

Memory, Identity and the Waffen SS “Galicia” in the Light of the Post-WWII Displacement

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Despite its attempts to democratise itself and its current President’s challenge to reconcile the pro-soviet and nationalistic military factions of the WWII period, Ukraine has no one response to the ethical and political significance of the Waffen SS “Galicia”¹ phenomenon. Even with the numerous recent works on Ukraine’s Liberation Movement and the newly opened archives in the West and those partially opened in Russia, Ukrainian historians seldom touch upon the issue of the First Ukrainian Division. It is clear that the memoir literature, albeit extremely valuable, does not provide sufficient material for a healthy argument about the “Galicia” case. When the military account of the Division do seem to receive some attention, there is no discussion of the “Galicia’s” members’ identity or their narrative, which is passed over or avoided; as is the (selective) memory of the phenomenon itself.

Having become a shameful taboo in conversations among Ukrainians both within the country and in the Diaspora, the story of “Galicia” has acquired an enigmatic shade. This has only encouraged polarisation of the political stances of Ukrainian nationalist groups and silence on behalf of historians, and has reinforced the Division’s as being ‘confusing’ and ‘incomprehensible’. However, it has to be identified that such suppression of the “Galicia’s” story not only underestimates the disadvantage it brings to Ukrainian historiography but also to its contemporary relevance.

1. The 14 Freiwilligen-Gernadier Division der SS (Galizische Nr.1), also informally known as the “Dyvisiya Halychyna”, the “Galician Division” and the “First Ukrainian Division”, formed in the spring of 1943.

This paper will address the question of how the perceptions of the Waffen SS “Galicia” members and the interpretations of their identity have changed over time. To do this, it will address concepts of memory and identity. It will start with a discussion of what is seen to constitute the ‘truthfulness’ of the Division’s narrative, will move on to examine the idea of an ‘imagined community’ and will conclude with the contemporary challenges of Ukrainian historiography on the question of WWII in general and the “Galicia” Division in particular, in the context of their struggle for Ukraine’s independence. In order to illustrate this, the paper will concentrate on the stay of the Waffen SS “Galicia” men at the Rimini POW SEP² camp in Italy, (namely, the analysis of the report of the British Screening Commission³ and an article by Dennis Hill⁴). It will also look into their reception in the UK and the diasporic spread around the world. It will conclude with the ultimate perception of the “Galicia” by the contemporary Ukraine and Ukrainian Diaspora.

‘Truth’ and ‘Memory’

“Those who have not lived through the experience will never know; those who have will never tell; not really, not completely... The past belongs to the dead...”⁵

Memory is central to the creation of identity. Psychologists argue that memory is a function of the brain and they usually view it as the ability to accumulate, encode, and retrieve information about previous experiences. It is thus often taken for granted that memoirs and interviews contain a significant amount of ‘truth’ as they are based on the first-hand testimony. Agamben, however, insists that every testimony contains a lacuna and that it “calls into question the very meaning of testimony and, along with it, the identity and reliability of the witnesses.”⁶ Levi also illustrates this view: “There is another lacuna in every testimony: witnesses are by definition survivors and so all, to some degree, enjoyed a privilege....”⁷ And if the testimony cannot be fully trusted, then what about the memory, which often serves as a source to the testimony? Watkins suggests that the meaning of memory resides in the process of it being recorded, i.e. it is

2. Surrendered Enemy Personnel.

3. National Archives (NA) HO/213/1851, Screening Commission Report written dated 21 February 1947. Original reference LACAB/18/RSC/RIC.

4. Hills, D., You are the Grey Mass, *The Spectator*, 23/30 December 1989.

5. Wiesel, Elie, “For Some Measure of Humanity” in *Sb’ma, A Journal of Jewish Responsibility* 5, October 31, 1975, p. 314.

6. Agamben, Giorgio, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, New York: Zone Books, 2002, p.33.

7. Levi, Primo, *Conversazioni e interviste*, Turin: Einaudi, 1997, pp. 215-16 in Agamben, Giorgio, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, New York: Zone Books, 2002, p.33.

what is lost in that process and what new material is gained that constitutes memory.⁸ He believes that if recording is challenged, writing is challenged, and memory is challenged, hence the meaning of firmness of a personal history is also challenged.⁹

The available memoirs¹⁰ written by the members of the Division and those close to them provide a specific take on the phenomenon – what happened during the war appears to the authors of these works as the only ‘truth’ and, as such, clearly memorable. This ‘truth’, however, can be easily challenged when contrasted with other ‘truths’, for instance archival reports or memoirs of ‘the other side’, often written by the Polish or Soviet authors¹¹. In order to avoid this hierarchy of ‘truths’, this paper adopts a micro-historical approach, that is to say, it argues for the necessity to situate each text in its contextual setting and to treat every type of source used for this research as equally valid in its degree of ‘truthfulness’, basing the conclusions on the context of the text or data used, whether it be archival material, reports, press cuttings or memoirs and interview testimonies. It also argues that these sources are to be viewed as components of the long and evolving process of the “Galician” identity formation.

