

Women's Body as Battlefield: Sexual Violence during Soviet Counterinsurgency in Western Ukraine in the 1944-1953¹

by Marta Havryshko

Abstract

The article focuses on sexual/ized violence experienced by the female members of Ukrainian nationalist underground, its sympathizers, and civilians during Soviet counterinsurgency in Western Ukraine in the late Stalinist period. It reveals the reasons, forms, topography, functions and implications of sexual assaults on women suspected in collaboration with OUN and UPA during anti-partisan military and state security operations, interrogation process, recruitment to work for Soviet intelligence agencies, as well as in the prisons, and other places of detention. The article explores how the Soviet justice system tackled criminal investigations of sexual violence by members of the militia, NKVD-MVD-NKGB-MGB, Internal Troops, special military units (spetsgrupy), and other perpetrators. It examines whether the measures taken by the Soviet officials in order to prevent violence and to punish transgressors were sufficient. The paper argues that sexual crimes and brutalization of women's bodies were an intrinsic part of the state violent practices against anti-Soviet armed resistance, and a by-product of the continuum of political violence in Western Ukraine in the decade after the Second World War.

Keywords: sexual violence, rape, Soviet counterinsurgency, OUN, UPA, NKVD, NKGB, perpetrators, justice

Introduction

After the expulsion of the Nazi authorities from Western Ukraine in 1944, the Soviet regime started a cruel struggle against the underground of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN)² and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). One of the important tools of this struggle was mass propaganda largely targeting women. Soviet authorities, as represented by Party and Komsomol activists, addressed women at different meetings and

encouraged them to solicit their husbands and sons "to come out of the woods."³ The significance of engaging women into the struggle of anti-Soviet resistance movement is stipulated in the Resolution of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Bolsheviks of Ukraine, dated 5 April 1945.⁴ At the same time, women were not only the objects of ideological influence but also of different violent practices. The wave of political terror and repressions engulfed Western Ukraine. The authorities became involved in the war with the OUN and UPA underground, the border guard and internal forces of NKVD, active units of the Red Army, detachments of local

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2 This article will only describe the so-called Bandera wing of the Ukrainian nationalist underground – OUN(B), named after Stepan Bandera.

3 Haluzevyi derzhavnyi arkhiv Sluzhby bezpeky Ukrainy (HDA SBU) [Sectoral State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine], fond 13, sprava 376, tom 75, arkush 226.

4 *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia. Tom 3: Borotba proty UPA i natsionalistychnoho pidpillia: dyrektyvni dokumenty TsK Kompartii Ukrainy. 1943–1959*, eds. Yu. Cherchenko, O. Vovk, I. Pavlenko (Kyiv; Toronto: Litopys UPA, 2001), 152.

air bases, operational battalions (first formed in 1944 from the local population), forces of NKVD of USSR on security of railways, operational staff of the raiiondepartments (*raionni viddily*, RV) NKVD and NKGB.⁵ In the period between 1 December 1945 and 10 February 1946, 15,562 military and state security operations were conducted, resulting in the murder of 4,200 persons, the arrest of 9,400 persons, and the seizure of different kinds of weapons.⁶ In addition, it was common to conduct mass evictions of family members of the underground fighters (who were executed or imprisoned) and their supporters to the remote areas of the Soviet Union. In the period from 1944 to 1953, Soviet authorities exterminated 153,000 members and supporters of the underground, arrested 134,000 and deported about 204,000 persons.⁷ It might be assumed that a large part of those convicted for “counterrevolutionary activities” and “engagement with the counterrevolutionary organizations” (art. 54 1a, and 54-11 of the Criminal Code of USSR, respectively) were women. For instance, in 1946, they accounted for 60%.⁸ Another method of counterinsurgency struggle practiced by Soviet special services was to create secret agent networks and special military units (so-

5 Mykhailo Romaniuk, *Zolochivska okruha OUN u natsionalno-vyzvolnomu rusi (1937-1953)*, (Lviv: In-t ukrainoznavstva im. I. Krypiakevycha NANU: Tsentr nezaleznykh istorychnykh studii, 2016): 188-189.

6 *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia. Tom 5: Borotba proty UPA i natsionalistychnoho pidpillia: informatsiini dokumenty TsK KP(b)U, obkomiv partii, NKVS-MVS, MDB-KDB (1943-1959). Knyha druha: 1946-1947* (Kyiv; Toronto: Litopys UPA, 2002), 12.

7 Laurentii Beria. 1953. *Stenogramma iul'skogo plenuma TsK KPSS i drugie dokumenty*, ed. A. N. Iakovleva (Moscow: MFD, 1999), 47.

8 See: “Protokol narady sekretariv obkomiv, i nachalnykiv oblupravlin MHB u zakhidnykh oblastei URSR . Lviv. 23.04.1947,” in *Litopys neskorenoi Ukrainy: Dokumenty, materialy, spohady. Knyha druha*, ed. Yaroslav Lialka (Lviv: Halytska vydavnycha spilka, 1997), 299.

called *agenturno-boevyie grupy or spetsgrupy*).⁹

While many academic researchers analyze the methods, forms, and scale of the struggle of the Soviet authorities against the OUN and UPA,¹⁰ gender aspects are marginalized. Jeffrey Burds was the first author who focused on the role of women in the covert intelligence work of Soviet security services, such as in large special operations against the underground leaders and the UPA. He also traced violence against women in the midst of OUN provoked by mass arrests of women by Soviet authorities.¹¹ Olena Petrenko defined mechanisms of recruiting women agents by Soviet special services, and the gender peculiarities of their operations.¹² There is also research on one of the best known Soviet female agents, Liudmyla Foia.¹³ Some aspects

9 See more in: Djeffri Burds, *Sovetskaya agentura. Ocherki voennoy istorii SSSR v poslevoennyye gody (1944-1948)* (Moskva; Niu-York, 2006); Dmytro Viedienieiev, Hennadii Bystrukhin, “Povstanska rozvidka diie tochno i vidvazhno...” in *Dokumentalna spadshchyna pidrozdiliv spetsialnoho pryznachennia OUN ta UPA. 1940-1950-ti roky* (Kyiv: K.I.S., 2006); Dmytro Viedienieiev, Hennadii Bystrukhin, *Dvobii bez kompromisiv. Protystorbov spetspidrozdiliv OUN ta radianskykh syl spetsoperatsii 1945-1980-ti roky* (Kyiv: K.I.S., 2007).

10 See selectively: Yurii Shapoval, “Viina pislia viiny,” *Voenna istoriia*, No 5-6 (2002): 59-84; Alexander Statiev, *The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Ivan Patryliak, “Vstan i borys! Slukhai i vir...” *Ukrainske natsionalistychnye pidpillia ta povstanskyi rukh (1939-1960 rr.)* (Lviv: Chasopys, 2012); Tamara Vronska, *Upokorennia strakhom: simeine zaruchnytstvo u karalnii praktytsi radianskoii vlady (1917-1953 rr.)* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2013).

