

Reagan and the War Crimes Lobby

By Joe Conason

"Out of the ashes, hope," said the president at Bitburg. But hope for whom? Hope, perhaps, for the war criminals and Nazi collaborators whose escape from justice has only recently begun to receive the prosecution it deserves.

Certainly that was what inspired a congratulatory telegram to Ronald Reagan from Otto Ernst Remer, the SS general who says he saved Hitler from assassination by German officers in 1944, and who has been a leading figure in that country's neo-Nazi circles since the end of the war. The Reagan ceremony encouraged Remer's following among SS veterans to believe that their crimes against humanity have been subordinated to the rhetoric of friendship and reconciliation.

But what about the collaborators and war criminals at large in the United States? Even before Bitburg, pressure was growing to renew the search for the genocidal doctor Josef Mengele, and from Mengele it is a short step down to scores or even hundreds of lesser figures in the ranks of European fascism who obtained refuge here.

The American commitment to extirpate the remnants of fascism among us is embodied in the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigation (OSI), which was created by Congress in 1979 to prosecute, denaturalize, or deport alleged war criminals. Its workload is a legacy of the cold war, whose early days saw various agencies of government, from the CIA and the State Department to Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe, aid and abet the entry of war criminals and collaborators. Behind this secret amnesty lay the theory that the flotsam of fascism could be useful in the impending conflict with the Soviet Union.

According to Charles R. Allen Jr., the most reliable authority on the subject, the OSI is still pursuing at least 200 cases of war criminals and collaborators with a staff of 47 and an annual budget of approximately \$3.2 million. And few of the people they are seeking, as Allen points out in his excellent new book *Nazi War Criminals in America: Facts... Action*, "are of German origin. Most of the crimes of the Holocaust were committed in Eastern Europe and on the soil of the Soviet Union by Nazi Germany and its collaborators [emphasis added]." Nearly all of the active and completed OSI cases listed in Allen's book are against émigrés, the bulk of them from the Ukraine, Latvia, and Lithuania. And the same rough proportions exist in a list of cases he predicts will be pursued by OSI in the near future.

In practical terms this means that the OSI is looking for war criminals among the Eastern European ethnic communities—Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian, Rumanian, Croatian—where ultraconservatism and support for Reagan are overwhelming. The communal organizations of the so-called "captive nations" are a bulwark of Reagan's hard-core political coalition, and it is unsurprising that they are trying to destroy OSI, prevent the deportation of its targets, and have found an ally in White House Communications Director Patrick Buchanan (*Voice*, May 7, "Reagan and the Fascist Fringe").

The émigré rightists are in fact well connected in the White House, and not solely through Buchanan. Their organizations are an integral part of the "Coalition for Peace through Strength," a pro-Pentagon lobby devised by the American Security Council to promote Reagan's defense buildup. They also hold several and political leaders and their patronage jobs



Reagan greets Lev Dobriansky.

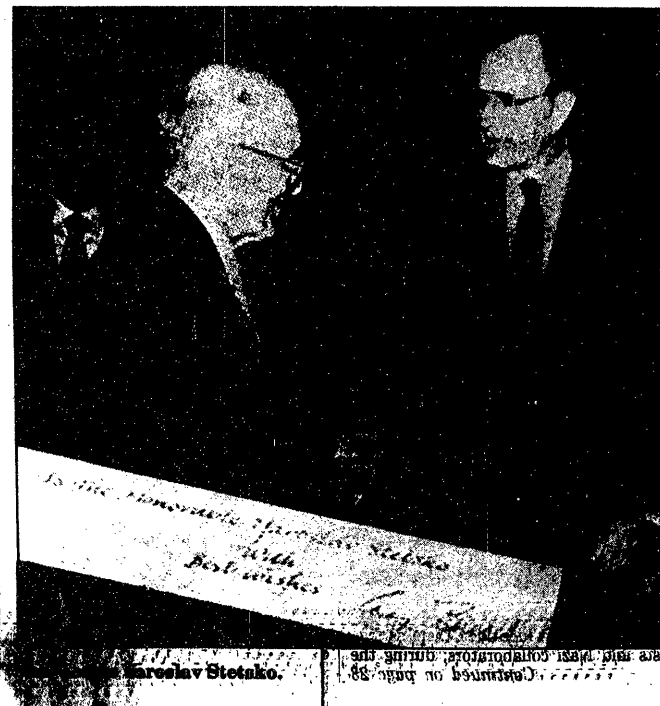
and visibility through their friendship with the president. A year ago, a coalition of rightist émigré groups held a "human rights banquet" at a Hungarian restaurant in Washington. Among those attending were top Geneva arms negotiator Max Kampelman, Voice of America director Kenneth Tomlinson, Presidential assistant Faith Ryan Whitteley, and Ben Wattenberg of the Board for International Broadcasting, which oversees Radio Free Europe. Among the banquet sponsors was the Joint Baltic American National Committee, whose efforts to save war criminal Karl Linnas from deportation were denounced by Senator Alfonse D'Amato last year, after he was "duped" into aiding them.