Therefore, it is important to recognise that the meaning of a memory is easily lost during the process of its recounting and recollection. In order to construct a testimony of an experience, one has to go through the process of memory retrieval. Out of the traditional four types of retrieval: recall, recognition, relearning and recollection, the last of these seems to be the most suitable in the case of the members of the “Galicia” when it came to them either giving their testimonies during their stay in the POW camp, or in their memoirs and interviews. This type of memory retrieval requires reconstructing memory, often employing logical structures, fractional memories, narratives or clues, i.e. remembering extracts of information, and then restructuring the remaining informa-

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8. Watkin, William, “Though we keep company with cats and dogs”: Onomatopoeia, Glossolalia and Happiness in the work of Lyn Hejinian and Giorgio Agamben, Jacket Magazine 2008, <http://jacketmagazine.com> on Hejinian, Lyn, *Writing is an Aid to Memory*, Los Angeles: Sun & Moon, 1996.
 9. Watkin, William, “Though we keep company with cats and dogs”: Onomatopoeia, Glossolalia and Happiness in the work of Lyn Hejinian and Giorgio Agamben, Jacket Magazine 2008, <http://jacketmagazine.com>
 10. See: memoir works of Michael Hryczyszyn (2006), Pavlo Hrytsak (1959), Roman Kolisnyk (1990), Roman Lazaruko (1971), Oleh Lysyak (1953 and 1996), Jaroslav Ovad (1999), Jevhen Pobihushchyj (2002 (1982)), Father Dr. I. Nahajevs’kyj (1955), Pavlo Shandruk (1959), Vasył’ Sirs’kyj (2000), Lev Stetkevych (1998), Yuri Tys-Krokhmal’uk (1954), Vasył Veryha (2002), Jevstakhij Zahachevskyj (1952). A collection of articles mainly on the experience of training and the Battle of Brody was of great memoir value and also includes V. Kubijovych, R. Kolisnyk, P. Nedzel’s’kyj, O. Midzhak, S. Levytskyj, Y. Kopystyanskyj, L. Ortyns’kyj, P. Shandruk, D. Fekurnyak, F. Korduba, I. Pol’ulyakh, F. Trach, R. Ts’olko, V. Koval’, O. Hryniv, J. Len’ko, A. Sek, and A. Drahan.
 11. Among others see Polish texts: Edward Prus (2001), Grzegorz Motyka and Rafal Wnuk (1997), Jerzy Lovell (1970), Waldemar Lotnik (1999). Because of a numerous Ukrainian community in Canada, the Soviet government was able to purchase the services of a quite prolific Ukrainian Canadian author Petro Krawchuk, who wrote two books under his pseudonym, Marko Terlytsia, which were published in Ukraine, all dealing with Ukrainian Canadians or Ukrainian Americans: “*The Nasty Great-Grandsons*” (1960), “*The Nationalist Scorpions*” (1963), and others. In all works by such authors the soldiers of the Ukrainian Division are referred to with typical epithets of Soviet writing: “cut-throats”, “killers”, “murderers”, etc

tion based on these partial memories.¹² One of the opening sentences of an ex-Division member's memoir is "Time flies, and with it flies our life, and so 54 years later we look at things differently".¹³ He continues: "...in 1943 Ukraine was again threatened by the red cloud from the East. We had already had this tragic experience and knew what our 'elder brothers' were bringing. We did not have a good choice and had to choose the lesser evil, rather than wait for death and annihilation, which was being brought to us by the 'liberators'. We took the weapon from our enemy – the Germans, in order to use that weapon to gain our liberty."¹⁴ These lines were written in 1997, when the author had already had 54 years to collect, encode and recall war-time events and to create a new memory of them, which clearly saw the German army as an enemy, albeit a 'better' one. In 1944, however, we can find different material which was used by those who were recruiting young Ukrainian men into the Waffen SS:



This flyer was used for recruitment into the "Galicia" Division and it reads:

"JOIN THE RANKS
OF THE WAFFEN SS
GALICIA DIVISION
FOR DEFENCE OF YOUR MOTHERLAND
IN ARMED BROTHERHOOD
WITH THE BEST WARRIORS IN THE WORLD!"

