

Divide and Conquer: The KGB disinformation campaign against Ukrainians and Jews

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Introduction

The Soviet regime had a serious image problem in the 1970s and '80s. While the communist propaganda apparatus was trying to present Soviet Russia as a normal peaceful state, in the United States and other free countries, people of Ukrainian, Jewish and Baltic origin were working together to expose the repressive and imperialist nature of the communist dictatorship. They picketed Soviet embassies, provided the press with names of prisoners in the Soviet Gulag and demanded freedom for the peoples of the Soviet empire.

The Politburo of the Soviet Communist Party assigned the KGB to solve this problem. The Soviet secret police and intelligence service had a long history of using disinformation to discredit political opponents. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Leonid Shabarshin, who formerly headed the First Chief Directorate (Foreign Intelligence) of the KGB, explained to the Moscow newspaper Trud that one of the jobs of the KGB was disinformation for "compromising 'anti-Soviets.'"

In Shebarshin's words, "during the Cold War the essence of our active measures was to inflict political and moral damage on our basic opponent, the United States . . . [so] we compromised political figures, organs of the press, and Americans whose activities were in some way unwelcome [to the Soviets]." The KGB veteran revealed that every "active measure" against the enemies of the Soviet Union abroad was submitted by KGB to the Politburo "and was implemented only with its permission. The results of the action were also reported to the Politburo."

The KGB was given the important job of creating division in the anti-Soviet camp. English language propaganda books and pamphlets were prepared with KGB assistance for dissemination in the West. One such pamphlet complained that Ukrainian nationalists

arrange noisy demonstrations in support of the Israeli aggressors (as has happened in West Germany), while the Zionist chieftains declare their 'firm intention to continue close cooperation' with the OUN [Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists] killers. Therefore, both partners in this wicked marriage publicly admit the real nature of the sinister alliance between Zionists and Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists.

To the Soviets, those who opposed them would only do so on orders of the CIA. The pamphlet went on "The malignant partnership of the Magen David [Star of David] and the nationalist trident [the Ukrainian national emblem], fostered by the CIA, has long become a reality."

The Soviets used foreign communists to spread the disinformation. One of them, Michael Hanusiak, a member of the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA), visited Ukraine in the early 1970s, where the KGB provided him with information on Ukrainians who were supposedly Nazi war criminals.

Soviet attempts to discredit Jews

During World War II, as a young communist, Hanusiak looked to Michael Tkach as his friend and mentor. Tkach was the head of the Ukrainian section of the International Workers Order, a communist front, and was editor of the communist newspaper Ukrainian Daily News, based in New York. He was also an agent of the NKVD, subsequently known as KGB, spying against the United States. Later Hanusiak replaced Tkach as the editor of The Ukrainian News. It was no longer a daily but continued to publish Soviet propaganda in New York.

In 1993 Hanusiak celebrated his 80th birthday. Gus Hall, head of the CPUSA, wrote him, "On this special occasion we want to congratulate you on your many years of outstanding contributions in the leadership of the Communist Party, USA, as well as other progressive organizations." Hanusiak's Communist Party comrade and close friend Lewis Moroze wrote to him, "My wife Dora and I have a dream that in the not too distant future the Soviet peoples will restore socialism to the Soviet Union, and the Morozes and the Hanusiaks will join hands in a walk side by side down the Krishchatik in the city of Kiev in the Ukraine." It was too late for them: Ukraine was free and the Soviet Russian empire could never be reestablished.

Hanusiak used some of the KGB information in a 1973 book called Lest We Forget. It was republished in Canada in 1976 with introductions that revealed its real purpose. One introduction signed Joshua Gershman complained,

It is no secret that leaders of the capitalist political parties in Canada - including Jews - are often honored guests at celebrations of the Ukrainian nationalists and other chauvinist ethnic community organizations, particularly at the time of elections. They express solidarity with the misleading slogans calling for the 'liberation' of the Ukraine and other Soviet Republics. . . . Thus we witnessed in Canada, in 1971, during the official friendship visit of Soviet Premier Kosygin, the ugly collaboration of cold warriors among

the Jewish, Ukrainian, Hungarian and other ethnic groups, demonstrating against the Soviet Union.

In another introduction to the book, Peter Krawchuk complained that the Ukrainian nationalists and Zionists "in their hatred of the Soviet Union . . . have become partners." In reality, many of the Jews who opposed the communist empire were not Zionist. The communists used the term "Zionist" as a synonym for Jews. During World War II the NKVD used the code word "Rats" for both Jews and Zionists. When the NKVD assigned agent Robert Soblen (Ruvelis Sobolevicius) to take over the spying on Trotskyites and Jews in New York, the secret communication referred to them under the code-names "polecats" and "rats."

