[25]

The Ukrainians courageously fought in uneven rear-guard battles, defending the railroad tracks along which the Russians advanced, as long as they [Ukrainians] had enough forces. On 14 January 1918, after several days of fighting between the units of the Petro Doroshenko Regiment and the Smert' (Death) kurin' on one hand, and Bolshevik units led by Reinholds Bērziņš and Mikhail Muravyov on the other, Ukrainian forces suffered significant losses and were forced to leave Bakhmach station. The commander of the Petro Doroshenko Regiment and the Head of the defence of the Bakhmach railway hub, Kost' Khmilevs'kyi, was killed in this battle. The rest of the Ukrainian units left the city and retreated to the station of Kruty, where a symbolic battle of Ukrainians sacrificing their lives in a struggle for their own state would take place a few days later.[26]

By the end of January, the Left-Bank and the South of Ukraine had fallen into Russian hands. Then Odesa, followed by Kherson, Mykolaiv, Poltava, Bakhmach, and Chernihiv. Gradually, Kyiv found itself under direct threat. While still in Bakhmach, Mikhail Muravyov gave an order to attack Kyiv, urging his troops to "ruthlessly eliminate all officers and

24 *Rumcherod* was the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of the Romanian Front, the Black Sea Fleet and the Odesa Region (Kherson and Taurida provinces).
25 Viktor Holubko, *Armija Ukrajins'koji Narodnoji Respubliky 1917–1918. Utvorennja ta borot'ba za deržavu* (L'viv: Kal'varija, 1997), p. 164.
26 Jaroslav Tynčenko, *Ukrajins'ki zbrojni syly berezen' 1917 – lystopad 1918 rr. – orhanizacija, čysel'nist', bojovi diji* (Kyjiv: Tempora, 2009), p. 77.

students of the military academies, Haydamaks, monarchists, and all enemies of the revolution in Kyiv".[27]

On 29 December in his report presented at a meeting of the General Secretariat on martial law in Ukraine, Mykola Porsh noted that the Kyiv garrison, some of which supported the Bolsheviks, some of which assumed a neutral position, and some of which remained loyal to the Ukrainian Central Rada, was in a miserable state and was "very tired and, at the moment, ill-suited to active work".[28] The report suggested that the most reliable and capable was the workers' regiment of the Free Cossacks under the leadership of Mykhailo Kovenko.[29] Naturally, the hopes of the General Secretariat were pinned on the Free Cossacks. Concerned about the likely threat of the Bolshevik uprising in Kyiv, the Government instructed Kovenko to disarm the Red Guards and 'unload' the city of 'elements' that were hostile to the authorities. In the early morning of 5 January 1918, units of Free Cossacks and military units loyal to the Central Rada raided several dozen enterprises, seizing a large number of weapons and arresting about 200 people.[30] The next day, in his comments on the operation at the meeting of the Mala Rada, Mykola Porsh noted that "the regular army in our country, as well as in Russia, is now in a state of complete decay, therefore all hopes are now pinned on the revolutionary organizations – the partisan units. These units are ready to march out to the defence of Ukraine".[31] He then further reported that, with the help of the Free Cossacks from the Arsenal, "20 cannons, thousands of guns, and millions of rounds had been seized".[32] On 15 January, Mykhailo Kovenko was appointed commandant of Kyiv, and on the same evening he and a group of Free Cossacks arrested seven left-wing Ukrainian Socialist-Revolutionaries who were suspected of colluding with the representatives of the Kharkiv People's Secretariat and planning to seize power.

The preventive measures carried out by Mykhailo Kovenko did not stop the Bolsheviks; on the morning of 16 January, they staged a rebellion in Kyiv that was opposed by military units loyal to the Central Rada, including the Free Cossacks. Meanwhile, these brigades of workers were not particularly familiar with military affairs and had never taken part in military action; according to Volodymyr Kedrovs'kyi's account, they were people of "different ages, from children to the old, wearing different attire,

27 Mark fon Hagen, 'Skladnyj zachidnyj front ta formuvannja Ukrajinskoji deržavy: zabutyj myr, zabuta vijna ta narodžennja naciji', *Ukrajina dyplomatyčna*, 19 (2018), 45–59 (p. 46).
28 The forces of the Central Council in Kyiv and its environs, according to the calculations of the historian Yaroslav Tinchenko, counted at the end of 1917 about 27 thousand bayonets and sabres, but their fighting capacity was low // Jaroslav Tynčenko, *Perša ukrajins'ko-bil'šovyc'ka vijna (bruden' 1917- berezen' 1918 r.)*, pp. 40–1.
29 *Ukrajins'ka Central'na Rada*, p. 76.
30 Valerij Soldatenko, *Ukrajins'ka revoljucija. Istoryčnyj narys* (Kyjiv: Lybid', 1999), p. 407.
31 *Ukrajins'ka Central'na Rada*, p. 67.
32 *Ukrajins'ka Central'na Rada*, p. 94.

armed in different ways".[33] In their subsequent memoirs, the Ukrainian military figures were rather critical of Kovenko's performance as the organizer of Kyiv's defence. He was a civilian engineer by profession, therefore military affairs were not his forte; he had neither a concept nor a defence plan, and his Cossacks had no experience of combat. That is why it took a week to suppress the uprising. Only on 22 January, when the units of the Haydamats'kyi kish[34] of Sloboda Ukraine under the command of Symon Petliura entered Kyiv, was the rebellion suppressed. However, the initiative had already passed to the Bolsheviks.

For the most part, Soviet military units that were formed in Russia behaved as conquerors in Ukraine in accordance with the revolutionary legal consciousness, which replaced law and regulations, while their rifles and machine guns opened wide opportunities for looting, massacres, and shootings. Their own commanders set an example. In Kharkiv, Volodymyr Antonov-Ovsiienko forced several manufacturers – under threat of reprisals – to pay a million roubles of contribution, which even led to a protest by the local Bolsheviks; at the same time, Lenin admired this approach and hastened to support the commander in his letter dated 29 December, saying, "I particularly approve and welcome the arrest of millionaire-saboteurs... I advise you to send them to the mines for forced labour, for six months".[35] Mikhail Muravyov, a left-wing Social-Revolutionary and Antonov-Ovsiienko's subordinate, also kept up with his superior. During the capture of Poltava, he reported to the commander, "...I'd rather ruin the whole town, to the very last building, than retreat. Give orders to mercilessly massacre all defenders of the local bourgeoisie".[36] Muravyov's conflict with the Poltava Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies also turned out to be curious. When the Council's representatives asked Muravyov, together with the army, to leave the city, referring to the neutrality of the Poltava Council in the conflict between the Bolsheviks and the Ukrainian Central Rada as the reason, Muravyov replied that he and his army "came here to restore the trampled Soviet power in Ukraine, particularly in Poltava", and added that he would not leave there until the "genuine People's Kharkiv Council" is recognized.

It is worth noting that Antonov's headquarters paid so little attention to the "Kharkiv Rada" (the TsVK and the People's Secretariat) that Lenin had to mentor his subordinate, convincing him, "... For God's sake, make every effort to eliminate all friction with the TsVK (Kharkiv). This

33 Archiv Vil'noji Ukrajins'koji Akademiji Nauk u N'ju-Jorku (hereinafter: Uvan), fond V. Kedrovs'koho, Verstka spomyniv.
34 Original name – Hajdamac'kyj kiš Slobids'koji Ukrajiny.
35 Lenin, *Voennaja perepiska*, p. 26.
36 Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski o graždanskoj vojne*, p. 135.

is extremely important in terms of our state. For God's sake, make peace with them and recognize their sovereignty on all levels. I kindly request you to remove the commissioners you have appointed".[37]

If the commanders found it possible to behave this way, it is only natural that their subordinates allowed all kinds of liberties. Volodymyr Antonov-Ovsiienko repeatedly admitted instances of looting, drinking, and non-compliance with orders, which went hand in hand with the actions of revolutionary troops: "In Kharkiv itself, with the help of Muravyov, I managed to stop unauthorized requisitions, searches, and arrests. The requisitions were carried out through the local Military Revolutionary Committees, and only through them were searches and arrests carried out (these committees were well aware of this). The units that arrived, as well as the local ones, largely turned out to be undisciplined, refused to go to the front, drank and looted".[38]

Ukrainian Central Rada responded to the offensive of the Russian troops by way of political measures, declaring the UNR an independent, sovereign state. This decision was formalized as the Fourth Universal of the Ukrainian Central Rada. Its historical significance is obvious. It completed the complex, controversial development of the Ukrainian national liberation movement, which finally broke away from the ideas of autonomy and federalism. However, this apex in the history of the state formation of Ukraine did not coincide with the period of the highest exaltation of the Ukrainian national movement. Moreover, it took place at the time of the greatest aggravation of the socio-economic crisis.

While describing the state of Ukrainian society at that time, Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi had to acknowledge the following,

> Bolshevik campaigning had its effect. In the army and in the rear alike, they looted and plundered property, threw the rest to death, and spontaneously dispersed, at times also looting and dismantling what was scattered along the road. In the villages, one could see more and more anarchist cells, which attracted the weaker parts of the peasantry and terrorized even those that were the most resistant. Looting and destruction of noblemen's estates, factories and plants became more widespread. The wealth of the land was lost – its productive forces were cut down.[39]

37 Ibid., p. 35.
38 Hrynevyč, and Hrynevyč, *Slidča sprava M.A. Muravjova*, p. 215.
39 Mychajlo Hruševs'kyj, *Iljustrovana istorija Ukrajiny* (N'ju-Jork: Vidavnictvo Čartorijs'kih, 1967), p. 543.

The virus of demoralization penetrated Ukraine and dominated its society, which had been undergoing some strange and rapid metamorphoses. It is as if there had been no large-scale demonstrations and congresses just a few months ago, no political passions boiling and pouring into the numerous declarations and resolutions. All of this seemed half-forgotten, like a poorly remembered lesson. As Mykola Halahan recalled,

> Until recently, Ukrainian soldiers declared and manifested their willingness to 'lay down soul and body for our freedom', but when the time came to prove it in deed, it turned out that there were very few descendants of the 'Cossack kin' who were at the disposal of Central Rada. Maybe someday researchers of the Ukrainian liberation movement will highlight the real reasons behind what happened: whether the general fatigue of the soldiers, caused by the World War, was to blame, or the lack of national consciousness, or perhaps it was the fault of the Central Rada and its failed policy.[40]

In this context, the courage of several hundred university and gymnasium students from Kyiv who were part of the newly created voluntary Ukrainian formations is worth being honoured and remembered by future generations. On 16 January, they entered an unequal battle with the predominant forces of the enemy near the station of Kruty. The majority of them were killed. About thirty were captured and then slaughtered in beastly fashion with bayonets. The heroism of the students who defended Kruty and sacrificed their lives to delay the advance of the enemy, thereby providing an opportunity for the Ukrainian military forces near Kyiv to regroup, has become one of the most important components of Ukrainian modern historical memory.

In fact, the victory of the Bolsheviks in the battle of Kruty opened a route for them to close on Kyiv. On 21 January, the Bolshevik units from the Left Bank [of the Dnieper] approached Darnytsia and seized an artillery battery in Slobidka, from where they began the barbaric shelling of the city centre, firing some 15 thousand artillery shells. From the Right Bank, Kyiv was shelled by an armoured train. As a result, the city was engulfed by fires and suffered immense damage. Among the shelled properties was the house of Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi on Pankivs'ka Street. His large library and archive perished in the ruins of the house; Hrushevs'kyi's mother was seriously injured and died shortly after. On 26 January, in order not to

40 Mykola Halahan, *Z mojich spomyniv (1880-ti-1920 r.)* (Kyjiv: Tempora, 2005), p. 326.

subject the capital to even greater destruction, the Ukrainian authorities and the army decided to leave Kyiv.

A few days earlier, when the assault on Kyiv had just begun, Mikhail Muravyov had telegraphed Petrograd to inform the authorities that the city had been taken. The Bolsheviks perceived this as an outstanding triumph, and the Moscow Izvestia ran a piece on this subject which was signed by Lenin under the title "To All, To All, To All". According to this piece, the Soviet army entered Kyiv on 22 January (in fact, it happened on 26 January); the Kyiv City Council headed by Volodymyr Vynnychenko was toppled, and the TsVK of Ukraine with its People's Secretariat in Kharkiv was recognized (by whom?) as the highest authority in Ukraine. The federal connection with Russia was renewed, as well as complete unity – in terms of domestic and foreign policy – with the Council of People's Commissars. Hence the conclusion: Ukraine was once again in Russian, albeit communist, hands. But Lenin, who from time to time recognized the right of Ukrainians to self-determination, was very reluctant to speak about the occupation directly; therefore, from the very beginning he emphasized that the Soviet army was not led by Volodymyr Antonov-Ovsiienko or Mikhail Muravyov, but by Yuriy Kotsiubyns'kyi, the son of Mykhailo Kotsiubyns'kyi.

Mykola Skrypnyk hastened to inform Leon Trotsky. In a telegram sent to Brest, where peace talks with representatives of the Quadruple Alliance were taking place, he reported,

> our artillery bombed the central quarters, where counter-revolutionaries were holding on in the midst of fires. The City Council attempted to act as an intermediary, but our representatives demanded the unconditional surrender of weapons and extradition of the leaders of the counter-revolutionary rebellion. Step by step, our forces drove out the supporters of the Rada with artillery and bayonets, and at last Kyiv was taken… the entire city is in the hands of the Soviet army, the capital of Ukraine, Kyiv, becomes red Kyiv.[41]

Obviously, when writing about "red Kyiv", Skrypnyk resorted to a metaphor, but within three days the city was flooded with rivers of blood. In his next order, Mikhail Muravyov gave permission for three days of terror and looting. People were grabbed right on the streets and led to execution; it was enough to have in one's possession documents

41 Tynčenko, *Perša ukrajins'ko-bil'šovyc'ka vijna*, p. 52.

written in Ukrainian, an officer's rank, or a priestly cassock. The murder of Metropolitan Volodymyr of Kyiv caused a great resonance in the city. His cell was robbed and he was taken outside the walls of the Lavra and shot. Muravyov tried to give excuses, insisting that it was the work of provocateurs, who he promised to find and severely punish. Of course, no one found these murderers, or the murderers of generals Viktor Gavrilov, B. Bilchyns'kyi, Illia Volkovyts'kyi, Vladimir Dankvart, A. Rydzevs'kyi, Kostjantyn Krakovetskyi, Fedir Dems'kyi, a number of officers, including Prince Mychajlo Golitsyn, Prince Petro Kochubey, Baron Korf, and Georgiy Rodzianko, the son of the former Head of the State Duma, Michail Rodzianko.

In the garden of the Mariinsky Palace, where the headquarters of the Red Army were located, Bolshevik Sergij Mojsjejev, who witnessed the events, recalled

> a lot of people were shot for no reason. The shootings were left to the discretion of the Red Guards themselves; soldiers who left the hospital and did not have identification documents were also shot... All the corpses were undressed, and all belongings were immediately distributed among those who were shooting, right in front of the crowd. When [Mikhail] Muravyov came to the location of the shootings and realized that he was surrounded by a crowd of savage Red Guards holding on to looted property, he did not say anything regarding the lootings; on the contrary, he urged them to continue with the shootings, saying that first and foremost one had to be merciless.[42]

Another place of mass shootings was the City Opera House, where former officers were summoned for document verification and registration, but it was actually a cynical massacre.[43]

While in Odesa, Muravyov himself related, very eloquently, his Kyiv "escapades":

> We come with fire and sword, we established Soviet power [...] I took the city, I attacked palaces and churches, priests, monks, I showed no mercy! On January 28th, the oboroncheskaia Duma asked for a truce. In response, I ordered to attack with asphyxiating chemical gases. Hundreds, maybe even thousands of generals were killed

42 Memorial Vseukrajins'ka pravozachysna orhanizacija Memorial imeni Vasylja Stusa, '8 ljutoho 1918 - zachopyvšy Kyjiv...' (Facebook post, 8 February 2021), <https://www.facebook.com/memorial.ukraine/posts/3875441999172691> [accessed 11 September 2022].

43 Sergej Mel'gunov, *Krasnyj terror v Rossii 1918–1922* (Berlin: Vataga, 1924), p. 75.

> mercilessly. That is how we took revenge. We would have been able to contain the explosion of revenge, but there was no need for that because our slogan was to be merciless.[44]

According to conservative estimates, 2576 officers were killed on the streets. Dmytro Doroshenko claims that some 3000 people were killed on the first day of the occupation, while the total number of victims and prisoners amounted to more than 10,000.[45] The figures provided are possibly substantially inflated (historians struggle to determine the number of victims in Kyiv)[46]; however, that does not call into question the fact of the tragedy caused by the Bolshevik troops in the city.

There is not much documentary evidence regarding the Kyiv massacre that has survived until now; therefore, I want to use Serhiy Yefremov's literary journalism works to the fullest. The newspaper Nova rada, which he edited, was closed down by the Bolsheviks but resumed its work on 4 February 1918. On the same day, Yefremov published in this newspaper four articles describing his eyewitness account of the Bolshevik siege and occupation of the city. Yefremov was certain that Kyiv had not suffered such a massacre since the times of the Mongol invasion. The shelling of this city of one million people had catastrophic consequences: the centre suffered huge damage, and a significant number of civilians was affected. The retreat of the UNR units did not deter the attackers, "On 26 January, all of Kyiv was already in the hands of the Bolsheviks; the arriving army, the Red Guard, and the new Soviet power took over", testifies Serhiy Yefremov as a journalist and eyewitness.[47] "The cannonade subsided, but occasional shots were still heard for a couple of days, especially near the former Royal Palace and in Mariins'ky Park: the conquerors triumphed and turned to mob law and execution of random victims... and those last days claimed even more victims than the previous days of the ardent battle".[48] Residents of Kyiv became the first victims of massive red terror. The shootings and the bacchanalia experienced by Kyiv led Yefremov to publicly appeal, through the newspaper, to a Bolshevik high-ranking official, the People's Secretary of Military Affairs Yuriy Kotsiubyns'kyi. The article, The Letter Missing an Envelope, had a humanistic outlook, deep morality, and spiritual courage – all the characteristics that do not allow one to remain silent even in the face of deadly danger. Even though Yefremov addressed the letter to

44 Ibid., p. 150.
45 Hagen, 'Skladnyj zachidnyj front', p. 46.
46 Andrij Zdorov, 'Červonyj teror u kyjevi na počatku 1918 r.: mify ta realiji', *Historians.in.ua*, 25 December 2015, <https://www.historians.in.ua/index.php/en/dyskusiya/1729-andrii-zdorov-chervonyi-teror-u-kyievi-na-pochatku-1918-r-mify-ta-realii> [accessed 11 September 2022]; Olena Betlij, 'Bilšovyc'kyj teror u Kyjevi u sični-ljutomu 1918 r.: žertvy i pam 'jat'', *Krajeznavstvo*, 3 (2018), 178–95.
47 'Podiji v Kyjevi (23–26)', *Nova rada*, 14 (1918).
48 Ibid.

a particular person, he also accused Bolshevism as a political movement, "There is an abyss between us, an unsurmountable chasm that distances a Bolshevik from an old Socialist, who has repeatedly experienced the tsar's prison and the gendarmes-scorpions. And yet, I do not envy your power, nor will I trade it for my lack of such".[49]

Serhiy Yefremov was conscious of the fact that ephemeral future socialist happiness is by no means an excuse for the destruction of a city and its population. He rejects as hypocritical the statement claiming that the executed people were counter-revolutionary and bourgeois:

> You would say, "This blood belongs to the bourgeois". How do you know that, I'll ask. During those ten cursed days, was not even more proletarian blood shed? Actually, it does not matter to me because bourgeois blood is as red as proletarian blood, and it is just as much fun for it to flow through the veins than drip on the sand in Mariins'ky Park, and just as much it intoxicates the people who can swim in it. And naked, robbed, undressed corpses, which were driven through the streets in sheaves – they are a mute testimony to the fact that people, drunk on vodka and blood, do not set limits to their predatory instincts.[50]

The Ukrainian theme plays an equally important role in The Letter Missing an Envelope since it is addressed to the eldest son of a prominent Ukrainian writer and public figure, the late Mykhailo Kotsiubyns'kyi, who devoted his entire life to the national cause and up until his death had faith that Ukraine would have a bright future. At the time when this future started to be actualized, when "freedom has already started shining under the Ukrainian sky [...], the degenerate son of the famous father" arrived as the leader of those who "again put this freedom in the coffin and nail down the heavy lid with weights". Knowing the tragic fate of Yuriy Kotsiubyns'ky, who was purged by the Stalinist regime in the mid-1930s, I would like to pay attention to the prophetic nature of the Letter. Yefremov did not believe in the power of good imposed by force, so he concluded with a warning:

> You too should know that the seeds that you sowed in your native land will not bring forth what you expected. Not equality and fraternity, but only knives on both sides, hatred, and blood... Clean work requires clean hands, whereas dirty hands soil, stain, and contam-

49 Serhij Jefremov, 'Lyst bez konverta', *Nova rada*, 15 (1918).
50 Ibid.

> inate the cleanest work. Even if you wash them in ten buckets of water, you won't wash away the shame and disgrace wherewith you have covered yourselves and your work.[51]

We should note that the brutal behaviour of the Bolshevik troops, including the shootings, plundering, drinking, and debauchery (known from the materials provided by Mikhail Muravyov's legal case), was an everyday phenomenon that accompanied the Bolshevik units throughout their entire stay in Ukraine. These were the first manifestations of the "Red terror", not yet declared as an official policy of the Bolsheviks. These atrocities made a significant impact on the attitude of the population, which initially, under the influence of propaganda, was sympathetic to the Bolsheviks' cause but was later struck by this turn of affairs and started to resist. This opinion has been expressed by the historian Liudmyla Garcheva, whose investigation focused specifically on the causes and course of the First Bolshevik-Ukrainian War. She believes that the population's anti-Bolshevik protests were due to the brutality of the Bolshevik regime, which fully manifested itself in the first few weeks of the war and occupation.[52]

Numerous testimonies to the participation of the Free Cossack units in the struggle against the Bolshevik aggression in the winter of 1917–1918, throughout entire Ukraine (Bakhmach, Vinnytsia, Zolotonosha, Katerynoslav, Konotop, Kremenchuk, Odesa, Rivne), have been preserved within memoirs and archival sources. For the most part, the resistance took the form of local partisan movements. For instance, the Free Cossacks of the Novomoskovsk county in Katerynoslav province, led by a member of the UNR, Fedir Storubel, waged a rail war by dismantling the railway tracks in order to slow down the movement of the Bolshevik units. In general, the power of the Bolsheviks did not extend beyond provincial and county towns, which were encircled by garrisons. Villages located within the narrow strips near railways suffered from raids for provisions, but the Free Cossacks successfully repelled these raids.