11 Djeffri Burds, “Moskal’ki”: zhenshchiny-agenty i natsionalisticheskoe podpol’e na Zapadnoj Ukraine, 1944— 1948,” *Social’naya Istoriya. Ezhegodnik’2004* (Moskva: ROSSPEHN, 2004): 300-339.

12 Olena Petrenko, “Instrumentalizatsiia strakh. Vykorystannia radianskykh ta polskymy orhanamy bezpeky zhynok-ahentiv u borotbi proty ukrainskoho natsionalistychnoho pidpillia,” *Ukraina Moderna. № 18 (7) (2011.)*: 141-167.

13 Volodymyr Ivanchenko, *Kvitka u chervonomu pekli: zhyttievyyi shliakh Liudmyly Foi* (Toronto; Lviv: Litopys UPA, 2009).

of gender-based violence of Soviet authorities against female underground fighters are covered by Larysa Zarichniak.¹⁴ However, despite the increasing number of studies, the problem of sexual violence in the context of opposition of Soviet authorities against OUN and UPA is largely understudied. My key research questions are: What is the role of female bodies and sexuality in the struggle of Soviet authorities against Ukrainian nationalist underground? Was sexual violence against women a tool in this war?

The article makes a first attempt to analyze different forms of sexual violence against women in the broader context of the struggle of Soviet authorities against the Ukrainian nationalist underground in Western Ukraine between 1944 and 1953.¹⁵ It reflects on the political meaning of this violence and its impact on the underground of OUN and UPA. Moreover, the article focuses on the consequences of violence for the victimized women, and on their reflections on the traumatic experience. The study claims that sexual violence against women was an intrinsic part of the war of the Soviet authorities against their opponents, and a by-product of continuum of violence created by WWII as well as activities of the Ukrainian nationalist underground and Soviet repressive policy in Western Ukraine afterwards. It must be noted that the subject matter of the research in this publication does not include violent

practices against women in the GULAG (such as sexual violence by administrators, guards, and fellow prisoners).¹⁶ They were obviously one of the forms of punitive repressive measures against members of the anti-Soviet resistance movement but did not have any direct effect on the practices of the Ukrainian nationalist underground. Violence against women taking place in Western Ukraine (the OUN underground was mostly functioning and witnessing the violence) had a huge impact on its strategy and tactics. Information on the violence spread within the OUN environment through reporting, letters, information accounts, stories, rumors, and victims' testimonies. No less important for spreading information on everyday routines for women in Soviet prisons at pretrial proceedings were stories from the women's cellmates, their family and friends who came to see them. The state-backed terror against women reflected not only the power and rage of Soviet authorities, but also weakness and helplessness of the underground who were not able to interfere in any way. Hence, numerous cases of gender-based violence were also a powerful psychological weapon against the OUN underground. It is related to a symbolic meaning of the female body in a nationalist discourse. Feminist scholars emphasize that in nationalist narratives, a female body functions as a symbol of the nation, of the homeland, and its territory. By contrast, the virginity of

14 Larysa Zarichniak, "Violence and the UPA Woman: Experiences and Influences," *Ievropeis'ki istorychni studii*, No 2 (2015): 243-267.

15 On gender-based violence (including sexual violence) against the "enemy" women perpetrated by members of OUN and UPA, see: Marta Havryshko, "Love and Sex in Wartime: Controlling Women's Sexuality in the Ukrainian Nationalist Underground," *Aspasia* Vol. 12 (2018): 35-67; Marta Havryshko, "Choloviky, zhinky i nasyl'stvo v OUN i UPA u 1940-1950-kh rokakh," *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal* No. 4 (2016): 89-107.

16 See more on sexual violence in GULAG: Helene Celmina, *Women In Soviet Prisons* (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1985); Veronica Shapovalov, *Remembering the Darkness: Women in Soviet Prisons* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001); Ann Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (New York: Doubleday, 2003); Jehanne M Gheith, Katherine R. Jolluck, *Gulag Voices: Oral Histories of Soviet Incarceration and Exile* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011); Oksana Kis, *Ukrainky v HULAHU: vyzhyty – znachyt peremohty* (Lviv: Instytut narodoznnavstva NANU, 2017).

a woman's body is a symbol of the integrity of borders. That is why the rape of a woman's body is treated as violating the body of the nation and undermining the honor of those who defend it, of men who defend their territory, their homeland, and their women.¹⁷ The research is based on a wider range of a variety of resources. It is not odd to see most data on the rape of women during the counterinsurgency struggle of Soviet authorities in the report documentation of the OUN who were trying to use the facts in their propaganda.¹⁸ For instance, in the so called "Terenovi Vistky" (Field News), "Informatsiyi z terenu" (News from the Fields) they recorded all the events in specific localities that could be of interest for the underground (political events, arrests, searches, evictions of families to Siberia, establishing and functioning of collective farms, crime rate and sanitary conditions, social and political attitudes of local people, etc.). While collecting data from local residents and staff reconnaissance officers/informers, the authorized OUN members compiled the most detailed possible report on each event.

17 See more at: Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990); Floya Anthias, Nira Yuval-Davis, eds, *Racial Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-Racist Struggle* (London, Routledge, 1992); Joane Nagel, "Masculinity and nationalism: gender and sexuality in the making of nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 21:2 (1998): 242-269; Ruth Seifert, "Rape: the female body as a symbol and a sign. Gender-specific violence and the cultural construction of war," in *War or Health? A reader*, ed. Ilka Taipale (Dhaka, Bangladesh: London; New York: Helsinki, Finland: Cambridge, Mass.: New York: University Press; 2002), 286.

18 Head of Ternopil' Okruzhnyi Provid of OUN, "Shakh," wrote to his senior "Shelest" in one of the letters dated 1947 that one of the tasks of the Security Service of OUN should be to inspire complaints about "robbery and victimization of NKVDists' from local residents to the prosecutor's office after each counterinsurgent operation of Soviet authorities with the goal "to compromise the villains." (HDA SBU, f.16, spr. 581, ark. 39).

Based on such records, we can learn about the circumstances of rapes of women, their names, age, social background, and more. The drawback of the reports is that it is not always feasible to identify the perpetrators. In all cases, when members of the underground had no clear data on the perpetrators, they were referred to as "Bolsheviks." According to the documents, they pertained to members of militia, law enforcement, and punitive repressive entities of Soviet authorities (most often of NKVD-NKGB, MVD-MGB). The underground documents differentiate the victims by age, *muzhatka* (married woman) or a woman was used for a married lady, while unmarried ladies were referred to as girls. While analyzing this topic, it is also important to refer to the documents of the Security Service of OUN (*Sluzhba bezpeky*, SB), such as the information on the activities of Soviet secret combat groups, and interrogation reports of women suspected of secret activities for the Soviet Union which describe sexual violence against them committed by Soviet security services officers.