It is interesting to note that at the same time, the Nazis in occupied Ukraine tried to divide Ukrainians and Jews by distributing a leaflet saying that "Jews are like rats." It showed a picture of a rat superimposed on the Star of David, the same Jewish symbol that the above-mentioned Soviet propaganda pamphlet, complained was in partnership with the Ukrainian trident.

KGB methodology to divide Jews from Ukrainians and Lithuanians

The KGB methodology in attempting to divide Jews from Ukrainians and other ethnic groups can best be understood by examining a collection of secret KGB materials discovered in Lithuania by the French scholar Françoise Thom. The KGB used both agents and "co-optees." The KGB's official definition of agent was "An individual who consciously, systematically and clandestinely carries out particular intelligence assignments in his own country or abroad." The difference was that the agent was a full time operative of any nationality, while the co-optee was a Soviet citizen, only occasionally called upon to carry out KGB orders.

In July 1980 the KGB in Lithuania wrote a memorandum on "Suggestions on active measures in connection with the attempts of the Zionists and Lithuanian nationalist émigrés to coordinate their activities." According to the memo, the "Zionists" had launched an anti-Soviet campaign which had been reported in the Lithuanian language press in the West. The leaders of the Lithuanian nationalist groups made contact with Jewish groups "with the aim of coordinating hostile activities against the Soviet Union with them."

The campaign against the Lithuanians was assigned to two KGB agents code named "Aleksas" and "Germanas" and two cooptees, Yu. Ronderis and Ya. Vinitskas. (While the agents mentioned in KGB reports were given code names, the co-optees were listed by their real names.) The KGB cooptee Yu. Ronderis was assigned to find people in Israel who could sign statements addressed to American Jews attacking the Lithuanians.

By 1987 the KGB's problems had intensified. Lithuanian nationalists were publicly active in Lithuania. Moreover, Lithuanian Jews were active in the nationalist movement. One in particular, Emmanuel Zingeris, was a member of the national board of the Lithuanian

national rebirth movement, "Sajudis." He is not a Zionist and describes himself as "a Lithuanian of Jewish background." Zingeris is now chairman of the Lithuanian Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights. Zingeris became a particular target of KGB disinformation.

A top secret cable dated September 23, 1987 from the KGB in Moscow to the KGB in Vilnius revealed that an agent with the code name "Yablonsky" had been assigned to travel to Israel to try to discredit Zingeris. According to the cable, "Before his departure for Israel 'Yablonsky' received an assignment from Service Z of the Lithuanian KGB to discredit Zingeris with Zionist circles." Service Z was the local section of Directorate Z (formerly 5th Directorate) of the KGB which had the job of persecuting dissidents.

"Yablonsky" had relatives at Kol Israel broadcasting service. He was ordered to tell them, as well as officials of the charitable organization, The Jewish Agency, that Zingeris was involved with Lithuanian nationalists who had murdered Jews. That was a lie, and "Yablonsky" failed in his mission. He explained to his KGB masters that The Jewish Agency, which provided financial support to help Jews abroad, was receiving money from the Joint Distribution Committee in the United States which would be angry with anyone who attacked Zingeris. "Yablonsky" may not have given the KGB a true excuse, but Zingeris was justifiably held in high regard by American Jews.

The role of East Germany's Stasi

The East German Ministry for State Security, known as Stasi, worked closely with the KGB. Like the KGB it was responsible for both internal repression and espionage abroad. Naturally Stasi played an important role in the disinformation campaign. With German efficiency, Stasi explained in a 1969 report how it conducted disinformation:

Periodicals will address specific persons and groups. One can select actual events, problems etc. using a mixture of truths, half truths, fiction and other well conceived interpretations, so the recipient finds them believable, thus causing the anticipated success. Exact knowledge of conditions within the particular government in the operational area is imperative. Absolutely necessary is thorough knowledge of western language use, as well as psychological, sensitive tactics in approach.