In February 1918, the Free Cossacks of Zvenyhorodka county and those around it carried out successful large-scale actions. In early February, Yuriy Tiutiunnyk was elected the kish otaman (of the Zvenyhorodka Cossack kish). A little later, Mykola Shynkar arrived in Zvenyhorodka. An eyewitness, Volodymyr Kedrovs'kyi, recalled,

51 Jefremov, 'Lyst bez konverta'.
52 Ljudmyla Harčeva, 'Zbrojni syly Central'noji Rady u ljutomu – kvitni 1918 roku', *Vijs'ko Ukrajiny*, 8 (1993), p. 107.

> Only a few other officers who made up the initial personnel of the so-called regular Free Cossack units in Zvenyhorodka came here with them. Thanks to this, Zvenyhorodka was tightly surrounded by Ukrainian forces, and for quite some time, until the arrival of the Germans and the return of the Central Rada to Kyiv, it remained (together with most of the county) a stronghold of national dedication among the waves of the Bolshevik "sea" overflowing Ukraine. Had we had similar folks in other counties of Ukraine, the Bolsheviks would have seen Ukraine as well as their own ears".[53]

The partisan Cossack resistance to the Bolshevik offensive was a glorious page of Ukrainian military history, but it failed to determine the main course of this military campaign. The situation became such that only external military assistance could save the UNR from final defeat by the Bolsheviks. By signing the peace treaty with the countries of the Quadruple Alliance on February 9th (January 26th), 1918, the UNR received powerful military assistance in the struggle against the Bolsheviks. On February 14th, under the pressure of Ukrainian formations and German troops, the Soviet People's Secretariat left Kyiv for Poltava. As Serhiy Yefremov wrote, they "fled. Shamefully, secretly, in the middle of the night – truly, 'like a thief in the night', one by one. Kharkiv's 'people's secretaries' disappeared. [They did so] having plundered the city, having bred anarchy, having led it to hunger and extreme decline".[54]

The war with the Bolsheviks lasted several years, with brief interruptions, and is reminiscent of what we today call hybrid war. On paper, the Bolsheviks recognized the right of nations to self-determination, but in reality they were not particularly concerned about this. At the centre of their policy was the principle of dictatorship of the proletariat. To spread this dictatorship, they created their own pocket "Soviet governments of Ukraine", which were assisted by the armed forces; in the underground, they organized armed rebellions and conducted subversive work among Ukrainian politicians with the help of leftist elements and their secret services. A brutal occupation regime was established in the seized Ukrainian territories. This regime was based on the "Red terror" and entailed dictatorship of the proletariat, a one-party political system, severe restrictions of human rights and freedoms, and the economic exploitation of Ukraine.

53 Ukrajins'ka Vil'na Akademija Nauk, fond V.Kedrovs'koho, Verstka spomyniv.
54 Serhij Jefremov, *Publicystyka revoljucijnoji doby, 1917–1920 rr.*, 2 vols (Kyjiv: Duch i Litera, 2013), I, p. 482.

The course of the revolution, which was closely connected to the Ukrainian-Bolshevik war, provides certain paradigmatic clues that bring light to the nature of the Bolshevik regime. Forcefully imposing communist ideas, the regime used ideology to occupy Ukraine. It was this occupation, as well as liberation from it, that became an important component of the history of Ukraine in the twentieth century. In fact, while constantly identifying itself with the idea of internationalism, Bolshevism turned out to be a kind of Russian messianism, centralism, and nationalism – all three being extremely aggressive and everlasting. These ideas did not disappear in twentieth century revolutionary Russia; instead, they were successfully sublimated into the ideas of dictatorship of the proletariat, struggle against bourgeois nationalism, assimilation of minor ethnicities, and rebuffing of Western civilization.

In recent decades, this terrible ideological mishmash has become the state ideology of Russia, and today it attempts to prove the viability of this ideology with its blatant aggression against Ukraine, as well as threats to the world. Only the absolute unity of the democratic world, our belief in inevitable victory, as well as the courage with which we fight for our native land can bury these efforts. In conclusion, let us recall the words of Serhiy Yefremov, which were written at the time of the Bolshevik occupation of Kyiv in February 1918 and are filled with deep faith,

> We sail through a sea of darkness. As in the past, it is not hope that shines ahead but an unshakeable certainty that we will get to our shores and enter our promised land. Travel adventures, however terrible and bloody they might have been, are just episodes, and we should not allow these fleeting episodes to knock us off the path in front of us. In front of us, not behind us...[55]

These wise words, filled with faith and invincible optimism in the historical fate of Ukraine, provide not only evidence of past hardships but also a roadmap to overcoming them today.

55 Ibid., 476.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Antonov-Ovseenko, Vladimir, *Zapiski o graždanskoj vojne*, 4 vols (Moskva: Vyssij voennyj redakcionnyj sovet, 1924–1933), I (1924)

Archiv Vil'noji Ukrajins'koji Akademiji Nauk u N'ju-Jorku, fond V. Kedrovs'koho, Verstka spomyniv

Berdjaev, Nikolaj, *Istoki i smysl russkogo kommunizma* (Moskva: Nauka, Vyssij voennyj redakcionnyj sovet, 1990)

Betlij, Olena, 'Bil'šovyc'kyj teror u Kyjevi u sični–ljutomu 1918 r.: žertvy i pam'jat'', *Krajeznavstvo*, 3 (2018), 178–95

Boš, Evgenija, God bor'by (Moskva: Gosizdat, 1925)

Hagen, Mark fon, 'Skladnyj zachidnyj front ta formuvannja Ukrajinskoji deržavy: zabutyj myr, zabuta vijna ta narodžennja naciji', *Ukrajina dyplomatyčna*, 19 (2018), 45–59

Halahan, Mykola, *Z mojich spomyniv (1880-ti–1920 r.)* (Kyjiv: Tempora, 2005)

Harčeva, Ljudmyla, 'Zbrojni syly Central'noji Rady u ljutomu – kvitni 1918 roku', *Vijs'ko Ukrajiny*, 8 (1993)

Holubko, Viktor, *Armija Ukrajins'koji Narodnoji Respubliky 1917 -1918. Utvorennja ta boroť ba za deržavu* (L'viv: Kal'varija, 1997)

Hordijenko, Mykola, 'Naši i jichni zavdannja', *Robitnyča hazeta*, 177 (1917)

Hruševs'kyj, Mychajlo, *Iljustrovana istorija Ukrajiny* (N'ju-Jork: Vidavnictvo Čartorijs'kih, 1967)

Hrynevyč, Vladyslav, and Ljudmyla Hrynevyč, *Slidča sprava M.A. Muravjova: dokumentovana istorija* (Kyjiv: Instytut istoriji Ukrajiny, 2001)

Jefremov, Serhij, 'Lyst bez konverta', *Nova rada*, 15 (1918)

Jefremov, Serhij, *Publicystyka revoljucijnoji doby, 1917–1920 rr.*, 2 vols (Kyjiv: Duch i Litera, 2013), I

Lapčyns'kyj, Heorhij, 'Peršyj period Radjans'koji vlady na Ukrajini', *Litopys revoljuciji*, 1 (1928), 159–75

Lenin, Vladimir, *Voennaja perepiska. 1917–1922 gg.* (Moskva: Ogiz Gospolitizdat, 1987)

Lytvyn, Mykola, 'ZUNR i Halyc'ka SRR u heostratehiji bil'šovyc'koji Rosiji', *Ukrajina: kul'turna spadščyna, nacional'na svidomist', deržavnist'*, 18 (2009), 101–18

Mazepa, Isaak, *Central'na Rada-Het'manščyna-Dyrektorija. Ukrajina v ohni j buri revoljuciji, 1917–1921*, 2 vols (Praha: Probojem, 1942), I

Mel'gunov, Sergej, *Krasnyj terror v Rossii 1918–1922* (Berlin: Vataga, 1924)

Memorial Vseukrajins'ka pravozachysna orhanizacija Memorial imeni Vasylja Stusa, '8 ljutoho 1918 – zachopyvšy Kyjiv...' (Facebook post, 8 February 2021) <https://www.facebook.com/memorial.ukraine/posts/3875441999172691> [accessed 11 September 2022]

'Podiji v Kyjevi (23-26)', *Nova rada*, 14 (1918)

Sidak, Volodymyr, ed., *Vyzvol'ni zmahannja očyma kontrrozvidnyka: dokumental'na spadščyna Mykoly Čebotariva* (Kyjiv: Tempora, 2003)

Skrypnyk, Mykola, 'Načerk istoriji proletars'koji revoljuciji na Ukrajini', *Červonyj šljach*, 2 (1923), 89–117

Smolij, Volodymyr, and others, eds, *Ukrajins'ka Central'na Rada. Dokumenty i materialy*, 2 vols (Kyjiv: Naukova dumka, 1996–1997), II (1997)

Sobranie uzakonenij i rasporjaženij pravitel'stva za 1917–1918 gg. Upravlenie delami Sovnarkoma SSSR (Moskva, 1942)

Soldatenko, Valerij, *Ukrajins'ka revoljucija. Istoryčnyj narys* (Kyjiv: Lybid', 1999)

Sovet Narodnych Komissarov, 'Privetstvie raboče-krest'janskomu pravitel'stvu Ukrainy ot Soveta Narodnych Komissarov RSFSR. 16 dekabrja 1917 g.', *Izvestija CIK i Petrogradskogo Soveta rabočich i soldatskich deputatov*, 254 (1917)

Stalin, Iosif, 'Otvet tovariščam ukraincam v tylu i na fronte', *Pravda*, 213 (1917)

Tynčenko, Jaroslav, *Perša ukrajins'ko-bil'šovyc'ka vijna (bruden' 1917- berezen' 1918 r.)* (Kyjiv–L'viv, 1996)

Tynčenko, Jaroslav, *Ukrajins'ki zbrojni syly berezen' 1917 – lystopad 1918 rr. – orhanizacija, čysel'nist', bojovi diji* (Kyjiv: Tempora, 2009)

Verstjuk, Vladyslav, 'Novyj etap revoljucijno-vojennoho protyborstva v Ukrajini', in *Revoljucija v Ukrajini: polityko-deržavni modeli ta realiji (1917-1920). Polityčna istorija Ukrajiny ChCh stolittja*, ed. by Valerij Soldatenko and Vladyslav Verstjuk, 6 vols (Kyjiv: Heneza, 2002–2003), II (2002)

Verstjuk, Vladyslav, *Ukrajins'ka Central'na Rada: Navčal'nyj posibnyk* (Kyjiv: Zapovit, 1997)

Zatons'kyj, Volodymyr, 'Uryvky z spohadiv pro Ukrajins'ku revoljuciju', *Litopys revoljuciji*, 4 (1929), 139–72

Zdorov, Andrij, 'Červonyj teror u kyjevi na počatku 1918 r.: mify ta realiji', *Historians.in.ua*, 25 December 2015 <https://www.historians.in.ua/index.php/en/dyskusiya/1729-andrii-zdorov-chervonyi-teror-u-kyievi-na-pochatku-1918-r-mify-ta-realii> [accessed 11 September 2022]

Jan Szumski

"I ONLY DO IT TO STAY ALIVE": DEVELOPMENT OF THE NARRATIVE OF "UNIFICATION OF THE WESTERN LANDS OF UKRAINE AND BELARUS WITH THE UKRAINIAN AND BELARUSIAN SOVIET REPUBLICS" IN SOVIET HISTORICAL PROPAGANDA*

ABSTRACT

The article analyses selected aspects of the formation of the historical propaganda narrative of the unification of the lands of Western Ukraine with the Ukrainian SSR and of Western Belarus with the Belarusian SSR as well as the participation of individual historians deliberately involved or for various reasons forced to take part in developing the academic justification for the change in borders. The knowledge and authority of scholars often originating from the pre-revolutionary school were necessary for creating a historical narrative legitimizing the change in policy and reinforcing the propaganda message.

KEYWORDS:

Soviet historiography, Vladimir Picheta, Western Belarus, Western Ukraine, propaganda

JAN SZUMSKI

historian, professor at L.&A. Birkenmajer Institute for the History of Science, Polish Academy of Sciences; senior researcher at the Historical Research Office of the Institute of National Remembrance. His research interests include the history of Polish–Soviet relations and scientific contacts, as well as the history of Poles in the USSR.

https://orcid.org/000-0001-6591-5795

* This article was written as part of the project "The Image of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth/Poland in the 'History of the Byelorussian SSR': transformation of the Soviet historical message in the national-official version of history", funded by the National Centre for Research and Development.

In Bolshevik propaganda, it would be a truism to say that war – and, more broadly, the ideological preparation of Soviet society for the inexorable clash with "all sorts of enemies" surrounding a country ruled by "workers and peasants" – was an essential feature of the indoctrination system. By creating an atmosphere of constant threat, the Soviet propaganda machine not only succeeded in stoking patriotic feelings; it also contributed to the development of an array of devices, phrases and propaganda slogans that took hold in the lexicon of propaganda concepts that have experienced a renaissance in the twenty-first century. A separate phenomenon was attaching new political significance and meaning to concepts and their derivatives that had hitherto been used in a neutral sense.

It is, in fact, an impossible task to make even a cursory analysis of selected aspects of the workings of Soviet propaganda using the examples of press, radio, cinema, and art in one article, yet both Russian and foreign scholars have attempted it. Even a list of just the essential subject literature would not fit into one footnote and would require a separate supplement. Those who have researched the Soviet propaganda apparatus and its mechanisms include Western Sovietologists such as Peter Kenez, Stephen F. Cohen, David Brandenberger, Ewa M. Thompson and Serhii Plokhy. Yet the most important works on the events preceding the outbreak of the Second World War and during the war itself are those by the Russian scholar Vladimir Nevezhin, who stood out as a consummate researcher and expert on the mechanisms of the Soviet propaganda machine.[1] As well as examining the nature and content of the propaganda, Nevezhin also critically analysed the activity of the "machine and cogs",[2] meaning the institutions and the role of individual decision makers in launching and conducting propaganda campaigns, including the "march of liberation of the Red Army" in September 1939.

Scholars agree that preparations for the "liberation of the Ukrainian and Belarusian half-brothers" began with Germany's aggression against Poland and were pursued simultaneously in the military, economic and propaganda-political fields. In the last of these domains, they have analysed press materials published in publications and documentation produced by government institutions, military organizations, and, to a lesser extent, memoir literature.[3] We will therefore not revisit well-known issues and conclusions that have long operated in the historiographical circulation.

1 Vladimir Nevežin, *Sindrom nastupatel'noj vojny. Sovetskaja propaganda v preddverii "svjaščennych boev", 1939–1941 gg.* (Moskva: AIRO-XX, 1997); id., *"Esli zavtra v pochod...": podgotovka k voyne i ideologicheskaya propaganda v 30-h-40-h godach* (Moskva: Eksmo, 2007); id., *Tajne plany Stalina: propaganda sowiecka w przededniu wojny z Trzecią Rzeszą 1939–1941*, trans. by Jan J. Bruski, (Kraków: Arcana, 2001).

2 The above paraphrase refers to the work of the Russian historian and dissident Mikhail Heller; see the first Russian edition published in London: Michail Geller, *Mašina i vintiki. Istorija formirovanija sovetskogo čeloveka* (London: Overseas Publications Interchange Ltd, 1985).

3 Nevezhin is among those who analyse these preparations in detail. See: Niewieżyn, *Tajne plany Stalina*, pp. 79–94. See also: Natalija Lebedeva, 'Sentjabr' 1939 g: Pol'ša meždu Germaniej i SSSR', *Vestnik MGIMO-Universiteta*, 4 (2009), 231–50.

What seems to be a less researched aspect is the activity of academic institutions and the role of individual scholars deliberately involved or forced, for various reasons, to participate in developing the academic justification for the territorial conquests and changes to the borders of the USSR. I will attempt to determine which factors affected the academic and ideological positions of scholars caught up in the gears of great politics. I will be particularly interested in the role of individual scholars and the expert assistance they provided to various propaganda institutions in their campaigns designed to construct specific ideas and public moods. The knowledge and authority of "old-school" scholars, often hailing from the pre-revolutionary tradition, were essential for developing the historical narrative, legitimizing the policy turn, and reinforcing the propaganda message.

INSTITUTIONS OF THE "IDEOLOGICAL FRONT"

The late 1930s marked a clear watershed that finalized the process of building the propaganda and ideological apparatus in the Soviet Union. Centralized and extensive propaganda and organizational structures were built that encompassed all echelons: top-level (the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (AUCP(b) Propaganda and Agitation Administration, the Red Army Political Administration, the Central Literature and Publications Bureau,[4] and political bureaus in people's commissariats (ministries); medium-level (AUCP(b) propaganda and agitation administrations at Soviet republic level, political administrations at military district level, various political education departments (*politprosveshcheniye*)[5]; and lower-level (propaganda divisions of AUCP(b) district and regional committees, political schools for AUCP(b) and Komsomol members, etc.

Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, the unquestioned authority in the formation of historical ideology in the USSR was the then general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin. Stalin's ideological opponents vanished from the political scene while he directly participated in the writing of the canonical version of the history of the AUCP(b), which was also an interpretation of Russia's general history since the end of the nineteenth century. The "leader of the working masses of the world", along with his retinue in the form of Andrei Zhdanov, Lev Mekhlis and other party dignitaries, personally inspired and set the guidelines for propaganda and oversaw its implementation. Other,

4 PURKKA – Političeskoe upravlenie Raboče-Krest'janskoj Krasnoj Armii; Glavlit – Glavnoe upravlenie po delam literatury i izdatel'stv.