This illustrates that in 1944 the Division members might have had the memory of the German Army as 'the best worriers in the world', but 50 years later through the process of memory retrieval and basing their narrative on fragmented memories, they saw the same soldiers as 'a lesser evil'.

"Memory can create the illusion of a momentary return to a lost past;" – suggests King – "its operations also articulate the complex relationship between past, present and future in human consciousness."¹⁵ The late 20th century has also experienced a turn to the studies of memory in the context of the events of the Second World War and the creation or establishment of 'new' nations, who often base their appeal for independence on the memories of oppression in the case of the "Galicians", when asked by the Soviet

12. Schacter, D.L., *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

13. Стеткевич, Л., Як з Бережан до Кадри, ("From Berezhany to Kadra"), Тернопіль: Джура, 1998, р. 6.

14. Стеткевич, Л., Як з Бережан до Кадри, ("From Berezhany to Kadra"), Тернопіль: Джура, 1998, р. 6. Here and elsewhere in the paper – translation by O. Khromeychuk.

15. King, Nicola, *Memory, Narrative, Identity. Remembering the Self*, Edinburgh University Press, 2000, p. 11.

Repatriation Commission in Rimini “why they had taken up arms against the USSR they answered – with vehemence as they gained confidence – that they ‘hated the Bolsheviks for having persecuted them and their families’”¹⁶. They saw their unity in the hatred of the Soviet regime, whom at the time of their post-war imprisonment they considered to be a common enemy. Later on, in their memoirs, they refer to the Nazi Army as equally evil.

In his work on the ‘retranscription’ of memories Freud uses a term of *Nachträglichkeit*¹⁷, translated as ‘afterwardsness’ by Laplanche¹⁸. This idea suggests that memory, operating in the present, must definitely include the awareness of ‘what wasn’t known then’. Benjamin¹⁹ uses this as a device to examine narratives in the context of their author’s relation to the past. Nicholls argues that: “to remember is not simply to restore a forgotten link or moment of experience, nor is it unproblematically to “repossess” or re-enact what has been lost”²⁰. This explains that the assumption that memory offers us a straight access to the past is problematic. It also reinforces the idea that this ‘retranscribed’ memory has a significant grip on the culture of the group and, consequently, its identity.

‘Finding’ Identity

In his essay “Ethnicity: Identity and Difference” Hall observes that identity is neither simple nor stable. Instead, it “is always a structure that is split; it always has ambivalence within it.”²¹ Just like memory for Watkin, for Hall identity is realised through the process of identification, something that happens over a period of time, “that is subject to the play of history and the play of difference”, and not just as a “one thing, one moment”²². In the mid-90s there was a change in the discourse of identity. It ceased to be seen as a stable psychological entity; instead identity started to be viewed as an evolving construction that adapts continually to internal and external transformations. Halbwachs’ “Collective Memory”²³ suggests that an individual has not only his/her own memory, i.e.

16. Hills, D., You are the Grey Mass, *The Spectator*, 23/30 December 1989, p. 14.

17. Moller, Lis, *The Freudian Reading: Analytical and Fictional Constructions*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991.

18. Laplanche, Jean, “Notes on Afterwardness”, 1992 in Fletcher, John and Stanton, Martin (eds.), *Seduction, Translation, Drives*, London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1992, pp. 161-177.

19. Benjamin, Andrew, “The Unconscious: Structuring as a Translation” 1992 in Fletcher, John and Stanton, Martin (eds.), *Jean Laplanche: Seduction, Translation, Drives*, London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1992.

20. Nicholls, Peter, “The Belated Postmodern: History, Phantoms and Toni Morrison” 1996, p.53 in Sue Vice, *Psychoanalytic Criticism. A Reader*, London: Polity Press, 1996.

21. Hall, Stuart, *Ethnicity: Identity and Difference*, 1991, in Singh, Amritjt, Skerrett, Joseph T. Hogan, Robert E. (eds.), *Memory Narrative and Identity. New Essays in Ethnic American Literatures*, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994, pp.16-17.

22. Hall, Stuart, *Ethnicity: Identity and Difference*, 1991, in Singh, Amritjt, Skerrett, Joseph T. Hogan, Robert E. (eds.), *Memory Narrative and Identity. New Essays in Ethnic American Literatures*, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994, p.17.

