Ukraine in World War II

1939–1945

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UKRAINE IN WORLD WAR II

Reference book

The 70th anniversary of victory over Nazism
in World War II

Kyiv, 2015

VICTIMS AND HEROES

During the Second World War, Ukraine lost more people than the combined losses of Great Britain, Canada, Poland, the USA and France. The total Ukrainian losses during the war is an estimated 8-10 million lives. The number of Ukrainian victims can be compared to the modern population of Austria.

The Ukrainians in the Transcarpathia were the first during the interwar period, who in March 1939 did not wait for the annexation of their region by foreign powers but stood up with arms for their freedom against the aggression of foreign countries.

From 1 September 1939 onwards, the Luftwaffe bombed Galicia and Volhynia.

During the Second World War, the front passed the whole of the Ukrainian territory twice. Through Kharkiv, the second largest city in the country, the front passed by four times.

Ukrainians became cannon fodder for two dictators – Hitler and Stalin. Every third man in the Red Army was lost (compared to every 20th in the British army). The reason for this terrible situation was simple – Stalin did not count the losses because, as he said: "Women can give birth to more children!"

The victims of this clash of two totalitarianisms were both the military and civilian Ukrainians, the area between the Carpathians and the Don River became known as the "Bloodlands." That was the price Ukrainians paid for a lack of their own independent state.

The Ukrainians fought against Hitler and his allies in the Polish, Soviet, Canadian and French armies along with those of the American and Czechoslovakian and in the European, African and Asian theatres of war and on the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

Ukrainian Alexei Berest was one of those who put the Soviet flag on the Reichstag in Berlin, the Ukrainian Michael Strank – was one of the American Marines who raised the American flag at Iwo Jima. But only one army formation fought under the Ukrainian flag during the war – the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA).

Ukrainians – the Heroes of Second World War

Ivan Kozhedub

Soviet fighter pilot. The most effective Allied ace. Had 64 air victories. Awarded the Hero of the Soviet Union three times.

Peter Dmytruk

Canadian military pilot. He was shot down and joined the French Resistance. Saved civilians from German repression. Awarded the Cross of War.

Nicholas Oresko

Master Sergeant U.S. Army. For a daring attack on the enemy's fortified position in Germany, he was awarded the highest American honours: the Medal of Honour, the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart.

Stepan Vaida

Lieutenant of the 1st Czechoslovak Army Corps. Participant in the Battle of the Dnieper and the battles in the Carpathian Mountains. Killed in Poland. He was awarded the Czechoslovak War Cross 1939-1945 and the Hero of the Soviet Union.
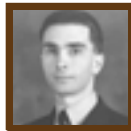
Michael Oparenko

Polish bomber pilot. He participated in the battles against the Nazi aggressors in Poland and later in France and the UK. Was awarded the Polish Cross of Valour twice.
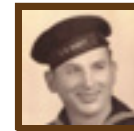
Alex Diachenko

Sailor U.S. Navy. By the price of his own life tried to save captured german ship from destruction. For his feat of arms he was rewarded by the Silver Star. American military transport ship was named after him (USS Diachenko (APD-123).

Olena Viter

Mother Superior of a convent in the Lviv province. During the German occupation, she hid people against severe repression. By saving the Jews during the Holocaust, she was awarded the title of a "Righteous Among the Nations."
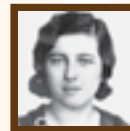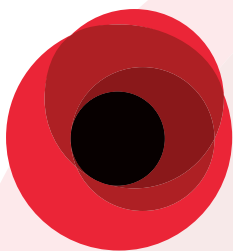
Kateryna Zarycka

Organizer of the Women's underground activities network, Head of the Ukrainian Red Cross for the UPA. Awarded the Silver Cross of Merit.

Second World War approximate losses according to the United Nations

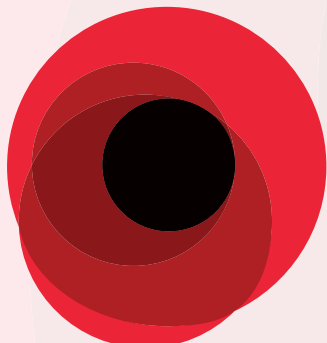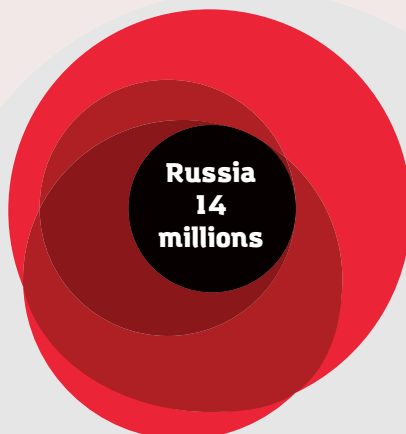Poland
6 millions

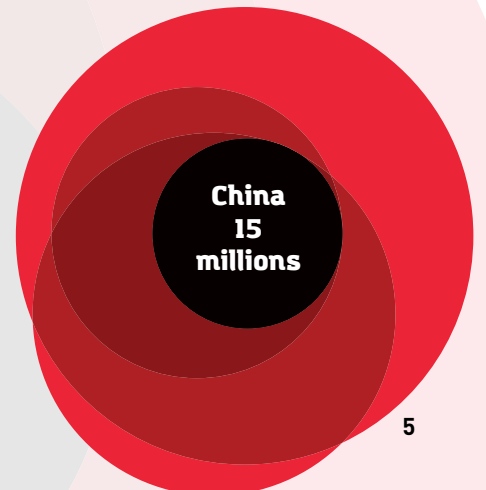Yugoslavia
1,1 millions

France
550 000

Great Britain
450 000

USA
420 000

Ukraine
8-10 millions

Russia
14 millions

China
15 millions

5

UKRAINIANS IN THE ARMIES
OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

During the Second World War, the majority of Ukrainians fought on the side of the Allies.

The war began on 1 September 1939 and 120 thousand Ukrainians fought against the Wehrmacht as part of the Polish Army. Most were Polish citizens who came from Galicia and Volhynia, which was a part of interwar Poland.