5 Politprosveščenie – political education system encompassing knowledge on the foundations of Marxism-Leninism, the history of the AUCP(b) and current politics.

lower-status "cogs" played the role of the transmission belt that relayed the leader's orders. Of course, the Soviet dictator had to make use of analytical material supplied by various agencies. He did so using an extensively developed state and party apparatus and institutions of the ideological front, largely pursuing propaganda activities and expert support from scholars, journalists and academic institutions.

In matters of information policy and international propaganda, in particular regarding Polish issues, apart from the NKID[6] (e.g., the Information and Press Department), an important role was also played by numerous Komintern structures,[7] and in the early 1930s by the AUCP(b) Central Committee's Bureau of International Information. A particular role was played by Soviet intelligence agencies: the IV (Intelligence) Administration of the Red Army Headquarters, and after organizational changes the Information/Statistics and Intelligence Administration, as well as the Foreign Department of the OGPU[8] and then the Main Directorate of State Security of the NKVD.

The AUCP(b) CC's Bureau of International Information, established on Stalin's initiative in spring 1932 with Karl Radek at the helm, in addition to supplying objective analytical information without ideological adjustment, was to concentrate its efforts on realizing political and strategic military tasks in the Moscow–Warsaw–Berlin triangle.[9] The bureau collected information and canvassed moods using the services of agents operating in the West in the guise of diplomats and journalists. One example was Stefan Jan Nejman (Rajewski), who served as adviser to the USSR embassy in Berlin; he was also a representative of the TASS press agency in Paris and head of the government newspaper *Izvestia*'s foreign department.

Following this brief outline of the propaganda structures and institutions of the ideological front, let us turn to the fundamental research problem of this study, which is the role of individual scholars and academic institutions in creating and reinforcing the historical propaganda message, with a particular focus on Polish issues.

6 NKID – Narodnyj komissariat inostrannych del (People's Commisariat for Foreign Affairs).

7 For more on this subject see: Grant Adibekov, Èleonora Šachnazarova, and Kirill Širinja, *Organizacionnaja struktura Kominterna, 1919–1943* (Moskva: ROSSPÈN, 1997); Piotr Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza. Droga do władzy 1941–1944* (Warszawa: Fronda PL, 2003), pp. 33–38; Natalia Lebiediewa, "Komintern i Polska w latach 1919–1943", in *W drodze do władzy. Struktury komunistyczne realizujące politykę Rosji sowieckiej i ZSRS wobec Polski (1917–1945)*, ed. by Elżbieta Kowalczyk, and Konrad Rokicki (Warszawa: IPN, 2019), pp. 163–210. Komintern's effective activity in the Soviet-Polish propaganda war is also discussed by the Polish scholar Aleksandra J. Leinwand, "Z dziejów eksportu propagandy: Komintern w wojnie z Polska w 1920 roku", *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 111:4 (2004), 83–107.

8 INO OGPU – Inostrannyj otdel Ob"edinennogo Gosudarstvennogo Političeskogo Upravlenija – Foreign Department of the Joint State Political Directorate.

9 Oleg Ken, "Karl Radek i Bjuro meždunarodnoj informacii CK VKP(b), 1932–1934 gg.", *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 44 (2003), 135–77. The Russian scholar, an expert on the history of Polish-Soviet bilateral relations in the interwar period, suggests that Radek exploited his status as Stalin's special envoy and then head of the foreign department of the influential newspaper *Izvestia*, seeking to weaken the influences of the anti-Polish party in the top political level of the Kremlin. Cited in Ken, "Karl Radek", p. 173. In notes to Stalin, Radek argued that there were no imperial plans regarding the Soviets in Poland and favoured improving Warsaw-Moscow relations by softening anti-Polish themes in Soviet propaganda, establishing a Polish-Soviet cultural cooperation society or joint publication of documents on Polish uprisings. See: "Nr 6. 1933 grudzień 3, Moskwa – Załącznik do informacji Karola Radka skierowanej do Stalina dotyczącej nowego etapu w stosunkach polsko-sowieckich", in *Geneza paktu Hitler-Stalin. Fakty i propaganda*, ed. by Bogdan Musiał and Jan Szumski (Warszawa: IPN, 2012), pp. 125–30 (here: 128).

BACK TO THE PAST, OR THE IMPERIAL PARADIGM OF HISTORY

It is worth emphasizing that the history of Poland was studied in the Soviet Union before 1939 primarily from the perspective of research on the history of the workers' movement, seen as an equivalent of the communist movement, at ideological academic institutions such as the Polish Institute of Proletariat Culture in Kyiv and its sister Institute in Minsk.[10] Only in the second half of the 1940s were specialist institutions set up within the Soviet Academy of Sciences, at which, in agreement and close cooperation with the AUCP(b) CC, evaluations and expert reports were produced and concepts of Polish history and positions regarding important historical periods and problems were prepared. In interwar Poland, meanwhile, there were several research centres devoted to Soviet[11] and communist[12] studies.

In the second half of the 1930s, the Stalinist variant of the Marxist-Leninist historiographical concept as a way of understanding the process of history was finally established in Soviet historical research. Following a decision of party and state authorities from 1934–35 concerning the teaching of history, organizational changes were introduced that finalized the process of building a centralized system. In 1936–37, the Institute of History of the Soviet Union and the Institute of History of Material Culture were established at the Soviet Academy of Sciences. The same solutions were implemented in the individual Soviet republics, but local issues were taken in to account. In Soviet Ukraine, where the status of national history was greater than it was in the Byelorussian Soviet Republic, a separate Institute of the History of Ukraine was set up in 1936 as part of the History

10 An aspect that has scarcely been researched is the activity of party research institutions, which, despite their often-dubious academic merit, held an important place in the research on Polish history that took place in the 1920s and 1930s in the Soviet Union. We can mention here the Polish Party History Commission at the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute (IMEL) in Moscow, which in 1926–34 published documents and articles on the Polish workers' movement in the journal *Z pola walki* (From the battlefield).

11 The history and Soviet studies output of the Eastern Europe Research Institute (INBEW) were examined in a monograph by Marek Kornat: *Polska szkoła sowietologiczna 1930–1939* (Kraków: Arcana, 2003). Henryka Ilgiewicz's book, in addition to the history of the INBEW, also discusses the organizational and personnel situation of the School of Political Sciences (SNP). See: Henryka Ilgiewicz, *Instytut Naukowo-Badawczy Europy Wschodniej oraz Szkoła Nauk Politycznych w Wilnie (1930–1939)* (Warszawa: Scholar, 2019). Paweł Libera's article, meanwhile, focuses on the political aspect of the IBEW and SNP's operation as well as the influence the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Second Department of Polish General Staff exerted on the institutions. See: Paweł Libera, 'Polityczne aspekty funkcjonowania Instytutu Naukowo-Badawczego Europy Wschodniej i Szkoły Nauk Politycznych w Wilnie (1930–1939)', *Dzieje Najnowsze*, 53:4 (2021), 67–84. See also: *Polsko-radzieckie stosunki kulturalne 1918–1939. Dokumenty i materiały*, ed. by Wiesław Balcerak (Warszawa: 'Książka i Wiedza', 1977), pp. 699–712. On the beginnings of Sovietology: *Instytut Naukowo-Badawczy Europy Wschodniej w Wilnie (1930–1939). Idee – ludzie – dziedzictwo*, ed. by Jan Malicki and Andrzej Pukszto (Warszawa: WUW, 2020).

12 Among the works discussing Polish social communist studies institutions which examined the ideological and political foundations, and the methods and tools of spreading propaganda by various bodies which were in fact Soviet intelligence agencies (such as International Red Aid (MOPR), we can cite Karol Sacewicz's monograph, and in particular the chapter on the Institute of Scientific Research on Communism (INBK). Karol Sacewicz, *Komunizm i antykomunizm w II Rzeczypospolitej: państwo–społeczeństwo – partie* (Olsztyn: Instytut Historii i Stosunków Międzynarodowych Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, 2016), pp. 28–41. On the INBK see also: Jacek Puchalski, 'Instytut Naukowego Badania Komunizmu w Warszawie (1930–1939). Program, organizacja, zbiory prace księgoznawcze', in *Bibliologia polityczna. Praca zbiorowa*, ed. by Dariusz Kuźmina (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SBP, 2011), pp. 214–243.

and Philology Department of the Ukrainian Soviet Academy of Sciences. This Kyiv-based institute also included a section focusing on Western Ukraine. No separate institute of the history of Belarus was set up in Minsk, but the Institute of History of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences (subsequently the Institute of History of the BSRS Academy of Sciences) operated from 1929, with a separate section for research on Western Belarus.[13]

Changes at the political centre brought fundamental transformations in the field of historical research, and the imperial paradigm of history that had been developed by nineteenth-century Russian historiography gradually came back into favour. The school of Mikhail Pokrovsky – an outstanding Bolshevik historian who introduced an entirely new approach to the entirety of Russian history from the perspective of economic materialism based on the idea of class struggle – was denounced, with the atmosphere of a witch hunt forming around the deceased scholar and his students. Among other things, Pokrovsky emphasized the imperialist nature of the policy of Moscow rulers, criticizing the well-established theory in Russian historiography regarding "gathering the lands of Rus'" around the Grand Duchy of Moscow.

In addition to establishing dogmas on historical formations and the interlocking discussions about the origins of feudalism, one of the main problems was justifying the multinational character of the Soviet Union. The concept of one big, happy family of "USSR nations" required academic rationalization of the bonds between the community of nations, especially Slavic ones.

Recognizing Kievan Rus' as the cradle of common statehood was the basis for acknowledging Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians as integral parts of the same nation. Research on the origin of the "Old Ruthenian nation" (Rus: drevnerusskaya narodnost'),[14] instigated following a series of decisions by state and party authorities, took place in the context of a multi-volume history of the USSR, chiefly at the Institute of History (IH) of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. In 1939, a special research group was set up at the N. Marr Institute of the History of Material Culture (IIMK) to investigate the East Slavic ethnogenesis in conjunction with work on the first volume of the publication *History of the USSR*. Work taking place in Moscow and Leningrad on developing the concept of a common origin of East Slavs, identified and used interchangeably with the "Ruthenian

13 Rajnèr Lindnèr, *Historyki i ŭlada. Nacyjatvorčy pracès i histaryčnaja palityka ŭ Belarusi XIX–XX st.* (Sankt-Pecjarburh: Neŭski prascjah, 2005), pp. 201, 216.

14 Terminological issues could form the basis of separate studies, as alongside such concepts as "drevnerusskiy narod", alluding to the paradigm of the "triyediniy narod" developed in Tsarist Russia, work on the concept in the 1930s and '40s also produced additional terms such as "drevnerusskaya narodnost'" and "obshherusskaya narodnost'".

nation", provided a solid foundation for the notion of one nation in the political sense.[15]

By 1939, an academic framework that conceptualized the common origin of the three brotherly nations – Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians – all traced back to Kievan Rus' had not only been put in place but had also been consolidated in Soviet historical research and education with the publication of a series of textbooks. As the Ukrainian scholar Natalia Yusova notes, 1939 was known in academic circles at the time as "the year of history textbooks"[16] as it was then that textbooks and teaching materials for higher education institutions were published. Particularly significant was the publication of the first volume of *History of the USSR*, where the origin and territorial expansion of the Russian Empire was integrated into the paradigm of the history of nations of the Soviet Union, connected by strong ties and joined by shared historical fortunes.[17] The Tsarist policy of "gathering lands" was also rehabilitated, along with ideas of "voluntary annexation" and "unification of lands separated by force" with Russia.

To develop new perspectives corresponding to the main premises of the Stalinist variant of Marxist-Leninist theory and tying in with selected elements of imperial Russian historiography, it was essential to find scholars with a high level of knowledge and authority who were capable of developing a historical narrative to legitimize the policy turn. The older generation of scholars born in the mid-nineteenth century and specialists in the history of the former Rus' (Sergei Platonov) and historical Lithuania (Matvei Lyubavsky) were sentenced under trumped-up charges as part of the so-called Academic Trial, resulting in them being stripped of their titles and degrees and exiled to distant corners of the USSR. Their fate was shared by their younger colleagues Sergey Bakhrushin and Vladimir Picheta, who had obtained their education and academic degrees in the late period of the Russian Empire. Platonov and Lyubavsky died in exile, while Bakhrushin and Picheta were permitted to resume academic work after a few years of exile. Others, such as Boris Grekov, the historian of Kievan Rus', despite being included as a plotter in the investigation into the Academic Trial, were ultimately freed after questioning and a month's detention.[18]

15 An important role in forming the basis of this concept was played by the leading Russian historians Boris Grekov, Nikolai Derzhavin and Vladimir Mavrodin, as well as the Ukrainians Kost Guslistyj and Fedir Yastrebov.

16 Natalija Jusova, *Henezys koncepciji davn'orus'koji narodnosti v istoryčnij nauci SRSR (1930-ti – perša polovyna 1940-ch rr.)* (Vinnycja: TOV Konsol', 2005), p. 163.

17 *Istorija SSSR. S drevnejšich vremen do konca XVIII v.: učebnik dlja istoričeskich fakul'tetov gosudarstvennych universitetov i pedagogičeskich institutov*, ed. by Vladimir Lebedev, Boris Grekov, and Sergej Bachrušin, 2 vols (Moskva: Socèkgiz, 1939), I.

18 According to Russian researchers, the question of the scholar's unexpected release from detention is yet to be satisfactorily explained and leaves many questions unanswered. See: Jurij Krivošeev, 'Boris Dmitrievič Grekov i 'Akademičeskoe delo'', *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta. Istorija*, 4 (2016), 237–58.

"STICK AND CARROT" POLICY

Using a "stick and carrot" policy, by Stalin's grace a few historians hailing from the pre-revolutionary school were reinstated from exile to academic work with the task of building the academic foundations of Soviet neoimperialism and legitimizing its expansion.[19] The life of the aforementioned historian Vladimir Picheta seems to be an excellent example of harnessing a scholar with a pre-revolutionary background and accepting the Marxist conception of history into the cogs of great politics. Born in Poltava in 1878, Picheta came from a mixed Serbian-Ukrainian family. He received his historical education at the Faculty of History and Philology of Moscow University, where he later taught as a private lecturer (Rus: *privat dotcent*). Picheta's academic interests focused on the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Having steered clear of politics in the tempestuous period of sociopolitical transformation in Russia, he decided to remain in the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik Revolution and collaborate with the new authorities. This decision had a crucial impact on the rapid development of his professional and academic career.[20]

In 1921, Picheta was appointed rector of the newly opened Belarusian State University in Minsk in Soviet Belarus; he was strongly committed to the popularization of the idea of Belarusianness based on academic foundations. For the next eight years, both in the USSR and abroad, he actively promoted research on the history of the Lithuanian and Ruthenian lands, participating in academic events and congresses in Germany, Norway, Poland, Czechoslovakia and other countries. He was regarded as the doyen of Belarusian Soviet historical research. At the time he was also keenly interested in the history of Lithuania, Ukraine, Poland and other Slavic states. As a representative of the new progressive Soviet "workers of science", he took part in anti-Polish propaganda campaigns that defended the rights of the Belarusian "working masses" in the Second Polish Republic.[21]

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Picheta's promising career suddenly collapsed. Amid the strict political course and battle against "nationalist deviations", the scholar was dismissed from all his positions, stripped of

19 Apart from Picheta and Bakhrushin, one of the best-known examples of forced involvement in academic and service activity is the Russian historian Jevgeny Tarle. Arrested as part of the Academic Trial and sentenced to exile in Kazakhstan, after a few years he was pardoned and reinstated. In addition to his fundamental work on Napoleon, on Stalin's commission he planned to write a three-volume book entitled *The Russian nation's fight with aggressors in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries*. Before the Soviet dictator's death, he succeeded in completing the first volume, on the Great Northern War and Swedish invasion.

20 Jan Szumski, 'Władimir Piczeta i Żanna Kormanowa: przyczynek do polsko-radzieckich relacji naukowych', *Rozprawy z Dziejów Oświaty*, 47 (2010), 129–58 (here: 131).

21 See *Apel komitetu pisarzy i robotników nauki Białorusi radzieckiej dla obrony Białoruskiej Robotniczo-Włościańskiej Hromady do mas pracujących i inteligencji ZSRR i całego świata protestujący przeciwko represjom władz polskich wobec ludności białoruskiej*, 24 February 1929. Cited in *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich. Maj 1926 – grudzień 1932*, ed. by Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska and Iwan Chrienow, 12 vols (Warszawa: 'Książka i Wiedza', 1963–1986), V (1966), pp. 406–08.

his titles and degrees, arrested by the OGPU as part of a sham investigation, and sentenced to five years' exile in Vyatka. In 1934, after being moved to Voronezh, he was allowed to teach at the local Pedagogical Institute. A year later he received permission to work in Moscow, where for the next few years he lectured at various Moscow higher education institutions, and in 1937 he became an employee of the Institute of History of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. According to some data, Picheta's acquaintance with the Czechoslovak politician Edvard Beneš played a not insignificant role in his pardoning.[22] He gradually had his former titles and degrees restored, and in 1939 he was elected as a corresponding member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

The fateful year 1939 brought the next stage in this historian's career, signalling a return to favour. In spring of that year, *Izvestiya*, the press organ of the Central Executive Committee and the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, published an article by Picheta in which he argued for the need to research, on the basis of Marxist methodology, the history of Slavic nations in combination with the history of Russia. Knowing how Soviet academia operated at the time and the practice of publishing articles in the central press organs, we can assume with a high degree of certainty that the decision to include this article was made by the so-called "decision-making elements", while this scholar was to use his authority to back this initiative.

A Slavic studies section was established at the Institute of History of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. As the unit's director, while presenting its plans for the next two years to the Academic Council, Picheta mentioned preparing a synthesis of Polish history.[23] It may be a simple coincidence, but it was also at this time that an intensive exchange of correspondence was taking place between Berlin and Moscow regarding the possibility of expanding economic contacts and diplomatic rapprochement.[24]

After the German-Soviet alliance following the pact of 23 August 1939, new orders from Moscow in September that year dictated that the definition of the war in progress should be changed to "imperialist and unjust

22 The American researcher Elizabeth K. Valkenier argues that Picheta's return to Moscow was made possible by Beneš's patronage. Apparently the then Czechoslovak foreign minister asked about the scholar during an official visit to the USSR. See Elizabeth K. Valkenier, 'Stalinizing Polish Historiography: What Soviet Archives Disclose', *East European Politics and Societies*, 7 (1992), 109–34 (here: 111).

23 Jan Szumski, *Polityka a historia: ZSRR wobec nauki historycznej w Polsce w latach 1945–1964* (Warszawa: Aspra-Jr, 2016), p. 105.

24 Bogdan Musiał, "Trudne początki zbliżenia niemiecko-sowieckiego", in *Geneza paktu*, pp. 72–74 (here: 73). Of course, the strategic plan for war in Poland had been prepared and authorized in Berlin as early as April that year, and published Soviet intelligence documents show that Moscow was well informed about the German preparations and the Third Reich's efforts to ensure Soviet neutrality. See: 'Podgotovka germanskogo napadenija na Pol'šu: iz Sbornika perevodov agenturnych donesenij po voenno-političeskim voprosam 5 Upravlenija RKKA, 4 ijunja 1939', in *Voennaja razvedka informiruet. Dokumenty Razvedupravlenija Krasnoj Armii. Janvar' 1939-ijun' 1941 g.*, ed. by Viktor Gavrilov (Moskva: Meždunarodnyj fond "Demokratija", 2008), pp. 104–05.

from both sides".[25] This definition was binding more or less throughout the entire Soviet period, where in encyclopaedias one could read that "the Second World War, the consequence of the mutual battle of capitalist states, began as imperialist from both sides – Germany and Japan as well as England and France".[26]

At this point it is worth making a slight digression on the use of the concept of "war" for propaganda purposes in the context of Polish-Soviet relations. The Kremlin's lingering belief in the permanent threat from Poland – reinforced in a period of major events in domestic politics and worsening conflicts in international relations – was often associated with Ukrainian and Belarusian issues. In summer 1926, OGPU chairman Felix Dzerzhinsky wrote in a letter to his successor Genrikh Yagoda that: "Pilsudski's coup, it seems obvious to me at the moment, is a manifestation of nationalist forces in Poland directed against 'Russia', that is us, entirely supported by England [...] The object of the Polish conquest will be Belarus and Ukraine, and respectively Minsk and Kiev as their capitals". A few years later, at the time of the so-called "war alarm" in March 1930,[27] there were quite serious concerns in the Kremlin that the anti-kolkhoz speeches of peasants in the border regions of Belarus and Ukraine could lead to military intervention from Warsaw.