A leading figure among the rightist émigrés is Dr. Lev Dobriansky, Reagan's ambassador to the Bahamas and chairman of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) and the Captive

Nations Committee Inc. Dobriansky, whose daughter Paula serves on the staff of the National Security Council, is also board chairman of a leading émigré publication, the *Ukrainian Quarterly*. Another is Yaroslav Stetsko, chairman of the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (ABN) and, for a brief period in the summer of 1941, premier of the "independent republic of the Ukraine." Stetsko, an elder statesman of the international far right, was received at the White House in July 1983 by the president and Vice-President George Bush; he and Dobriansky also helped to create the World Anti-Communist League (WACL), the organizational haven for neo-Nazis, fascists, and anti-Semitic extremists from two dozen countries, formerly headed by racial theorist Roger Pearson.

The Bandera Faction

The spotty history of wartime Ukraini-



an nationalism is useful in understanding the anti-OSI campaign in which Dobriansky, Stetsko, and their compatriots are implicated. For centuries the believers in a separate Ukrainian state were frustrated by rulers from without—Polish, German, and Russian—and irritated by the presence on their soil of non-Ukrainians, principally Poles and Jews. These sentiments found expression in a variety of nationalist organizations, but the most important role during the war was played by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), a fascistic outfit that freely employed terror and murder in its quest for a racially pure Ukrainian state.

By 1940, after Hitler and Stalin divided the Ukraine between them, the OUN had split into two factions. The more active and radical, the OUN/B, was identified by the last name of its would-be Führer, Stepan Bandera. His most trusted lieutenant was a young nationalist named Yaroslav Stetsko.

Hitler's plan to invade the Soviet Union involved a campaign through the Ukraine, with the promised assistance of OUN/B, whose chief patron in the Nazi regime was the real Führer's racial mentor, Alfred Rosenberg. But there was disagreement among the top Nazi leaders on the "Ukrainian question"; Heinrich Himmler and Martin Bormann, for example, insisted that Slavs were "untermenschen," lesser peoples whose only purpose on earth was to serve Aryan masters. To them no Ukrainian state was tolerable. Rosenberg, himself a Baltic German, was more accommodating, and furthermore saw himself as the satrap of an Eastern realm in a "New Europe."

OUN/B held its first and second "congresses" under Nazi auspices, and among its resolutions in 1941 was the following: "The Jews in the Soviet Union are the most dependable underpinning of the ruling Bolshevik regime and an avanguard of Muscovite imperialism in the Ukraine. . . . The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists opposes the Jews as a pillar of the Muscovite-Bolshevik regime and at the same time is informing the mass of people that Moscow is the main enemy." Such was the ideological preparation for the Nazi invasion and the Holocaust that came in its wake.

Simultaneously, the OUN/B was adopted by the Nazi spy apparatus, the *Abwehr*, to aid in the actual invasion both militarily and for intelligence purposes. Battalions of OUN/B volunteers, under German command, were formed both in occupied Poland (the "Nachtigall" division) and in Austria (the "Roland" division). Though the surviving adherents of the OUN/B deny it, historical evidence shows that the Ukrainian nationalists under Bandera reached an agreement with the Nazis for the future control of the Ukraine.

On June 30, 1941, the Nazi invasion reached Lvov, the capital of the Ukrainian province of Galicia, which was the OUN/B stronghold. That same evening, the OUN/B leaders who had traveled to Galicia with the Nazis declared a sovereign Ukrainian state, with Yaroslav Stetsko as "premier." The division among the Nazis erupted in reaction to this declaration, and within 10 days Stetsko was placed under "honorary arrest" by officers of the SS.