23. Halbwachs, Maurice, *La Memoire Collective*, Paris: P.U.F., 1950.

of the events that he/she experienced directly, but also ‘remembers’ occurrences, events, values, opinions and language of the other members of the groups they inhabit. If this approach is applied to the war-time “Galicia” men, it will be clear that just as their identity, their memory was fragmented, disjointed and lacking coherence:

“There was confusion as to the exact identity and geographical origins of these East European peasants whose homeland was notorious for its impermanent frontiers and shifting governments. The British were unwilling to face the scandal of a forcible repatriation operation. No evidence of war crimes had been produced against the men – the scraps of paper with names written on them which the Soviet mission sometimes handed in to Sub-Area HQ were thrown away. But the real strength of the Ukrainians lay in their cohesion, their relative literacy and extreme national consciousness. They had their own language, ranks and uniform, their own religion with its Uniate cross and marvellous chants, their own history. They regarded themselves as part of the Ukrainian Freedom Army, using Germany as an ally in their fight against Bolshevism.”²⁴

The task of analysing the identity of a group and the memory which has an impact on such an identity is a process of studying the traces of memory in its language, its oral tradition, its relation to history at the time of it being retrieved. In this context, the memories of the “Galicia” men and those who came in contact with them shapes the forms that their narratives take, the ways of recalling a dormant past and the creation of a certain perception of the identity of themselves (for the Division members) and of the “Galicians” as a group for those who came in contact with them. These perceptions often proved to be totally conflicting.

From the memoirs and the German documentation of the recruitment process it is evident that the Division received support especially from the youth of L'viv and other western Ukrainian towns, mainly students of gymnasia²⁵ and the former officers of the Ukrainian military formations of the First World War period; they saw in the creation of such a Division a potential basis for the future Ukrainian Army which, after the war, could play a decisive role in the formation of Ukrainian independent state. The British Screening Commission report, however, sees them as “...the simple peasant type”, who “...made a good impression, showing no signs of either prevarication or truculence...”²⁶ The Report also comments on the ‘national identity’ of the group and summarises the ex-soldiers of the Division as “being decent, simple sort of people”²⁷ who “regard themselves as a homogenous unit, unconnected either with Russia or Poland”²⁸, and who “do not seem conscious of having done any wrong.”²⁹

24. Hills, D., You are the Grey Mass, *The Spectator*, 23/30 December 1989, p. 14.

25. Гімназія – an Austro-Hungarian equivalent of a modern high school or a pre-university college, practiced in pre-war Ukraine.

26. NA HO/213/1851, p.2

27. NA HO/213/1851, p.3

28. NA HO/213/1851, p.3

29. NA HO/213/1851, p.3

They have, however, been simultaneously given an identity of a ‘traitor’, for according to the definition³⁰, which the Commission had consulted, traitors are “civilians who voluntarily offer their services to the enemy and, in general sense, people who gave aid and comfort to the enemy”³¹. This makes D. Halden Porter, the head of the British military commission in Italy, to conclude that “This definition undoubtedly applies to most, if not all, of these Ukrainians.”³² He also explains the reasons, which he believes to be behind the Ukrainian unit’s choice:

“(a) The hope of securing a genuinely independent Ukraine.

(b) Without knowing exactly what they were doing, e.g. because other Ukrainians whom they knew had already volunteered.

(c) As a preferable alternative to forced labour etc, or to living in Soviet controlled territory.

(d) To have a smack at the Russians, whom they always refer to as ‘Bolsheviks’.”³³

Thus, Haldane Porter sees them as not “at heart pro-German”³⁴ and believes that their support for the German Army was “incidental and not fundamental.”³⁵ Unlike, D. H. Porter, General Vasiliev of the Soviet Repatriation Commission, who came to interview the “Galicians” in Rimini, considered the Division members’ participation in the Waffen SS as neither incidental, nor naïve. Denis Hill quotes him:

“Towards the end the General, a tired, courteous man who took medicine poured for him by his female interpreter, left in disgust. The remaining Soviet officers began to shout at the prisoners. A colonel freshly arrived from Moscow to ginger things up was permitted to address the prisoners by companies. ‘You are the grey mass [*tiomnava massa*]³⁶’, he cried to the wooden faces gazing at him. ‘You have nothing to offer but your hands. The world doesn’t want you. For them, you are rubbish. Be warned. Sooner or later the Soviet Union will have you.’”³⁷

Here, it is clear that both the UK and the USSR officials see the “Galicians” as ‘traitors’, but in different ways and for different reasons. When D. H. Porter refers to them as ‘homogenous unit’ with the strong ‘national consciousness’, General Vasiliev regards them as a ‘grey mass’ and, of course, ‘the enemy of the Soviet people’.

30. This definition is referred to in the report as that of Professor Royes. The report does not explain what the role of Professor Roys is and why it is his definition that they employ. To date, it has not been possible to establish his authority.

31. NA HO/213/1851, p.6

32. NA HO/213/1851, p.6

33. NA HO/213/1851, p.6

34. NA HO/213/1851, p.6

35. NA HO/213/1851, p.6

36. It seems that Denis Hill mistranslated and misspelt “the grey mass” expression; it should be either серая масса *seraja massa* (grey mass) or темная масса *tiomnaja massa* (dark mass).

