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Women and Ukrainian Nationalism: OUN-B, Ukrainian-Americans, and Collective Memory

Women’s bodies acted as buffers for both the Ukrainian nationalist movement and for the USSR as they battled one another, with the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) employing women as couriers and the USSR using women’s relationships and gender against them.[[1]](#footnote-1) Despite their gender being weaponized for the sake of competing militant organizations, women still held power over the course of memory warfare as they took on key positions in propaganda, education, and message delivery in Ukraine.[[2]](#footnote-2) Women within the UPA, or OUN-B, often held positions such as recruiters, trainers, couriers, and propaganda writers.[[3]](#footnote-3) These positions, though not fighting the enemy directly, helped to fight the longer war over collective memory. As men and women fled Ukraine throughout the 1940s, many of them arrived in the United States, where they were able to inform previous waves of Ukrainian emigrants of the situation happening in Eastern Europe. With little other reliable information to go on, the older waves of emigrants had no choice but to trust the stories of newer emigrants and their claims that the OUN and UPA’s cause was a just one.[[4]](#footnote-4) For those who emigrated to the United States, further fortifying this control over the memory battlefield came in establishing Ukrainian language and cultural classes, emphasizing nationalism and the uniqueness of the Ukrainian people – themes that were already circulating at the time of their arrival.[[5]](#footnote-5) The story these women all helped to craft, knowingly and unknowingly, has lasted into modern politics and continues to shape Ukrainian memory of the OUN and UPA.[[6]](#footnote-6) To date, there has been no scholarship synthesizing the involvement of women in the Ukrainian nationalist movement and the lasting nationalistic collective memory fostered both in Ukraine and in the United States. This essay seeks to explore the treatment of Ukrainian women both within the organization itself and outside of it, contending that in spite of the violence and marginalization these women suffered they still played a crucial role in developing the modern Ukrainian memory of the nationalist movement seen across Ukrainian communities in America and in Ukraine today.

Much of the current historiography on women’s participation within the UPA focuses on the violence faced by women who participated in or were caught in the crossfire of the guerrilla war waged between the UPA and major powers fighting in Ukraine. Although scholarship touches upon larger collective memory, the contribution of women has been left undiscussed. Instead, scholars have noted how women have been omitted from collective memory and have forged their own identities through shared memories of events, as well as reclaiming their identities through the narrative of insurgents’ portrayal as heroes.[[7]](#footnote-7) This ignores significant evidence left behind by Ukrainian women as they set out to create a collective memory about the war in Ukraine, with scholars instead portraying them as inactive agents in the formation of said memory. Modern historiography has also been leaning toward celebratory language, using terms such as “appreciate” with regard to the involvement of Ukrainian women from various backgrounds in the UPA when “acknowledge” may be more appropriate.[[8]](#footnote-8) While scholar Oksana Kis laments the lack of gender balanced celebration of UPA fighters in modern Ukraine, Olesya Khromeychuk argues against heralding women as heroines when the UPA’s actions were anything but heroic.[[9]](#footnote-9) This paper strives to take a balanced approach to women’s involvement in the Ukrainian underground and their contributions toward forming a national and international collective memory surrounding the actions of the Ukrainian nationalist movement, neither praising nor condemning them for their participation.

This essay attempts to analyze the participation of Ukrainian women both in Ukraine and in the United States in securing a cohesive collective memory of the Ukrainian nationalist movement. Rather than celebrating the anti-Soviet nature of their work or the inclusion of women in guerilla warfare, this essay seeks to synthesize women’s activities in the movement and how they helped further the goals of the Ukrainian nationalists, violent or not. This paper focuses most on the activities of OUN-B, the Banderite faction, but attempts to provide a holistic view on women’s participation in the OUN and how they ultimately contributed to the collective memory of Ukrainians. Through the use of historic American newspapers, the memoir of a former member of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, and reports from the CIA, this essay shows the impact women had on developing a lasting narrative of Ukrainian nationalism.