Stasi also explained how it responded to those who exposed human rights violations in the communist empire. It considered the truth about communism "harassment" and said in its report, "Through distribution of aggressively directed messages, the enemy will be disinformationed and forced to abandon his harassment campaign thus keeping him disturbed and pointlessly occupied." These activities were coordinated with the appropriate officials of the Communist Party (SED). Stasi reported, "There are near daily conversations with the member of the Politburo responsible for agitation in the West, Comrade [Albert] Norden or Comrade [Werner] Lamberz, Secretary of the Central Committee and Chairman of the Agitation Commission of the Politburo." Albert Norden had been a German Communist Party activist since he was 16 years old, in 1920. During World War II he operated in the United States as a communist propagandist. In East

Germany he served as the loudest and most vicious voice against the West in the communist dictatorship.

In 1959 he led the smear campaign against the West German Federal Minister of Refugees, Theodor Oberlander. Norden issued a book attacking Oberlander and at a press conference in East Berlin on October 22, 1959, Norden identified Oberlander as the political commander of the Ukrainian Nachtigall Unit, which together with the German Wehrmacht fought against the Soviet Union. That was the true part of Norden's story.

The false part was the claim that the military unit was involved in a pogrom against the Jews of Lviv. The official reports of the Nazi Einsatzgruppen of actions against the Jews, instigated by the Nazi propaganda that the Jews were responsible for the communist atrocities against Ukrainians, do not show that Nachtigall was involved. In a report date July 16, 1941, we read,

In the first hours after the Bolshevik withdrawal, the Ukrainian populations displayed commendable activity against the Jews. For example, the Dobromil synagogue was set on fire and 50 Jews were killed by the enraged crowd at Sambor. Maltreating them, the Lvov inhabitants rounded up about 1000 Jews and took them to the GPU [i.e., NKVD] prison which has been occupied by the Wehrmacht.

Active measures against Ukrainian leader Stephan Bandera

Norden's book was the usual vile disinformation, but its worst charge related to the murder of the leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, Stephan Bandera. According to Norden, Bandera "the Commander of Nachtigall" was murdered on October 15, 1959 to prevent him from revealing what he knew about the supposed crimes of Oberlander.

The commander of Nachtigall was not Bandera, but Roman Shukhevych, who later commanded the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). Bandera was head of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), the political movement, which on June 30, 1941, proclaimed reestablishment of an independent Ukrainian state headed by Yaroslav Stetsko. The KGB then destroyed Bandera with the most intense method on the active measures spectrum: assassination. Bogdan Stashynsky, the KGB assassin, later defected to West Germany and revealed how Soviet intelligence had ordered him to murder the Ukrainian leader. He served a prison sentence in West Germany for his crime.

Bandera was hated both by the communists and the Nazis. On July 2, 1941, SS Einsatzgruppe B reported to the Chief of the Security Police that "measures against the Bandera group, in particular against Bandera himself, are in preparation. They will be carried out as soon as possible." On July 9 the Ukrainian nationalist leaders, including Bandera (arrested already on July 5) and Stetsko, were arrested by the SS. They spent most of the war as prisoners in Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

A Gestapo report dated August 18, 1941, reveals that "The OUN in Lvov sells war-loan stamps and releases pamphlets demanding Bandera's return. From Lvov, posters are

released declaring that a 'free and independent Ukraine' must be created according to the motto "Ukraine for the Ukrainians, under the leadership of the OUN.' Orders of the German Army are frequently ignored. . . ."

While persecuting the OUN, the Nazis agitated the population against the Jews. The communists had helped them by murdering Ukrainian intellectuals, officially considered enemies of Soviet power, before fleeing the German invasion. An Einsatzgruppe reported on July 16th that about twenty thousand Ukrainians had disappeared from Lviv, eighty percent of them belonging to the intelligentsia. The prisons were crammed with the bodies of murdered Ukrainians. In Dobromil eighty-two bodies were found. Four were of Jews.

One Ukrainian witness to the pre-war Soviet mass murders was the journalist Apollon Trembowetskyi, also called Petro Pavlovyeh, who testified before the United States House Committee on Un-American Activities that he wondered at the time "why so many were arrested, especially Ukrainians, those of Polish decent - half Polish, half Ukrainian and many Jewish people who were arrested in our town. . . ."

Another eyewitness, whose identity was protected, gave his evidence to the Ukrainian Historical Association. He had been a correspondent of Trembowetskyi's newspaper Vinnytski Visty, and had access to the lists of victims found by the Nazis in Vinnytsia. The Nazis ordered him to publish the nationality of Polish and Ukrainian victims but to list Russians, Jews and Gypsies as "nationality unknown." The Nazis were agitating the population against the Jews at the time and did not want it revealed that the communists murdered Jewish intellectuals as well as Ukrainians.