37. Hills, D., You are the Grey Mass, *The Spectator*, 23/30 December 1989, p. 14.

An 'Imagined Community' of the "Galicians" in the UK and the World Diaspora

One of the most important factors in the granting of permission to the "Galicians" to be moved to the UK and made DPs was their 'national consciousness': "...the real strength of the Ukrainians lay in their cohesion, their relative literacy and extreme national consciousness. They had their own language, ranks and uniform, their own religion with its Uniate cross and marvellous chants, their own history. They regarded themselves as part of the Ukrainian Freedom Army, using Germany as an ally in their fight against Bolshevism."³⁸ Consequently, national identity played a big part in the Division's own perception of itself and attitude towards them of the outside world. "...the national cultures into which we are born are one of the principal sources of cultural identity", stresses Hall³⁹, "In defining ourselves we sometimes say we are English or Welsh or Indian or Jamaican. Of course, this is to speak metaphorically. These identities are not literally imprinted in our genes."⁴⁰ He then goes on to saying that "...identity is actually something formed through unconscious processes over time, rather than being innate in consciousness at birth. There is always something "imaginary" or fantasized about its unity. It always remains incomplete, is always "in process", always "being formed"."⁴¹ That is to say that an ethnic group's very strong ethnic identity is being continuously affected by a number of processes to which that group is subjected. In the case of the Ukrainian Division, it underwent a number of identifications, both within itself (during its active years as a military unit) and for the purpose of categorisation (once in POW camps); and none of these identities were based purely on the ethnicity of some fixed feature, uniting the group. The changed, evolved over time together with the circumstances surrounding the group. This can be exemplified with the 'nationality crisis' in the aftermath of WWII.

DPs were classified according to their citizenship, not by their nationality (i.e. residency in 1939, as stated in their documentation rather than what they considered to be their ethnic nationality). So Ukrainian DPs were classified as Soviet (Eastern Ukraine), Polish (Galicia, Volhynia), Romanian (Bessarabia, Bukovyna) or Czechoslovakian (Carpatho-Ukrainian) citizens. The decision to discard the status of DPs as Ukrainians

38. Hills, D., You are the Grey Mass, *The Spectator*, 23/30 December 1989, p. 14.

39. Hall, Stuart; Held, David; Hubert, Don; Thompson, Kenneth (eds.), *Modernity. An Introduction to Modern Societies*, Blackwell, 1996, p.61.

40. Hall, Stuart; Held, David; Hubert, Don; Thompson, Kenneth (eds.), *Modernity. An Introduction to Modern Societies*, Blackwell, 1996, p.611.

41. Hall, Stuart; Held, David; Hubert, Don; Thompson, Kenneth (eds.), *Modernity. An Introduction to Modern Societies*, Blackwell, 1996, p.612.

was agreed on later: for the US and British⁴² Zones in November 1945 and UNRRA⁴³ followed in December 1945. The Allies thought they had solved the problem in this way. But in fact, “Polish” Ukrainians, or “Doubtful Poles”⁴⁴ were repatriated to Poland and often driven to the USSR by the Polish state⁴⁵. Among these were almost one hundred members of the Waffen SS “Galicia” who recognised their country of birth to be Poland; they were either resettled in Poland or repatriated to the USSR.⁴⁶

Scruton believes that “The condition of man [sic] requires that the individual, while he exists and acts as an autonomous being, does so only because he can first identify himself as something greater – as a member of a society, group, class, state or nation, of some arrangement to which he may not attach a name, but which he recognizes instinctively as home.”⁴⁷ Although Scruton comes from a very conservative standpoint, his view that without a sense of national identity an individual can experience a sense of lacking can also be found in the more liberal Gellner’s work: “a man [sic] must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears. All this seems obvious, though, alas, it is not true. But that it should have come to seem so very obviously true is indeed an aspect, perhaps the very core of the problem of nationalism. Having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but it has now come to appear as such.”⁴⁸ The “Galicians”, however, had only a nation to define themselves by, as their state no longer existed. Since national identity was not enough for categorisation purposes, they attempted defining themselves according to the region – Galicia in the west of Ukraine. This also posed a problem, for this region moved from belonging to one state (Poland) prior to the WWII and then another (Soviet Union) post 1939. This confused not only the screening commissions, who eventually chose to recognise the Division members as ‘stateless’, but the “Galicians” themselves. Some of them joined General Anders’ Army, and ‘became’ Polish nationals, thus changing their identity yet again; others adopted a political iden-

42. I will be using *British* throughout my paper, as opposed to *English* as is often used in the Ukrainian literature.

43. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) assisted in the repatriation of millions of refugees in 1945 and managed hundreds of Displaced Persons camps in Germany, Italy, and Austria during that year. It provided health and welfare assistance to the DPs, as well as vocational training and entertainment.