The Ukrainian nationalist movement found its beginnings in Stalin’s clashes with the Ukrainian peasant population and the antagonism between Poles and Ukrainians in Poland.[[10]](#footnote-10) Stalin’s preparations for the inevitable war between capitalism and socialism began in the late 1920s and swept through the USSR throughout the 1930s. As such, the 1920s-30s bore witness to mass collectivization of peasants, the militarization of the youth, and the growth of industry, distancing the USSR from its rural past and emphasizing the development of urban life.[[11]](#footnote-11) Being a republic largely comprised of peasants, Ukraine bore the brunt of the violence that came with collectivization in the early 1930s, as well as the steep price they paid when Stalin allowed a famine to starve out resistance.[[12]](#footnote-12) The 1930s were marked with antagonism between the Ukrainian peasant population and Stalin’s visions for the USSR, with many Ukrainian peasants attempting to abandon collectives and ignore Soviet rule.[[13]](#footnote-13) Due to the population’s nationalistic sentiments and resentments harbored toward the Soviet state, the Soviets sought to trample dissent through purges and terror, resulting in increased disdain among the people.[[14]](#footnote-14) Observing this animosity, various aggrieved Ukrainian groups exiled to the West set out to form an independent Ukraine, hoping to capitalize on the tensions forming between Ukrainian peasants and Soviet officials as well as those that existed in Polish-held Ukraine.[[15]](#footnote-15) One such group of men exiled in Germany worked to create the OUN in 1929, combining the Ukrainian Military Organization (UVO) and the Union of Ukrainian Nationalistic Youth to form one cohesive organization to operate from abroad, hoping to draw interest from both Ukrainian men and women still living within Ukraine.[[16]](#footnote-16)

The inclusion of women in warfare was not a new concept in Eastern Europe. Across the Soviet Union, women were being mobilized in a variety of ways before and during the Second World War. As such, Eastern Ukrainians had been exposed to the mobilization of women in Soviet propaganda throughout the 1930s, in which women were featured in newspapers for their successes in training for the impending war between the USSR and the world.[[17]](#footnote-17) At the outset of World War II, women from across the Soviet Union found themselves rushing to the front, freed from the belief that women were less able to contribute to the war effort than men. Despite many facing difficulties in joining the war front, the fact that women perceived themselves to be more useful fighting than mothering is telling of the new gender norms forming at the time, though they were not entirely released from traditional stereotypes.[[18]](#footnote-18)

The same can be said of women in Western Ukraine, whose identities as women were leveraged by the Soviets and members of the UPA alike. Women largely acted as the “essential workers” for the insurgents’ military operations, a marked similarity to the function women often fulfilled as Soviet partisans.[[19]](#footnote-19) Their role within the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and larger network of the OUN was strictly femininized, often called “auxiliary” by scholars today. As Kis has asserted, these roles were not “auxiliary” but were instead vital to the continuation of anti-Soviet partisan activities in Ukraine.[[20]](#footnote-20) Women performed a variety of tasks both as insurgents themselves and for the insurgents, acting as cooks, laundresses, educators, disseminators of propaganda, and couriers. Through women there existed a network of couriers to spread propaganda, deliver reports, and transport supplies. Without these couriers, nurses, and laundresses the Ukrainian nationalist movement likely would have collapsed early on, leaving few to spread the news of the nationalists.[[21]](#footnote-21) The work of these women also built the foundation of the collective memory that was to eventually come crumbling down with the opening of the Ukrainian archives.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Even during the war, women were already contributing to building the collective memory Ukrainians had about the Ukrainian nationalist movement. Through their role as educators, women went from village to village actively searching for new recruits and spreading propaganda about their cause.[[23]](#footnote-23) For Maria Pyskir, it was a woman who recruited her and led secret meetings to teach herself and other new recruits the ideology of the insurgents and the evils of the Soviets.[[24]](#footnote-24) Nationalist women not only recruited and trained new members, they also wrote documents and articles on the ideology of the movement. Woman insurgent Kateryna Zaryts’ka wrote an article titled “Ways of Russian Imperialism” that soon became required reading for all recruits in training.[[25]](#footnote-25) In spite of their education and adaptability, OUN and UPA leadership actively discouraged women from pursuing positions of leadership outside of what they could achieve in the Women’s Network, a sub-group formed for women within the OUN.[[26]](#footnote-26) Even still, women like Dariia Rebet managed to rise through the ranks to become prominent figures in leadership, though she and other women have received little attention from scholars.[[27]](#footnote-27)