Nazi and Communist triangulation against Ukrainians and Jews

The East German propagandists conveniently ignored the action of the Soviets, murdering millions of people of all nationalities - but particularly intellectuals. The Stasi boasted that its campaign against Oberlander had been successful and that he had been removed from the West German government.

In 1974 Oberlander visited Washington, DC and participated in the Congress of the World Anti-Communist League. British anti-communists had warned that a neo-Nazi group from Latin America had infiltrated the Congress. Oberlander joined with Yaroslav and Slava Stetsko and the leaders of the American delegation, former Congressman Walter Judd and Lee Edwards, to expose and discredit the neo-Nazis.

The anti-Nazi caucus was successful and the neo-Nazis exposed themselves when they voted against a resolution presented by Oberlander to condemn the human rights violations in communist East Germany. The neo-Nazis supported the communist dictatorship. At this writing, Mrs. Stetsko is a member of Parliament in Free Ukraine.

Human rights leader Avraham Shifrin headed the Israeli delegation to the WACL Congress. He had spent 10 years as a prisoner in a Soviet slave labor camp. He told this

writer that he had become a Zionist in the Gulag and how Ukrainians and Jews learned to work together when they were both being persecuted by the same KGB. The Ukrainian Insurgent Army, led by Shukhevych, fought against the Nazis and continued the war against the communists until the 1950s.

The horrors inflicted by both the Nazis and communists brought Ukrainians and Jews together. Jews participated in the UPA as well as other anti-communist and anti-Nazi units. The Soviet propagandists complained,

During the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945, many Zionists were members of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and the Ukrainian People's Revolutionary Army (UPRA). For example, the Zionist Haim Sigal, alias Sigalenko, was a chieftain and 'Bulba's' right-hand man. . . . A number of Zionists such as Margosh, Maximovich, 'Kun' and others were officers in the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. According to a report by a Nazi Einsatz-commando Zionists closely cooperated with the Bandera ringleaders. The latter provided them with the forged German documents.

Only Nazis and communists could complain that Ukrainian nationalists saved the lives of Jews by providing them with false documents during the Nazi occupation. That story happens to be true. A report to the Chief of the Security Police in Berlin dated March 30, 1942 revealed that "Today, it has been clearly established that the Bandera movement provided forged passports not only for its own members, but also for Jews."

One Ukrainian who saved hundreds of Jews was the 86 year-old leader of Ukraine's Catholics, Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi. His story was told by Rabbi David Kahane, one of the Jews he rescued. With the help of his brother, Abbot Kliment Sheptytskyi, the Metropolitan hid Jews and, according to Rabbi Kahane,

continued to warn the Ukrainian people against evil and in his pastoral letters he endeavored to keep them away from hatred in general and from racial hatred in particular. He told us he was issuing a pastoral letter to the Ukrainian people and the clergy on the subject of mercy, in which he stated emphatically that in these times of trial one must pity not only the Ukrainians and the Christians, but everyone, regardless of his religion.

Rabbi Kahane later went to Israel where he became the Chief Rabbi of the Israeli Air Force.

Manufacturing 'Nazi war criminals'

The communists reviled Metropolitan Sheptytskyi and stated that he "never ever raised his voice against the mass annihilation of Lviv residents. . . ." Rabbi Kahane exposed this lie. Communist hatred of the Jews was obvious when Soviet propagandists wrote, "We know from history that freedom of thought and a scientific view of the world have always been mercilessly suppress by Judaism."

But it was important to them to divide the Jews and Ukrainians in the West who had joined together to expose the Soviet Russian totalitarian regime. Thus, the KGB in Ukraine provided American communist Michael Hanusiak with a list of alleged "Nazi war criminals" from Ukraine. While caring little if at all for Nazi crimes against Jews, the communists understood that Americans would want anyone who engaged in such activity, regardless of their nationality, punished - no matter how long it took.

The KGB wanted to use this legitimate concern of Americans as a weapon to divide their Ukrainian and Jewish enemies, to discredit the large émigré communities in the United States and Canada, and to discredit any emergence of Ukrainian nationalism.

One of the names Hanusiak brought to the United States was that of John Demianiuk (Demjanjuk). His name was given to the United States Justice Department, which began an investigation of the retired Ohio auto worker. Soon, Demianiuk was accused of being "Ivan the Terrible," a brutal guard at the Nazi Treblinka death camp.