44. Those Ukrainians who were born in Galicia before 1939, when it belonged to Poland, and claimed to be Polish citizens were often referred to as “Doubtful Poles”.

45. Jacobmeyer, W., *Vom Zwangsarbeiter zum Heimatlosen Auslaender; Die Displaced Persons in Westdeutschland 1945 - 1951*, Goettingen: 1985, pp. 75-79 (translated from German by Stefan Schroeder).

46. I have carried out a number of in-depth interviews with the ex-members of the Waffen SS “Galicia” as part of my research; the interviewees wished to remain anonymous. (31/03/2007, London).

47. Scruton, Roger, “Authority and Allegiance” in Donald, J. and Hall, Stuart (eds.), *Politics and Ideology*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986, p.156.

48. Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983, p. 6.

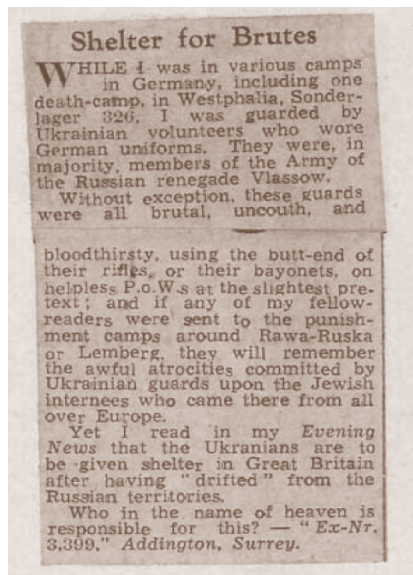
tity instead of the national one – those in support of Bandera⁴⁹ or Mel’nyk⁵⁰. In many instances, the older generation of the Diaspora community is still separated according to this political dualism.

This episode clearly shows that national identities are not something that individuals are born with. They get constructed and reconstructed according to the representation or perception of the group. Schwartz argues that “A nation is a symbolic community and it is this which accounts for its “power to generate a sense of identity and allegiance”⁵¹. To further this point, it is important to mention Anderson’s idea of an “imagined community”⁵². He states that the difference between nations is located in the different ways in which the nations are imagined. According to Hall, in order for this ‘imagination’ to take place there has to be a narrative of the nation, “as it is told and retold in national histories, literatures, the media, and popular culture. These provide a set of stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols, and rituals which stand for, or represent, the shared experiences, sorrows, and triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation.”⁵³ The Division members had all of the above attributes. They only lacked the state. The commanders of the Division were Germans; Himmler refused to recognize the Division as a Ukrainian unit; therefore, the regional Galician Lion, as opposed to the Ukrainian National Trident, was adopted as the emblem of the Division. Only the residents of Galicia district who were Greek Catholics were allowed to be recruited into the “Galicia” Division. All other Ukrainians, especially the Orthodox residents of the Lublin region were prohibited from joining the ranks of the Division⁵⁴, for the fear of them turning against the Germans, as had been the case in 1918.⁵⁵ It could be argued that the absence of the state served to unite them in

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49. Sepan Bandera (1 January 1909 – 15 October 1959), a Ukrainian nationalist leader who headed the OUN. He was condemned to death for the organisation of the murder of the Home Secretary of Poland in 1934; the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Released by Germans in 1939 he headed the group of the OUN which broke away from Andrij Melnyk. Imprisoned again in German Sachsenhausen concentration camp until February 1945, then headed the West European units of the OUN and the UPA. He was poisoned in Munich and died on 15 October 1959. A group of Western Ukrainians are still often referred to by some (Eastern or Southern) Ukrainians or pro-Soviet Ukrainians as “Banderivtsi” (i.e. Bandera supporters).
50. Andrij Mel’nyk (12 December 1890 – 1 November 1964). Ukrainian military and political leader. One of the founders of the OUN in 1922. After his imprisonment by the Polish government between 1924 and 1928, in 1930s Melnyk created an armed wing of the OUN, responsible for a number of terrorist acts. Since 1940 Mel’nyk was competing with Bandera supporters for influence in western Ukraine. After the war he escaped to the West and remained politically active, heading a number of Ukrainian émigré organisations.
51. Schwarz, B., “Conservatism, Nationalism and Imperialism” in Donald, J. and Hall, S. (eds.) *Politics and Ideology*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986, p. 106
52. Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities*, London: Verso, 1983.
53. Hall, Stuart; Held, David; Hubert, Don; Thompson, Kenneth (eds.), *Modernity. An Introduction to Modern Societies*, Blackwell, 1996, p. 613.
54. This policy was in place until the final days of the war when the German Army mobilised (often forcefully) all Ukrainians, despite their origins. Thus there were a number of Ukrainians from “Soviet Ukraine” in the ranks of the Waffen SS “Galicia” at the end of the war, which created further complications for the screening commission.
55. Бояновський, А., Дивізія «Галичина». Історія, Львів: ІУ, 2000, pp. 322-324.

their ‘imagined community’ of the First Ukrainian Division which fought for Ukraine’s independence and to share this narrative.