An important methodological challenge for the studies of sexual assaults against women within the context of Soviet counterinsurgency activities is the verification of information so widely available in the documents of Ukrainian nationalist underground with the help of documents of Soviet party bodies and security authorities, most of which are preserved in the Sectoral State Archives of the Security Service of Ukraine and have been recently made available to researchers. This information is scarce in different kinds of operations reports (including also in the Command Headquarters of the Internal Forces of NKVD of Ukrainian military raion), in staff reports, in fact sheets, special reports on the implemented military public

security operations and the activities of fighter battalions or special groups. This is because the objective of generating such documents was to report on the “successes” in the fight against the “foes” of Soviet authorities. That is why they mostly include dry statistics on the numbers of underground members and members of UPA taken captive or killed in different localities, in different periods, on the weapons seized, the bunkers detected, and Soviet troop losses.¹⁹ The supervisory control files on individual members of the underground or its entities do not contain any information on the forms of gender-based violence to force women into collaboration with the NKGB-MGB since in legal terms it was illegal and punishable.²⁰ Instead, in the generalized documents of the state security entities on the operational, secret agents, and investigative activities of certain regional boards of NKGB-MGB, there is data on procedural infringements, unjustified detentions of women, arrests without due warrants, long detention in custody with no official indication of formal charges, and also the use of violence against them during arrests and interrogations.²¹ For this research, it was

most informative to resort to party documents, the materials of the military prosecutor, correspondences between high party and state security and prosecution bodies describing the crimes of NKVD and other entities against the civil population referred to as “violation of revolutionary vigilance” and “socialist legitimacy.” Many of these documents were published in different collections of documents.²² In order to further extend the available knowledge on official responses of Soviet authorities on sexual violence on the part of “their own” performers it would be helpful to study the rich documentary legacy of Soviet state security entities. In particular, it would be valuable to consider personal files and archival criminal cases on the former Soviet state security officers dismissed or convicted for undermining “Soviet legitimacy” and for professional misconduct.

The ego-documents are an extremely important source to study the topic under analysis. It is crucial to take a closer look at women’s voices about sexual trauma and examine how women articulate their experiences, what factors influenced their decisions to speak up or keep silence, and how their verbal and

19 For instance, see materials from the Archiv Upravlinnia SBU u Rivnenskkii oblasti, f. 2, subf. 31.

20 For instance, see HDA SBU, f. 65 (“Spravy operatyvnoho obliku KGB URSR”) and the progress reports of Ternopil’ raion committee of the KP(b)U, board of NKVD and NKGB on the implementation of Resolutions of the TsK VKP(b) and TsK KP(b)U on the struggle against OUN and UPA (pp. 356-361), and also other similar reports in the Litopys UPA. Nova seriiia. Tom 4: Borotba proty UPA i natsionalistychnoho pidpillia. Informatyini dokumenty TsK KP(b)U, obkomiv partii, NKVS-MVS, MDB-KDB 1943-1959. Dokumenty i materialy. Knyha persha: 1943-1945, eds. V. Lozytskyi, I. Pavlenko, A. Kentii (Kyiv: Litopys UPA, 2002).

21 The materials from HDA SBU, such as fond 2 (“Board of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for Combatting Banditism, Department 2-H and Department 4 of the MGB-KGB of Ukrainian SSR.” On methods and techniques of secret operational work of the bodies of public security of Ukraine to liquidate the organized underground of OUN and armed gangs of UPA militants on the territory of

the republic during the period of 1943/54”), f. 13, spr. 372 (“Collection of Documents of the Structure and Nature of Anti-Soviet Activities of the “Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists – OUN” and the “Ukrainian Insurgent Army – UPA”); f. 16 (“Secretariat of the Main Political Board State Political Administration) (GPU) –KGB of Ukrainian SSR”), such as, spr. 590, ark. 32-42; f. 71 (“Transfer Acts of Archival Document Materials of the Board of KGB in Lviv Region”), a.o.

22 For instance, see Ivan Bilas, Represyvnokaralna sistema v Ukraini. 1917–1953: Suspilnopolitychnyi ta istoryko-pravovyi analiz: U 2 kn. Kn. 2. (Kyiv: Lybid–Viisko Ukrainy, 1994); Litopys neskorenoi Ukrainy: Dokumenty, materialy, spohady. Knyha 2, ed. Yaroslav Lialka and others (Lviv: Halytska vydavnycha spilka, 1997); Reabilitovani istoriieiu u 27-y tomakh. Lvivs’ka oblast’. Kn. 1, holova oblasnoi red. kolehii Ihor Derzhko, uporiadk. nauk. red. i peredmova V. Savchak (Lviv: Vydavnytstvo “Astrolibia,” 2009).

physical language conveyed attempts to make sense of and reflect on their experience. Due to the feeling of shame and guilt and the fear for stigmatization, many of them did not write about their traumatic experiences. That is why most published memories of women either did not touch upon the topic, or marginalized it. They are dominated by extended descriptions of other, non-sexualized physical and mental torture that women suffered during arrest, interrogations, imprisonment, prisoner transportation, and in the slave labor camps. In oral narratives, women are more open to tell about the experience of sexual violence. This study uses the materials of 67 interviews I recorded with the female members of OUN and UPA in 2015-2018. Not all of my respondents were ready to talk about their experience. They are more candid with regard to the stories of other women, their friends and acquaintances who experienced sexual violence.²³ Taking into account that in order to speak of their own trauma women would often resort to this method (telling about another person), we might assume that some of the stories told could in fact be about the respondents themselves. On the whole, oral stories empower women with voices and make visible their feelings and emotions related to their traumatic past; they allow us to trace survival strategies practiced by the victims of sexual violence.

On the whole, ego-documents of violence

²³ For instance, a former OUN member Mariia Yukish told about rape during Soviet interrogations of several friends of hers who were members of the underground. It is notable that one of the victims of violence mentioned by Yukish (a well-known member of OUN who held a leading position in the Ukrainian Red Cross) never mentioned in any of her interviews being a victim of rape during arrest. Interview with Mariia Yukish (b. 1930), recorded by M. Havryshko on 21 January, 2017, Dolyna, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast', author's private archive.

survivors, just like other sources used for this study, help us trace the forms and consequences of the gender-based violence of Soviet authorities within the context of the struggle against the Ukrainian nationalist underground, but they fail to measure the scale of violence and the precise numbers of victims. At the same time, including new sources, primarily Soviet documents, would help us trace motivations of perpetrators and how their gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, social class, political views, combatant status, position of power intersect.