The threat of the supposed aggression of "Polish fascism" was used primarily for intra-party sparring and to create a "siege mentality" to mobilize society. The propaganda and ideological construction of the "proletariat and internationalist war", with its ultimate objective being global revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat, was replaced in the mid-1920s by the slogan of "self-determination of nations until detachment", targeted at national minorities. It is interesting that, in Poland's case, this slogan was only invoked for Upper Silesia and the Lithuanian minority, before being expanded to include Pomerania. The right to "self-determination" was therefore not due to Belarusians and Ukrainians, whose aspirations were defined from above by the Third Congress of the Communist Workers' Party of Poland (KPRP) in January–February 1925. It was at this time

25 Although anti-Polish slogans had always been an integral part of Bolshevik propaganda, changes in the propaganda line were often so surprising that they caused consternation with the abrupt turn in the situation both within the USSR and in the foreign communist movement. Often cited with regard to Poland is a statement by Stalin from 7 September 1939, recorded in the diary of Georgi Dimitrov, general secretary of the Executive Committee of Comintern: "Historically the Polish state was a nation state. That is why the revolutionaries defended it from partitions and enslavement. Today it is a fascist state which oppresses Ukrainians and Belarusians. Therefore, the destruction of Poland means that there will be one bourgeois fascist state less". This was a real shock for many communist parties, which called in the first days of the war to fight "German fascism" and defend Poland's independence. For more, see: Bernhard H. Bayerlein, *"Der Verräter, Stalin, bist Du!": Vom Ende der linken Solidarität. Komintern und kommunistische Parteien im Zweiten Weltkrieg 1939–1941* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2008).

26 *Istorija vtoroj mirovoj vojny 1939–1945. Zarożdenie vojny. Bor'ba progressivnych sil za sochranenie mira*, ed. by Grigorij Deborin et al., 12 vols (Moskva: Voenizdat, 1973–1982), I (1973), p. 11.

27 See: Oleg Ken, '"Alarm wojenny" wiosną 1930 roku a stosunki sowiecko-polskie', *Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, 35 (2000), 41–74.

that the slogan of annexing "Western Ukraine" and "Western Belarus" to the USSR was first put forward.[28]

This slogan was connected to the anti-Polish propaganda which, depending on the current circumstances and the international situation, the Soviet propaganda machine pursued with varying intensity throughout the interwar period. The culmination of the anti-Polish propaganda campaign came in September 1939 with the emergence of an array of new rhetorical devices and ideological and propaganda phrases. First and foremost, we should mention the categories of the "liberation march" conducted as part of a "just offensive war".

Anti-Polish propaganda, apart from the well-known slogans about the threat of the supposed aggression of "Polish fascism", the criminal nature of the Polish state and the moral decline of Polish elites, increasingly emphasized themes of the national and class oppression of Ukrainians and Belarusian, which around mid-September turned into anti-Polish hysteria. Poland was portrayed as the "oppressor" of enslaved nations and a "warmonger". Ewa Thompson, based on analysis of the leading Soviet periodicals (*Pravda*, *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, and *Literaturnaia gazeta*),[29] confirms that the anti-Polish campaign was accompanied and supported by two smaller pro-Belarusian and pro-Ukrainian ones. These were shorter and were more meant to heighten anti-Polish moods in the newly annexed lands than to be an expression of actual support for Ukrainians and Belarusians.[30]

TROUBADOURS OF THE EMPIRE[31]

The aggression against Poland was presented in propaganda materials as a "just war" with the objective of liberating the honourable blood brethren – the Ukrainians and Belarusians – from the yoke of oppression. It was here that Vladimir Picheta came along with academic succour for the agitators and propagandists. At party headquarters, he was regarded as a specialist in Ukraine and Belarusian history, especially the western territories.[32] Literally a few days after the Soviet aggression against Poland of 17 September 1939, the aforementioned *Izvestiya* published an article by Picheta with

28 Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza*, pp. 28–29.
29 Ewa M. Thompson, 'Nationalist Propaganda in the Soviet Russian Press, 1939–1941', *Slavic Review*, 50 (1991), 385–99.
30 Ibid., p. 393.
31 This term is a reference to the Polish title of Ewa M. Thompson's book published in English as *Imperial Knowledge. Russian Literature and Colonialism* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000). Ewa M. Thompson, *Trubadurzy imperium. Literatura rosyjska i kolonializm*, trans. by Anna Sierszulska (Kraków: Universitas, 2000).
32 In addition to academic publications made before the revolution and in the 1920s (cf. Vladimir Pičeta, 'Istoričeskie sud'by Zapadnoj Belorussii', in *Zapadnaja Belorussija. Sbornik statej: kniga 1* [Minsk: BGI, 1927], pp. 44–90), after arriving in Moscow Picheta also prepared a special subject programme on the history of Belarus and Ukraine for higher education institutions. See Vladimir Pičeta, *Programma special'nogo kursa po istorii Belorussii i Ukrainy* (Moskva: MGU, 1938).

the telling title "Ukrainian brothers and Belarusian brothers". In addition to articles in the central press and that of the Ukrainian and Belarusian Soviet republics and academic journals,[33] this historian incessantly spoke at rallies and meetings and on the radio. In summer 1940, 10,000 copies of a pamphlet were published in which he presented his main arguments, which were borrowed from his previous propaganda works.[34]

He begins with an introduction: "Western Ukraine [...] and Western Belarus [...] are eternal lands of Rus', once part of the 'Rurikid empire'. In an ethnic sense, this population used to form one whole with other East Slavic tribes". Historical propaganda articles on Western Ukrainian themes published at this time opened similarly.[35] This kind of narrative was also reproduced in texts published in autumn 1939 by other authorities of Soviet historical research, including Boris Grekov, who indicated the need for in-depth research on the history of the Cherven Cities, treated as a synonym for the concept of the Kingdom of Halych-Volhynia or the Kingdom of Ruthenia.[36]

In the model outlined by Picheta, the history of the Western Ukrainian and Western Belarusian lands began with the Rurikid dynasty, detailing the history of the Kingdom of Halych-Volhynia, then considering them in the context of the history of the Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and from the sixteenth century onwards exclusively in the paradigm of the class and national struggle with lordly Poland. Even the partitions of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth did not change this – it was still the "Polish" lords who were the main oppressors. The final chord of these centuries-long struggles was the liberation of these "blood brothers" from centuries of oppression. And if the presentation of events from the previous periods could be roughly classified as the historian's personal version, Picheta's narrative regarding the outbreak of war on 1 September 1939 repeated the main arguments of the Kremlin's propaganda message as follows: "amid conditions of the collapse of

33 Vladimir Pičeta, 'Brat'ja-ukraincy i brat'ja-belorusy: (iz istorii narodov Ukrainy i Belorussii)', *Izvestija*, 21 September 1939; id., 'Zapadnaja Belorussija: istoričeskaja spravka', *Moskovskij bol'ševik*, 30 September 1939; id., 'Istoričeskij put' Zapadnoj Belorussii i Zapadnoj Ukrainy', *Molodoj bol'ševik*, 18 (1939), 45–50; id., 'Istoričeskij put' narodov Zapadnoj Ukrainy i Zapadnoj Belorussii', *Oktjabr'*, 10/11 (1939), 3–11; id., 'Osnovnye momenty v istoričeskich sud'bach narodov Zapadnoj Ukrainy i Zapadnoj Belorussii', *Istorik-marksist*, 5/6 (1939), 67–98; id., *Istoričeskij put' Zapadnoj Ukrainy i Zapadnoj Belorussii*, Mikrofonnye materialy Vsesojuznogo radiokomiteta № 114 (Moskva, 1939).

34 Vladimir Pičeta, *Osnovnye momenty istoričeskogo razvitija Zapadnoj Ukrainy i Zapadnoj Belorussii* (Moskva: Sotcegiz, 1940), p. 3.

35 Traditionally, the introduction would begin with a statement such as "Western Ukraine – the Halych Land and Volhynia – were eternal Ruthenian lands inhabited for time immemorial by Ukrainians and Russians. From the ninth to the eleventh centuries, they were part of the Kievan State. As we know, it was at this time that the Great Ruthenian, Ukrainian and Belarusian nations were formed and the might of the great Russian nation was forged". Cited in Dmitrij Min, *Zapadnaja Ukraina* (Moskva: Gospolitizdat, 1939), p. 4.

36 Boris Grekov, 'Drevnejšie sud'by Zapadnoj Ukrainy', *Novyj mir*, 10–11 (1939), 248–56 (here: 250). See also Marcin Wołoszyn, 'Zaraz po wojnie: z historii badań nad pograniczem polsko-ruskim w latach 1945–1956 (ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem grodów czerwieńskich)', *Przegląd Archeologiczny*, 65 (2017), 199–224 (here: 202).

the economy, hunger and oppression of the masses as well as widespread dissatisfaction, the circles ruling Poland began war with Germany [sic]".[37]

Picheta's expert knowledge was also used when it came to marking out the administrative border between the Ukrainian and Belarusian Soviet republics, taking into account the territories newly annexed by the Soviet Union. In mid-September 1939, Picheta prepared the extensive study "Article on the [history of] the southern border of the BSSR", with a copy being sent to AUCP(b) CC secretary Georgy Malenkov. In a note, the historian rejected the ethnographic criterion for defining borders used in the works of "bourgeois linguists [Alexei] Shakhmatov, [Yefim] Karsky, [Timofey] Florinskiy, [Aleksei] Sobolevski, [Mykhaily] Hrushevsky", and he described Hrushevsky's views as "nationalist-chauvinistic".[38] In Picheta's view, the borders between the Belarusian and Ukrainian Soviet republics should run in line with the "old" administrative boundaries. These "old" boundaries approximately coincided with the line dividing the Polish Crown from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and, after the partitions, the Grodno and Minsk governorates on one side and the Volhynian and Kiev ones on the other.

As well as Picheta, who represented the Soviet Academy of Sciences, a study was also prepared by a team of experts from the Belarusian Soviet republic's own academy, comprising Iosif Lochmel (historian), Moisei Grinblat (ethnographer), and Timofei Lomtev (linguist). The contents of this report and, most importantly, the conclusion were identical to the findings from Picheta's expert statement. The report compiled by the Belarusian experts noted that the border between the Belarusian and Ukrainian republics "should run along the southern boundary of the former Grodno and Minsk governorates, or – which essentially amounts to the same thing – with the southern boundary of the Polesia voivodeship of the former Polish state, excluding the Koszyrski district, which was previously part of the *Volhynia* voivodeship" (emphasis mine – J.Sz.).[39]

According to the memoirs of the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Belarusian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (CP(b)B), Panteleimon Ponomarenko, during his visit with Nikita Khrushchev (then first secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party) and Stalin on 22 November 1939, discussed the question of the administrative borders between the two

37 Pičeta, *Osnovnye momenty*, p. 126.

38 '№ 54, Dokladnaja zapiska V.I. Pičety v rukovodjaščie partijnye organy po voprosu razgraničenija territorij Belorussii i Ukrainy', in *Gosudarstvennye granicy Belarusi: sbornik dokumentov i materialov (nojabr' 1926 – dekabr' 2010)*, ed. by Vladimir Snapkovskij, Aleksandr Tichomirov, and Aleksandr Šarapo, 2 vols (Minsk: BGU, 2012–2013), II (2013), pp. 83–90.

39 Tlumachalaya zapiska 'Da pytannja ab ustalavannja mjaży pamiž BSSR i USSR na tèrytoryi Zachodnej Belarusi i Zachodnej Ukrainy' padryhtavanaia supracounikami AN BSSR, ne paz'nei nizh 20 XI 1939, in *Vyzvalenne i zanjavolenne. Pol'ska-belaruskae pamežža 1939–1941 hh. u dakumentach belaruskich archivaŭ*, ed. by Aljaksandr Smaljančuk (Minsk: Zmicer Kolas, 2021), pp. 96–100 (here: 100). The authors of the note incorrectly include the Koszyrski district in the Volhynia voivodeship, whereas in fact it belonged to the Polesia voivodeship of the Second Polish Republic.

republics. Records of entrances and exits from Stalin's office, however, show that Khrushchev and Ponomarenko visited the leader the following day, 23 November, entering together at 20.55 and leaving at 21.50.[40]

The initial plans entailed inclusion of Brest, Pinsk, Kobryn and most of the Białowieża Forest in the USSR. Ponomarenko claimed that Stalin deemed this division to be an "inappropriate nationality policy" during the audience, claiming that "public opinion will not understand it". As a result, the Soviet dictator drew a border on the map himself that was almost entirely consistent with Ponomarenko's proposals, based on the report by Picheta and the Belarusian Academy of Sciences experts, leaving the Koszyrski district with Kamień Koszyrski on the Ukraine side and a "small incision in the north" in a green part of the map. The reason for this was, apparently, to satisfy at least part of the Ukrainian Soviet republic's demand for wood.[41]

Picheta's expert work encompassed a broader range of assignments. On the request of the Soviet NKID, he was tasked with evaluating whether it was appropriate to return to the Lithuanian Republic archive materials and book collections taken to Minsk and Moscow from Vilnius in October 1939 (March 1940). As part of a commission appointed by the Central Archival Administration of the Soviet NKVD, he also verified around 20 tonnes of archives taken in December 1939 to the Central State Special Archive (June–July 1940) and issued opinions on the worthlessness of the division of exhibits from the Historical Museum in Grodno (October 1940).[42]

Despite this strong engagement in current political affairs as an expert, Picheta's position was still uncertain. In December 1939, the Belarusian NKVD people's commissar Lavrentiy Tsanava submitted several reports on the historian to the first secretary of the republic's party central committee, Ponomarenko. He informed about the scholar's critical evaluations of the Red Army and sympathies for Poland. In his diary in February 1945, Picheta confirms that in autumn 1939 he was accused of Polonophilia, which in those times was practically synonymous with anti-Sovietism.[43]

In the agent's materials, Picheta's comments, as recorded by NKVD informers, are as follows: "I do not agree with the policy of the Soviet authorities and will not agree, I can't stand them. Everywhere there are boors and nobody else. The USSR is a fascist torture chamber, not a socialist

40 *Na prieme u Stalina: tetradi, žurnaly zapisej lic, prinjatych I. V. Stalinym 1924–1953 gg.*, ed. by Anatolij Černobaev (Moskva: Novyj chronograf, 2008), p. 281.

41 Georgij Kumanev, *Rjadom so Stalinym. Otkrovennye svidetel'stva: vstreči, besedy, interv'ju, dokumenty* (Moskva: Bylina, 1999), pp. 298–300. Cited in '№ 55, Iz vospominanij byvšego pervogo Sekretarja CK Kompartii Belorussii P. K. Ponomarenko ob ustanovlenii gosudarstvennych granic meždu BSSR i USSR', in *Gosudarstvennye granicy Belarusi*, pp. 91–94.

42 Michail Šumejko, 'Naučno-pedagogičeskaja i obščestvennaja dejatel'nost' V.I. Pičety nakanune i v gody Velikoj Otečestvennoj vojny', in *Pičetovskie čtenija – 2020: vojny v istorii čelovečestva. K 75-letiju Pobedy nad fašizmom: materialy meždunarodnoj naučno-prakičeskoj konferencii, Minsk, 21 okt. 2020 g.*, ed. by Aleksandr Kochanovskij, Michail Šumejko, and Oleg Janovskij (Minsk: BGU, 2020), pp. 33–45 (here: 37, 39).

43 Szumski, 'Władimir Piczeta i Żanna Kormanowa', p. 154.

country. Everything they write in newspapers is idolatry and idiocy". Asked why he gave the authorities his support, Picheta answered: "I only do it to stay alive".[44]

Picheta's final entries in his diary soon before his death confirm just what a distorted world the "troubadours of the empire" of the time inhabited: "I worked for the good of the nation in the past, and again I'm working for a future 'socialist paradise' that will never come. This is demagogic delusion of the masses. We are great monks (Rus: molchalniki) who vow silence. We are allowed to sing 'Hallelujah' and 'Hosanna', but God forbid we tell the truth and say what is said in private, when you are certain that no one will inform on you".[45]

In late September and early October 1939, academic sessions were held in Moscow, Kyiv and Minsk at the headquarters of the Soviet, Ukrainian and Belarusian academies of sciences, with the papers being published soon afterwards in academic journals and joint publications.[46] The tone of the campaign was set by the Moscow scholars. Apart from Picheta and Grekov, a Soviet lawyer and full member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Ilya Trainin, contributed a major article, arguing after lengthy deliberations on the legality of the incorporation of the eastern lands of the Second Polish Republic that "the nations liberated by the Red Army joined the common family of Soviet nations, and there is no power today that could break this great voluntary alliance".[47]

The main thrust of the texts produced by Soviet historians from the Ukrainian and Belarusian Soviet republics was undisguised distaste towards the Polish state in its various incarnations, from ancient times to the Poland reborn in 1918. They repeated almost word for word the propaganda message about the "bankruptcy of the Polish state", the "monstrous bastard of the Versailles Treaty that existed at the cost of oppressed non-Polish nationalities", and about the war into which "imprudent rulers drove" the Polish people, and so on. They highlighted the artificial and even criminal nature of the former Republic, stressing the class and national oppression of the enslaved nations – the Ukrainians and Belarusians – chaos and anarchy, and lack of capacity for independent existence. The main idea of these works was clearly anti-Polish and anti-Western, with the historians' role reduced to legitimizing the official version of events.[48]

44 Šumejko, 'Naučno-pedagogičeskaja', p. 35.
45 Szumski, 'Władimir Piczeta i Żanna Kormanowa', p. 158.
46 See: Grekov, 'Drevnejšie sud'by Zapadnoj Ukrainy', pp. 248–56; *Zachodnjaja Belarus' pad panskm hnëtam i jae vyzvalenne*, ed. by Nikolaj Nikol'ski, and Iosif Ločmel' (Minsk, 1940); *Zachidna Ukrajina*, ed. by Serhij Bjelousov and Oleksandr Ohloblyn (Kyjiv: AN USSR, 1940).
47 Il'ja Trajnin, 'Nacional'noe i social'noe osvoboždenie Zapadnoj Ukrainy i Zapadnoj Belorussii', *Vestnik Akademii nauk SSSR*, 8–9 (1939), 1–24 (here: 24).
48 Nikolaj Mezga, 'Vossoedinenie Zapadnoj Belarusi s BSSR i Zapadnoj Ukrainy s USSR v otraženii sovetskoj istoriografii 1939–1941 gg.', *Časopis Belaruskaha dzjaržaŭnaha ŭniversytèta. Historyja*, 3 (2017), 55–60 (here: 59).

CONCLUSION

The practice of the operation of the apparatus of power in Soviet Russia and the USSR showed that without the help of "bourgeois specialists" or "poputchiks" the forced modernization of the economy and society could not be achieved. The same was true in research of history. Despite the emergence in the historical field of graduates of the Institute of Red Professors and the Sverdlov Communist University and other institutions with party ties that toed the party line, the new generation of regime historians (Rus. *vydvizhenetc*) were unable to ensure lasting academic foundations in accounting for the turn in perception of Russia's imperial heritage and its territorial expansion policy.

The experiences of exile and the awareness of constant threat had a major impact on the attitudes of the products of the old Russian historian school who survived the flames of revolution. The adoption of Marxist methodological tools formally completed the "ideological rebuilding" of the pre-revolutionary scholars, some of whom, incidentally, arrived at Marxism from the positivist and neo-positivist trends.