In addition, there were a few dozen veterans of the Ukrainian Army from 1917-1920 serving in the Polish armed forces. These officers also defended Poland in 1939.

After the defeat of Poland in 1939, Ukrainians also fought as part of the Polish armed forces under Soviet and British command. Entering the Polish formations under the USSR, Ukrainians saved themselves from the death sentence that came in the GULAG camps. For this reason, Ukrainians born in Transcarpathia, also joined the 1st Czechoslovak Army Corps under the command of Ludvík Svoboda

On 17 September 1939, the Red Army crossed Poland's eastern border. This was how Soviet Ukrainians entered the Second World War.

Many Ukrainians fought on the Soviet side against Finland in 1939-1940.

More than 6 million Ukrainians fought in the Red Army during the 1941-1945 German-Soviet War.

In the summer of 1945, Ukrainians as part of the Soviet army took part in the defeat of Japan.

At the front from the Atlantic to the Pacific and Norway to Egypt, Ukrainians fought in the Armed Forces of the United States of America (80 thousand), the British Empire (45 thousand), France (6 thousand) and other countries. These were predominantly members of the Ukrainian Diaspora.

During 1942–1950 the Ukrainian Insurgent Army fought in Ukraine, with approximately 100 thousand people moving through its ranks.

Some Ukrainians did fight alongside Germany's allies. Most of them were forced to take this step by trying to survive the German occupation. Some associated with Germany, expecting independence from Soviet Ukraine. Playing on these national feelings, the German invaders created Ukrainian military units during the final stages of the war.

Red Army - 6 millions

Polish Armed Forces in 1939 - 120 000
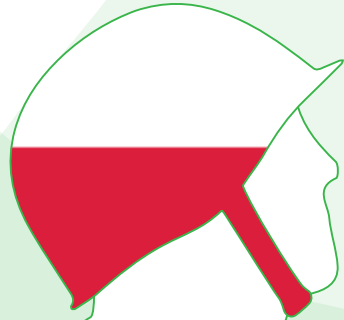
Ukrainian Insurgent Army - 100 000

U.S. Army - 80 000
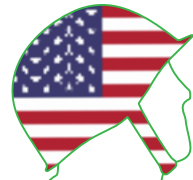
British Empire Forces - 45 000

French Armed Forces - 6 000
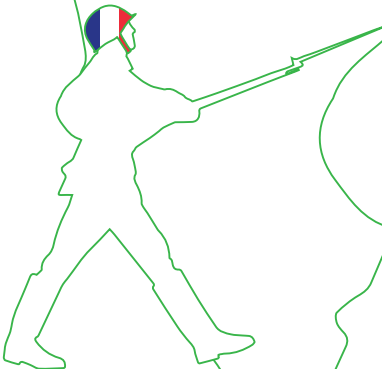
DIVIDED NATION

For the first time in the twentieth century, Ukraine declared independence during the First World War. In 1917, the Ukrainian Central Rada was formed in Kyiv, who played the role of a transitional government and declared the creation of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR).

After the declaration of four fundamental constitutional degrees – Universals – the UNR, as an independent state, instigated diplomatic contacts with England and France along with Germany and their allies.

The Ukrainian revolution began earlier than in other countries of this region: in Lithuania, Estonia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Latvia and the Balkans.

In December 1917, after the Kharkiv puppet government was formed and the Bolsheviks proclaimed a "Soviet Ukraine", the Russian Bolsheviks unleashed war against Ukraine.

The fight against the Bolsheviks continued until 1921. This war and other conflicts exhausted Ukraine and it lost its independence.

The worst of times then began for one of the great European nations. The mass deportations, the Holodomor and the Great Terror claimed millions of lives during this "peaceful" interwar period.

The Ukrainian nation at the start of the Second World War in September 1939 was divided among five countries: the USSR, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania.

On 15 March 1939, the Carpatho-Ukrainian Parliament elected Augustine Voloshin as its president and adopted several state symbols – the blue and yellow flag, "Ukraine has not yet perished" as its anthem and St. Volodymyr the Great's trident as their national coat of arms.

On the same day, Budapest offered Khust a peace that would annex Carpatho-Ukraine (Transkarpathia) to Hungary. Voloshin refused and thus began the general offensive of the Hungarian troops.

In 1939, the Ukrainian national borders were divided among five countries: the USSR, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania
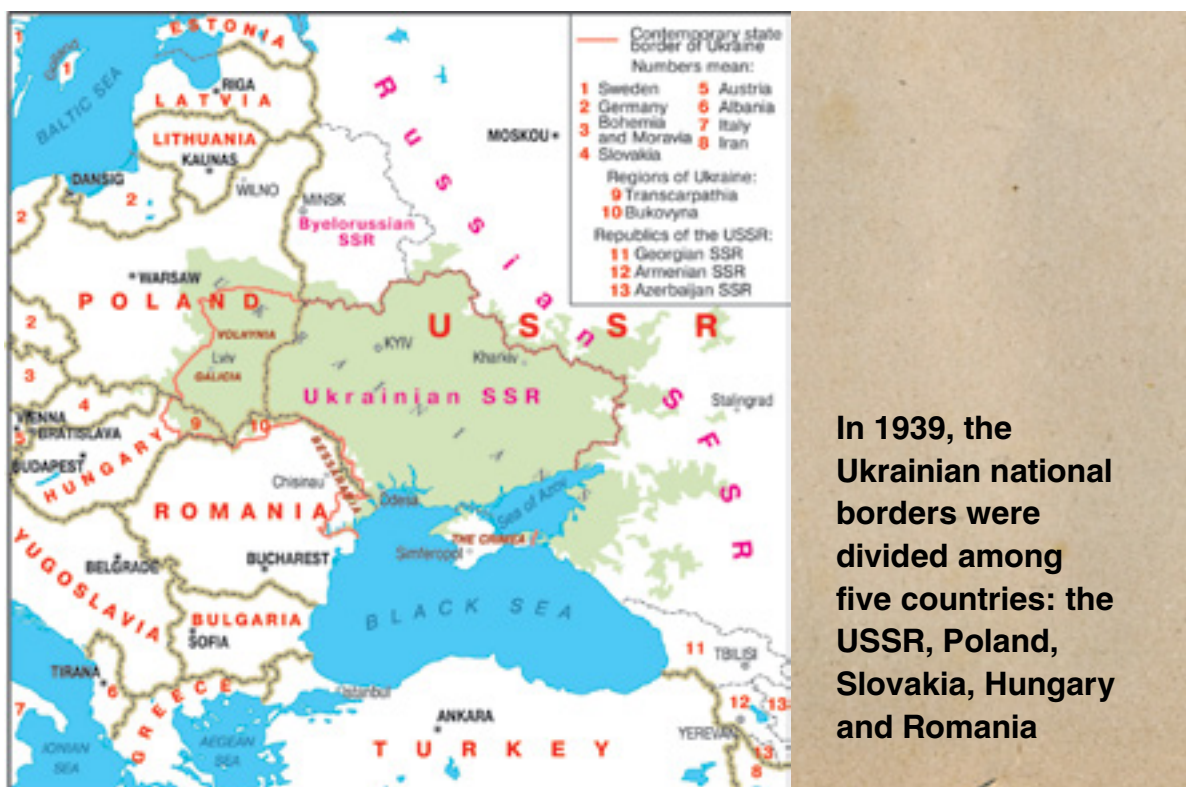
Historian Timothy Snyder, on the First Ukrainian Independence:

