Reagan and the War Crimes Lobby

By Joe Conason

"Out of the ashes, hope," said the president at Bishburg. 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 collaboration and war criminals at large in the United States? Even before Bishburg, 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 fascists 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 Investigations (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, where it continues to work with various agencies of government, from the CIA and the State Department to Radio Liberty and Radio Europe, and where its work is made easier by the exit of war criminals and collaborators. Behind this silent mystery lies the theory that the absence of justice could be useful in the unfolding conflict with the Soviet Union.

According to journalist 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 ultraconservative support for Reagan is 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 Prince").

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 and the military and diplomatic leadership of the great escape 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 arm negotiator Max Kampelman, Voice of America director Kenneth Tobinon, Presidential assistant Ralph Ryan Whitlaccy, and Ben Westenberg 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 Lintrum from deportation were denounced by Senator Alfonso 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 Stetako, chairman of the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (ABB) and, for a brief period in the summer of 1941, premier of the "independent republic of the Ukraine." Stetako, 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-Nazi, fascist, and anti-Semitic extremists from two dozen countries, formerly headed by racial theorist Roger Pearson.

The Bandera Faction

The sordid history of wartime Ukrainian nationalism is useful in understanding the anti-OSI campaign in which Dobriansky, Stetako, and their compatriots are implicated. For centuries the believers in a separate Ukrainian state were frustrated by rule from without—Polish, German, and Russian—encouraged 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 factions. The one active and radical, the OUN/B, was identified by the last name of its would-be president. His most trusted lieutenant was a young nationalist named Yaroslav Stetako.

Hitler's plan to invade the Soviet Union involved a cordon around the Ukraine, with the promised assistance of OUN/B, whose chief patron in the Nazi regime was the real Polish premier, 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 "underdeveloped peoples who can 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 itself "under Nazi auspices, and among its resolutions in 1941 was the following: "The Jews in the Soviet Union are the most valuable element in the ruling Bolshevik regime and an avant-garde of Muscovite imperialism in the Ukraine... The Ukrainian Nationalists opposes the Jews as a pillar of the Muscovite-Bolshevik regime and at the same time 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 party apparatus, the Sturmabteilung, that aid in its military and for intelligence purposes. Battalions of OUN/B volunteers, under German officer, were sent born in occupied Poland (the "Nachtigall" division) and in Austria (the "Ro land" 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 the capital of the Ukrainian province of Galicia, which was the OUN/B stronghold. That same evening, the OUN/B leaders who had fled to Galicia with the Nazis declared a sovereign Ukrainian state, with Yaroslav Stetako as "premier." The division moved en mass in reaction to this declaration, and within 10 days Stetako was placed under "honorary arrest" by the German SS.

Although this arrest is now portrayed as severe repression by the OUN/B, in fact the Germans treated Bandera and his followers as heroes—especially compared to the Jews and other victims of the Final Solution in Lwow, which was being conducted by Ukrainian "partisan" (task forces) and Ukrainian "mili tia," including many OUN/B men. In the SSD a German ratification of the authoritative German Rule in Russia 1941-1945:

"Under the following days of chaos [after the entry into Lwow], it became obvious to the Germans that Bandera's so-called (Nachtigall) regiment, were displaying considerable initiative conducting purges, and special reports were sent to Berchtesgaden. After several [weeks] Bandera was ordered to show a modicum of discipline and to move his men to an area occupied by the SS. From then on Bandera's men were treated as 'traitors' and 'enemies of the people'..."
Understanding the context in which McCarthyism operates the believers, the Soviet state was in crisis. The power struggle was without a doubt the central issue. The forced labor of non-believers and Jews, or at least those considered to be enemies of the state, was a facet of the crisis that reached its peak with the purges and mass executions. The racial policies of the Soviet Union were also a part of this crisis.

Some of the most important moves in the context of McCarthyism were the purges of the Soviet Union in the late 1930s. The purges were led by Joseph Stalin, who was the leader of the Soviet Union. The purges were aimed at removing anyone who was suspected of being a counter-revolutionary, including members of the Communist Party and other opposition groups. The purges were a brutal and systematic attempt to eliminate any opposition to Stalin's rule.

Despite the purges, the Soviet Union was still able to maintain its position as a major power in the world. The Soviet Union continued to expand its influence in the post-World War II period, and its military and economic power continued to grow. The Soviet Union was able to achieve this because of the support of the Chinese Communist Party, which was a key partner in the Soviet Union's strategy.

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war, for that matter, the FBI had kept the United States and their allies under surveillance, because they believed it was cooperating with pro-Nazi elements here.

The Suspect Emigres

But political rivalry of the OUN was aided by amendments to the Displaced Persons Act a few years later, and even the OUN members began to find their way into the United States, along with followers of assorted other Eastern European fascist paramilitary and political organizations, often associated with mysterious circumstances in Munich, allegedly by a Soviet agent. In the meantime, they have attracted the attention of the Small group of émigré leaders into the ABN. Among the OUN’s top officials by 1960 was the Belarusian OUN leader, a former anti-Semite who had been a director of the OUN in 1935. Morris O’Connor, a veteran of the anti-Semitic party in Poland, was among the Russian émigrés who supported Stalin’s policies. Unlike the Ukrainian followers of Stetako and Banders, Ostrowsky’s followers were strongly opposed to the atrocities during the war. There was no doubt of their Nazi affiliations.

Stetako maintained other dubious affiliations, as his organization and others propagated for a NATO offensive to overthrow Stalin and liberate the “captive nations.” An examination of his publications, for instance, shows that Stetako’s military mentor was Major J. F. C. Fuller, who in 1941 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 Stetako’s 1950 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 Bandereite front in the U.S. The board of directors was Dobriansky, who also headed up the Captive Nations campaign and has worked closely with Stetako’s organizations. Among the personal affairs of the editorial board of the quarterly, and a regular contributor to the ABN newsletter as well is Dr. Austin J. App, who joined the Captive Nations Committee in Philadelphia for years, is better known as one of the earliest proponents of the idea that the Holocast 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 Basket Exposed, among others. Of German origin, Dr. App was also a contributing editor to Western Destiny, the postrwar neo-Nazi magazine edited by Roger A. Pearson.

The pages of the Ukrainian Quarterly, under Dobriansky’s chairmanship, have regularly included editorials of the top figures of the OUN, and of General Shadrsk, the military leader of the Waffen-SS Galician Division. The noted Shadrsk, whose name had become a good impression on people,” citing the opinion of the Nazi major who directed the activities of the Galician Waffen-SS (transferred 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, while denouncing Russian, and the usual catalog of ultra-obsessions, from the overthrow of the Sandinistas to the “betrayal” of the Soviet Union. Over the past year, at least, another theme has been appearing with greater frequency, the depression of the OSI (in collusion with the Soviet KGB) against good émigré anticommunists.

Among those émigré victims have been several former OUN members, as identified by such, including Bohdan Koziy of Fort Lauderdale, who was found to have “murdered several of his friends.