Hunt for the Enemies: Women and Military Security Operations

The goal of the military security operations was to exterminate or take captive the members of the underground and their supporters, and to detect the bunkers. Military people involved in the operation searched through the woods and muddy areas, where the insurgents might be hiding. They organized the ambushes, blocked villages and conducted searches of houses, and arrested the persons suspected of cooperating with the OUN underground.²⁴ Women were one of the most vulnerable categories of the population during such military operations. Many of them, particularly in 1944 and 1945, ran the households by themselves, took care of their children and old people, whereas their husbands may have been subject to forced labor in Germany, hiding from the call to military duty in the Red Army, or staying in the insurgent units of the UPA and in the combat units of the OUN underground. Rape was by far one of the most wide-spread violent

²⁴ For more on methods of "searching" and "sweeping" during Soviet military and security police operations, see the report of the Board for Combatting Banditism of NKVD for 1945, HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 372, t. 91, ark. 177-179.

act suffered by women during the military and security police operations. The leadership of the OUN tried to collect all the data about the raped women to be possibly further used for anti-Soviet propaganda. The data was recorded in special reports on Soviet terror in certain localities. For instance, 382 cases of rape of civilian women by Soviet authority representatives, such as law enforcement bodies, were recorded in the report on the situation in the Lviv Oblast' for July 1944 to July 1945.²⁵

The persons of greatest interest to Soviet authorities during the raids were the closest relatives of insurgents and members of underground. The eye-witness Mykola Maksymych mentions a gang rape and murder of a wife of one of the insurgents in his home village of Halivka in Staryi Sambir raion (Lviv Oblast') during the military operation:

His wife was making a bread at the moment in a house, she was kneading the dough, and there was fire in the oven. The baby was in a cot, so they took the baby and threw it into the oven. And they took the woman and undressed her and tied her to the window. There were some sort of benches at the window outside, with the holes where they used to put in the flax tow. He took a spindle, spindled her hair on it, the window was open, and put it with the hair on into that bench hole. And then she went through some five of them, and then eventually they hung her.²⁶

While conducting searches in a village and

25 Litopys UPA. Nova seriia, Tom 13: Voienna okruha UPA "Buh". Dokumenty i materialy (1943–1952). Knyha 2., eds. V. Moroz, O. Vovk (Kyiv; Toronto: Litopys UPA, 2009), 205.

26 Mykola Maksymych (b. 1936), "Mene partyzany nazyvaly 'Zhaivoronok'," in *Yavorivshchyna u povstanskii borotbi. Rozpovidi uchasnykiv ta ochevydtsiv, zapysav ta uporiadkuvav Yeohen Luno. Tom 2: Yavoriv* (Lviv: Rastr-7, 2015), 963.

detaining suspects, Soviet soldiers and NKVD officers forced them into public buildings such as schools, barns, village council buildings, clubs, or private houses, etc., and interrogated them there about their family members, friends, acquaintances, or other persons related to the underground or insurgents. When investigating a case of the NKVD's detainment of a typist of the raion center of OUN Pavlyna Boychuk ("Orelia"), on 17 July 1945, in a village of Maydan of Solotvyno raion in Stanislaviv Oblast' (presently Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast'), the security service officer noted in the documents that during interrogations in a local school "she was told to undress herself and he threatened to rape her. The rape was supposed to involve the entire battalion."²⁷ The former head of the Ukrainian Red Cross (UPA medical service) in the Kosiv raion, Oleksandra Slobodian, recounts that after her arrest in April 1945, a Soviet officer made an attempt to rape her in front of other soldiers. After Oleksandra resisted, the rapist hit her so hard that she thrust open a barn door with her body and landed at the soldiers' feet. "They yelled that I offended their superior and threatened that they would all amuse themselves with me."²⁸ Some women who resisted the attempts at rape were killed. In the reports of the security service we can find descriptions about the death of Yustyna Triasko on 1 March 1946, in a village of Veldizh of Kalush raion (Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast'):

A Bolshevik ran after her and grabbed her by the hands in the anteroom. The woman tried to break out, but the Bolshevik threw her on the ground and

27 HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 376. t. 57, ark. 30.

28 Interview with Oleksandra Slobodian (b. 1922), recorded by M. Havryshko, 14 August, 2016, Zapruttia, Sniatynskyi raion, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast', author's private archive.

attempted to rape her. Yustyna started screaming and other Bolsheviks came to see. She broke free from the grip of the Bolshevik and tried to run away to her house. The Bolshevik realized he was not able to catch the woman, and started shooting with his gun. After three shots, she was killed in front of her house.²⁹

The reports of OUN record many cases of death of the raped women. For instance, a report dated August 1944 on the situation in the Sokal raion describes the death of two girls “raped by Bolsheviks” in the village of Liubych.³⁰ Another report of OUN states that in a village of Vykhopni (Kamianka-Buska raion, Lviv Oblast’), on 10 October 1946, 100 “Bolsheviks” arrested a local resident Mariia Vykhopen who was interrogated as a suspect in relation with the insurgents. After the interrogation, she was brought to the forest, raped and killed. On the next day, the people from the village found only the blood stained head-kerchief of the woman. They never found the body.³¹ According to the report of OUN dated 26 February 1947, in the village of Tatoryniv (Horodok raion, Lviv Oblast’), officers of a local army garrison of NKVD arrested Sofia Kohut and raped her in the sty. On the next day, the village people found her dead in the street.³²

Some reports on the death of the girls arrested by Soviets do not contain any specific information on sexual violence against them, but the content might imply the rape of the women before the murder. For instance, one

29 HDA SBU, f. 13, spr.376, t. 57, ark. 102.

30 *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia*, Tom 13, 77.

31 *Ibid.*, t. 75, ark. 314.

32 Consolidated report for November and December 1947. Districts: Komarno, Horodok, Yanyiv, Rudky, Archive of the Center for Research on the Liberation Movement (Arkhkhiiv Tsentru doslidzhen’ vyzvolnoho rukhu (ATsDVR), coll. 10 (Archives of the Foreign Detachments of OUN (New-York)).

of the reports describes that in the village of Zushtytsi (Horodok raion, Lviv Oblast’), the village people found in the forest the clothes of a woman arrested shortly before the body was found after a month on 8 May 1946.³³ Murders of women in order to hide the rape were also recorded in Soviet documents. For instance, on 5 May 1945, in the Sambir raion, in the village of Vanevychi, a group of soldiers and a sergeant of the 656 rifle regiment robbed, raped, and killed three women.³⁴

The available documents imply that random women could also be victims of sexual violence by Soviet soldiers. This was the case with crimes of the 10th mechanized division of the major general Pavlov in a village of Velykyi Zhytyn (Rivne Oblast’). Overnight into 10 January 1946, some unidentified persons (possibly underground members) fired at the division soldiers when they were passing by the village. In response, the soldiers burnt down 23 houses in the village. During the fire, many cattle and several local people died. In a special report to the first secretary of the KP(b) U, Mykyta Khrushchov, dated 26 January 1946, the people’s commissar for state security Serhiy Savchenko stated the following: “Three servicemen raped the wife of a Red Army soldier, Nykolaychuk Mariya Afanasyevna, a mother of three small children.”³⁵

The OUN documents often highlighted that Soviet law enforcers deliberately chose to rape young and beautiful victims, irrespective of their actual relation to the OUN underground. In particular, it was noted that during the searches in the village of Vovchynets, near Ivano-Frankivsk, on 17 October 1946, a group of MVD officers raped the “mentally

33 *Visti z terenu za cherven 1945*. Lvivshchyna, ATsDVR, coll. 9, t. 17 (<http://avr.org.ua/index.php/viewDoc/9118/>)

34 *Litopys neskorenoi Ukrainy*, Knyha 2, 284.