The paradigm of history that was built alluded in the civilizational dimension to the tradition of "Slavic community" with its roots in the period of Kievan Rus', emphasized the processes of Polonization and conversion to Catholicism, and underlined Ukrainians' and Belarusians' constant aspiration to join with the Great Russian. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania then was a state founded by Lithuanian liege lords as a result of conquest, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a state of Polish nobility and magnates where exploitation and oppression of enslaved nations were rife. The Ukrainians' and Belarusians' centuries of shared history as part of the former Commonwealth were seen as essentially wasted time, viewed solely in terms of national oppression and class struggle with the Polish magnatery. In this paradigm, the partitions of the Commonwealth were entirely justified, and inclusion of Ukrainian and Belarusian lands in the empire of the House of Romanov was a "historically progressive act".[49] Similar arguments were used to justify the Soviet aggression against Poland in September 1939.

[49] In the case of the history of the Ukrainian lands, the Pereiaslav Agreement of 1654 and Khmelnytsky's decision to join Tsarist Russia were treated as symbols of unity and a precursor of the ultimate unification of all Eastern Slavic lands under Moscow's control. The task of Ukrainian historians and ideologues was to present the alliance with Moscow as the culmination of Ukrainian history and reconcile the historical mythology of his nation with the imperial narrative of the centre. Serhij Jekel'čyk, *Imperija pam'jati. Rosijs'ko-ukrajins'ki stosunky v radjans'kij istoryčnij ujavi* (Kyjiv: Krytyka, 2008), pp. 69–70.

As one of the scholars dealing with the subject of East Slavic nations, Vladimir Picheta played a prominent role in expanding and elaborating the concept of the single (Rus. *yedinyi*) Ruthenian nation as a common progenitor for Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians. The political importance of this construction increased markedly in September 1939, when the Soviet aggression against Poland was treated no longer in terms of export of revolution and bringing help to the global proletariat but as an act of historical justice – combining the missing parts (Western Ukrainian and Western Belarusian) with Ukrainians, Belarusians and Russians into one whole.

In the new paradigm of history, the centuries-long common struggle of brethren nations with invaders ended with the unification of all lands within a uniform state organism. Despite continual curbs in the form of being part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania or Commonwealth, the entire course of history led to the three nations ultimately coming together into one whole. Kievan Rus', as the genesis of the Soviet Union, was reborn in the strengthened and expanded format of the "nations of the USSR" with a leading role for the Russian nation. History thus came full circle.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adibekov, Grant, Èleonora Šachnazarova, and Kirill Širinja, *Organizacionnaja struktura Kominterna, 1919-1943* (Moskva: ROSSPÈN, 1997)

Balcerak, Wiesław, ed., *Polsko-radzieckie stosunki kulturalne 1918–1939. Dokumenty i materiały* (Warszawa: 'Książka i wiedza', 1977)

Bayerlein, Bernhard H., *"Der Verräter, Stalin, bist Du!": Vom Ende der linken Solidarität. Komintern und kommunistische Parteien im Zweiten Weltkrieg 1939–1941* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2008)

Bjelousov, Serhij, and Oleksandr Ohloblyn, eds, *Zachidna Ukrajina* (Kyjiv: AN USSR, 1940)

Černobaev, Anatolij, ed., *Na prieme u Stalina: tetradi, žurnaly zapisej lic, prinjatych I. V. Stalinym 1924–1953 gg.* (Moskva: Novyj chronograf, 2008)

'"Da pytannja ab ustalavannja mjaży pamiž BSSR i USSR na tèrytoryi Zachodnej Belarusi i Zachodnej Ukrainy" padryhtavanaia supracounikami AN BSSR, ne paz'nei nizh 20 XI 1939', in *Vyzvalenne i zanjavolenne. Pol'ska-belaruskae pamežža 1939–1941 hh. u dakumentach belaruskich archivaŭ*, ed. by Aljaksandr Smaljančuk (Minsk: Zmicer Kolas, 2021), pp. 96–100

Deborin, Grigorij, and others, eds, *Istorija vtoroj mirovoj vojny 1939-1945. Zaroždenie vojny. Bor'ba progressivnych sil za sochranenie mira*, 12 vols (Moskva: Voenizdat, 1973–1982), I (1973)

Dimitroff, Georgi, *Tagebücher 1933–1943* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2000)

Gąsiorowska-Grabowska, Natalia, and Iwan Chrienow, eds, *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich. Maj 1926 - grudzień 1932*, 12 vols (Warszawa: 'Książka i Wiedza', 1963–1986), V (1966)

Geller, Michail, *Mašina i vintiki. Istorija formirovanija sovetskogo čeloveka* (London: Overseas Publications Interchange Ltd, 1985)

Gontarczyk, Piotr, *Polska Partia Robotnicza. Droga do władzy 1941–1944* (Warszawa: Fronda PL, 2003)

Grekov, Boris, 'Drevnejšie sud'by Zapadnoj Ukrainy', *Novyj mir*, 10–11 (1939), 248–56

Ilgiewicz, Henryka, *Instytut Naukowo-Badawczy Europy Wschodniej oraz Szkoła Nauk Politycznych* w *Wilnie (1930-1939)* (Warszawa: Scholar, 2019)

Jekel'čyk, Serhij, *Imperija pam'jati. Rosijs'ko-ukrajins'ki stosunky v radjans'kij istoryčnij ujavi* (Kyjiv: Krytyka, 2008)

Jusova, Natalija, *Henezys koncepciji davn'orus'koji narodnosti v istoryčnij nauci SRSR (1930-ti – perša polovyna 1940-ch rr.)* (Vinnycja: TOV Konsol', 2005)

Ken, Oleg, '"Alarm wojenny" wiosną 1930 roku a stosunki sowiecko-polskie', *Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, 35 (2000), 41–74

Ken, Oleg, 'Karl Radek i Bjuro meždunarodnoj informacii CK VKP(b), 1932–1934 gg.', *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 44 (2003), 135–77

Kornat, Marek, *Polska szkoła sowietologiczna 1930–1939* (Kraków: Arcana, 2003)

Krivošeev, Jurij, 'Boris Dmitrievič Grekov i "Akademičeskoe delo"', *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta. Istorija*, 4 (2016), 237–58

Kumanev, Georgij, *Rjadom so Stalinym. Otkrovennye svidetel'stva: vstreči, besedy, interv'ju, dokumenty* (Moskva: Bylina, 1999)

Lebedev, Vladimir, Boris Grekov, and Sergej Bachrušin, eds, *Istorija SSSR. S drevnejšich vremen do konca XVIII v.: učebnik dlja istoričeskich fakul'tetov gosudarstvennych universitetov i pedagogičeskich institutov*, 2 vols (Moskva: Socèkgiz, 1939), I

Lebedeva, Natalija, 'Sentjabr' 1939 g: Pol'ša meždu Germaniej i SSSR', *Vestnik MGIMO-Universiteta*, 4 (2009), 231–50

Lebiediewa, Natalia, 'Komintern i Polska w latach 1919–1943', in *W drodze do władzy. Struktury komunistyczne realizujące politykę Rosji sowieckiej i ZSRS wobec Polski, (1917–1945)*, ed. by Elżbieta Kowalczyk and Konrad Rokicki (Warszawa: IPN, 2019), pp. 163–210

Leinwand, Aleksandra J., 'Z dziejów eksportu propagandy: Komintern w wojnie z Polska w 1920 roku', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 111:4 (2004), 83–107

Libera, Paweł, 'Polityczne aspekty funkcjonowania Instytutu Naukowo-Badawczego Europy Wschodniej i Szkoły Nauk Politycznych w Wilnie (1930–1939)', *Dzieje Najnowsze*, 53:4 (2021), 67–84

Lindnèr, Rajnèr, *Historyki i ŭlada. Nacyjatvorčy pracès i histaryčnaja palityka ŭ Belarusi XIX–XX st.* (Sankt-Pecjarburh: Neŭski prascjah, 2005)

Malicki, Jan, and Andrzej Pukszto, eds, *Instytut Naukowo-Badawczy Europy Wschodniej w Wilnie (1930–1939). Idee – ludzie – dziedzictwo* (Warszawa: WUW, 2020)

Mezga, Nikolaj, 'Vossoedinenie Zapadnoj Belarusi s BSSR i Zapadnoj Ukrainy s USSR v otraženii sovetskoj istoriografii 1939–1941 gg.', *Časopis Belaruskaha dzjaržaŭnaha ŭniversytèta. Historyja*, 3 (2017), 55–60

Min, Dmitrij, *Zapadnaja Ukraina* (Moskva: Gospolitizdat, 1939)

Musiał, Bogdan, 'Trudne początki zbliżenia niemiecko-sowieckiego', in *Geneza paktu*, pp. 72–74

Nevežin, Vladimir, *"Esli zavtra v pochod...": podgotovka k voyne i ideologicheskaya propaganda v 30-h-40-h godach* (Moskva: Èksmo, 2007)

Nevežin, Vladimir, *Sindrom nastupatel'noj vojny. Sovetskaja propaganda v preddverii "svjaščennych boev", 1939–1941 gg.* (Moskva: AIRO-XX, 1997)

Niewieżyn, Władimir A., *Tajne plany Stalina: propaganda sowiecka w przededniu wojny z Trzecią Rzeszą 1939–1941*, trans. by Jan J. Bruski, (Kraków: Arcana, 2001)

Nikol'ski, Nikolaj, and Iosif Ločmel', eds, *Zachodnjaja Belarus' pad panskm hnëtam i jae vyzvalenne* (Minsk, 1940)

'Nr 6. 1933 grudzień 3, Moskwa – Załącznik do informacji Karola Radka skierowanej do Stalina dotyczącej nowego etapu w stosunkach polsko-sowieckich', in *Geneza paktu Hitler-Stalin. Fakty i propaganda*, ed. by Bogdan Musiał and Jan Szumski (Warszawa: IPN, 2012), pp. 125–30

'№ 54, Dokladnaja zapiska V.I. Pičety v rukovodjaščie partijnye organy po voprosu razgraničenija territorij Belorussii i Ukrainy', in *Gosudarstvennye granicy Belarusi: sbornik dokumentov i materialov, (nojabr' 1926 – dekabr' 2010)*, ed. by Vladimir Snapkovskij, Aleksandr Tichomirov, and Aleksandr Šarapo, 2 vols (Minsk: BGU, 2012–2013), II (2013), pp. 83–90

'№ 55, Iz vospominanij byvšego pervogo Sekretarja CK Kompartii Belorussii P.K. Ponomarenko ob ustanovlenii gosudarstvennych granic meždu BSSR i USSR', in *Gosudarstvennye granicy Belarusi*, pp. 91–94

Pičeta, Vladimir, 'Brat'ja-ukraincy i brat'ja-belorusy: (iz istorii narodov Ukrainy i Belorussii)', *Izvestija*, 21 September 1939

Pičeta, Vladimir, 'Istoričeskie sud'by Zapadnoj Belorussii', in *Zapadnaja Belorussija. Sbornik statej: kniga 1* (Minsk: BGI, 1927)

Pičeta, Vladimir, 'Istoričeskij put' narodov Zapadnoj Ukrainy i Zapadnoj Belorussii', *Oktjabr'*, 10/11 (1939), 3–11

Pičeta, Vladimir, 'Istoričeskij put' Zapadnoj Belorussii i Zapadnoj Ukrainy', *Molodoj bol'ševik*, 18 (1939), 45–50

Pičeta, Vladimir, 'Osnovnye momenty v istoričeskich sud'bach narodov Zapadnoj Ukrainy i Zapadnoj Belorussii', *Istorik-marksist*, 5/6 (1939), 67–98

Pičeta, Vladimir, 'Zapadnaja Belorussija: istoričeskaja spravka', *Moskovskij bol'ševik*, 30 September 1939

Pičeta, Vladimir, *Istoričeskij put' Zapadnoj Ukrainy i Zapadnoj Belorussii*, Mikrofonnye materialy Vsesojuznogo radiokomiteta № 114 (Moskva, 1939)

Pičeta, Vladimir, *Osnovnye momenty istoričeskogo razvitija Zapadnoj Ukrainy i Zapadnoj Belorussii* (Moskva: Sotcegiz, 1940)

Pičeta, Vladimir, *Programma special'nogo kursa po istorii Belorussii i Ukrainy* (Moskva: MGU, 1938)

'Podgotovka germanskogo napadenija na Pol'šu: iz Sbornika perevodov agenturnych donesenij po voenno-političeskim voprosam 5 Upravlenija RKKA, 4 ijunja 1939', in *Voennaja razvedka informiruet. Dokumenty Razvedupravlenija Krasnoj Armii. Janvar' 1939-ijun' 1941 g.*, ed. by Viktor Gavrilov (Moskva: Meždunarodnyj fond "Demokratija", 2008), pp. 104–05

Puchalski, Jacek, 'Instytut Naukowego Badania Komunizmu w Warszawie (1930–1939). Program, organizacja, zbiory prace księgoznawcze', in *Bibliologia polityczna. Praca zbiorowa*, ed. by Dariusz Kuźmina (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SBP, 2011), pp. 214–43

Sacewicz, Karol, *Komunizm i antykomunizm w II Rzeczypospolitej: państwo–społeczeństwo – partie* (Olsztyn: Instytut Historii i Stosunków Międzynarodowych Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, 2016)

Šumejko, Michail, 'Naučno-pedagogičeskaja i obščestvennaja dejatel'nost' V.I. Pičety nakanune i v go dy Velikoj Otečestvennoj vojny', in *Pičetovskie čtenija – 2020: vojny v istorii čelovečestva. K 75-letijuPobedy nad fašizmom: materialy meždunarodnoj naučno-prakičeskoj konferencii, Minsk, 21 okt. 2020 g.*, ed. by Aleksandr Kochanovskij, Michail Šumejko, and Oleg Janovskij (Minsk: BGU, 2020), pp. 33–45

Szumski, Jan, 'Władimir Piczeta i Żanna Kormanowa: przyczynek do polsko-radzieckich relacji naukowych', *Rozprawy z Dziejów Oświaty*, 47 (2010), 129–58

Szumski, Jan, *Polityka a historia: ZSRR wobec nauki historycznej w Polsce w latach 1945–1964* (Warszawa: Aspra-Jr, 2016)

Thompson, Ewa M., 'Nationalist Propaganda in the Soviet Russian Press, 1939–1941', *Slavic Review*, 50 (1991), 385–99

Thompson, Ewa M., *Imperial Knowledge. Russian Literature and Colonialism* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000)

Thompson, Ewa M., *Trubadurzy imperium. Literatura rosyjska i kolonializm*, trans. by Anna Sierszulska (Kraków: Universitas, 2000)

Trajnin, Il'ja, 'Nacional'noe i social'noe osvoboždenie Zapadnoj Ukrainy i Zapadnoj Belorussii', *Vestnik Akademii nauk SSSR*, 8–9 (1939), 1–24

Valkenier, Elizabeth K., 'Stalinizing polish Historiography: What Soviet Archives Disclose', *East European Politics and Societies*, 7 (1992), 109–34

Wołoszyn, Marcin, 'Zaraz po wojnie: z historii badań nad pograniczem polsko-ruskim w latach 1945-1956 (ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem grodów czerwieńskich)', *Przegląd Archeologiczny*, 65 (2017), 199–224

Kati Parppei
"IMPUDENT PROVOCATION BY FINNISH WARMONGERS" – THE SHELLING OF MAINILA (1939) IN THE CONTEXT OF SOVIET/RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA AND INFORMATION WARFARE

ABSTRACT

The shelling of Mainila in November 1939 was used as a pretext by the Soviet Union to start a war against Finland and is often presented in military history as a classic case of a false-flag operation. This article examines this incident in the context of Soviet propaganda, post-Soviet history politics, and contemporary Russian war propaganda and rhetoric. It argues that the same strategies – blaming others for provocation, "accusation in a mirror", and systematically emphasizing one's innocence –applied by Soviet newspapers to their reportage of this "provocation" are applied by Russian propagandists in the contemporary domestic and international media environment.

KEYWORDS:

Soviet Union, Russia, war, propaganda, political uses of history

KATI PARPPEI

historian and a university lecturer (title of docent) in the Department of Geographical and Historical Studies at the University of Eastern Finland. Her interests include the history of mentalities and ideas, image studies, Russian history, and borderland issues.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4322-9046

INTRODUCTION

On 26 November 1939, according to the established view, the Red Army shelled the small border village of Mainila. This false flag operation was the starting point for a war between the Soviet Union and Finland and was also the endpoint in the longer process of the former putting pressure on the latter, which was trying to retain its neutrality and integrity in the face of growing international tensions. Before the incident, basing its claims on its need to protect Leningrad, the Soviet Union had tried to persuade Finland to move the border westward, away from Leningrad, as well as to cede certain islands to the Soviet Union and lease Hanko peninsula to be used as a Soviet naval base. Some land in Eastern Karelia was offered in exchange. These requests were part of demands that were presented to Finland from 1938 onwards and were intended to ensure that this country would not become a bridgehead for hostile acts by Germany, Britain or France towards the Soviet Union. Finland refused the deal. Soon, the Soviet Union declared that a Finnish military provocation had taken place in Mainila, claiming the lives of four men and wounding nine.[1]

Based on this claim, on the same day the foreign minister of the Soviet Union, Viachestlav Molotov, sent a note to Finland's envoy in Moscow, Aarno Yrjö-Koskinen. In this note it was announced that basing troops near Leningrad was a hostile act which had now led to an attack and that the Finnish troops should immediately be withdrawn farther from the border. On 27 November, Yrjö-Koskinen conveyed the Finnish government's reply, which noted that explosions had indeed been reported by the Finnish border guard but that all the Finnish artillery was placed too far from the border for any shots to reach the Soviet Union. Also, it was suggested that the case should be investigated in cooperation between Soviet and Finnish border officials and that all troops, both Finnish and Soviet, should be transferred to an equal distance from the border.[2]

Molotov answered that the reply reflected "the deep hostility of Finnish government towards the Soviet Union" and would inevitably lead to extreme escalation of the tensions between these two countries. Further, the note announced that

1 See, for instance, *Dokumenty vnešnej politiki SSSR, 1939. Sentjabr'-dekabr'*, 2 vols (Moskva: Meždunarodnye otnošenija, 1992), II; Carl van Dyke, *The Soviet Invasion of Finland 1939–40* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 14–24; Robert Edwards, *The Winter War: Russia's Invasion of Finland, 1939–1940* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2008), pp. 76–106; Ohto Manninen, *The Soviet Plans for the North Western Theatre of Operations in 1939–1944* (Helsinki: National Defence College, 2004), pp. 7–11.

2 Van Dyke, *The Soviet Invasion of Finland 1939–40*, p. 24. See also Väinö Tanner, *Olin ulkoministerinä talvisodan aikana* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1979), pp. 122–24.

> The fact that the Finnish government denies that Finnish troops fired on Soviet troops with artillery fire, causing victims, can only be explained as a means for misleading public opinion and mocking the victims of the attack. Only a lack of a sense of responsibility and a contemptuous attitude towards public opinion can have dictated this attempt to explain this hideous incident as a Soviet artillery drill on the border that was visible to the Finnish troops.[3]

Also, the note concluded that the goal of the Finnish government was to keep Leningrad under threat and that the suggestion of a mutual retreat of troops from the border was unrealistic due to the close proximity of this city.[4] On 29 November, the Soviet Union announced its withdrawal from the nonaggression pact that had been signed in 1932; the next day, Russia invaded Finland and bombed Helsinki without an explicit declaration of war (ultimately, this act led to the expelling of the Soviet Union from the League of Nations). On 1 December, the Soviet Union also announced the foundation of "the People's Revolutionary Government of Finland" as the official socialist government it was having diplomatic relations with. This puppet government was formed of Soviet citizens and leftist "red" Finns who had escaped to the Soviet Union after the Finnish Civil War in 1918.[5]

The war between the Soviet Union and Finland is known as the Winter War and it ended with the Moscow Peace Treaty in March 1940, after a Soviet breakthrough at the Karelian Isthmus. Finland suffered heavy territorial losses that exceeded the Soviet Union's pre-war demands. Nevertheless, Finland's resistance had surprised the Red Army, which also suffered heavy losses.[6] In 1941–44, the hostilities between the Soviet Union and Finland were renewed, with Finland being supported by Germany.