Although this arrest is now portrayed as severe repression by the OUN/B, in fact the Germans treated Bandera and his followers rather well—especially compared to the Jews and other victims of the Final Solution in Lvov, which was being carried out by Nazi *Einsatzgruppen* (task forces) and Ukrainian "militia," including many OUN/B men. Indeed, according to Alexander Dallin's authoritative *German Rule in Russia 1941-1945*:

"During the following days of chaos [after the entry into Lvov], it became obvious to the Germans that Bandera's followers, including those in the [Nachtigall] regiment, were displaying considerable initiative conducting purges and . . .

McCarthy and Malmedy

When Pat Buchanan made his now-famous attack on the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) on a Washington TV program in January 1982, he argued that we shouldn't be prosecuting war criminals who "didn't kill Americans. . . . Why don't we go out and find people who committed atrocities against Americans! What about Malmedy?"

Malmedy is the name of a town in Belgium where, during the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944 and January 1945, the first and second divisions of the Waffen-SS commenced a series of atrocities against captured soldiers and civilians. Among these war crimes was the slaughter of more than 100 American GIs at a Malmedy farm. Charles R. Allen Jr. estimated, in an essay he wrote about those events from which much of this account is taken, that "at least 464 unarmed GIs" were thus murdered in a series of incidents around Malmedy that month.

The Malmedy story has been retold in the press lately because of the likelihood that veterans of the first and second Waffen-SS divisions are among the German dead buried in Bitburg's military cemetery. But only the massacre itself has been recounted, and its aftermath holds a lesson in political history.

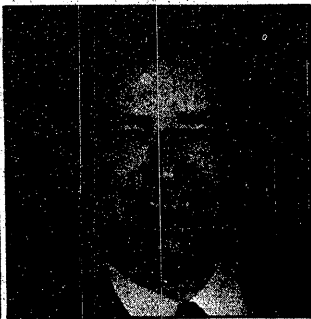
Of the hundred or so men shot at Malmedy on December 17, 1944, nearly a dozen survived among the corpses piled up in a wheatfield. Their testimony led to an investigation by the U.S. Army authorities in occupied Germany, who arrested veterans of the implicated Waffen-SS divisions, interrogated them and eventually charged 74 with participation in the massacre. Tried by a military court in Germany, 43 of the 74 were sentenced to death. None took the stand in his own defense, while all 12 of the GI survivors testified.

The convicted SS men, supported by a growing neo-Nazi movement in postwar Germany, appealed their case up through the Army judicial system to the Allied High Commission. And as part of the effort to overturn their sentences, the 74 original defendants began to issue affidavits alleging that the Army had tortured them during the interrogations to induce them to confess. Concerned by the political sensitivity of the case, the Army appointed a special committee to investigate these claims, headed by Col. John M. Raymond. This review board dismissed the torture claims as "groundless." A second committee, composed of three American jurists, re-investigated the case, and also found nothing wrong.

By 1949 the Malmedy defendants had found a friend in the U.S. Senate, a still-obscure Wisconsin Republican—

And during the following months, even though Stetako and company had been effectively removed from power, their adherents continued to assist the Nazis in murdering thousands of Jews and removing thousands more to concentration camps such as Belzec. Bandera himself, according to Dallin, was "taken from Cracow to Berlin and, though treated with deference, was kept in jail." Ironically, considering their ideological and "racial" affinity with the Nazis, quite a few of the OUN/B leaders fared less well. Some were sent to concentration camps, while others remained in the Ukraine and aided the Nazi occupiers in the extermination campaign.

By 1943, Nazi attitudes toward the OUN/B shifted again. Needing manpower, Himmler approved the formation of a new SS unit, "Police Regiment Galicia," in March, and by April had begun to recruit Ukrainians in L'vov for a new unit of the Waffen-SS. The police regiment was renamed Waffen-SS Division Galicia. More than 100,000 Ukrainians volunteered, and 30,000 were accepted. But



AP / WIRE WORLD PHOTOS

McCarthy in 1954

Joseph R. McCarthy. Bolstered by his financial angel, a far-right Wisconsin manufacturer of German origin named Walter Harnischfeger, McCarthy began to repeat the allegations of torture as if he believed them. And, with the cry that was to become his trademark—"I have here in my hand . . ."—McCarthy brandished their affidavits, demanding a Senate investigation.