35 HDA SBU, f. 16, spr. 556, ark. 16.

challenged but beautiful" 30-year-old Varvara Hryhorash in her house, but:

*in order to disguise what was going on in the house, they thoroughly dug every piece of land in the yard of the lady's household, and asked every passer-by where her husband was.*³⁶

There were also cases of rape of the underage girls. It was recorded in a secret report of a member of the Council of Aid to Western Ukraine, Tymofiy Strokach, addressing the secretary of TsKKP(b)U Demyan Korotchenko, that on 22 March 1945, a Red Army soldier of the regiment 154, Oleksandr Hruzdayev, killed the 14-year-old Anna Yaremchuk after a failed attempt at rape while on a special counter-underground operation in a village of Kaminne (Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast').³⁷ He then hid the body in a ditch. On 15 July 1947, in a village of the Mylne (Ternopil Oblast'), a group of Soviet soldiers raped the 16-year-old daughter of Mykhaylo Shcherbyna, who was staying home alone.³⁸ In a village of Bliativka, the underground members recorded the following group rape by the NKVD officers of a 17-year-old girl.³⁹

Rape would often take place in the presence of parents and other family members of the girls. For example, in a village of Mistky (Lviv Oblast'), two NKVD officers attempted to rape

an 18-year-old girl. The 70-year-old father who was trying to defend the daughter was killed.⁴⁰ A former leader of a security service combat group, Dmytro Kupyak, described in his memoirs the details of Soviet military operations against the underground in the Lviv Oblast' in winter 1945: "In a village of Yablunivka, a major raped a 9-year-old girl, a daughter of Anna Savkova, in full view of the mother."⁴¹ A major of the Zhuravne raion unit of MVD, Baburin, took the 16-year-old Kateryna Yaremko after the arrest to his place, raped her, and let her out.⁴²

However, it must be emphasized that victims of mass rape were not only young women. On 17 August 1948, in a forest near the village of Antonivka of Tovmach raion, five garrison soldiers raped the 40-year-old Kateryna Holovata.⁴³ There were cases of rape of elderly women. For instance, eight NKGB officers attempted to rape a 72-year-old woman on 2 December 1946 in the village of Rostoky in the Vyzhnytsia raion, Chernivtsi Oblast'.⁴⁴ On 2 January 1948, two soldiers of the mopping-up battalion raped a 70-year-old woman from the village of Krohulets (Husiatyn raion, Ternopil' Oblast').⁴⁵

In many cases, rape was committed by a group of perpetrators. For instance, one of the reports of OUN documented that in the

36 *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia. Tom 22. Stanyslaviivska okruha OUN: Dokumenty i materialy. 1945-1951*, eds. D. Prodanyk, S. Lesiv (Kyiv; Toronto: Litopys UPA, 2013), 420.

37 *Ibid., Tom 4: Borotba proty UPA i natsionalistychnoho pidpillia: informatsiini dokumenty TsK KP(b)U, obkomiv partii, NKVS-MVS, MDB-KDB (1943-1959). Knyha persha: (1943-1945)*, eds. V. Lozytskyi, I. Pavlenko, A. Kentii (Kyiv; Toronto: Litopys UPA, 2002), 427.

38 *Litopys UPA. Osnovna seriia. Tom 49: Ternopilshchyna: "Visti z Terenu" ta "Vistky z Ternopilshchyny." 1943-1950; Knyha persha (1943-1947)*, eds. I. Homziak, M. Posivnych (Toronto; Lviv: Litopys UPA, 2010), 479.

39 *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia. Tom 13*, 81.

40 *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia. Tom 19: Pidpillia OUN na Bukovyni: 1943-1951: dokumenty i materialy*, ed. D. Prodanyk (Kyiv; Toronto: Litopys UPA, 2012), 147.

41 Dmytro Kupyak, *Spohady nedostrilianoho* (Toronto; Niu York: Printed by Beskyd Graphics, 1991), 225.

42 *Litopys neskorenoi Ukrainy. Knyha 2*, 281.

43 *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia. Tom 22*, 710.

44 *Ibid., Tom 19: Pidpillia OUN na Bukovyni: 1943-1951. Dokumenty i materialy*, ed. D. Prodanyk (Kyiv; Toronto: Litopys UPA, 2012), 229.

45 *Litopys UPA. Osnovna seriia. Tom 50: Ternopilshchyna: "Visti z Terenu" ta "Vistky z Ternopilshchyny." 1943-1950; Knyha druha (1948-1950)*, ed. I. Homziak (Toronto; Lviv: Litopys UPA, 2010), 90.

village of Ulvivok (Sokal raion, Lviv Oblast') MVD officers raped the 32-year-old Melania Solmanchuk on 19 April 1946 during a search:

She was told to go to the cellar, because they wanted to do an inspection. When a woman entered, two NKVD officers followed, while one officer stayed at the door. The two attacked the woman. She started screaming. They stuck a hat in her mouth and committed the rape.⁴⁶

On 15 April 1946, in a forest at the village of Zahiryia (Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast'), 30 "Bolsheviks" raped the newly arrested two daughters of the village woman Sofia Savychyn. After the rape, the women were released to go home.⁴⁷ On 17 August 1946, in the hamlet of Dibrova (presently part of the town Koropets, Ternopil' Oblast'), seven NKVD officers raped the wife of the local citizen Petro Chemnyi. The husband was taken out of the house during the rape.⁴⁸ The sexual exploitation of the detained women could last for several days and had severe consequences for the victims. In the village of Komariv, Halych raion, Stanislaviv Oblast', on 3 April 1946, the MVD arrested two girls who were questioned about the activities of OUN in the village. The security service documents describe the case as follows:

On the following day, during the interrogations when the girls were severely beaten, they were also taken from the house to the barn and raped there. Mariya Zatvarnytska was raped 4 times

46 HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 376, t. 57, ark. 334.

47 *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia*. Tom 22, 157.