The official Soviet view that Finland had been the aggressor that caused the Winter War did not waver. However, in May 1994, President Boris Yeltsin held a press conference in Moscow together with the President of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari, during which he admitted that

3 See, for instance, Tanner, *Olin ulkoministerinä talvisodan aikana*, p. 124. See also 'Telegramma vremennogo poverennogo v delach SSSR v Finljandii M.G. Judanova v Narodnyj komissariat inostrannych del SSSR, 27 nojabrja 1939', in *Dokumenty vnešnej politiki SSSR, 1939*, II, pp. 342–43.

4 Tanner, *Olin ulkoministerinä talvisodan aikana*, p. 125.

5 'Soobščenie ob ustanovlenii diplomatičeskich otnošenij meždu SSSR i Finljandskoj Demokratičeskoj Respublikoj', 2 dekabrja 1939', in *Dokumenty vnešnej politiki SSSR, 1939*, II, p. 355; Edwards, *The Winter War*, pp. 107, 114–16.

6 Edwards, *The Winter War*, pp. 272–82; Pasi Tuunainen, *Finnish Military Effectiveness in the Winter War 1939–1940* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), passim.

the Winter War was a result of Stalin's aggressive politics.[7] The opening of Russian archives during the 1990s had also revealed that detailed plans to attack Finland had been ready by the end of November 1939, and Andrei Zhdanov, according to his notes, had been active in preparing this (also, in 1985, the Russian historian Igor Bunich had interviewed a retired general who said that his group had been testing a new secret projectile in Mainila and had received precise orders regarding where and how to do this; however, as the general had died in 1986, it was not possible to get more detailed information about this after the dissolution of the Soviet Union).[8] Since then, there has been a kind of silent consensus on the matter.

However, quite recently, the issue of the shelling of Mainila has occasionally been brought forward once again, partly due to the 80th anniversary of the beginning of the Winter War in 2019. The innocence of Finland in starting the war was questioned in several Russian articles and blogs in the latter half of the 2010s. These texts were authored by individuals, but in some cases they were connected to state authorities.

In this article, I will first examine the reportage of this incident in the contemporary Soviet media and the means used to justify it when describing the "provocation" and the "response" to it amongst the people. I will leave aside the treatment of the incident in the media outside the Soviet Union, as the focus is on how the Soviet audience was persuaded to accept mobilization using the alleged shelling as a *casus belli*.

However, it should be pointed out that the Soviet diplomats kept a watchful eye on how the escalation of the "Finnish question" was represented abroad, with the intention of influencing the issue and reporting the situation to the commissary of foreign affairs. For instance, in this correspondence, the British and American media were reprehended for their "anti-Soviet" treatment of the event before and especially after the Soviet invasion of Finland as they considered the Soviet government's desire to seize Finnish territory to be the root cause of the events.[9] Also, as part of this contemporary information warfare, Molotov, in his letter to the Secretary-general of the League of Nations, Joseph Avenol, on 4 December 1939,

7 Despite my efforts, I did not manage to find a report of the press conference. For a secondary reference, see, for instance, Pekka Nevalainen, 'Many Karelias', *Virtual Finland*, November 2001, <https://web.archive.org/web/20060814015731/http://newsroom.finland.fi/netcomm/news/showarticle.asp?intNWSAID=25907> [accessed 29 August 2022].

8 See, for instance, Ohto Manninen, *Stalinin kiusa – Himmlerin täi. Sota-ajan pieni Suomi maailman silmissä ja arkistojen kätköissä* (Helsinki: Edita, 2002), pp. 29–33.

9 See, for instance, 'Telegramma polnomočnogo predstavitelja SSSR v Velikobritanii I.M. Majskogo narodnomu komissaru inostrannych del SSŠR V. M. Molotovu, 27 nojabrja 1939', in *Dokumenty vnešnej politiki SSSR, 1939*, II, pp. 340–42; 'Telegramma polnomočnogo predstavitelja SSSR v SŠA K.A. Umanskogo v Narodnyj komissariat inostrannych del SSSR, 30 nojabrja 1939', *Dokumenty vnešnej politiki SSSR, 1939*, II, pp. 353–54; 'Telegramma polnomočnogo predstavitelja SSSR v SŠA K. A. Umanskogo v Narodnyj komissariat inostrannych del SSSR, 2 dekabrja 1939', in *Dokumenty vnešnej politiki SSSR, 1939*, II, pp. 359–60. See also van Dyke, *The Soviet Invasion of Finland 1939–40*, pp. 26–27.

emphasized that "the Soviet Union is not in a state of war with Finland and does not threaten the Finnish people with war" (basing his claim on the diplomatic relations with "the People's Revolutionary Government of Finland"); therefore, according to him, the Finnish diplomat Rudolf Holsti's attempt to hold the Soviet Union accountable for the attack on Finland was groundless.[10]

Furthermore, I will look into more recent interpretations of this issue in Russian media in the context of attempts to control representations of history concerning the decisions and activities of the Soviet Union and the Red Army during the Second World War. Finally, I will briefly consider the case of the Mainila shelling in the context of Russian military doctrine, propaganda, and information warfare.

PREPARING THE GROUND FOR WAR

The early Soviet regime relied on getting its message through to the common consciousness. At first, activities aimed at consolidating Soviet ideology amongst the people and mobilizing them to work for it were called agitation. However, this later developed into propaganda which was distributed openly in diverse forms. During the 1930s, Soviet propaganda took a new turn: stories of contemporary heroes on one hand and sheer patriotism on the other became the basis of the new mass culture.[11] This setting was a fine foundation for war propaganda, even though, in early autumn 1939, the Soviet newspapers reported something else: a military nonaggression pact with Hitler's Germany. However, tensions were simultaneously growing between the Soviet Union and Finland, and the image of Finland as a vicious and reactionary nation was being reinforced in Soviet media.[12]

Apparently, as Väinö Tanner, the foreign minister of Finland in 1939–40, admits in hindsight in his memoirs, the Finnish politicians had not quite grasped the political significance of Soviet propaganda, thus underestimating and misreading the increasing and intensifying denigration of Finland and its government in Soviet media preceding the Mainila incident. Instead of understanding that the message was primarily aimed at the Soviet audience in order to justify the upcoming war, Finnish politicians considered it as a means to pressure Finland to agree with the demands of the Soviet

10 'Telegramma narodnogo komissara inostrannych del SSSR V.M. Molotova general'nomu sekretarju Ligi nacij Ž. Avenolju, 4 dekabrja 1939', in *Dokumenty vnešnej politiki SSSR, 1939*, II, pp. 364–65.
11 Karel C. Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda During World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 2–4, 7–9.
12 See, for instance, Edwards, *The Winter War*, pp. 98–99.

Union.[13] The coverage given to the "provocation" between 27 and 30 November in the newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* indeed indicates the importance of the issue to Soviet propagandists; it was presented as an acute matter concerning the whole Soviet nation, and the first and second pages of these issues were dedicated to it (in general, from the 1930s onwards, Soviet newspapers concentrated on providing building blocks for Soviet identity, and any news of what was going on in other parts of the world was printed on the fifth page).[14]

On 27 November, the day following the alleged incident, both *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* were already reporting it at full blast. *Pravda* published the headline "Impudent provocation by Finnish warmongers", while *Izvestiia's* main headline concerning the issue was "The Soviet people are angered by the impudent provocation by Finnish warmongers". Both newspapers published a short description of how seven artillery shots had been unexpectedly fired from the Finnish side on a Soviet unit near the village of Mainila. Four had died, according to the newspaper, and nine wounded. Colonel Tikhomirov had been called upon to carry out an investigation at the site. The provocation had caused deep anger amongst the locals, the newspaper concluded.[15]

In both *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, the whole text of Molotov's first note to the Finnish government was published, which is a clear indication of the dual purpose of the notes related to the incident: in addition to international communication, they were aimed at preparing public opinion for actual military operations and mobilization.[16] In the case of the Mainila shelling, the "provocation" was indeed immediately used to stir up an angry response amongst the people. What is interesting is that on 27 November, only a day after the alleged incident, the newspapers were already full of reports of workers' meetings and interviews on the issue all over the country, which indeed suggests that a propaganda plan utilizing a "provocation" had already existed well before 26 November, perhaps created by Zhdanov (how the readers interpreted this almost real-time reportage remains unknown).[17]

Numerous alleged announcements by diverse collectives and interviews with Soviet workers from various factories were published in Soviet newspapers. All of these texts were quite homogenic and rhetorically very similar, so summarizing them systematically one by one is not practical for our purpose; instead, some examples will give an adequate idea

13 Tanner, *Olin ulkoministerinä talvisodan aikana*, pp. 114, 122.
14 Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, p. 9.
15 *Pravda*, 27 November 1939, p. 2; *Izvestija*, 27 November 1939, p. 2.
16 Ibid.
17 Manninen, *Stalinin kiusa – Himmlerin täi*, p. 30.

of the rhetoric and style. For instance, in *Pravda*, Comrade Egorov from a car factory in Moscow was reported as saying: "Our answer is simple and clear: if the overreactive 'knaves' [*voiaki*, a word often used to refer to Finnish soldiers in these articles] do not stop, our Red Army will deliver them a true counterpunch. We will not forgive them shedding the blood of our beloved soldiers and commanders".[18] An announcement from workers of the same factory reflected the mood the Soviet government wanted to spread: "Down with the warmongers! We all, as one, will defend the socialist fatherland".[19]

Izvestiia was flooded with similar announcements. For instance, in a text titled "Finnish warmongers are playing a dangerous game", Comrade Nefesov from another factory in Moscow was reported to have said that "the peaceful politics of the Soviet administration are known all over the world", but any border violations would have consequences:

> We accept the demand of the Soviet administration that Finnish troops have to be removed from the border. If needed, by the call of the Party and the administration, we are ready at any minute to protect our beloved native country.[20]

Besides this message, which was repeated in all the announcements by the workers, it was pointed out, for instance, that the Finnish government was incompetent, "had lost its mind", and that the ministers were mere marionets who had been paid to arrange the provocation, while the Finnish peasants and workers did not want a war.[21]

Similar articles, interviews and announcements were published on 28 November. In both newspapers, two crammed pages were dedicated to the "provocation". The main headline on the first page of *Pravda* announced that "The note by the Soviet administration is widely supported by the whole nation", while the second page declared "The provocation of Finnish warmongers aroused the anger and indignation of the whole Soviet people".[22] *Izvestiia's* main headlines were, respectively, "The anger of Soviet people grows" and "The workers single-mindedly demand a comprehensive reply to presumptuous Finnish warmongers".[23] The other headlines in the newspapers declared, for instance, "The terrible anger of Soviet people", "Let the adventurers blame themselves", "There is a limit to patience", "Look out, marionets", "Restrain the arrogant provocateurs", "Starters of

18 *Pravda*, 27 November 1939, p. 2.
19 Ibid.
20 *Izvestija*, 27 November 1939, p.2.
21 *Pravda*, 27 November 1939, p. 2; see also *Izvestija*, 27 November 1939, p. 2.
22 *Pravda*, 28 November 1939, pp. 1–2.
23 *Izvestija*, 28 November 1939, pp. 1–2.

war end up badly" and "Stop the rampage of the bandits!"[24] Some articles already referred to actual military activities as a response to the alleged provocation, informing, for instance, that "The Baltic fleet of the Red Army is ready to crush the enemy".[25] In *Izvestiia*, Comrade Petrushenko, a soldier working at the border, was reported to have said that "We accept comprehensive action by the Soviet administration and assure our readiness to once again show the power of Soviet weapons".[26]

The collective hubris and aggression was reported to be getting stronger: "The pitiful leaders of Finland forgot that the Soviet border is sacred and inviolable. The ridiculous fools of the Finnish administration did not learn any lessons from the sad experiences of Polish landlords", Comrade Sorokin from the "Elektrosila" factory was reported to have said.[27] Workers of another factory announced:

> We do not want war, but we are ready for war. The peaceable work of the great Soviet nation is protected by our mighty, invincible Red Army, which is by any minute ready to wipe the warmongers from the face of the earth.[28]

The other interviewees reminded readers that the "Finnish knaves" had forgotten that the Soviet people can "destroy them, crush them like bugs".[29] Finnish leaders were repeatedly called warmongers and accused of imperialism, playing with fire, and humouring their "Western European masters"; they were reminded that the Finnish people do not support them.[30]

On 29 November, both newspapers published the reply to the first Soviet note from the Finnish government – in which the involvement of the Finnish troops was denied and negotiations called for – as well as Molotov's reply, dated 28 November, which was mentioned in the "Introduction" of this article.[31] It is interesting that the Finnish government's polite and somewhat level-headed reply was published together with Molotov's reaction that blamed it for reflecting deep hatred towards the Soviet Union; so, apparently, the publishers had confidence in their readers' ability to interpret the Finnish representation of the matter in the "proper" light after exposure to long-term propaganda concerning the Finnish government and its relations with the Soviet Union.

24 *Pravda*, 28 November 1939, pp. 1–2; *Izvestija*, 28 November 1939, pp. 1–2.
25 *Pravda*, 28 November 1939, p. 1.
26 *Izvestija*, 28 November 1939, p. 1.
27 *Pravda*, 28 November 1939, pp. 1–2.
28 Ibid., p. 2.
29 Ibid., p. 1
30 Ibid., pp. 1–2.
31 *Pravda*, 29 November 1939, p. 1; *Izvestija*, 29 November 1939, p. 1.

Two pages in both newspapers were dedicated once again to announcements by diverse collectives, the main headline in *Pravda* announcing: "Solid demand of the Soviet people: give a crushing and destructive blow to the Finnish warmongers!"[32] In *Izvestiia* it was announced that "The false and ruthless note from the Finnish administration aroused an explosion of anger and fury in the Soviet people".[33] Now the tone was even more aggressive than in the articles published in the previous days, emphasizing imagery of the enemy with headlines such as "The Red Army will destroy the overreaching bandits", "Wipe the Finnish adventurers off the earth", "Rabid dogs will be destroyed", "Destroy the disgusting gang" and "Woe to those who arouse the rage of the Soviet people!"[34]

Finns were threatened by the wrath of the Soviet people in numerous ways and also ridiculed: "Clowns dressed in uniforms of knaves are larking at our borders. The pitiful dwarves, they suggest that the great Socialist country would withdraw the troops of the glorious Red Army and expose the route to Lenin's city".[35] Once again, the "West" in the background was brought out; for instance, Comrade Kazantsev, a worker from a factory in Moscow, was reported as saying:

> We were too lenient with Finland. How many times has the Soviet Union patiently and persistently suggested to the headstrong Finnish leaders: "Let us live in peace and harmony". The Finnish political gamblers, encouraged by the West, shouted like cockfighters: "no, we do not want to!"[36]

Also, there was a piece of fresh news entitled "New provocations by Finnish warmongers", describing how a Russian patrol had been fired on near the border on 28 November by a group of Finnish soldiers, three of whom ended up captives when more Russians arrived for assistance. Shots were reported to have been fired from the Finnish side towards Russia on two separate occasions, the second being followed by an attempt by Finnish soldiers to cross the border to the Russian side.[37]

32 *Pravda*, 29 November 1939, p. 2.
33 *Izvestija*, 29 November 1939, p. 2.
34 *Pravda*, 29 November 1939, p. 2; *Izvestija*, 29 November 1939, p. 2.
35 *Izvestija*, 29 November 1939, p. 1.
36 *Pravda*, 29 November 1939, p. 2.
37 Ibid., p. 1, see also *Izvestija*, 29 November 1939, p. 1.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE WAR

On 30 November, the newspapers published Molotov's radio address from the previous day. In the address he blamed the Finnish government for "indulging in revolting provocations" and having "an uncompromising and hostile attitude" that was backed by "foreign imperialists who stir up hatred against the Soviet Union". According to Molotov, the Finnish government had shown its inability to "maintain normal relations" and, despite the suspicions expressed in the hostile foreign press, the Soviet Union had never cherished any intentions to annex Finnish territory, claiming anything else was "malicious slander". As nothing was expected from the Finnish government but "fresh insolent provocation", the Soviet Government considered itself released from the Treaty of Non-aggression, which had been "irresponsibly violated by the Finnish government". Also, Soviet diplomats residing in Finland were recalled.[38]

However – as there was no official declaration of war – the other texts continued with the same style as in the issues of the preceding days; however, there were less of them now. Apparently, it was considered that the reportage on Mainila incident had served its propagandistic purpose for preparing the people for the upcoming military conflict. The rhetoric, once again, emphasized that the Soviet administration represented the "voice of the whole nation", that the fury expressed by the people was righteous and even "sacred" (as were the borders of the Soviet Union), and that the army was in full readiness to protect the nation.[39] Likewise, the newspapers kept on emphasizing the essential "otherness" of the enemy; for instance, in *Pravda* there was a title "Finnish pigs must not push their snouts into the Soviet garden".[40]

Pravda also published a short article describing the atmosphere in Helsinki, describing the increased military activity in the city and the "anti-Soviet" tone of the newspapers. "In the spirit of the note from the Finnish government, [they] distort all the facts". Also, there was a note on how German newspapers had reported on the "provocation by Finnish warmongers". It was noted that the German press considered the interests of the Soviet Union completely natural and stated that Finland had refused to cooperate with the Soviet Union due to its policy of neutrality. "But here the deceitfulness of the government of Finland could already be seen, as the agreement on cooperation would not have required abandoning the policy of neutrality if that policy had not been used against

38 *Pravda*, 30 November 1939, p. 1; *Izvestija*, 30 November 1939, p. 1.
39 *Pravda*, 30 November 1939, pp. 1–2; *Izvestija*, 30 November 1939, pp. 1–2.
40 *Pravda*, 30 November 1939, p. 2.

the Soviet Union".[41] These statements were aligned with the contemporary political situation between Germany and the Soviet Union, which was sealed for the time being with the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact. Even though the actual threat to the Soviet Union was Germany, this was not explicitly mentioned; also, in *Pravda's* articles the faceless operator of "marionets" – that is, the Finnish leaders – was generalized as the capitalist and imperialist "West".

To sum everything up, several purposes for the dire representation of the "provocation" and the alleged response in the profoundly propagandistic Soviet newspapers can be detected:

1. The widespread publication of news articles regarding the staged incident together with the preceding propaganda concerning Finland provided a proper excuse to start a war because, according to the orthodox socialist world view, aggressive and imperialistic war-waging was out of the question. Presenting the incident as an unquestionable threat aimed at the Soviet people and nation – and especially Leningrad – was the *casus belli* that was needed for action.
2. Emphasizing the workers' response underlined and boosted the collective nature of the upcoming military efforts: essentially, it was the Soviet people as a whole which was threatened by Finland, and the same people as a collective was represented as willing to defend itself and its native country. This attempted mobilization of the people is in line with the war propaganda in Soviet newspapers from 1941 onwards.[42] In light of Soviet protocol, it was crucial that the people was represented as giving its full approval to any action the Soviet administration considered necessary, including military interventions. Bringing forth the alleged unity of the Soviet administration and people also created a contrast to how Finland was represented: its reckless leaders waging war and ignoring the people's interests, and foreign states meddling in the issues of the country in the background. This juxtaposition of order against chaos, unity against disunity, was an effective propagandistic and rhetorical tool.