The First World War in Eastern Europe – and now I will lose all my Polish, Czech and Romanian friends –was when one where you did not have to do anything to gain a state but got it anyway. The connection between the active struggle for national independence and whether one actually achieved it, was minimal.

In this way, Romania made minimal contributions to the First World War, but received considerable amount of territory. The Czechs and Slovaks fought on the wrong side but received a completely new state. The Polish independence movement existed, but their efforts were minimal. But despite this, Poland became a larger, stronger state. In fact, you did not need to do a lot. Serbia, for example, started the war but at the end of it was a central part of a stronger state – Yugoslavia. The Ukrainian example is not typical: many Ukrainians struggled for independence even after the war.

And here we see an unusual situation: many battles, many people who died for the formation of an independent state but as a result no state appeared.

From the «It has not even passed» public lecture, Kyiv, May 2014.

Proclamation of the Third Universal on Sofia Square in Kyiv, 20 November 1917. In the center – Ukrainian political leaders: Symon Petliura, Mykhailo Hrushevksyi, Volodymyr Vynnychenko.

Declaration of Independence of Carpatho-Ukraine, 15 March 1939

The culmination of this was the Battle of Krasne Pole on 16 March 1939. Here, the Ukrainian soldiers organized their defense against the regular Hungarian army which included tanks, planes, artillery and heavy weapons. By the evening, the Carpatho-Ukrainian capital fell.

Ukrainians were the first in pre-war Europe to defend their freedom with arms.

THE FAKE "GOLD" OF SEPTEMBER: 1939-1941

Pact. On 23 August 1939, the Non-Aggression Pact was concluded between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union (the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) which made the outbreak of the war possible. According to the secret protocol, Eastern Europe was to be divided between the two dictators: Hitler would take Poland and the Baltic States, Finland and Romanian Bukovyna and Bessarabia would fall into Stalin's zone of interest. For 50 years the government of the USSR denied the existence of this secret protocol.

The signing of the Treaty of Non-Aggression between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union.

Outbreak of the War. The war in Ukraine began on 1 September 1939 and 120 thousand Ukrainians met the Nazis in the ranks of the Polish Army. Lviv and other Western Ukrainian cities suffered from Nazi bombings on the first day of the war.

The Soviet Union entered the Second World War on 17 September 1939 as a Nazi ally. Without declaring war, the Red Army crossed the Polish border and moved westward. The Soviet troops helped the Wehrmacht break the Polish resistance in Przemysl and Brest. On 22 September, Lviv surrendered, besieged by the Wehrmacht from the west and the Red Army from the east. The same day there was a joint German-Soviet victory parade in Brest.

Ukrainian, Polish Army Military Chaplain Symon Fedoronko was killed along with his friends in Katyn, which still on active duty.

Joint Victory Parade of the Wehrmacht and Red Army in captured Brest on 22 September 1939.

In June 1940, a Soviet Union ultimatum demanded that Romania transfer all of Bessarabia and northern Bukovyna. Without the support of Berlin and not wanting a war, Bucharest gave their territories to the Soviet Union without a single shot fired.

«First Soviets»

On these newly-occupied territories, the Soviet regime implemented a large-scale repression. In Western Ukraine in 1940 and the first half of 1941, over 10% of the population was deported. In the newly established Ukraine, there were 25 prisons created where tens of thousands of local residents were imprisoned.

Even before the end of war with Poland, on 28 September 1939 the German-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Demarcation was signed, in which a secret protocol was included that specified the spheres of influence in Europe. Afterward, trade agreements were concluded as a result of which Germany received critical raw materials and supplied the Soviet Union with modern techniques and technology. As a result of this cooperation, the Third Reich was able to wage war in the West and could not declare war against their Soviet allies in 1940.

Soviet press map from September 1939. Titled: "Mutual Border of Interest of the USSR and Germany in the former Polish State."

HOT SUMMER OF 1941

Blitzkrieg. At dawn on 22 June 1941, German troops crossed the USSR border. During the fighting along the border region of Dubno, Lutsk and Brody, Soviet troops were defeated. The Red Army actually lost their command and began the retreat to the Dnieper River.

Abandoned Soviet tanks near Dubno, June 1941.

At the same time, in Lviv, Lutsk, Stanislav, Dubno and in dozens of other cities in Western Ukraine there began a mass execution of political prisoners. During the first two weeks of the war, more than 21 thousand people were shot by the NKVD in the prisons of Western Ukraine. With the eastward departure of the Red Army, mass executions took place in Vinnytsia, Uman, Kyiv and other cities.