This brings the argument back to the discussion of memory. Renan notes the three things which constitute the principle of the unity of a nation or a group with a ‘shared’ national identity: “...the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories, ... the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the heritage that one has received in an undivided form”.⁵⁶ The memory of the Division men was formed using the narratives and symbols which untied them into one ‘imagined community’. The memory and perception of those who received them in the UK was affected by the constructed national identity of the ‘Englishness’ (‘Britishness’) and the heroic victory of WWII. On 27 May 1947 the soldiers of the Division were moved to Sheffield and then to the POW camps in Scotland (to the suburbs of Glasgow) and later to Haddington camp (near Edinburgh) and yet again their identity was altered: “It was an unpleasant surprise that although in Italy the Division members were classified as surrendered enemy personnel (SEP), which surrendered to the British forces, in Britain this classification was changed to the ‘prisoners of war’... (however, this new form of detention was rather humane)”⁵⁷, writes Fostun, of the ex-members of the “Galicia”. So to continue with the examples of the vast dissimilarities in the perception of the “Galicians” it is helpful to illustrate the cuttings from the newspapers on the arrival of the Division to the UK. By the time the Division was ready to leave Italy and be relocated to the UK, its members were physically ill, psychologically exhausted and demoralised, but the press⁵⁸ saw them differently:



56. Renan, Ernest, *What is Nation*, in Bhabha, H. (ed.), 1990, p. 19.

57. Фостун, С., *Воїни 1 УД УНА в таборах вйцьковополонених у Великобританії*, in *Перша українська Дивізія української національної армії: історія створення та національно-політичне значення*, Львів: Новий час, 2002. (Translation from Ukrainian by O. Khromeychuk).

58. “Shelter for Brutes”, *Evening News* 4/6/47; “8,000 Ukrainians to Work in Britain”, *Manchester Guardian* 26/5/47; “Fought For Nazis – Coming Here”, *The People* 25/5/47, in HO 213/1851.

These examples clearly illustrate how different perceptions of the same group came to exist in the same period of time. Thus, juxtaposed with the arrival of ‘the other’, the enemy, it received an inflated negative reaction. So what constitutes the memory and, effectively, the identity of the new generation of Ukrainians?

The Contemporary Perception of the Division

Making the past ‘available’ to the future generations is not an easy task. The way the event is represented in texts or oral tradition forms a perception of that event and the group in question. This section of the paper talks of most recent developments in the creation of the identity of the Waffen SS “Galicia” Division and its ex-members, now in their late 80s. An ex-“Galician” Volodymyr Malkosh took part in a teachers’ conference in a town of Kalush in western Ukraine in 2007. Previously he has written a brochure “The Truth About the “Galicia” Division”, and often presented at conferences and numerous commemorations, but in 2007, the 82 year old ‘unofficial’ veteran⁵⁹ felt that his story was requested by fewer people each year and the interest in the Division’s history was diminishing. The teachers’ conference proved the situation to be even worse than Malkosh had expected: “The ‘Galicia’ Division? All I know about it is that it existed. In the history class this was brought up for about 15 minutes. What can you learn from that?”, confesses Hanya, who is a student of the Kalush *gymnasia*.⁶⁰ Her friend Oksana supports the same view: “there is little information in our textbooks on the issue of “Galicia”, and even that is not trustworthy. My granddad fought in UPA [Ukrainian Insurgents Army] and told me all about it. And when I open my textbook, I see that there is only 50% of truth there. It would be useful to discuss this in class”⁶¹ Oksana has a clear idea of what constitutes the ‘truth’ for her – it is rooted in the oral tradition, the stories her granddad recalled to her and thus an official school textbook is seen as only offering ‘half-truth’. When the students were asked whether there were discussions or disputes about “Galicia” or UPA during the class they answered that the teachers claimed they “did not have time” for such arguments.⁶²

Yaroslava Kryvoruk, who is a history teacher, explains: “the programme allows nine lessons for the whole of the WWII history and six out of those are dedicated to the Ukrainian part of it. There is no lesson planned for the history of the “Galicia”

59. In Ukraine those who fought for UPA (Ukrainian Insurgents Army) or the “Galicia” Division, as well as a number of smaller nationalistic military group are not officially recognised as the veterans of WWII. There is an ongoing debate, initiated and supported by President Yushchenko to reconcile the former Red Army soldiers and those who fought for independent Ukraine and recognise them officially as veterans of WWII. This debate has not been brought to any clear conclusion.