41 Ibid., p. 5.
42 Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, pp. 9–12.

3. The newspapers were effectively spreading enemy imagery against Finns or, more precisely, against the Finnish government and army, as the Soviet Union wanted to present itself as an ally for the Finnish working people. The dualistic representation of "us" – in this case, the Soviet people, administration and army – in an exclusively positive light and the labelling of "them" with pejorative names and attributes, even denying their humanity, is a typical tool for persuading masses to agree to and participate in a conflict that is perceived, ultimately, as one between good and evil. In the case of reporting the alleged provocation, Finns were called, for instance, warmongers, bandits, criminals, knaves, marionets, clowns, dogs and pigs.[43]

The imagery was also consolidated in pictorial form. In *Pravda*, Finland was represented in political caricatures on the fifth page. A cartoon on 27 November was called "Dangerous game" and depicted the Finnish prime minister as a jester with pictures of Russian emperors hanging on his neck, juggling with bombs and torches and balancing on an exhausted figure labelled "Finances".[44] On 28 November, a cartoon depicted a dog barking at a tank which had a "USSR" label on it, encouraged by headless figures labelled as "provocateurs of war". The text above reminded the reader that the fate of Finnish leaders would be as miserable as that of Polish ones.[45] On 29 November, there was a picture of a dumb-looking soldier jumping on artillery and waving weapons, while in the front of him there was a fellow in tails and a top hat – apparently representing the Finnish government – waving a note announcing that there was no artillery near the border.[46] In the cartoon published on 30 November, a nasty-looking figure bursts through a document entitled "Non-aggression pact between USSR and Finland" and tries to grab Leningrad. A pair of hands with a rifle prepares to prevent it: "We will slap [them] on the hands!"[47]

In the context of the reportage of the "provocation", it was predictable that on 1 December the Soviet Union's attack against Finland in the Karelian isthmus was also represented as the Red Army's defence operation against hostilities by Finnish soldiers (when it comes to how the events

43 See, for instance, Marja Vuorinen, *Enemy Images in War Propaganda* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), pp. 3–5; Vilho Harle, 'On the Concepts of the "Other" and the "Enemy"', *History of European Ideas*, 19 (1994), 27–34.
44 *Pravda*, 27 November 1939, p. 5.
45 *Pravda*, 28 November 1939, p. 5.
46 *Pravda*, 29 November 1939, p. 5.
47 *Pravda*, 30 November 1939, p. 5.

were presented to the Soviet soldiers who had been sent to crush the Finnish army, it was mentioned that their task was to "liberate" the Finnish people from their government, landowners and capitalists).[48] It was noted that the airfields in Viborg and Helsinki had been bombed by the Soviet air force and that the president of Finland had announced that Finland was at war with the Soviet Union.[49]

THE MAINILA CASE UNDER RE-SCRUTINY

All nations tend to cherish their national narratives, but Russian history has been valued exceptionally highly in the twenty-first century. The contemporary regime has embraced not only the idea of the significance of a national historical narrative in attempts to create and maintain cohesion, but also the importance of controlling representations of the past. Especially the Second World War – or the Great Patriotic War, as it is called in Russia, referring to 1941–44 and omitting the collusion between Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939–41 – has been fully utilized in order to create idealized imagery of Russia heroically defending all of Europe against fascism, and the soldiers of the Red Army sacrificing themselves for the common good. This development towards a fully state-controlled past has fiercely resisted any counternarratives, for instance, by Eastern European countries which suffered the invasion, occupation, and other activities of the Red Army and the Soviet Union. These counternarratives, and basically any attempt to present the Red Army in anything but a positive light, have been proclaimed "falsification" of history by the Russian administration. Also, there has been a project to unify school textbooks to ensure that pupils are taught the "right" version of historical events.[50] Simultaneously, the disturbing features of the Stalinist period that do not match the cohesive national narrative have been whitewashed by, for

48 *Pravda*, 1 December 1939; p. 1. van Dyke, *The Soviet Invasion of Finland 1939–40*, p. 27.
49 *Pravda*, 1 December 1939, p. 1.
50 See, for instance, Veera Laine, 'New Generation of Victors: Narrating the Nation in Russian Presidential Discourse, 2012–2019', *Demokratizatsiya*, 28:4 (2020), 517–40; Keir Giles, *Moscow Rules – What Drives Russia to Confront the West* (Washington: Chatham House, 2019), pp. 105, 119–24; Gregory Carleton, *Russia – The Story of War* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017), pp. 80–113; Kati Parppei, '"A thousand years of history": References to the past in the addresses to the Federal Assembly by the president of Russia, 2000–19', in *Medievalism in Finland and Russia*, ed. by Reima Välimäki (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), pp. 39–56; NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, Falsification of History as a Tool of Influence, ed. by Amanda Rivkin, Anne Geisow, and Marius Varna (Riga: NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2020), <https://stratcomcoe.org/cuploads/pfiles/abuse_of_history_report_27-01-2020_reduced_file_size.pdf> [accessed 26 August 2022].

instance, directing the attention of Russians to external enemies rather than the internal terror.[51]

This revisionism is also the context in which the shelling of Mainila was re-scrutinized in the Russian media scene. The idea of the Soviet Union staging a provocation in order to justify an attack on a neighbouring country apparently did not fit in the martyrdom-toned, profoundly dualistic popular imagery of the Great Patriotic War which was being formed and maintained. Also, by bringing forth the hypothesis that the Soviet Union had indeed been a victim of hostile scheming in 1939, it was possible to downplay the awkward and disturbing fact that the Soviet Union had actually made an agreement with Nazi Germany.

In January 2018, the Foreign Minister of Russia, Sergei Lavrov, suggested founding a Finnish-Russian historical committee to investigate certain "controversial" historical issues, one of which, according to him, was the beginning of the Winter War. This suggestion was in response to a question asked by a Russian journalist at a press conference regarding whether the shelling of Mainila had been perpetrated by Finland or the Soviet Union (the journalist pointed out that views with which Finnish historians disagreed had recently been presented on the issue). Lavrov also said that historians should resolve such matters. In response to Lavrov's suggestion concerning the founding of a joint committee, the President of Finland, Sauli Niinistö, briefly replied that the question of the shelling of Mainila had already been adequately examined by both Finnish and Russian historians.[52]

By the time of Lavrov's suggestion, the generally accepted view of the shelling as a false-flag operation by the Soviet Union had indeed been questioned or challenged by several writers on internet platforms, some of which had connections to the administration. Some of them simply presented the issue of Mainila as an open question. For instance, in the "official" history portal in Russia, maintained by the state-supported Russian Military Historical Society, an article "the Soviet-Finnish War" was published on 15 December 2015. The authors, I.S. Rat'kovskii and M.V. Khodiakov, presented the shelling as an unsolved question:

51 One example of this whitewashing is the case of the Sandarmokh mass graves in Russian Karelia. In 1937–1938, over 9000 victims of Stalinist terror, of more than 58 nationalities, were buried in the area. From 1996 onwards, the Memorial Society worked on identifying the victims. In 2016, a Russian historian, supported by the Russian Military Historical Society, began to promote a new "theory" of Soviet prisoners of war, killed by Finns, having been buried in Sandarmokh (see, for instance, Anna Yarovaya, 'Rewriting Sandarmokh,' *The Russian Reader*, 29 December 2017, <https://therussianreader.com/2017/12/29/anna-yarovaya-rewriting-sandarmokh/> [accessed 28 August 2022]; see also Kati Parppei, 'Case study: Finland', in *Falsification of History as a Tool of Influence*, pp. 34–41).

52 'Prezident Niinistë: vystrely v Majnila uže izučeny', *YLE News in Russian*, 15 January 2018, <https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/novosti/prezident_niiniste_vystrely_v_mainila_uzhe_izucheny/10024386> [accessed 28 August 2019].

> Disputes regarding whose side the shots were fired from continue. In 1939, the Finns tried to prove that the shelling could not have been carried out from their territory, and the whole story of the "Mainila incident" was nothing more than a provocation from Moscow.[53]

However, some writers took their hypotheses further than that. Another article on the same site by Ivan Zatsarin, published on 26 November 2016, was entitled "How to stubbornly stir up trouble. For the anniversary of the Mainila incident". It had a suggestive tone, aiming to draw parallels to contemporary political conflicts. The article began with quotes from British scholars, describing the tense position of Eastern European countries in relation to Russia, and the author continued by explaining how these countries actually brought the misfortune on themselves by considering Russia a hostile neighbour: "we should discuss the fact that if you continue crying 'wolf' for a long time, the wolf will come. But it is not his fault". He continues by explaining that two versions exist of what happened in Mainila and reminds the reader that Finland gained independence because of Russia, which had granted it lots of privileges in the nineteenth century (the author points out that the situation was similar in "Malorossiia"), thus creating an optimal foundation for independence, formalized by the Bolsheviks on 4 January 1918.[54]

After that, according to the author, Finland took Poland's route: invading Karelia, raiding other territories, and making a general military nuisance of itself to Russia. "In other words, Finland, which in November 1939 suddenly shelled the territory of the Soviet Union, was nothing extraordinary. Shellings with small arms had taken place several times". Further, the author explains, the reason for this courage was simple: the patronage of other countries, first Britain, then Japan, and finally Germany.[55] In 1939, Finland refused to move the border in the area of Vyborg (interestingly, the author chooses to call it "Crimea") and, according to the author, either side could have performed the shelling. More important for him is, however, that the Soviet-Finnish war can be compared to the Russo-Georgian war of 2008 or "the return of Crimea to Russia" in the sense that "both of these events are today used as evidence of Russia's incredible aggressiveness"

53 Il'ja Rat'kovskij and Michail Chodjakov, 'Sovetsko-finskaja vojna', *Istorija.rf*, 15 December 2015, <https://histrf.ru/read/articles/sovietsko-finskaia-voina-event> [accessed 18 August 2022].
54 Ivan Zacarin, 'Kak uprjamo budit' licho. K godovščine Majnil'skogo incidenta', *Istorija.rf*, 26 November 2016, <https://histrf.ru/read/articles/kak-upriamo-budit-likho-k-77-lietiiu-mainilskogho-intsidienta> [accessed 18 August 2022].
55 Ibid.

and an excuse to hunt down Moscow's agents and ask NATO for weapons and reinforcements.[56]

The author concluded by pointing out that as Poland and Finland from the 1920s onwards had aimed to "curse, threaten, intimidate and hunt down 'agents of Moscow'", these "current victims and candidates for victims" are erroneously doing the same. He sarcastically pointed out that they aim to unite to create "a sanitary frontier by the border of barbaric Russia" and those countries "that do not participate in such projects have no problems with the inviolability of their borders".[57]

An article by Leonid Maslovskii that was published in July 2017 on the *Zvezda*-channel website – run by the Russian Ministry of Defence – concentrated on historical issues, presenting yet another theory concerning the Mainila incident. The article, entitled "The shame of Dunkirk: how Europe eagerly bowed to Hitler", claimed that Finland had started the war, aiming to test the Red Army on behalf of the German forces after Finland had rejected the Soviet Union's proposition to move its border in exchange for an area of land twice as large: "Finland refused and reacted with a military provocation that had strong support from Germany and fellow warmongers".[58]

Thus, the shelling of Mainila, according to Maslovskii, was linked to the alleged general resentment and opportunistic attitude of the "West" towards the Soviet Union, the whole war having been a test of the Soviet Union's Western forces:

> After the Finns encircled and defeated our 44th Infantry Division, W. Churchill stated in a radio appearance on 20 January 1944 that Finland "revealed to the world the weakness of the Red Army". This statement was made in order to accelerate Germany's attack on the Soviet Union. The whole policy of the West was aimed at achieving one goal: an attack by Germany on the Soviet Union.[59]

56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Leonid Maslovskij, 'Pozor Djunkerka: kak Evropa s gotovnost'ju preklonilas' pered Gitlerom', *Zvezda*, 31 July 2017, <https://tvzvezda.ru/news/qhistory/content/201707310904-1vri.htm> [accessed 17 August 2022].
59 Ibid.

It was also announced by the author that any suggestion that the Soviet forces would anyhow have been defeated by the Finnish in the Winter War was a falsification of history.[60]

Finland is linked to the military aspirations of the "West" in some other writings, too. For instance, in December 2017, a site called *Politics and War*[61] published an article called "Mainila, what really happened", by B. Rozhin. The author refers to documents (not properly cited) and claims that they contain evidence that Finland was to blame for this event.

According to Rozhin, other sabotage attempts by Finnish soldiers dressed as border guards took place in the Soviet Union at around the time of the shelling. He says that the reason for this was to provoke the Soviet Union to start a war in which the "West" would provide support to Finland; he asks why the Finnish government would behave "to put it mildly: unwisely" and comments that "the answer is self-evident: it is because they were promised serious support from the West in the case of war with the Soviet Union!"[62] He continues by explaining that it was necessary to present the Soviet Union as a warmonger to justify the intervention: "And so we come to understand that Finland was suddenly very interested in an event that would push the Soviet Union to take action".[63]

The author also mentioned that Tsar Alexander I had made a mistake by joining the province of Vyborg with Finland in 1812, and that the nationalistic zeal of the Finns had been high prior to the war. He concludes his text as follows:

> The lesson was learned by Finnish society and a high price was paid for the realization of its real place in the world. Only in getting rid of the ulcer of nationalism did Finland manage to build amicable relations with its great neighbour.[64]

60 Ibid. Maslovskii's article in *Zvezda* was noted by Finnish journalist Arja Paananen, specialised in Russia, who wrote an article about it in the Finnish tabloid *Ilta-Sanomat* on 1 August 2017: 'Russian TV channel distorts history: "Finland executed the shelling of Mainila and, through military provocation, started the Winter War as an ally with Germany"'. In her article, Paananen also recalls her recent conversation with a Russian navy officer, who was worried about the resurrection of fascism and Nazism in Europe and emphasised that Russia had never been the aggressor in military conflicts. Paananen contextualised both of the issues in Russian information warfare, which aims to emphasise the threat posed by Europe (Arja Paananen, 'Venäläinen tv-kanava vääristelee historiaa: 'Suomi ampui Mainilan laukaukset ja provosoi talvisodan Saksan apurina', *Ilta-Sanomat*, 1 August 2017, <https://www.is.fi/ulkomaat/art-2000005309849.html> [accessed 26 August 2022]).

61 The site seems to be run by several individuals, who proclaim their goals to be, for instance, to "advance a reasonable civil society" in Russia, and to "preserve and strengthen the independence and sovereignty, as well as the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation, as well as the spiritual and material development of the country's population". The authors emphasise that "the main priority for us is to counter the processes of colour revolutions in Russia initiated by external intervention, as well as the processes of new restructuring ('perestroika-2'), related to the struggle between the Kremlin clans" ('Manifest', *Politwar.ru*, <http://politwar.ru/manifest> [accessed 26 August 2022]).

62 Boris Rozhin, 'Majnila, kak èto bylo na samom dele'. This text used to be available on the site of *Politika & Vojna* (December 2017), but it has been removed; however, it can be found in Rozhin's personal blog, *LiveJournal*, 3 December 2017, <https://colonelcassad.livejournal.com/3849481.html> [accessed 28 April 2023].

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

In both cases, the authors explicitly emphasize the role of Finland as a pawn in a game played by the "West", thus repeating the claims of Soviet propaganda in 1939. In Rozhin's article, this role is explicitly linked to the unrealistic nationalistic aspirations of Finns.

Only on some occasions was the shelling of Mainila mentioned in the state media. For instance, on 26 November 2019 – on the anniversary of the event – the news site *Gazeta.ru* published an article "Shots in Mainila: who started the war between the USSR and Finland?". This article was written by Dmitrii Okunev and it represented this issue as controversial. It presented Finnish nationalism and hostile attitudes towards the Soviet Union, together with the restlessness of the border area, as the primary reason for the Soviet leadership wanting to move the border; the fear of an attack by Germany was mentioned only as a secondary reason. As for which side was responsible of the incident, the author mentions that many researchers now agree that it was a well-planned provocation of the Soviet command with the intention of justifying the subsequent invasion of Finland by the Red Army; he also says that the "pro-Western" version, which represented the shelling as the work of NKVD, was based on secondary sources. The author also cites journalist Arja Paananen (see note 58) in describing the significance of the event to Finns. He concluded the article by noting that the war, which lasted far longer than expected, had dispelled the myth of the power of the Red Army, the losses of the Soviet Union exceeding those of Finland.[65]

AMBIGUITY, MIRRORING AND "THE DOCTRINE OF INNOCENCE"

What is the "legacy" of the shelling of Mainila and how does it relate to the military activities and propagandistic strategies of contemporary Russia? Of course, one always has to be cautious in drawing parallels between historical and contemporary events, approaches, and ideas. However, in this case prudent comparison can be said to be justified because post-Soviet Russia "inherited" certain propaganda strategies – also, we could say, the whole notion of the importance of propaganda and the idea of active involvement in information warfare – from the Soviet Union and has

65 Dmitrij Okunev, 'Vystrely v Majnile: kto načal vojnu SSSR s Finljandiej', *Gazeta.ru*, 26 November 2019, <https://www.gazeta.ru/science/2019/11/26_a_12831998.shtml?updated> [accessed 26 August 2022]. Some dispute arose on social media due to the anniversary; on 30 November 2019, a state-run "Museum of Victory" tweeted that the Winter War broke out due to Finns firing at Soviet stations. The Finnish Reservists' Association made a statement on the issue. The museum replied by apologizing and saying the tweet had been misinterpreted ('Finnish Reservists' Association slams false Russian interpretation of Winter War', *YLE News*, 7 December 2019, <https://yle.fi/news/3-11107504> [accessed 26 August 2022]).

applied them in the modern media environment in domestic communication as well as in international circles.[66]

The Mainila incident has become a classic example in the media of a false-flag operation, together with another 1939 case, namely the so-called Gliwice (Gleiwitz) incident on 1 September 1939, when German forces invaded Poland using a staged "Polish provocation" in this Silesian border town as an excuse.[67] The Mainila shelling has been brought up especially in the context of Russia's invasions of and interventions in its neighbouring countries (which is undoubtedly one of the reasons why the counternarratives described in the previous section have been produced).[68] It has been referred to, for instance, by Ukrainian representatives in the United Nations Security Council. At the meeting on 26 November 2018, the Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations, Volodymyr Yelchenko, compared the Kerch Strait incident to the event that started the Winter War in 1939 and which ultimately led to the expelling of the Soviet Union from the League of Nations.[69] On 31 January 2022, less than a month before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the United Nations Security Council held a meeting on the question of Russia concentrating troops near the border. The representative of Ukraine, Sergiy Kyslytsya, pointed out that "we are well aware of Russia's history of ploys and provocations, and we will do everything possible to prevent another Mainila-type provocation by Russia".[70]

On the doctrinal level, historical as well as contemporary false-flag operations can be said to represent or perhaps overlap with the strategy of ambiguity or deception *(maskirovka)* that is practiced by Russia, and by the Soviet Union preceding it.[71] A prominent example is the war in Georgia in 2008 and Russia's preparations for it. By constantly provoking and pressuring Georgia, Russia aimed to tempt it to react militarily in order to convince the international community that its operation was justi-

66 Sinikukka Saari, 'Russia's Post-Orange Revolution Strategies to Increase its Influence in Former Soviet Republics: Public Diplomacy *po russkii*', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 66 (2014), 50–66; Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss, *The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money* (New York: Institute of Modern Russia, 2014), pp. 8–9; Katri Pynnöniemi, 'Introduction', in *Fog of Falsehood – Russian Strategy of Deception and the Conflict in Ukraine*, ed. by Katri Pynnöniemi and András Rácz (Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2016), pp. 13–15.

67 See, for instance, Richard C. Hall, 'Renewed War', in *Consumed by War: European Conflict in the 20th Century* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), pp. 119–36 (here: 119).

68 See, for instance, 'False flags: What are they and when have they been used?', *BBC News*, 18 February 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-60434579> [accessed 26 August 2022].

69 The Kerch Strait incident refers to events on 25 November 2018, when three Ukrainian naval vessels attempting to transit from the Black Sea to the Azov Sea were fired on by the Russian coastguard. See Bjorn Ottosson, *UN Security Council Emergency Meeting on Russia Ukraine Tensions, Nov 26 2018*, online video recording, YouTube, 27 November 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Pf_aTPOM3A/> [accessed 28 August 2022].

70 Meetings coverage 'Situation along Russian Federation-Ukraine Border Can Only Be Resolved through Diplomacy, Political Affairs Chief Tells Security Council', *United Nations Security Council*, 31 January 2022, <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14783.doc.htm> [accessed 24 August 2022].