Bodies of the murdered Ukrainian prisoners in the Lonsky Prison yard (Lviv), July 1941.

«Scorched Earth». The retreat of the Red Army was accompanied by the use of the "scorched earth" tactics. Its need was declared by Stalin in a speech on 3 July 1941. Numerous resolutions of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union ordered the destruction of everything that could not be evacuated to the eastern regions of the USSR including plant equipment, machinery, grain etc. One of the horrific crimes of the Stalin regime was the destruction of the Dnieper Dam by NKVD troops in August 1941. This resulted in the death of tens of thousands of Red Army soldiers and civilians who were nearby.

Dnieper River Dam destroyed by NKVD units in August 1941.

Military Disaster. The Red Army's fight in Ukraine in 1941 turned into a disaster. In August-October 1941, the Red Army in Ukraine was actually destroyed. The number of dead Soviet soldiers is still unknown. In encirclements ("pockets") near Uman, Kyiv and Melitopol about 1 million Red Army soldiers were lost.

Captured Red Army soldiers in the Kyiv region, September 1941.

Only at the beginning of 1942 did Soviet command try to begin offensive operations, but they all ended in a crushing defeat for the Red Army. In May-July 1942, Soviet troops were defeated in Kerch, Sevastopol and Kharkiv. The Red Army lost 500 thousand soldiers as prisoners of war. By 22 July 1942, the entire territory of Ukraine was occupied by German troops and their allies.

Column of Soviet prisoners of war after the Kharkiv defeat, May 1942.

KYIV. THE CITY THAT WAS BETRAYED

Diary of Kyivan Iryna Horoshunov

29 July 1941
…I cannot describe it all. The leadership left but the people stayed. Most of us have no jobs, we have no opportunities to leave, there is nothing in front of us but war…

25 August 1941
… Stalin said: We cannot give up Kyiv.

29 August 1941
There are rumours flying around the city. Some people are saying that there is an order to surrender Kyiv. We think that's a provocation. Everything points to the contrary. Kyiv will be protected. A lot of our troops have been pulled into Kyiv.

16 September 1941
…in an article by the Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Lysenko, it said that Kyiv was, is and always will be Soviet…(…) We are surrounded. Now what will happen to Kyiv? What will happen to us?

25 September 1941
I was deeply wrong. Everything is gone.
The (strategic) bridge has fallen into the water. (…) The fire has gradually eased since the wind stopped blowing. The sun has come out. And someone came with the news – the Germans are in the city. (…) In Red Square, German motorcycles – two in a row in equal columns – are slowly moving forward. On 25 September, on all the streets, almost everywhere there are portraits of Hitler. He is depicted in the same tones as Stalin's portraits. Standing proud in full view… and under the portrait is inscribed: "Hitler – Liberator."

Battle for Kyiv

The Battle for Kyiv lasted from early July to 26 September 1941. In August, Hitler rejected the proposal of his General Staff to concentrate all their strength in the direction of Moscow. A directive was quickly signed which moved the offensive south. In early September, Kyiv was "in a vice."

The Soviet garrison in the fortified Kyiv area continued their struggle. The Kyiv resistance lasted for 6 weeks – longer than the resistance for the whole of Poland in September 1939. Only on 19 September, when the Nazis closed their encirclement to the east of Kyiv, did the Red Army leave the capital of Ukraine.

In the pocket at Kyiv, according to German data about 665 thousand Red Army soldiers were captured.

Adolf Hitler on the Battle for Kyiv: "The greatest battle in the history of the world!"

Crimes of the Communists in Kyiv

Before their departure from the Ukrainian capital, the Soviet government had mass executions of political prisoners in Kyiv prisons. Many houses were mined by the NKVD and then destroyed. Eighteen months after the fall of the city, there was a crime against culture: Soviet commando units blew up the 11th century Cathedral of the Assumption, the main church of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra.

The destruction of Khreshchatyk Street

On 24 September 1941, NKVD detonated radio-controlled mines that they laid in advance in houses along the central streets of the Ukrainian capital.

NKVD saboteurs destroyed the center of Kyiv, along with its people. Explosions and fires destroyed 324 old houses. Thousands of people in Kyiv were killed and 50,000 were left homeless.

The occupational authorities used the destruction of central Kyiv as an excuse for their accusations against the Jews and soon began their mass killings at Babi Yar.

Ruins of the Cathedral of the Assumption, destroyed by Soviet commando units on 3 November 1941

BLOODLANDS

Prisoners of War

During the 1941-1942 retreat, the Red Army lost almost 70% of its personnel in Ukraine. Millions of Red Army soldiers were taken to German captivity, a significant portion of which went voluntarily. During the war, there were 180 concentration camps in Ukraine where nearly 1.8 million POWs were killed.

"Uman Pit": Soviet prisoners of war in Nazi Stalag 329, Uman, August 1941.

Holocaust

During the occupation, Ukraine lost more than 5 million civilians, of which 1.5 million were Jews. Mass executions began from the first days of the German-Soviet war. Nazi Einsatzkommando groups almost completely destroyed the Jewish community in Lviv, Drohobych, Lutsk, Rivne, Zhytomyr, Kharkiv and dozens of other cities in Ukraine.

BabiYar

During the 1941-1943 Kyiv occupation, Babi Yar became the place of mass executions of civilians, prisoners of war and resistance movement members. In only two days – 29 to 30 September 1941 – the Nazis shot almost 34 thousand Jews at Babi Yar. The mass shootings at Babi Yar and the neighbouring Syrets Concentration Camp were continuously held until the liberation of Kyiv. During the years of the occupation, there were approximately 70-200 thousands people shot at Babi Yar.

Prisoners of war, covering earth on executed Jews at BabiYar, October 1941.

Koriukivka

On 1-2 March 1943, in response to the actions of the Soviet partisans, the German and Hungarian units held punitive actions against the civilians of Koriukivka in the Chernihiv province. They shot several thousand local residents and burned almost all the houses. On 9 March 1943, the invaders again came to Koriukivka. On this day, they assembled all the surviving villagers and burned them alive. In three tragic days, the invaders killed 6700 people and burned 1290 houses. It was the largest settlement in Europe that was completely destroyed

by the Nazis as part of their punitive operations during the Second World War.