During World War II, the OUN was hoping to count on American support for their cause. Members of the OUN within Ukraine and in exile believed that the end of the Second World War would result in another version of the Paris Peace Conference, in which ethnic groups were able to carve out their own nations on the principle of national self-determination.[[28]](#footnote-28) The insurgents, wanting to strengthen their case for nationhood, set out on a mission of vengeful genocide against non-Ukrainians in Western Ukraine. Jews and Poles had already been listed as “enemies of the people” and “hostile minorities” in guidebooks like the OUN’s “Guidelines for the Early Days of the Organization of Public Life,” with such language helping to foment violence against these populations in Ukraine.[[29]](#footnote-29) In 1943, members of the newly-formed Ukrainian Insurgent Army arrived in Volhynia and began targeting ethnic Poles residing there, murdering any Poles they saw and tricking survivors into coming out of hiding before killing them as well.[[30]](#footnote-30) What came after this incident was a massive cover-up by Ukrainian nationalists in which insurgents blamed victims and pointed to earlier acts of violence from Poles against Ukrainians. This cover-up was coupled with a covert effort to erase the genocide from collective memory by dismissing the event altogether in order to better position the insurgents in the eyes of the West.[[31]](#footnote-31)

As the war in Europe raged on, Ukrainian nationalism was gaining a stronger foothold in immigrant communities in the United States. Newspapers, such as *The Ukrainian Weekly* and *Evening Star*, documented nationalist activities in Ukraine and the burgeoning nationalist movement occurring in the US.[[32]](#footnote-32) These papers documented the armed struggle of the insurgents in Western Ukraine, the letters sent to White House officials both from insurgents and from American citizens, along with the activities of the Ukrainian-American Congress, which was a group formed from various Ukrainian-American organizations with the hope of producing a united nationalist movement focused on building an independent Ukraine abroad.[[33]](#footnote-33) The Ukrainian-American Congress managed to bring forth feelings of nationalism among non-Communist Ukrainian-Americans, with Communists being banned from participating, by highlighting cultural aspects of Ukraine and the unfair treatment of Ukraine after World War I when Ukrainians had not been allowed to create a nation-state based on self-determination.[[34]](#footnote-34) Women involved themselves with this movement in a variety of ways, from serving in the Congress as Mary Malevich did to joining choral groups singing of the struggle of Ukraine to writing articles for *The Ukrainian Weekly* as Mary Kuvy did.[[35]](#footnote-35) Though these organizations were largely male-led, women were able to involve themselves in more stereotypically feminine ways as well, such as giving traditional dance lessons to Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians alike and teaching the Ukrainian language.[[36]](#footnote-36)

When women were not shown actively participating in the nationalist movement, they found their images being used to further the nationalist cause. On Mother’s Day in 1940, *The Ukrainian Weekly* ran an article describing what made a good mother, detailing a woman who worked hard, loved Ukraine, and enrolled her many children in classes on Ukraine.[[37]](#footnote-37) Another article described the life of the Ukrainian author Lesya Ukrainka/Kosach who, although ill, loved Ukraine and sought to stand up to tsarist rule through her poetry. In her work, she compared her health being oppressed by disease to Ukraine’s oppression under the Russian Empire.[[38]](#footnote-38) Women were urged to think both of Ukraine and of America. Not wanting to seem solely loyal to Ukraine and risk an outcry against Ukrainian-American organizations, *The Ukrainian Weekly* also ran articles stressing the importance of learning Ukrainian for both those of Ukrainian descent and for America. The paper emphasized that learning Ukrainian could help the youth to connect with their heritage as well as provide the United States with someone who could act as a translator.[[39]](#footnote-39) Much of the duty to act as the connection between American-born Ukrainians and their heritage fell on the mothers or women of the family, showing women’s centrality to fostering nationalism and collective memory.[[40]](#footnote-40)

With the return of the Soviets to Ukraine in the summer of 1944 came heightened security and increased suspicion against movement across the countryside. This suspicion was primarily levied against men due to gender stereotypes whereas women were viewed as less dangerous, thus hindering the movement of male nationalists working in Ukraine. Though OUN leadership was reluctant to recruit more women into the organization, they had no other options if they hoped to continue their operations.[[41]](#footnote-41) Women were able to use their femininity to capitalize on the gender stereotypes employed by the Soviets, a skill they had previously used against the Poles and the Nazis who had harbored similar stereotypes.[[42]](#footnote-42) This allowed women to move about Ukraine with more ease than their male counterparts, though their movement remained fraught with dangers and hardships. In order to circumvent some of these hardships, women began hiding the messages they were delivering in their braids or sewing them into their clothes, usually attempting to eat the letters if they were caught by the Soviets, who were quick to realize the new, distinctly feminine methods being used by the nationalists.[[43]](#footnote-43)