71 See, for instance, Charles J. Dick, 'Catching NATO Unawares: Soviet Army Surprise and Deception Techniques', in *The Art and Science of Military Deception*, ed. by Hy Rothstein and Barton Whaley (Norwood: Artech House, 2013), pp. 181–92; Douglas Mastriano, 'Putin – the masked nemesis of the strategy of ambiguity', *Defence & Security Analysis*, 33:1 (2017), pp. 68–76.

fied as a peacekeeping mission in the context of its alleged "Responsibility to Protect".[72] The annexation of Crimea and the war in East Ukraine were carried out utilizing strategies of deception and misinformation; in the case of the escalation of the war in February 2022, when Russia staged a full-scale invasion, the official Russian propaganda followed familiar lines by emphasizing the nature of this "special operation" as a reactive one that was a consequence of the alleged distress of the Russian-speaking population in East Ukraine (the ideas of "denazification" were intended to resonate primarily with the domestic audience in Russia).[73]

The military doctrine of deception is seamlessly intertwined with that of disinformation and the constant and multifaceted information war waged by Russia internally as well as abroad.[74] Obviously, the media of the 1930s and the twenty-first century cannot be compared as such, but certain common features can be found in Russian propaganda concerning the shelling of Mainila and, say, the ongoing war in Ukraine, despite the completely different media platforms that now exist. Blaming the adversary of "provocation" or a threat of some other sort when justifying intervention or invasion is the most prominent of these features. Provocation as a term derives from Soviet political language, originally referring to any critical voices, but it was later established to underline Russia's role as a victim instead of an aggressor in conflicts.[75]

Blaming others for provocations is a prime example of *accusation in a mirror*, "a rhetorical practice in which one falsely accuses one's enemies of conducting, plotting, or desiring to commit precisely the same transgressions that one plans to commit against them".[76] When the Soviet Union was secretly preparing for a war against Finland in November 1939, it consistently blamed the Finnish government for "warmongering" and plotting against its socialist neighbour. Similarly, contemporary Russia systematically denies any atrocities and transgressions in Ukraine – from war crimes to bombing civilians and risking a nuclear disaster – consistently blaming Ukraine for the same acts instead.[77]

72 See, for instance, Roy Allison, 'Russia resurgent? Moscow's campaign to "coerce Georgia to peace"', *International Affairs*, 84:6 (2008), 1145–71; Juris Pupchenok and Eric James Seltzer, 'Russian Strategic Narratives on R2P in the "Near Abroad"', *Nationalities Papers*, 49:4 (2021), 757–75. See also Matti Nupponen, 'Harhauttaminen Venäjän sotilasoperaatioissa' (unpublished master's thesis, National Defence University of Finland, 2017), pp. 28–49.

73 Pupchenok and Seltzer, 'Russian Strategic Narratives on R2P in the "Near Abroad"', pp. 757–75.

74 For an overview, see, for instance, Peter Pomerantsev, 'The Kremlin's Information War', *Journal of Democracy*, 26:4 (2015), 40–50. See also *Fog of Falsehood*, ed. By Pynnöniemi and Rácz, passim.

75 Katri Pynnöniemi, 'The Metanarratives of Russian Strategic Deception', in *Fog of Falsehood*, pp. 71–119 (p. 75).

76 Kenneth L. Marcus, 'Accusation in a Mirror', *Loyola University Chicago Law Journal*, 43:2 (2012), 357–93.

77 For recent examples of these tactics, see, for instance, the Twitter account of the Foreign Ministry of Russia, <https://twitter.com/mfa_russia> [accessed 29 August 2022]. See also Andrej Sementkovskij, 'Istorija fejkov I poddelok: kto stal krestnym otcom gazetnych utok iz Buči', *Istorija.rf*, 5 April 2022, <https://histrf.ru/read/articles/istoriya-feykov-i-poddelok-kto-stal-krestnym-otcom-gazetnyh-utok-iz-buchi> [accessed 29 August 2022].

Accusation in a mirror in Russian propaganda and rhetoric and Russia's systematic refusal to take any responsibility for its actions can actually be seen as a strategic application of a (profoundly imperialist) outlook I call "a doctrine of innocence". The perception of Russia as a victim of treacherous and self-interested Western Europe was being formulated in the nineteenth century, following the rise of nationalist and Slavist ideas, Russia's disappointment with the West following events such as Napoleon's invasion in 1812, and the Crimean war in 1853–56. Russia, for its part, was represented as a mere defender of its righteous interests in its geopolitical surroundings (and, for instance, in the case of Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, when Russia also represented itself as a defender of its oppressed Slavic brothers; here, we can actually see an early case of applying the ideas behind the "Responsibility to Protect" doctrine, which was still forming at that time).[78] Further, as noted above, the Soviet Union presented itself as a socialist workers' realm devoted to peace, in contrast to capitalist and imperialist nations that were prone to conflicts and "anti-Soviet" representations of contemporary events. The rhetoric around the "provocation" in Mainila was a combination of "anti-Soviet" propaganda and the Soviet Union presenting itself as an innocent victim of warmongering on one hand, and threatening Finland with the invincible might of the Red Army on the other. The telegram to the League of Nations, emphasizing that the Soviet Union was not at war with Finland while it was bombing Finnish cities and localities (see above), is also quite a telling example, as is the idea of Soviet soldiers as "liberators" instead of invaders that was repeated frequently in the context of the Red Army in the Second World War.

Following the same doctrine, the idea of Russia never having attacked anyone, just being surrounded by "Russophobic" hostile forces and only reacting to provocations – for instance, by NATO – has recently been explicitly expressed by diverse actors in the context of the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (also, the concept of Russian soldiers as "liberators" has been used).[79] Of course, in principle this outlook is universal: in all military conflicts, both sides consider their cause a righteous one, but

78 Parppei, 'A thousand years of history', pp. 51–53. See also Kati Parppei, 'Enemy Images in the Russian National Narrative', in *Nexus of Patriotism and Militarism in Russia – A Quest for Internal Cohesion*, ed. by Katri Pynnöniemi (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2021), pp. 23–47.

79 See, for instance, Louis Jacobson, 'Russian spokesman's statement ignores centuries of Russian attacks', *PolitiFact*, 21 February 2022, <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2022/feb/21/dmitry-peskov/russian-spokesmans-statement-ignores-centuries-rus/> [accessed 27 August 2022]; 'Kirill's provocative statement: Russia has never attacked anyone', *Orthodox Times*, 4 May 2022, <https://orthodoxtimes.com/kirills-provocative-statement-russia-has-never-attacked-anyone/> [accessed 27 August 2022]; see also Prezident Rossii, 'Poslanie Prezidenta Federal'nomu Sobraniju', 1 December 2016, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/53379> [accessed 27 August 2022]. For the use of the concept "liberator" in the context of Ukraine, see, for instance, Andrej Sementkovskij, 'Zabveniju ne podležit. Istoki nasilija neonacistov nad voennoplennymi', *Istorija.rf*, 31 March 2022, <https://histrf.ru/read/articles/zabveniyu-ne-podlezhit-istoki-nasiliya-neonacistov-nad-voennoplennymi> [accessed 6 November 2022].

the contemporary regime in Russia has brought it out openly and consistently as a basis for its demands from the international community, simultaneously blaming others for not taking into account its legitimate interests, for acting in a provocatory way, or for military destabilization. This rhetoric has sometimes been combined with Russia showing off its new armaments, reflecting a sense of Russian exceptionalism in the military context.[80]

The doctrine of innocence applied to contemporary purposes is intertwined with the recent and ongoing attempts to control representations of history, especially the Second World War, and to whitewash the decisions of the Soviet administration and the activities of the Red Army. Accusing other countries of falsifying history while presenting the "official" and state-controlled Russian historical narrative as the only acceptable one is also a form of accusation in a mirror. The "truth" as such can – perhaps paradoxically – be seen secondary in this game of rewriting history. As one of Russia's tactics in distributing misinformation is to create general confusion and mistrust, it might well be enough to bring forth optional hypotheses – as in the case of Mainila incident – with the hope that they will adequately resonate in the minds of the attempted audience, thus challenging the established perceptions and images for the benefit of Russia and its regime.[81] Thus, we can say that the echoes of the shelling of Mainila, with all their implications and layers of meanings, are still relevant today in several ways.

80 See, for instance, Prezident Rossii, 'Poslanie Prezidenta Federal'nomu Sobraniju', 1 March 2018, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/56957> [accessed 29 August 2022]. Carleton, *Russia – the Story of War*, passim.

81 Pomerantsev, 'The Kremlin's Information War', pp. 40–50.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allison, Roy, 'Russia resurgent? Moscow's campaign to "coerce Georgia to peace"', *International Affairs*, 84:6 (2008), 1145–71

Berkhoff, Karel C., *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda During World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012)

Bjorn, Ottosson, *UN Security Council Emergency Meeting on Russia Ukraine Tensions, Nov 26 2018*, online video recording, YouTube, 27 November 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Pf_aTPOM3A/> [accessed 28 August 2022]

Carleton, Gregory, *Russia – The Story of War* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017)

Dick, Charles J., 'Catching NATO Unawares: Soviet Army Surprise and Deception Techniques', in *The Art and Science of Military Deception*, ed. by Hy Rothstein and Barton Whaley (Norwood: Artech House, 2013), pp. 181–92

Edwards, Robert, *The Winter War – Russia's Invasion of Finland, 1939–40* (New York, 2008)

'False flags: What are they and when have they been used?', *BBC News*, 18 February 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-60434579> [accessed 26 August 2022]

'Finnish Reservists' Association slams false Russian interpretation of Winter War', *YLE News*, 7 December 2019, <https://yle.fi/news/3-11107504> [accessed 26 August 2022]

Giles, Keir, *Moscow Rules – What Drives Russia to Confront the West* (Washington: Chatham House, 2019)

Hall, Richard C., 'Renewed War', in *Consumed by War: European Conflict in the 20th Century* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), pp. 119–36

Harle, Vilho, 'On the Concepts of the "Other" and the "Enemy"', *History of European Ideas*, 19 (1994), 27–34

Izvestija, 27, 28, 29, and 30 November 1939

Jacobson, Louis, 'Russian spokesman's statement ignores centuries of Russian attacks', *PolitiFact*, 21 February 2022, <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2022/feb/21/dmitry-peskov/russian-spokesmans-statement-ignores-centuries-rus/> [accessed 27 August 2022]

'Kirill's provocative statement: Russia has never attacked anyone', *Orthodox Times*, 4 May 2022, <https://orthodoxtimes.com/kirills-provocative-statement-russia-has-never-attacked-anyone/> [accessed 27 August 2022]

Laine, Veera, 'New Generation of Victors: Narrating the Nation in Russian Presidential Discourse, 2012–2019', *Demokratizatsiya*, 28:4 (2020), 517–40

'Manifest', *Politwar.ru*, <http://politwar.ru/manifest> [accessed 26 August 2022]

Manninen, Ohto, *Stalinin kiusa – Himmlerin täi. Sota-ajan pieni Suomi maailman silmissä ja arkistojen kätköissä* (Helsinki: Edita, 2002)

Manninen, Ohto, *The Soviet Plans for the North Western Theatre of Operations in 1939–1944* (Helsinki: National Defence College, 2004)

Marcus, Kenneth L., 'Accusation in a Mirror', *Loyola University Chicago Law Journal*, 43:2 (2012), 357–93

Maslovskij, Leonid, 'Pozor Djunkerka: kak Evropa s gotovnost'ju preklonilas' pered Gitlerom', *Zvezda*, 31 July 2017, <https://tvzvezda.ru/news/qhistory/content/201707310904-1vri.htm> [accessed 17 August 2022]

Mastriano, Douglas, 'Putin – the masked nemesis of the strategy of ambiguity', *Defence & Security Analysis*, 33:1 (2017), pp. 68–76

NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, Falsification of History as a Tool of Influence, ed. by Amanda Rivkin, Anne Geisow, and Marius Varna (Riga: NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2020), <https://stratcomcoe.org/cuploads/pfiles/abuse_of_history_report_27-01-2020_reduced_file_size.pdf> [accessed 26 August 2022]

Nevalainen, Pekka, 'Many Karelias', *Virtual Finland*, November 2001, <https://web.archive.org/web/20060814015731/http://newsroom.finland.fi/netcomm/news/showarticle.asp?intNWSAID=25907> [accessed 29 August 2022]

Nupponen, Matti, 'Harhauttaminen Venäjän sotilasoperaatioissa' (unpublished master's thesis, National Defence University of Finland, 2017), pp. 28–49

Okunev, Dmitrij, 'Vystrely v Majnile: kto načal vojnu SSSR s Finljandiej', *Gazeta.ru*, 26 November 2019, <https://www.gazeta.ru/science/2019/11/26_a_12831998.shtml?updated> [accessed 26 August 2022]

Paananen, Arja, 'Venäläinen tv-kanava vääristelee historiaa: 'Suomi ampui Mainilan laukaukset ja provosoi talvisodan Saksan apurina', *Ilta-Sanomat*, 1 August 2017, <https://www.is.fi/ulkomaat/art-2000005309849.html> [accessed 26 August 2022]

Parppei, Kati, '"A thousand years of history': References to the past in the addresses to the Federal Assembly by the president of Russia, 2000-19', in *Medievalism in Finland and Russia*, ed. by Reima Välimäki (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), pp. 39–56

Parppei, Kati, 'Case study: Finland', in *Falsification of History as a Tool of Influence*, pp. 34–41

Parppei, Kati, 'Enemy Images in the Russian National Narrative', in *Nexus of Patriotism and Militarism in Russia – A Quest for Internal Cohesion*, ed. by Katri Pynnöniemi (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2021), pp. 23–47

Pomerantsev, Peter and Michael Weiss, *The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money* (New York: Institute of Modern Russia, 2014)

Pomerantsev, Peter, 'The Kremlin's Information War', *Journal of Democracy*, 26:4 (2015), 40–50

Pravda, 27, 28, 29, 30 November, and 1 December 1939

'Prezident Niinistë: vystrely v Majnila uže izučeny', *YLE News in Russian*, 15 January 2018, <https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/novosti/prezident_niiniste_vystrely_v_mainila_uzhe_izucheny/10024386> [accessed 28 August 2019]

Prezident Rossii, 'Poslanie Prezidenta Federal'nomu Sobraniju', 1 December 2016, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/53379> [accessed 27 August 2022]

Prezident Rossii, 'Poslanie Prezidenta Federal'nomu Sobraniju', 1 March 2018, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/56957> [accessed 29 August 2022]

Pupchenok, Juris and Eric James Seltzer, 'Russian Strategic Narratives on R2P in the "Near Abroad"', *Nationalities Papers*, 49:4 (2021), 757–75

Pynnöniemi, Katri, 'Introduction', in *Fog of Falsehood – Russian Strategy of Deception and the Conflict in Ukraine*, ed. by Katri Pynnöniemi and András Rácz (Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2016)

Pynnöniemi, Katri, 'The Metanarratives of Russian Strategic Deception', in *Fog of Falsehood*, pp. 71–119

Rat'kovskij, Il'ja and Michail Chodjakov, 'Sovetsko-finskaja vojna', *Istorija.rf*, 15 December 2015, <https://histrf.ru/read/articles/sovietsko-finskaia-voina-event> [accessed 18 August 2022]

Rozhin, Boris, 'Majnila, kak èto bylo na samom dele', *LiveJournal*, 3 December 2017, <https://colonelcassad.livejournal.com/3849481.html> [accessed 28 April 2023]

Saari, Sinikukka, 'Russia's Post-Orange Revolution Strategies to Increase its Influence in Former Soviet Republics: Public Diplomacy *po russkii*', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 66 (2014), 50–66

Sementkovskij, Andrej, 'Istorija fejkov i poddelok: kto stal krestnym otcom gazetnych utok iz Bučі', *Istorija.rf*, 5 April 2022, <https://histrf.ru/read/articles/istoriya-feykov-i-poddelok-kto-stal-krestnym-otcom-gazetnyh-utok-iz-buchi> [accessed 29 August 2022]

Sementkovskij, Andrej, 'Zabveniju ne podležit. Istoki nasilija neonacistov nad voennoplennymi', *Istorija.rf*, 31 March 2022, <https://histrf.ru/read/articles/zabveniyu-ne-podlezhit-istoki-nasiliya-neonacistov-nad-voennoplennymi> [accessed 6 November 2022]

'Situation along Russian Federation-Ukraine Border Can Only Be Resolved through Diplomacy, Political Affairs Chief Tells Security Council', *United Nations Security Council*, 31 January 2022, <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14783.doc.htm> [accessed 24 August 2022]

'Soobščenie ob ustanovlenii diplomatičeskich otnošenij meždu SSSR i Finljandskoj Demokratičeskoj Respublikoj', 2 dekabrja 1939, *Dokumenty vnešnej politiki SSSR, 1939. Sentjabr'-dekabr'*, 2 vols (Moskva: Meždunarodnye otnošenija, 1992), II, p. 355

Tanner, Väinö, *Olin ulkoministerinä talvisodan aikana* (Helsinki, 1979)

'Telegramma narodnogo komissara inostrannych del SSSR V.M. Molotova general'nomu sekretarju Ligi nacij Ž. Avenolju, 4 dekabrja 1939', in *Dokumenty vnešnej politiki SSSR, 1939*, II, pp. 364–65

'Telegramma polnomočnogo predstavitelja SSSR v SŠA K.A. Umanskogo v Narodnyj komissariat inostrannych del SSSR, 30 nojabrja 1939', in *Dokumenty vnešnej politiki SSSR, 1939*, II, pp. 353–54

'Telegramma polnomočnogo predstavitelja SSSR v SŠA K.A. Umanskogo v Narodnyj komissariat inostrannych del SSSR, 2 dekabrja 1939', in *Dokumenty vnešnej politiki SSSR, 1939*, II, pp. 359–60

'Telegramma polnomočnogo predstavitelja SSSR v Velikobritanii I.M. Majskogo narodnomu komissaru inostrannych del SSSR V.M. Molotovu, 27 nojabrja 1939', in *Dokumenty vnešnej politiki SSSR, 1939*, II, pp. 340–42

'Telegramma vremennogo poverennogo v delach SSSR v Finljandii M.G. Judanova v Narodnyj komissariat inostrannych del SSSR, 27 nojabrja 1939', in *Dokumenty vnešnej politiki SSSR, 1939*, II, pp. 342–43

Tuunainen, Pasi, *Finnish Military Effectiveness in the Winter War 1939-1940* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)

Van Dyke, Carl, *The Soviet Invasion of Finland 1939-40* (London: Routledgem, 1997)

Vuorinen, Marja, *Enemy Images in War Propaganda* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012)

Yarovaya, Anna, 'Rewriting Sandarmokh,' *The Russian Reader*, 29 December 2017, <https://therussianreader.com/2017/12/29/anna-yarovaya-rewriting-sandarmokh/> [accessed 28 August 2022]

Zacarin, Ivan, 'Kak uprjamo budit' licho. K godovščine Majnil'skogo incidenta', *Istorija.rf*, 26 November 2016, <https://histrf.ru/read/articles/kak-upriamo-budit-likho-k-77-lietiiu-mainilskogho-intsidienta> [accessed 18 August 2022]

Ihor Skochylias

WHO ARE THE BASILIANS?

ABSTRACT

The main topic of the article is the history of the Basilian Order in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the seventeenth–eighteenth centuries, including the foundation and daily life of the order, its most important personalities, its internal laws, and relations between the clergy and laity. Particular attention is paid to the cultural role of the Basilians in social life, their struggle to survive under the Russian authorities, as well as the Basilian movement 's crucial role in the development of Ukrainian and Belarusian culture of the Modern era. The article also describes the Basilian Order's most revered shrines, the activities of its main donors from the Polish-Lithuanian nobility, and the masterpieces of church architecture of that era that were created in Basilian monasteries.[1]

KEYWORDS:

Basilians, Basilian order, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, monasticism, Metropolitanate of Kyiv, pope

IHOR SKOCHYLIAS (1967–2020)

Ukrainian historian working at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv. He was the world's leading specialist on the history of the Eastern Churches in the Ruthenian lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. He died of Covid-19 while working on the book on the history of the Brest Union.

1 This abstract was written by AREI's editorial team.