During the German occupation of Ukraine, there were more than 1370 settlements destroyed. The number of victims of these punitive operations were at least 50 thousand people.

A Koriukivka street, March 1943.

Righteous

According to Yad Vashem, the national Holocaust memorial, 2472 Ukrainians are recognized as saving the lives of the Jews during the Holocaust and given the title "Righteous among the Nations."

Father Alexander Glagolev with his family, 1944.

During the Nazi occupation of Kyiv, Father Alexander Glagolev and his family saved the Jews of Kyiv from destruction. He hid them in his apartment and in the buildings that belonged to his parish. He also gave them a certificate of baptism on old certificates that remained from the time of his father. In the autumn of 1943, he was arrested by German police and sent to Germany. Along the way, he managed to escape and returned to Kyiv. The "YadVashem" Institute awarded him and his wife and children the title of "Righteous among the Nations."

Trying to save the Jews from extermination, Father OmelyanKovch gave them baptismal certificates. Overall, he released more than 600 certificates. He wrote a letter to Hitler, which condemned the mass killings of Jews and sought permission to visit them in the ghetto. For this, in the spring of 1943 he was arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned in the Majdanek Concentration Camp, where he secretly continued his priestly activities until his death in 1944. In 1999, the Jewish Council of Ukraine gave him the title of "Righteous of Ukraine."

Father Omelyan Kovch

GUERRILLAS

The lack of political rights, the economic exploitation and the terror against the civilians and prisoners of war caused people to hate the invaders. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians took part in the resistance against the Nazi occupation regime.

Soviet Partisans

The underground network was organized by the intelligence agencies of the USSR and the Communist Party. Trained commandos were thrown across the front lines. The Red partisans were formed from emissaries of the Soviet command, local residents and soldiers of the Red Army who escaped captivity. Leadership and arms for the Red partisans was provided for by Moscow. Large guerrilla groups were formed in military units, which carried out raids in the German rear. The Red partisans fought against the occupation's forces and administration, committed sabotage operations of communication lines and conducted intelligence activities.

Red Partisans Semyon Rudniev and Sydir Kovpak

Polish Partisans

In western Ukraine, in addition to the Red partisans, there was also the Polish underground. The Polish government-in-exile sought to restore their pre-1939 eastern border. To do this, they set up the basis of the Home Army (AK). They relied on Polish settlements that were scattered among the Ukrainian population.

Apart from Soviet and Polish partisans, the fight against the German occupiers was also carried out by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA).

Ukrainian Liberation Movement

The Ukrainian liberation movement existed in western Ukraine before the Second World War. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) fought for Ukrainian independence against Poland until 1939, from 1939-1941 against the Soviet Union, and after that against Germany.

The summer 1941 attempt of the liberation movement to try to restore Ukrainian independence was suppressed by the German occupiers. The OUN leaders were imprisoned in concentration camps.

During the German occupation, the OUN underground operated across Ukraine from the Carpathians to the Donbas. In eastern Ukraine, raids were organized by members of the OUN who made their way from Galicia and Volhynia. Members of these groups found allies among the local population in Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Simferopol and other cities.

Halyna Kuzmenko: born in Chernihiv, grew up in the Donbas, fought with the UPA in the Carpathian Mountains

In the wooded areas of western Ukraine, Ukrainian nationalists created the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in 1942. The UPA was made up of local people opposed to the German plans for the economic life of their country and the export of the population to the Reich for forced labour. The UPA disorganized the German occupation's administration in Volhynia: some areas were temporarily liberated from the Nazis. In the liberated territories, the Ukrainian self-government acted under the protection of the UPA. An example of this territory the area around the Kolky settlement – the insurgent's "Kolky Republic".

In their battles against the German occupiers, the UPA destroyed almost 13 thousand enemies. The objectives of the UPA, AK and the Red partisans were different, which is why in 1943-1944 there were bloody battles between them. A particularly cruel form of conflict occurred during the Polish-Ukrainian conflict, the victims of which became civilians from both sides.

UPA unit, 1943

THE EXPULSION OF THE NAZIS FROM UKRAINE AND CENTRAL EUROPE

In 1943, the armies of the anti-Hitler coalition, after their victories in Stalingrad and Al Alamein, began to release territory from Nazi occupation. In the second half of 1943 to the end of 1944, Ukraine became the main theatre of operations in the Eastern Front. In 1944, of the Red Army most were concentrated infantry, armoured and mechanized formations.

Ukrainian Fronts

On 20 October 1943, four Ukrainian fronts were formed on the basis of military units which fought in Ukraine. Henceforth, they especially recruited Ukrainians who were mobilized into the Red Army. From only February 1943 to October 1944, nearly 3.7 million people were mobilized in Ukraine.

The Red Army soldiers and Kharkiv residents near the monument to Taras Shevchenko in Kharkiv, 1943.

Black Infantry ("Chornosvytnyky")

During the offensive, Soviet command started the total mobilization of the civilian male population in Ukraine. A special field army was created which even mobilized 16-17 year olds. Ukrainians, without proper training, were used as "cannon fodder". The communist regime regarded everyone in the Nazi-occupied territories as traitors. In battle, they often went unarmed and in civilian clothes and so they were called "Chornosvytnyky" or the "Black Infantry"

Battle of the Dnieper

In the autumn of 1943, Soviet troops reached the Dnieper River and Stalin ordered them to take Kyiv at any costs by 7 November, a symbolic date for the communist regime – the anniversary of the October Revolution. The Battle of the Dnieper was the bloodiest battle operation in Europe.

Soldiers prepare rafts during the Battle for the Dnieper, 1943.

In order to take the capital of Ukraine before the specified date, Soviet command threw all their available forces into the battle, regardless of their losses. Kyiv was won on 6 November 1943 at the cost of at least 380 thousand soldier's lives. Among them – about 250-270 thousand forcibly mobilized "Chornosvytnyky".