There was an investigation, conducted by a special subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee. McCarthy, who was not a member, demanded the right to sit in on its hearings. He swiftly distinguished himself by constant, irrelevant badgering of the Army witnesses, and by his heavy-handed use of anti-Semitic innuendo. Over and over, he attacked the credibility of Jewish Army officers involved in the prosecution by stressing their names and, in some cases, their status as "non-Aryan refugees" from Germany, or "39ers." Ultimately, McCarthy "quit" the subcommittee in a fit of bluster, accompanied by his special counsel, a lawyer loaned him by Harnischfeger. The hearings continued, and the outcome was a repudiation of both the charges against the Army and of McCarthy himself.

Years later it was proved that McCarthy had received his evidence directly from a neo-Nazi agitator named Rudolph Aschenauer, who used McCarthy's speeches in the German press for his own ends. By 1951 those ends had been accomplished. Hoping to mollify the neo-Nazi movement, the Army commuted the death sentences of the Malmedy defendants. Informed of this denouement, McCarthy—by then engaged in other dirty work—was well satisfied. He delivered a comment with haunting relevance today: "We can now go forward and consolidate our friendship with Germany."

Ronald Reagan, it seems, is only completing, in his more genial way, a mission begun by his ideological forebear. ■

Soviet troops gradually drove the Germans and their Ukrainian helpers out of the Ukraine. Late in 1944, Bandera and his followers were released from prison by the Nazis, on the condition that the Ukrainian nationalists assist in defending their falling eastern front against the Red Army. This they did, with a new Nazi-sponsored front under the leadership of General Paul Shandruk. Shandruk's forces surrendered to the Allies at the end of the war.

As for Stetako, he and Bandera reconstituted themselves politically in Munich after the war as the "Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations," and like other collaborationist forces they switched their allegiance to the West.

The atrocities committed by their adherents under the Nazis were well enough known to place the OUN on a list of "inimical organizations" whose members were barred from entry into the United States under the Displaced Persons Act of 1948. That list identified them as fascists and Nazi collaborators, during the

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war, for that matter, the FBI had kept the Ukrainian nationalists already in the United States under surveillance, because they were believed to be cooperating with pro-Nazi elements here.

The Suspect Emigrés

But the political revival of the OUN was aided by amendments to the Displaced Persons Act a few years later, and dozens of OUN members began to find their way into the United States, along with followers of assorted other Eastern European fascist paramilitary and political outfits. Bandera himself was later assassinated under mysterious circumstances in Munich, allegedly by a Soviet agent. But in the meantime he and Stetsko had recruited followers of other émigré groups into the ABN. Among the ABN's top officials by 1960 was the Belorussian collaborator Radislaw Ostrowsky, a notorious anti-Semite who according to Dallin had been groomed by Rosenberg in 1944 as "the new Belorussian Führer." Like the Ukrainian followers of Stetsko and Bandera, Ostrowsky's followers were strongly believed to have participated in atrocities during the war. There was no doubt of their Nazi affinities.

Stetsko maintained other dubious affiliations, as his organization and others propagandized for a NATO offensive to overturn Yalta and liberate the "captive nations." An examination of his publications, for instance, shows that Stetsko's military mentor was Major J. F. C. Fuller, who in prewar years had been "the most eminent military supporter" of the British Fascist Oswald Mosley, according to Mosley biographer Robert Skidelsky. Fuller, who is often quoted in ABN periodicals, wrote the foreword to Stetsko's 1959 book *The Kremlin On A Volcano: Coexistence or Liberation Policy?*

Of a more intellectual bent was the *Ukrainian Quarterly*, published by the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, a Banderite front in the U.S. The board chairman was Lev Dobriansky, who also headed up the Captive Nations campaign and has worked closely with Stetsko for decades. Among the personages on the editorial board of the quarterly, and a regular contributor to the ABN newsletter as well, was Dr. Austin J. App. App, who chaired the Captive Nations Committee in Philadelphia for years, is better known as one of the earliest proponents of the theory that the Holocaust never took place. His works include *Can Christianity Survive When the Jews Control the Media and the Money?*, *The Six Million Swindle*, and *Kosher Food Racket Exposed*, among others. Of German extraction, Dr. App was also a contributing editor to *Western Destiny*, the postwar neo-Nazi magazine edited by Roger Pearson.