60. Шиндлер, Елла, «Минуле – судити чи вивчати?», Вісті Комбатанта, ч.1, р. 2007, ст. 34. “Visti Combatanta” – *The Combatant’s News* – is a journal, published quarterly by United Ukrainian War Veterans in America and Brotherhood of Former Soldiers of the 1st Ukrainian Division of the UNA, in Toronto, Canada.

61. Шиндлер, Елла, «Минуле – судити чи вивчати?», Вісті Комбатанта, ч.1, р. 2007, ст. 35.

62. Шиндлер, Елла, «Минуле – судити чи вивчати?», Вісті Комбатанта, ч.1, р. 2007, ст. 35.

Division”⁶³ In fact, all of the actions of Ukrainian military outside of the Red Army (including the UPA) are incorporated into one lesson only. This programme is put together by the Ministry of Education of Ukraine. It is up to the teacher whether he or she will take the liberty to dedicate any part of the precious lesson time to the discussion of the Ukrainian participation in the Waffen SS. Olena Kozhan, who is also a teacher of history, complains that there is a lack of information on the “Galicia” question: “even when we do mention in our lessons that such a Division existed, we have nothing to say of its military account, its history. In order to be able to make some conclusions and present them to the students we need to have trustworthy information. But where do we get it? Thus, the simple fact of the “Galicia” Division belonging to the German Army already creates a negative connotation in our students’ imagination, as we have always been told that those who supported the Germans – our enemy, were also our enemy. As this is a complex dilemma, teachers do not take risks to explain it.”⁶⁴ The Ukrainian historian Malyarchuk would like to see a change of approach to the Division question at a state level: “This question should be raised and there must be light shed on these historical facts from every point of view... It will also require a new generation of teachers, which will have been formed in the independent Ukraine. I admire current tutors, but we are still programmed with the soviet ideology”⁶⁵. “History must not be good, it has to be trustworthy”, concludes Ella Schindler, a journalist of the “Nuremberg Caitung” and a former Ukrainian citizen, “how should we form a ‘civilised attitude’ towards that of which we prefer to be silent? Ultimately, our attitude towards our past, an ability to accept it objectively – whether we like it or not – is an indication of our development”⁶⁶. Indeed, the development of an identity of the group can be observed through the development of the perception of that group by the outside world. Now the “Galician” Division is being both vilified and glorified at the same time, but by different groups of people, its identity is very unclear. So is its memory. Often during interviews⁶⁷, unlike only few years ago, when there was no mention of the ‘legalisation’ of UPA and “Galicia” in Ukraine, the ex-members give both ‘justificatory’ and condemnatory accounts of their recruitment, stay and dissolution in relation to the Waffen SS “Galicia”. Their identity as well as that of the second generation who often prefer to change their surnames to less-Ukrainian sounding ones, so as not to take on the stigma of the ‘antagonist’, evolves and sways along the amplitude between pride and dishonour.

63. Шиндлер, Елла, «Минуле – судити чи вивчати?», Вісті Комбатанта, ч.1, р. 2007, ст. 35.

64. From an interview with Olena Kozhan, L’viv, 2008.

65. Малярчук, Олег, Вісті Комбатанта, ч.1, р. 2007, ст. 35

66. Шиндлер, Елла, «Минуле – судити чи вивчати?», Вісті Комбатанта, ч.1, р. 2007, ст. 36.

67. All interviews this paper refers to have been conducted by O. Khromeychuk (unless otherwise specified and referenced).

Conclusion

This paper has presented an argument that in order to understand why the perception of the identity of the Waffen SS “Galicia” Division men has changed over time we must look at what impacted the creation of the story of the Division. It has been argued in this paper that although memory can serve as a link between the past and the present, it cannot be seen as the ‘truth’ on which such a narrative can be based. It involves a multi-faceted process of negotiation of ‘remembering’, ‘forgetting’ and ‘recollecting’ the history, and the creation, destruction and evolution of identity. These problematic moments have to be addressed in order to present an essential contemporary reading of the Waffen SS “Galicia” story and one of the ways to tackle these problems can be through a micro-historical approach to the process in which the knowledge of the “Galicia” Division is collected and transmitted.

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