The Rescue of Krakow

In 1944, the retreating Nazis prepared their plans to start mining Krakow. First, transportation and industrial facilities were mined. Next, the historical city center. Soviet intelligence, which was led by Ukrainian Yevhen Berezniak from Dnipropetrovsk and Oleksiy Shapovalov from Kirovohrad, received information about this plan. With this information, engineers promptly destroyed the explosives and the city was saved.

Yevhen Berezniak – scout, Hero of Ukraine, awarded the Polish War Order of Virtuti Militari. In 1944, he led a group of scouts, code-named "Voice", which operated in Poland. Captain Yevhen Berezniak operated in the suburbs of Krakow in August 1944. Was arrested by the Gestop but managed to escape. Operated 156 days behind enemy lines. His greatest achievement – saving Krakow from destruction. After returning home, security officers accused him of wanting to stay in captivity. He was taken to an NKVD filtration camp. After his release, he worked as a Ukrainian language teacher. By the 1960's, he was under surveillance by the secret intelligence services. He died in his 99th year.

Auschwitz Liberators

On 27 January 1945 came the end of the most terrible tragedy for the prisoners of the largest Nazi "death factories" – Auschwitz. On 24 January, the 60th Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front launched an offensive against the city of Oswiecim. Almost half of the soldiers of the Army came from Ukraine. During the attack, on 27-28 January, the following concentration camps were freed: Auschwitz-I, Auschwitz II Birkenau and Auschwitz-III Monowitz. The first gate of the main camp was opened by the soldiers of the battalion headed by Poltava-Jew, Anatoly Shapiro of the 100thLviv Division.

Anataoly Shapiro – participant of the Auschwitz concentration camp liberation, Hero of Ukraine. Born in 1913 in the city of Krasnohrad, in the Poltava province to a Jewish family. Was a trained engineer. During the Second World War, commanded a separate infantry battalion of the 100th Infantry Division. Awarded 20 orders and medals.

VICTORY, BUT NOT LIBERATION

After the expulsion of the Nazis in October 1944, the Soviet totalitarian regime returned to Ukraine. Although, given the important contributions and enormous sacrifices, Ukraine was one of the founding members of the UN, there was no room for an independent Ukraine in the new world order.

The Punished People

The expulsion of the Nazis from Crimea ended on 12 May 1944 and a week later the Soviet government began the deportation of Crimean Tatars. They were accused of mass desertion at the beginning of the war and with rampant collaboration with the occupiers. There were also similar charges made against other people living in Crimea.

The Crimean Tatars contributed to the victory over Nazism. By 1941, the Red Army mobilized more than 12 thousand Crimean Tatars out of which more than 3 thousand died. The title "Hero of the Soviet Union" was awarded to 5 Crimean Tatars, 2 were with honours and one – Amet-khan Sultan – was given the "Hero" title twice.
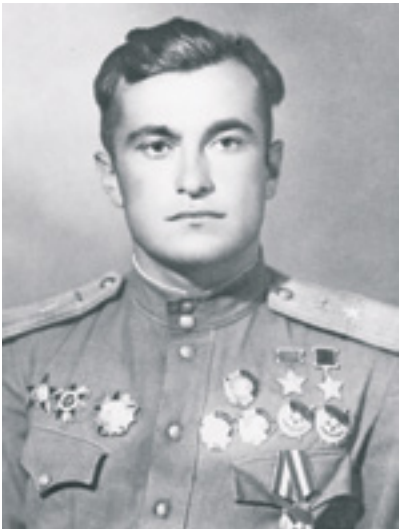
Amet-khan Sultan

On 18 May 1944 began the forced eviction of all the Crimean Tatars to Central Asia. By early July, 225 thousand people were deported: 183 thousand Crimean Tatars, 12 thousand Bulgarians, 9.5 thousand Armenians, 15 thousand Greeks and 4 thousand other nationalities. Another 9 thousand Crimeans were exiled from the Red Army in 1945. Due to the deportation conditions, more than 30 thousand deportees were killed before the end of the war.

Deported Crimean Tatars in the northern snow. Perm province, 1940's.

The "Big Three" at Yalta

The World, Divided in Half

On the eve of the final defeat of the Third Reich, the leaders of the "Big Three" – Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill, met on 4-11 February 1945 at the Yalta Conference. According to the USSR, its decisions affirmed their right to western Ukraine and Belarus, lands that were detached from Poland in 1939.

As a result of these Yalta agreements, and later at Potsdam, Europe was divided into two parts: the liberation democratic West and the communist totalitarian East.

Quote: "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an «Iron Curtain» has descended across the continent". W. Churchill.

Ukrainians continued to suffer losses and after the war, mass repression continued until Stalin's death. An organized resistance to Soviet rule in western Ukraine existed until 1954 and some clashes occurred until 1960. During the suppression of the national movement, about 500 thousand people were repressed (killed, imprisoned or deported).

Another 200 thousand Ukrainians who were in Western European Displaced Person's Camps were not willing to return to the Soviet Union.
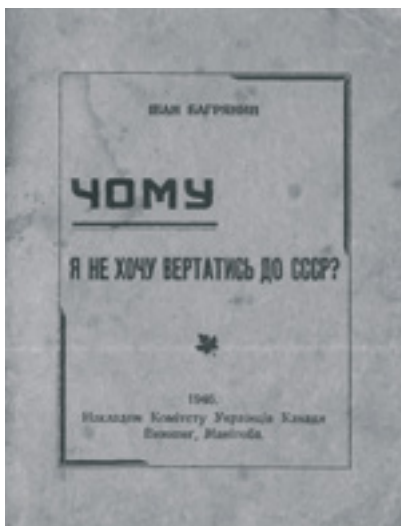
Cover of I. Bahrianyi's (Ukrainian writer-political emigre) brochure, "Why I Am Not Going Back to the Soviet Union?"