In the horrors that took place in that camp, "Ivan the Terrible" became a legend as the cruelest of all the murderers. After undergoing a long legal ordeal, Demianiuk was extradited to Israel where he was convicted and sentenced to death. The collapse of the Soviet Union allowed access to KGB files in Ukraine and probably saved the man's life. The evidence showed that "Ivan the Terrible" was Ivan Marchenko, not Demianiuk. The Israeli court, after examining the new evidence, reversed the conviction of Demianiuk and allowed him to return to the United States.

The question is - Who was Marchenko? He was a Soviet prisoner of war who had volunteered to work for the Nazis as a camp guard. A 1961 KGB report on the interrogation of Sergey Vasylyenko revealed that Marchenko was the man the Jews in the camp called "Ivan the Terrible."

According to Vasylyenko, "He exhibited special savagery in dealing with people in the killing process, he killed people with an obvious satisfaction and beat them with whatever was at hand and however he fancied." More importantly, the KGB knew that toward the end of the war that Marchenko had gone to Yugoslavia and joined with Tito's communist partisans. He remained in Yugoslavia after the war and the KGB knew of his whereabouts in 1948-1949.

In the summer of 1948, Stalin broke with Tito. Soviet propaganda accused Tito, who remained a committed communist, of being a fascist. In October 1949, the New York County Communist Party issued a Discussion Outline and Study Guide entitled *The Struggle Against the Tito Fascists - Agents of Imperialism*.

This theme permeated worldwide Soviet propaganda. However, KGB propaganda never pointed out that the Tito government was harboring Ivan Marchenko, the Nazi war criminal known as "Ivan the Terrible." This issue raises the question as to whether Marchenko was not in fact a Soviet agent carrying out his atrocities on the order of the NKVD (KGB). We know of other cases where KGB operatives pretended to be anti-

communists and carried out atrocities to blame them on their enemies and seize the moral high ground.

The main piece of Soviet-provided evidence against Demianiuk was a supposed identity card showing his name and picture at the Travniki training camp for guards. The authenticity of the document was challenged as it was apparent that the picture had come from another document and that the card contained other inaccuracies. That was not enough to acquit Demianiuk, but the KGB's internal files released after the Soviet collapse convinced the Israelis of Demianiuk's innocence.

Internal KGB reports describe Soviet operations against Ukraine

In 1980 a report was prepared by KGB Colonel V. Medvedev titled "More Culture in the Work on the Nazi Criminals." It was published in the internal, secret KGB magazine Sbornik KGB.

Colonel Medvedev boasted of the materials provided by KGB to the Western governments to prosecute Nazi war criminals. However, he complained that "the quality of the materials . . . sometimes make it impossible to send the materials abroad." Such documents, he said, are usually sent back by KGB headquarters to be redone: "The analysis of the weak points shows that sometimes they are the result of the inattentiveness and inaccuracy of the functionaries."

KGB technicians often took a long time to fix them. As a result there was a delay in providing the documents to the Western governments. In Medvedev's words, "Practice shows that concrete evidence of the witnesses thoroughly interrogated on a high professional level appear to be very important proof in the Nazi criminal's cases." Some of the old interrogation transcripts were so "standardized" that the constant repetition of phrases by different witnesses made it apparent that they were false.

We had not seen these admissions during the 1980s when this writer was a staff member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, but anti-communists such as Congressman John Ashbrook (R-Ohio), understood not to trust the KGB. In retrospect it might seem strange to point out that U.S. government officials, including lawyers, senior political appointees and elected officials, did indeed trust the KGB-furnished information and were critical of the skeptics. But the lawmaker saw fit to warn his colleagues and the public.

In the Congressional Record of May 28, 1981 Congressman Ashbrook said, "World War II ended 36 years ago but many of us still remember its horrors. We should never forgive and never forget the atrocities committed by the Nazis against the Jews. The Nazi murders of 6 million Jews and millions of Christians are crimes that require punishment of all who are guilty. At the same time, we must not forget the Communist murders of even greater millions of Christians, Jews, and Moslems. And we cannot forgive these crimes. Hitler and Stalin and most of their top henchmen are dead. But, the present leadership in the Soviet Union were all part of the Stalin murder machine."

Ashbrook continued, "We cannot condemn anyone based on Soviet evidence, but we must make sure that no Nazi or Communist criminal should receive sanctuary here. We can be sure of this by using our basic American laws of evidence. Soviet evidence is tainted and should not be utilized in American courts."

Now we have available the evidence from the Soviet and other communist archives of what really happened in the past. In the future, we must honor those who fought and died against communist dictatorship and learned in that struggle how people of different religions and nationalities could work together against the common enemy.

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