48 HDA SBU, f. 62, op. 2, spr. 51, t. 10, ark. 472. For other cases, see: *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia*. Tom 22, 165; *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia*. Tom 49: *Pidpillia OUN na Bukovyni: 1943-1951. Dokumenty i materialy*, ed. Dmytro Prodanyk (Kyiv; Toronto: Litopys UPA, 2012), 273; *Zvit. Teror suproty ukrainskoho naselennia. Drohobyt'skyi i Medynyt'skyi raiony, ATsDVR*, coll. 10.

on that day, while Mariya Melnychuk suffered 10 times. When the girls were fought back and screamed, Bolsheviks threatened them with prison and execution. Moreover, Mariya Melnychuk was also raped the following two days. After such interrogations and rape, the girls were beaten so hard that Mariya Melnychuk had her arm broken, and her legs displaced, and the bodies of both girls were full of bruises.⁴⁹

Mass rape would often take place during the long stays of Soviet troops in certain localities. For instance, there is information in the OUN report for May 1946 for the Stanislaviv Oblast' on mass arrests of young women with the intention to further rape them. This took place during the so-called Winter Siege (*Zymova blokada*) during January-April 1946.⁵⁰ Most arrested girls had nothing to do with the OUN underground. For instance, in the village of Pidpechary (Tysmenytsia raion), about 60% of young unmarried women were arrested and further transferred at the disposal of individual NKVD officers and Red Army soldiers. In the Halych raion, the report states that almost all girls were arrested in villages for further sexual exploitation.⁵¹

Along with rape, there were other forms of sexual violence during military operations

49 HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 376, t. 57, ark. 307.

50 "Winter Siege" - in the documents of the OUN, this is one of the largest military operations of Soviet power, conducted to ensure the holding of the elections to the Supreme Council of the USSR. During January-April 1946, 3500 garrisons of regular troops with a total number of more than half a million people, 15 thousand NKVD personnel, and 3,593 fighter battalions with a total of 63 thousand were involved in this operation. 140 employees of the NKDB of the UkrSSR, as well as 50% of the city departments of the NKDB in Western Ukraine took part in the special operation. (Oleksandra Stasiuk, "Protystoiannia vldady ta natsionalistychnoho pidpillia pid chas vyborchykh kampanii 1946-1947 rokiv u zakhidnoukrainskykh oblastiakh," *Viiskovo-naukovyj visnyk*. Vyp. 26. (2016): 176-177.

51 *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia*. Tom 22, 317, 340.

against the OUN underground and the UPA. Genital injuries were a rather frequent practice of torture against the arrested women. The OUN reports often include information about corporal injuries of the killed women, when describing circumstances around the death of the underground members during the military and security police operations and operations of Soviet security bodies. In particular, one such report states that one of the local leaders of the Ukrainian Red Cross "Olenka" who died during the raid on 22 September 1945, near the village of Zahirya (Zboriv raion, Ternopil' Oblast'), also had her breasts cut in addition to broken arms and legs.⁵² According to the data of the list, another killed female underground member, Anna Hetman, also had her breasts cut off.⁵³ However, the sexualized violence against women did not stop even after their death. A former underground member, Stefania Petrash-Sichko, describes in her memories another frequent Soviet practice related to the defilement of dead bodies of the killed enemies:

Still during the war, until May 1945, when they killed us, either the OUN or the UPA members, they did not take away the dead bodies. They left them there. After the battle, we could bury them. After the war though, they killed them and made the people from the village stack the dead bodies on the carts and take them to the raion center for identification. The identification procedure was like this: they undressed them naked, and put them next to each other in a sitting position along the walls of NKVD or KGB. When there were girls among the

*insurgents, they would put the arms of dead girls around the necks of dead boys to have a good laugh. They would walk around them, laugh, and spit on them.*⁵⁴

There were also pregnant women among the killed underground members. For example, there was "Vira," a close friend of Olena Andrushchak. Still today, she is horrified to recollect how "Vira" looked when "a baby was still pushing inside her belly."⁵⁵ The burial place of "Vira" remains unknown still today. On the basis of the available sources, it might be assumed that cases of sexual violence against women during the military and police operations were numerous. It is also reflected in Soviet official documents. A secret report of the Board for Combatting Banditism of NKVD for 1945 describes that one of the key drawbacks of a military and police operation are "the cases of breaching Soviet lawfulness by individual NKVD staff, officers, and soldiers of BB NKVD."⁵⁶ The document does not specify the list of crimes but due to different data from other sources we could assume that the authors of the report also implied cases of gender-based violence. In other Soviet documents, one can find more details. In particular, in his address to the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Ukrainian SSR, Tymofiy Strokach, dated 17 July 1946, the Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR, Serhiy Kruhlov, mentioned that the militia officer of the Halych raion law enforcement unit of Stanislaviv region, Izotov, raped women

52 Spysok vpavshykh heroiv ukrainskoi revoliutsii v borotbi z moskovsko-bilshovytskym okupantom za chas vid 13.03.1944 do 31.12.1948). Ternopilshchyna, ATsDVR, fond. 12 (Zbirka dokumentiv z riznykh kolektsii, zibranykh ATsDVR)), coll. 4.

53 Ibid.

54 *Try povstannia Sichkiv: u 2TT. T.1: Spohady Stefanii Petrash-Sichko. Dokumenty*, ed. V.V. Ovsiienko (Kharkiv: Folio, 2004), 35.

55 Interview with Olena Andrushchak (b. 1924), recorded by M. Havryshko, 9 July 2015, Silets, Sokal' raion, Lviv oblast', author's privat archive.

56 HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 372, t. 91, ark. 174.

during the military and militia operations.⁵⁷ Pursuant to the Resolution of the Political Bureau of TsK KP(b)U “On Intensifying the Fight Against Ukrainian Nationalists in Western Regions of Ukraine” dated 2 January 1945, party secretaries of different levels as well as heads of regional and raion units of NKVD-NKGB were obliged to investigate all cases of breaching “Soviet lawfulness” and to bring the culprits to responsibility.⁵⁸ However, there were cases when militia members or security unit officers who committed the crimes, rape among them, were left unpunished or only disciplinary measures were applied. For instance, it took a year of investigations of the case of an operative of the Pomoriany raion unit of MVD, Klymenko, when the UMVD administration punished him to 20 days of arrest and further dismissal from the position in October 1946. The alleged crimes committed by Klymenko also included the rape of a woman in a village of Vatsen.⁵⁹ The Soviet documents imply that one of the reasons for tolerating crime on the part of MVD-MGB officers was their effective participation in special operations against the OUN underground, which in some cases served as immunity against being brought to justice. For instance, upon request of local prosecutor’s office, the Stryi Sambir raion unit of MVD declined the arrest of their officers, Poslavskyi and Kovalyov, who attempted to rape women in their homes in the village of Sozan (Drohobych Oblast’) on 5 May 1946. One of them, Mariia,

was shot in the chest by Poslavskyi. Upon request from the regional prosecutor’s office, a Military Prosecutor of MVD Troops in the Drohobych Oblast’ also left this case unattended without any progress.⁶⁰