Poland, 1939
George Salsky

1

Son of the Minister of Military Affairs of the UNR, Volodymyr Salsky. Lieutenant in the Polish Air Force. Took part in the air battles against the Luftwaffein sky of Poland, France and Britain.

Sevastopol, 1942
Mariya Bayda

2

Soviet nurse. Saved the lives of dozens of soldiers. Freed 9 soldiers from captivity, killing 15 enemy combatants. Hero of the Soviet Union.

Volhynia, 1943
Vasyl Ivahiv

3

Organizer and the first Chief Commander of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. Killed in battle against the Germans.

Tunisia, 1943
Nicolas Minue

4

US Army Private. Attacked a German position, destroyed 10 machine-gunners and riflemen but died in the process.
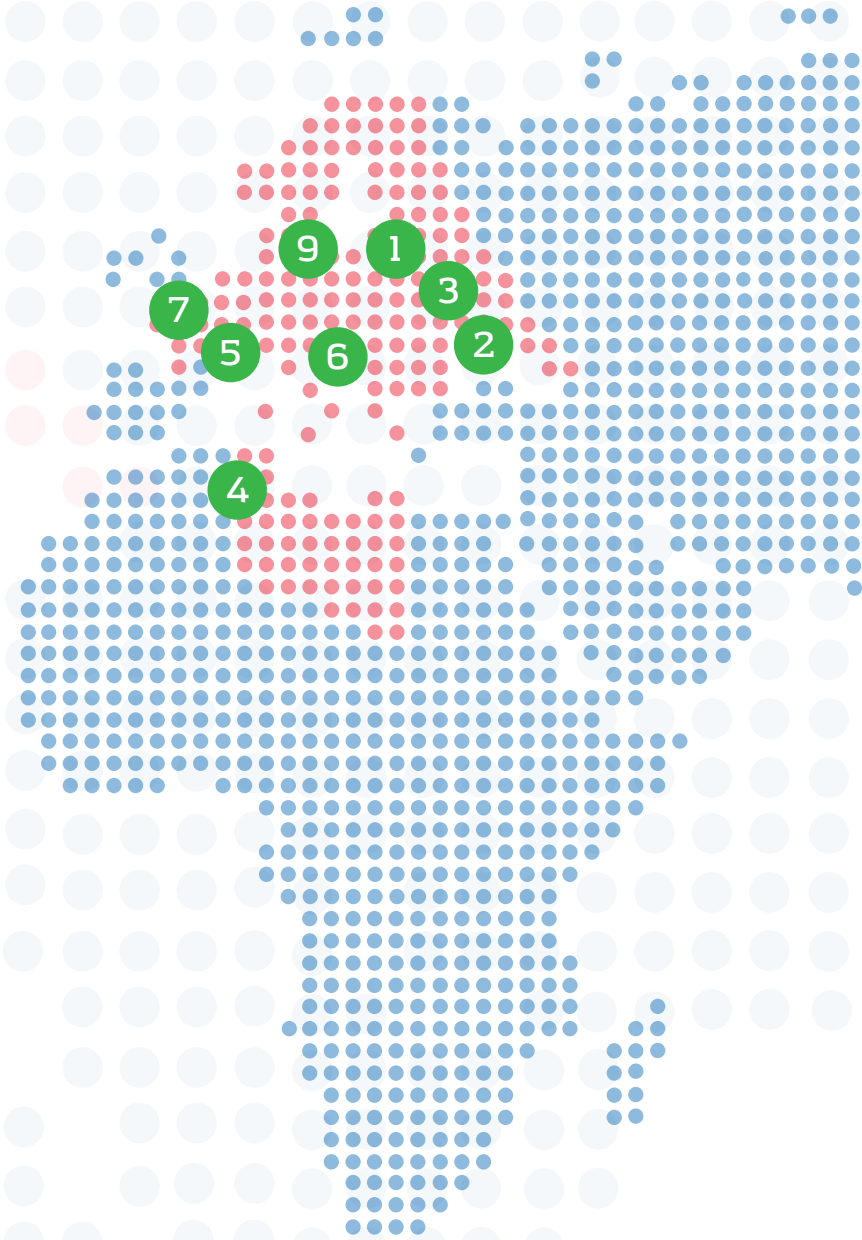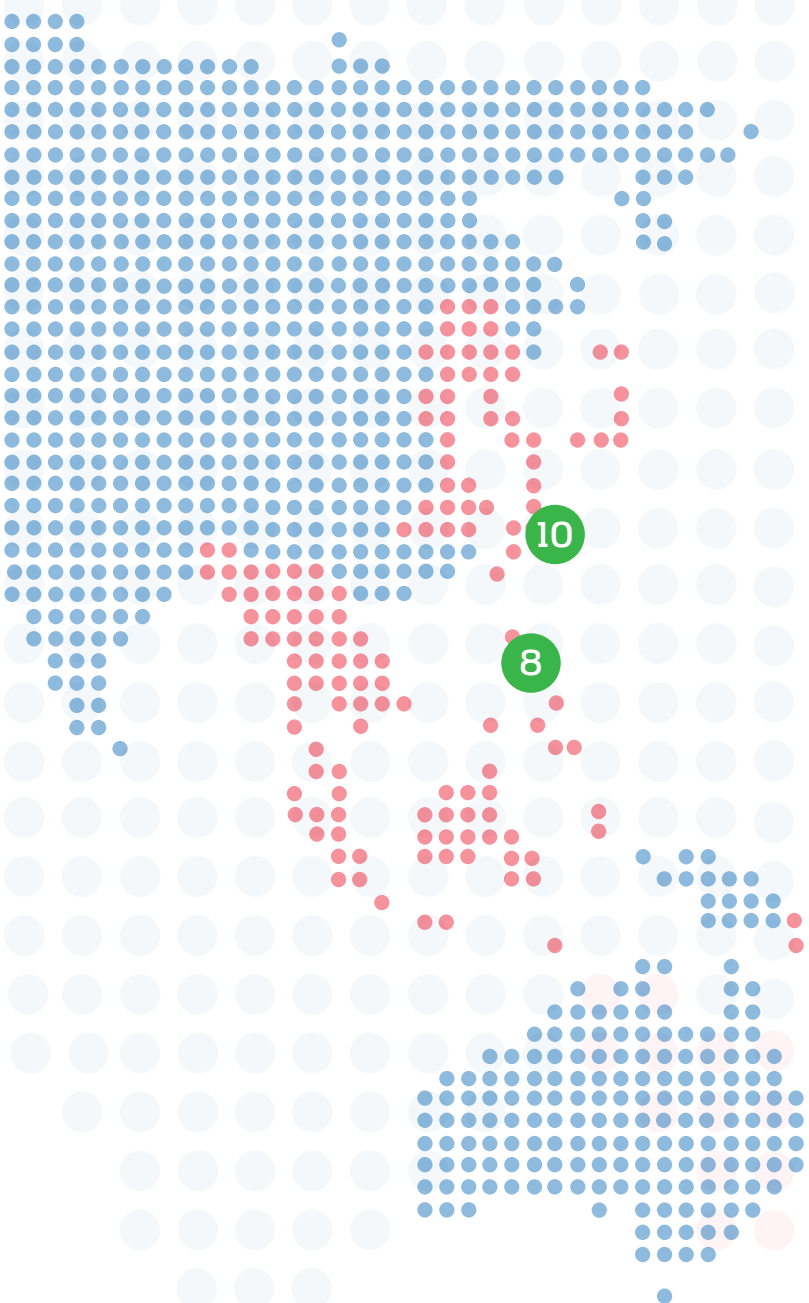Awarded the Medal of Honour, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart.