The pages of the *Ukrainian Quarterly*, under Dobriansky's chairmanship, have regularly included eulogies of the top figures of the OUN, and of General Shandruk, the military leader of the Waffen-SS Galician Division. It noted Shandruk's "ability to make a good impression on people," citing the opinion of the Nazi major who directed the activities of the Galician Division. (Shandruk emigrated to the U.S. in the early '50s.)

The Crusade Against OSI

The *Ukrainian Quarterly* and other rightist émigré publications are filled, as one might imagine, with accolades to Reagan, philippics against everything Russian, and the usual catalog of ultra obsessions, from the overthrow of the Sandinistas to the "betrayal" of Taiwan. Over the past year, at least, another theme has been appearing with greater frequency: the depredations of the OSI (in collusion with the Soviet KGB) against good émigré anticommunists.

Among these anticommunist victims have been several former OUN members, identified as such, including Bohdan Koziy of Fort Lauderdale, who was found to have murdered several defendants

Jews—one of them a little girl—in the Galician town of Lisets. He was denaturalized and is currently facing deportation. Others had been members of the Ukrainian militia, recruited by the Nazis from the OUN. But the line taken by the émigré groups is that none of their number should face prosecution by the OSI. Their reaction has been classical rebaiting.

The quarterly's spring 1984 issue, for example, featured a lengthy denunciation of OSI by Edward M. O'Connor entitled "Our Open Society Under Attack By The Despotic State." After a turgid recitation of American and Russian history, O'Connor reaches his main argument, explaining the atrocities committed by the East European Waffen-SS contingents as part of the Western struggle against Soviet imperialism. "No quarter was given," he wrote, "all those who acted in any way to support Imperial Russia [such as anti-Nazi partisans] were regarded as enemies and treated accordingly." He urges that the OSI become "a major policy issue" of the 1984 presidential election. In essence, the Ukrainian editors were accusing the OSI of treason for seeking Soviet cooperation in the prosecution of émigré war criminals.

The summer 1984 issue pursued the OSI theme, publishing an open letter to

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir in defense of John "Ivan the Terrible" Demjanjuk, the Ukrainian concentration camp guard facing deportation to Israel by OSI. The letter claims unequivocally that the émigrés accused of war crimes are all "utterly innocent people," facing the wrath of a Jewish public manipulated by the KGB. It warns that by requesting the deportation of Demjanjuk, Israel risks generating "a new wave of anti-Semitism."

That ominous new wave seems already to have gathered force among at least some of the émigré organizations, according to the World Jewish Congress. Over the past several years, the congress has documented numerous anti-Semitic excretions in the émigré press on the subject of OSI. Lithuanian newspapers in New York and Cleveland, echoing the old formulations of the Nazis and the OUN, have asserted that Jews "collaborating with the Bolsheviks soiled themselves with Lithuanian blood and are now peacefully living in Israel"; a Massachusetts publication of the Ukrainian Congress Committee charged that "the OSI has been completely influenced and controlled by the Jewish lobby." The State Department has even received a ravaging anti-Semitic letter from Dr. Eduard Rubel, an Estonian who is a board member

of the Captive Nations Committee (and also has links to the native anti-Semitic rightist Lyndon LaRouche). Finally, in a book published by an anti-OSI group called Ukrainian Survivors of the Holocaust, historian Petro Mirchuk, an OUN sympathizer called as a defense expert in several OSI cases, summed it all up:

"[Why is it] that all the nations of the world, down through the ages, have hated and persecuted the Jews so brutally and criminally? Don't you think that the reason must lie within yourselves [the Jews], in your behavior toward other people?"

So far the comrades of Dobriansky and Stetsko haven't succeeded in gaining much public sympathy for the accused war criminals, but there is little doubt that the émigré groups intend to continue their crusade against OSI, and that they have powerful friends in high positions. Supporters of the OSI's work fear that Attorney General Edwin Meese, who himself has strong ties to the émigrés, will join forces with Buchanan against the agency. Reagan faces the same Faustian bargain made by the American officials who first enlisted the fascist émigrés in their cold war against the "evil empire." His lack of historical memory, so vividly illustrated last Sunday and in his remarks about the Bitburg trip, do not bode well.

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