While Ukrainian-Americans set out to work by forming a new collective memory to rally around, the attempt at national independence in post-war Ukraine became more dire. The closure of World War II enabled the Stalinist regime to clamp down on newly acquired territories along with those they had held before the war, threatening the Ukrainian nationalist movement and their hope for independence. At the end of the war, the Soviets began employing counter-insurgency methods through propaganda, tactical sweeps through the woods, and moving the population from one area to another via deportation and attempts at re-education.[[44]](#footnote-44) Propaganda took on various forms for the Soviets, originally calling the insurgents “bandits” and members of the “bourgeoisie” before trying to ignore their activities altogether with the hope that the lack of acknowledgement would show how little their movement meant.[[45]](#footnote-45) A CIA report from April 1953 noted that the Soviets dismissed the nationalists as American or British operatives in an attempt to rally the population against the guerrillas.[[46]](#footnote-46) While this may seem like petty propaganda, there exists evidence to suggest that the Soviets were increasingly convinced that the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and other organizations were an extension of Western intelligence serving in a proxy war.[[47]](#footnote-47) With heavier military units now freed from war-time activities, the Soviets were able to concentrate more of their forces on doing sweeps of the countryside. One tactic used against the nationalists was encirclement by troops and sending in specialized units to track the insurgents down, taking insurgents by surprise as they closed in on nationalist strongholds.[[48]](#footnote-48) Finally, the USSR utilized deportations and mass movement of the Ukrainian population in an attempt to control the activities of the guerrillas. Though the insurgents claimed the deportation of nationalists to Eastern Ukraine and Siberia helped to spread the movement, it does not appear as though this spread helped to bolster the nationalist cause.[[49]](#footnote-49)

As part of the Soviets’ plan to end the nationalist movement in Western Ukraine, they employed women in Eastern Ukraine in professional occupations like teaching and sent them into Western Ukraine. Eastern Ukraine, which held closer ties to the Soviet Union and viewed Russians as an extension of the Ukrainian ethnic group, supplied the Soviets with teachers willing to help settle the issue of nationhood in Western Ukraine.[[50]](#footnote-50) Just as religious figures were used to control the population, so too were women professionals, marching into Western Ukraine alongside the Red Army as early as September of 1939.[[51]](#footnote-51) The majority of these teachers were young women who were subjected to the violence of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, which had quickly ascertained the reasoning behind sending these women west. The Soviets had been hoping for a misstep on the insurgents’ side that would provide them with the evidence they needed to turn the population against their opponents. Their wish was granted as nationalist fighters rebuked the Eastern Ukrainian women as enemies, a term that had previously been loosely defined by the nationalists and was gaining more hold as time went on.[[52]](#footnote-52) In only a matter of months, the nationalists had abducted, threatened, and murdered hundreds of women sent west to teach Ukrainian youth, a demographic that had been a prime target of the insurgents.[[53]](#footnote-53) In this respect, women were once again being used as buffers for the ongoing war between Ukrainian nationalists and the Soviets in an attempt to subdue threats. While the insurgents saw their actions as an attempt to expunge the enemy from their stronghold, ordinary Ukrainians were becoming increasingly wary of the violence being imposed upon the general populace by the organization.[[54]](#footnote-54)

Unbeknownst to previous waves of Ukrainian emigrants residing in the United States, the UPA began taking a more violent turn on other ethnic Ukrainians. No longer were the Ukrainian fighters combating Germans, Russians, and Poles – they now found themselves pitted against other ethnic Ukrainians. Just as the bodies of women members in the Red Army were to act as a buttress against the lust of male members, civilian Soviet women’s bodies were to be used as a buttress to protect the state from violent Ukrainian nationalism while women suffered the consequences of such violence themselves.[[55]](#footnote-55) Intensified collectivization served as yet another wedge between civilian Ukrainians and the Ukrainian nationalists. As collectivization resumed with the return of the Soviet regime, the Ukrainian nationalists began attacking parts of the population that were forced to collectivize, regardless of whether they had willingly done so or not.[[56]](#footnote-56) This indiscriminate violence against average ethnic Ukrainians pushed people closer to the Soviets and further from the insurgents as they began to consider which group was the lesser of two evils.[[57]](#footnote-57)