France, 1943
Vasyl Poryk

5

Red Army Lieutenant. Escaped from German captivity and led a partisan group in France. Hero of the Soviet Union and awarded the title National Hero of France.

the field of war

Battleship Missouri, 1945
Kuzma Derevyanko.

Lieutenant-General of the Red Army. Signed the Japanese Instrument of Surrender on behalf of the USSR.

10

Berlin, 1945
Alexei Berest

Red Army Lieutenant. Raised the Soviet Victory Flag over the Reichstag.

9

Iwo Jima, 1945.
Michael Strank

Sergeant US Marine Corps. One of 6 marines recorded in Joe Rosenthal's "Raising of the Flag on Iwo Jima" photograph.
Awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart.

8

Monte Casino, 1944
Volodymyr Yaniv

Officer Cadet II of Wladyslaw Anders' Polish Corps. Saved life 5 officers in the Battle for Monte Casino. He was awarded the Polish Order of Virtuti Militari.
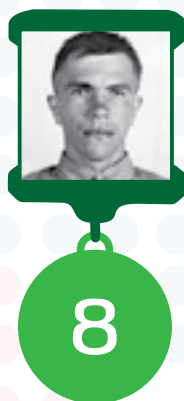
6

Normandy, 1944
Gordon Bohdan Panchuk

Canadian Air Force Captain. Participated in the Normandy landings. Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

7

UKRAINE'S CONTRIBUTION TO VICTORY

Ukrainians made a major contribution to the victory over Nazism, becoming one of the victorious nations.

Millions of Ukrainians, with weapons in their hands, fought against Nazism during the war. Ukraine gave the Red Army: 7 Front and Army Commanders, 200 Generals, more than 6 million soldiers, NCO's and officers.

About 120 thousand Ukrainians met the Nazis in September 1939 as part of the Polish Army. In subsequent years, more than 130 thousand Ukrainians fought in the armies of other anti-Hitler Allies (USA, British Empire, France). Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians fought Nazism in the resistance movement.

As a result of the fighting, more than 700 cities and towns were destroyed in Ukraine along with tens of thousands of villages. Kyiv was 85% destroyed, Kharkiv – 70%, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia and Poltava suffered great devastation and Ternopilwas almost completely destroyed. Nearly 2 million homes were destroyed which resulted in more than 10 million homeless people. Overall, Ukraine's material losses in the war were 285 billion rubles or $100 billion.

During the Soviet retreat of 1941, 550 industrial companies, property and livestock from thousands of farms was taken from Ukraine along with farms and dozens of academic and educational facilities, cultural centers and historical valuables. Nearly 3.5 million inhabitants left the republic – skilled workers and professionals, scholars, intellectuals who gave their labour and intellectual force in the development of the military and economic potential of the USSR.

In order to gain support in Ukraine, in 1943 Stalin was forced to make certain concessions to Ukrainians. The Ukrainian Fronts were created, the government of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was formed on the basis of the People's Commissars (Ministries) of Defence and Foreign Affairs.

In recognition of this Ukrainian contribution to the victory over Germany, Ukraine was included in one of the founding states of the United Nations.

Soviet Flag over the Reichstag

American Flag at Iwo Jima

Paraskevia Havrysh's 5 sons and 1 war

She gave birth to 5 children. She was like Ukraine. Her mother was of Cossack heritage. Her father – an artisan. Her husband Ivan– a paramedic, but this did not help in the typhus epidemic that occurred at the beginning of the 1930s. By Ivan, she had 5 sons: Ivan, Pavlo, Fedir, Anastasyi and Anatoly. Paraskevia Havrysh waited for 7 years for her 5 son-soldiers to come back from the fronts of the Second World War. Only two came back.

The three eldest were mobilized in 1939. Fedir nearly froze in Finland, survived and was thrown in to "liberate" Lithuania. The oldest died first – Ivan, disappeared without a trace during the defense of Sevastopol in the autumn of 1941. Pavlo, the second eldest, received the Hero Star for the Battle of the Dnieper. Then, in 1943, Anastasiy and Anatoly was mobilized to the field army and into the "Black Infantry". Anatoly died soon after. Anastasiy survived, got to Poland and died while his platoon was attacking the town of Ostroleka. Fedir arrived in Berlin, and wrote on the Reichstag wall: "We won!"

Paraskevia Havrysh

Anastasiy Havrysh

Ivan Havrysh

Anatoly Havrysh

Pavlo Havrysh

Fedir Havrysh