Vulnerability of the Female Bodies in Places Deprived of Liberty

The abuse of women’s bodies did not stop in pretrial detention centers and lock-up wards (preliminary detention cells), prisons where the female relatives of the underground members were gathered along with female underground members themselves, their supporters, or witnesses. The arrested women often had little to do with the underground. Both sexes were subjected to similar types of violence in cells – hair shaving, forced undressing, body searches, and physical tortures. But some forms of degradation produced feelings and meanings that differed from those of men due to socialized gendered roles and expectations. Even the mandatory routine procedures for such establishments of the Soviet penitentiary system were taken by some women as sexual humiliation. In the first place, it was a matter of the so called sanitation of prisoners. More often than not, the naked women were escorted to the shower rooms by men guards who scrutinized the women’s bodies. A former special service agent of OUN, Halyna Kokhanska, recalls her stay in a prison of the Lutsk city when she was 19: “The guard took me to the cell. On his way, he said: “Well, you are severely hurt, you know.” He watched me wash through the peep-hole in the door. I felt disgusting inside from such a humiliating position.”⁶¹ A former liaison

57 Ivan Bilas, *Represyivno-karalna systema v Ukraini. 1917–1953. Knyha 2*, 646.

58 NKVD–MVD SSSR v bor’be s bandytsizmom i voozruzhennym nacionalisticheskym podpol’em na Zapadnoy Ukraini, v Zapadnoy Belorussii i Pribaltike (1939–1956), eds. I. Vladimircsev, A. Kokurin (Moskva: Ob’edinennaya redakciya MVD Rossii, 2008), 244.

59 Litopys neskorenoi Ukrainy: Dokumenty, materialy, spohady. Knyha 2, 275.

60 Ibid., 281.

61 Litopys UPA. Seriiia “Biblioteka”. T. 9: Halyna Kokhanska, Z Ukrainoiu v sertsii: spomyny,

women of OUN Tamara Kryshtalska recounts her traumatic experience in a prison in Lutsk when she was 19:

*They took us to the steam room for disinfection and made us strip naked. And all the convoy guards were young boys. What a shame it was, it was so embarrassing!*⁶²

Yevheniia Andrushchak recalls her stay in the Lviv transit prison in January 1949:

*Everyone was forced one by one into sanitary treatment, and then into a bathroom. Men were everywhere. The women started a row that they did not want to approach men, screaming, crying, young girls calling for their mothers. Men would curse and mock us shamefully.*⁶³

A former OUN liaison person Mariia Levytska-Zahoruyko, recalls how a group of girls who stripped off their clothes and sent them to “sanitation” treatment went to the bathrooms in the internal prison of MGB Board in Lviv region presently known as the “Prison at Lontskoho”⁶⁴:

P. Potichnyi, M. Posivnych (eds.) (Lviv; Toronto: Litopys UPA, 2008), 225.

⁶² Interview with Tamara Kryshtal'ska (b. 1926), recorded by M. Havryshko, 24 April 2016, Horokhiv, Volyn'ska oblast', author's private archive.

⁶³ Yevheniia Andrusiak, *Spohady: memuary i dokumenty* (Lviv: Lvivskyi natsionalnyi un-t im. Ivana Franka, Instytut literaturoznavchych studii, 2001), 56.

⁶⁴ It pertains to the so called “Prison at Lontskoho,” presently known as the National Memorial Museum of Occupation Regimes Victims. From 1944 to 1991, it was used by different agencies: Between 1944 and 1946 it was a prison No 1 of the Board of NKVD in the Lviv region, from 1946 to 1954, it was an internal prison of the Board of MGB in the Lviv region, from 1954 to 1991, it was a pre-trial prison of the KGB Board in the Lviv region (see more at: Ihor Derevianyi, *Tiurma na Lontskoho, Entsyklopediia istorii Ukrainy*, ed. V. Smolii. Tom 10: T-Ya (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2013), 193.

*They made us walk along through the rows of impudent men in NKVD uniforms who shouted all sorts of obscenities and abusing jokes in Russian... When women were to wash, all of them, from the “bath attendant” – a young boy – to everyone person on the guard were male and Russian-speaking.*⁶⁵

The women's memoirs also included stories involving women forced to undress during a role-taking routine. It was often accompanied by humiliating comments about the female body and sexuality. A former OUN member, Ivanna Mashchak, describes the procedure in the transit prison in Lviv:

*Every night women and girls had to undress for the so called “check-up.” We had to stand in lines, and then the superiors would come. The seniors picked anyone from the lines and “characterized” women's bodies in obscene and vulgar words. I recall they dragged out of the line the young girl Lida Pletinka. Her long black braided hair covered her white body perfectly beautifully like snakes and tears were running down her face. Some senior turned her around and said aloud: “and how could she be a bandit...” next to her stood undressed grey-haired women – mothers, pregnant women, crippled women with obvious signs of beating.*⁶⁶

Some other frequent practices included forced stripping and sexual harassment during interrogations. Along with other methods of psychological (blackmail, intimidation, threats to take away the children, to evict the family to the remote areas of Soviet Union) and physical violence, sexual violence was one of a methods to get the wanted information. An

⁶⁵ Mariia Levytska-Zahoruyko, *U kozhnoho svoia dolia* (Novyi Rozdil: b.v.,1994), 261.

⁶⁶ Ivanna Mashchak, *Dorohamy mynuloho* (Kyiv: [b.v.], 2010), 78.

arrested 26-year-old SB scout Mariya Povkh (Haliatovska), stayed in the abovementioned prison of the MGB Board in the Lviv region in summer and autumn 1949. She recalled:

*It was horrible, it was disgraceful. Three of them would come, and take all of your clothes off, and say: 'Look, she was a Bandera whore.' And you would stand there all naked, they forcefully strip you. You don't undress yourself. They tore the clothes off you. And they would stand there and laugh at you. If only I had guns, I would kill all of them.*⁶⁷

A former underground member Olha Volianska recalled torture in a prison in the town of Mykolayiv (Lviv Oblast'): "I did my best to bear with it. They kicked me and spit on me, and stripped me, Jesus, I don't feel like recalling what those moskals⁶⁸ did."⁶⁹ The stripped women were also be beaten on their breasts or genitals during interrogations.⁷⁰ They were sometimes also victimized by several persons at the same time.⁷¹ Sometimes, they touched the women's genitals without stripping them. A former SB scout Anna Bondaruk (Sosnova) recalls how at the age of 20 she was summoned to the interrogation to the NKVD prison in Terebovlia at 2 a.m.:

An investigative officer entered from another room.

⁶⁷ Interview with Mariia Povkh (b. 1923), recorded by M. Havryshko, 23 February 2017, Burshtyn, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast', author's private archive.

⁶⁸ Moskal' is a derogatory term for a Russian and/or pro-Russian person.

⁶⁹ Interview with Olha Volianska (b. 1926), recorded by M. Havryshko, 2015, Lviv oblast', author's private archive.

⁷⁰ Zvit. Stanislavivshchyna. Report. Stanislavivshchyna. December 1946, ATsDVR, coll. 10

⁷¹ Interview with Mariia Vivcharyk (b.1925), recorded by M. Havryshko, 5 March 2017, author's private archive.