At the same time the Soviets were using pro-Soviet women to quell the unrest in Western Ukraine, they also made use of anti-Soviet women’s platonic and romantic relationships to dismantle the underground operation. The capture of couriers proved to be an effective means of disrupting partisan activity. By capturing couriers, the Soviets were able to break down communication lines among insurgents and use the couriers they had arrested to discover and arrest other couriers. Given that the majority of couriers were women, it was the platonic relationships of women that came to be frayed. This resulted in painful betrayals as women were forced to choose between the well-being of their families and the continuation of the Ukrainian underground’s cause.[[58]](#footnote-58) For women who held romantic ties within the Ukrainian nationalist movement, the risk of capture could result in a romantic partner’s death as the Soviets attempted to use these women as bait for male members of the underground. After Maria Pyskir was betrayed by her friend and fellow courier, Zoya, the Soviets sought to use her to influence her husband to come out of hiding, telling her to, “Influence him as only a wife can when she sets her mind to do so.”[[59]](#footnote-59) Women’s relationships were crucial to the functioning of the underground, highlighting the importance of couriers and the operations of women within the movement.

The post-war period forced much of the Ukrainian nationalist movement underground, causing members to develop new ways to spread the word of their ambitions. To accomplish their goal of creating an independent Ukraine, the nationalists realized they needed to find allies in the region and focused propaganda campaigns on swaying residents of neighboring republics to help their cause.[[60]](#footnote-60) Prior to the start of their propaganda raids, few Europeans outside of Ukraine and Poland knew of the UPA and its mission.[[61]](#footnote-61) Capitalizing on the lack of border security in countries like Czechoslovakia and Romania, among other war-torn European nations, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army pushed their way west, leaving a paper trail of propaganda in their wake.[[62]](#footnote-62) As noted by Michal Smigel, men were not the only ones who went on these propaganda raids. According to archival sources, there was an entire women’s platoon called “Krylati” that participated in the propaganda raids on Czecho-Slovakia, though their history and activities remain under-researched.[[63]](#footnote-63)

Although the seeds for Ukrainian nationalism had been planted in the US, they were not enough for the UPA. In order to win Ukrainian independence, the OUN and UPA needed powerful Western allies and set their sights on the United States and their occupied zone of Berlin. Through a combined effort of Ukrainian-American pressure, the exiled leaders of the OUN in Germany, and propaganda campaigns, the Ukrainian nationalists were able to establish contact with US officials, much to the chagrin of the Soviets.[[64]](#footnote-64) American officials lied to the Soviets on behalf of the Ukrainian nationalists by feigning ignorance on the whereabouts of the infamous OUN leader, Stepan Bandera, who the Soviets later discovered to be hiding in American-held territory in Germany being closely guarded by American agents.[[65]](#footnote-65) The continued connection between the exiles and the Ukrainian underground, however, was maintained by trustworthy couriers such as Maria Pyskir.[[66]](#footnote-66)

In the same way that the Ukrainian Insurgent Army used women as a buffer against the Soviets, the United States used the UPA as a warning system for a potential war with the Soviets. Though they made contact with the anti-Soviets and American policymakers openly declared support for them – likely for the appeasement of constituents, who were actively working toward establishing a Ukrainian state abroad – it was clear to operatives that the insurgents were fighting a doomed war.[[67]](#footnote-67) For the UPA, US support was momentous in more ways than one – it offered the insurgents a boost in morale and bragging rights, along with much-needed supplies.[[68]](#footnote-68) Both the UPA and the US used one another to further their own goals. Equipping the UPA with communication devices helped the nationalists to continue their operations while also helping American officials to keep tabs on the Soviets behind the iron curtain. Fearing a large-scale war with the USSR that only an early warning could help prevent, Ukrainian nationalists were used as the eyes and ears of America in Eastern Europe.[[69]](#footnote-69)

The use of women as buffers for both state and organizational operations is a theme of women’s history in Eastern Europe. As partisan activities continued, the Soviets became concerned about these ‘buffers’ being used against them, as was the case with several professionals from Eastern Ukraine who defected to join the OUN.[[70]](#footnote-70) Considering their own fears, they decided to utilize the OUN’s courier system to neutralize the exiled leaders of the movement and officially bring nationalist activities to an end.[[71]](#footnote-71) Maria Pyskir found herself caught in the middle of one such Soviet plan, whereby her identity as a mother and a wife was leveraged against her.[[72]](#footnote-72) Pyskir was to lead Soviet operatives to the hideouts of OUN leaders in the West, with the Soviets showing her what was at stake by allowing her to see her first-born son and her husband before they departed for their mission. Instead of accepting this, Pyskir internally positioned herself as the courier to the West who was to tell the world of the plight of the insurgents and their failed uprising.[[73]](#footnote-73) She saw herself and her compatriots in a heroic light, untouched by the genocides and other acts of violence committed by the organization to which she belonged.[[74]](#footnote-74) Once in the American zone of Berlin, she sought out the American consulate and warned the leaders of the OUN of the Soviets’ plans.[[75]](#footnote-75) Pyskir continued to spread the message of the OUN and UPA upon arriving in America, writing her memoir and joining organizations where she found other former members of the nationalist movement.[[76]](#footnote-76)

Pyskir was not the only one who had left Ukraine for the West. The letters of nationalists sent abroad to the United States and other Western nations utilized various emotional themes emigrant groups had used on themselves. One propaganda letter stressed the importance of remaining loyal to the “motherland” and emphasized the responsibility emigrants had to act on the behalf of their “brothers” in “Mother Ukraine.”[[77]](#footnote-77) The language used in one letter documented by the CIA is not unlike language used within the ranks of the OUN and UPA. The formation of the Women’s Network within the OUN was prefaced on feelings of sisterhood being stronger than even actual familial bonds.[[78]](#footnote-78) Just as Kis argued, even the image of women played a central role in propaganda in the OUN. In propaganda, the depiction of womanhood was evoked exclusively for sympathetic purposes while collective memory has forgotten the women who built and sustained it.[[79]](#footnote-79)

During and after the war, the United States and other Western nations soon found themselves with a new wave of Ukrainian immigrants primarily hailing from Galicia and other sections of Western Ukraine.[[80]](#footnote-80) Once settled in their new communities, these emigrants were buffeted with questions about the Volhynia Massacre and insurgent activities. The new wave of emigrants were quick to reassure the older waves by dismissing any violent events they had heard about as being Soviet slander, informing the older waves of the plight of the insurgents and the destruction of Ukrainian culture at the hands of the Soviets.[[81]](#footnote-81) Films such as Kalyna Lisiuk’s “The Tragedy of Carpatho-Ukraine” had been featured in the US, exposing established Ukrainian-Americans to a carefully cultivated story of the heroism and oppression of insurgents.[[82]](#footnote-82) Having no other information to go on, the established Ukrainian-American community believed the new emigrants to be a more reliable source than the Soviets and adopted this narrative themselves. As years went on and new generations were born, the lines separating older waves of Ukrainian-Americans and newer waves faded to create one Ukrainian-American community with one collective memory on the actions of the OUN and UPA.[[83]](#footnote-83) Every question on the purported violence of the Ukrainian nationalists was taken as an insult to the community as a whole until the Ukrainian Archives opened in the 1980s, revealing the truth about violent Ukrainian nationalism and shattering the myth of the pure heroism of the nationalists.[[84]](#footnote-84) After decades of fostering the memory that the Soviets were the only bad actors in Eastern Europe, the community has now split between clinging to the hero myth or admonishing the violence of the nationalists.[[85]](#footnote-85)

The activities of the women in the OUN has long outlived their time in the organization, acting as the collective memory of entire generations of Ukrainian-Americans. While there has been more discussion of the involvement of women in the Ukrainian nationalist movement, there has been little talk of how they contributed to the modern problem of collective memory regarding the violence committed by the movement. Despite the violence women themselves suffered at the hands of male members of the nationalist movement, they adopted the hero myth as their own and helped to forge it both within and outside of the OUN. The occupations and stereotypes surrounding women became necessary for continuing nationalist activities and pressuring the United States government to act on behalf of Ukraine all became key pieces in Ukrainian women’s ability to shape the discourse surrounding the OUN and UPA. Women fashioned their tasks as a part of the grand and just scheme of the nationalist movement, allowing them to ignore the pain inflicted on themselves and on other populations. Although women were consistently used by the OUN and the Soviets, they have largely been ignored. In this essay, I have argued that women were essential to structuring the collective memory about the Ukrainian nationalist movement through the activities they participated within the OUN, the aid they gave outside of the organization, and their propagation of the myth abroad.

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I hereby declare upon my word of honor that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work. – Emily Johnson

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