*He was also young and started molesting and groping my breasts. And my investigative officer told him: 'Don't touch the banderovite!'*⁷²

Young, often unmarried women prevailed among the arrested persons suspected of relations with the nationalist underground. Considering the strict sexual standards of the times based on the idea of virginity until marriage for girls, we might reasonably assume that before the arrest many of the arrested girls might not have had any sexual experience. Therefore, forceful stripping was particularly painful for them, and the traumatic experience must have left a severe footprint on their memory. They felt double shame and humiliation, both as women and as prisoners in the enemy's hands.

Another frequent violent practice in Soviet prisons was rape during interrogations. Kateryna Maksymovych recalls that during her stay in the internal prison of the MGB Board in Lviv, one of the investigating officers continuously raped the girls. One of them died after the torture.⁷³ A former underground member Mariya Yukish ("Chorna") recounted the rape attempt of an investigating officer in a prison in the town of Bolekhiv (Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast') when she was 16:

*If it were not for the call, he would have raped me. He was all ready, he took me by the hands and wanted to put me on his knees, and somebody called him and told him his wife was in labor.*⁷⁴

⁷² Interview with Anna Bondaruk (b. 1928), recorded by M. Havryshko, 27 March 2017, author's private archive.

⁷³ Interview with Kateryna Maksymovych (b. 1924), recorded by M. Havryshko, 20 June 2015, Mykolaiv, Lviv oblast', author's private archive.

⁷⁴ Interview with Mariia Yukish (b. 1930), recorded by M. Havryshko, 21 January, 2017, Dolyna, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast', author's private archive.

Later, several of Mariya's friends told her that he had raped them during interrogations. UPA journal "Striletski Visti" of June 1945 reports following: "One girl liberated from the Lopatyn prison admitted that during her stay in the prison she was raped by fifty NKVD officers."⁷⁵ In the documents of OUN and UPA, there are also many records of women released from prisons who had suffered rape. In April 1947, in a village of Koropets of the Zolochiv raion (Lviv Oblast'), a 27-year-old Mariya Hontar died on the third day after she came back from one day in prison. Mariya was interrogated about her sister's fiancé who was an underground member.⁷⁶ In September 1946, a military tribunal sentenced a former criminal investigator of Stanislaviv MGB Board, Yehorov, to five years in a forced labor camps for raping a pregnant woman during interrogation while drunk.⁷⁷

Stories of rape circulated among the imprisoned women. They listened to the stories of victims and passed on the stories or rumors. The fear of being raped was a continuous factor in the prison routine for women. Stefania Bodnar recalls that some of the first stories she heard in the "Prison at Lontskoho" were about rape:

*Everyone was saying they were raping, oh my... it was complete darkness, there were two of us, and they threw me into the cell, and we sat there in the corner, and I would think I wish there was someone else, and we talk together about how he [the investigating officer] might abuse us.*⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Litopys UPA. Nova seriia. Tom 13, 668.

⁷⁶ Litopys UPA. Nova seriia. Tom 24: Zolochivska okruha OUN: Orhanizatsiini dokumenty (1941-1952), ed. Mykhaylo Romaniuk (Kyiv: Toronto, 2014), 245.

⁷⁷ Litopys UPA. Nova seriia. T. 5, 265.

⁷⁸ Interview with Stefaniya Bodnar (b. 1927) recorded by M. Havryshko, 4 November 2016, Hai, Peremyshlians'kyi raion, Lviv oblast', author's private archive.

Hanna Linko (Kovalchuk), a former scout of UPA, who stayed in the same prison in summer 1949,⁷⁹ also had similar memories.

Most probably, the rape of women during interrogations was not sanctioned, or rather, it did not follow the direct orders or guidelines, at least not in written form. However, according to Soviet documents, some investigative officers believed it was an acceptable method to carry out an investigation. Quite a significant role in shaping such attitudes can be attributed to Soviet authorities and their loyal treatment of such practices, such as there were no due investigations of violence episodes against women or punishment of rapists. The investigation periods for such cases extended far beyond the framework set by the law. In particular, the fact sheet of the personnel department of the TsK KP(b)U dated 8 October 1945 mentions the overrun investigation in the case of the aid of the criminal investigator of the Kamyanka-Buska raion of NKVD in Lviv Oblast', Yaremyn, who raped the arrested woman Anastasiya Kis in July.⁸⁰ The same factsheet states the termination of the criminal procedure in the matter of the chief of the fighter battalion of the Solotvyno raion division of NKVD in Stanislaviv Oblast' who coaxed the women detained in the preliminary detention cell, Basiuts and Semaniuk, into sexual intercourse.⁸¹ Some of the most notorious cases of rape of the arrested women were reported to the highest-ranking party officials. In individual cases, it was impossible to hide or ignore the crimes due to the social position of the victims and their

⁷⁹ Interview with Hanna Lin'ko (b. 1924) recorded by M. Havryshko, 17 February 2017, Zbarazh, Ternopil' oblast', author's private archive.

⁸⁰ Litopys UPA. Nova seriia. Tom 14: UPA i zapillia na PZUZ. 1943-1945. Nevidomi dokumenty (Kyiv; Toronto, 2010), 479.

⁸¹ Litopys UPA. Nova seriia. Tom 14, 480.

loyalty or closeness to the Soviet authorities. A former OUN member, the 92-year-old Z., recalls that in 1945, he was held in detention in the building of NKVD, near the Zahirya village (Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast'). His friend Hanna, who was arrested on suspicion of collaboration with the underground, was also in the cell along with him and other inmates. Mr Z. can vividly remember the details of one interrogation of Hanna conducted by a senior lieutenant of NKVD:

He stripped her naked and would try to have her his way, but it did not work, so he beat her so hard, she was all bruised, and then he put a club in her [vagina]. She burst with blood. They took her by the arms and legs and threw her into our cell. Well, I had some nose-wipes. And I gave the wipes to her, and she tucked them in, to stop the blood.⁸²

The events described above took place while the First Secretary of the local Komsomol organization was there and talking to the arrested people. He saw the raped and beaten Hanna who was a financial agent at the time (worked in a financial department of the local administration in the town of Rohatyn) and reported about it to his superiors. The victim was taken to a local hospital to receive medical aid.

The incidents of coaxing women into sex were recorded in various Soviet documents. For instance, such acts on the part of Rudenko, chief of NKVD raion division in Krukenychi raion (Lviv Oblast') are described in a letter addressing Mykyta Khrushchov and coming

from one of the majors of the border guard troops of NKVD in Drohobych Oblast', M. Bitiukov.⁸³ In some cases, in order to coax the detained women into sex, Soviet investigative officers forced them to drink alcohol and then raped them. This was the case with the acting chief of the Zhuravno raion division of MVD, Alekseev, with the detained woman Iryna Sikirko.⁸⁴ More often than not, investigative officers used blackmail and promised to release the women in exchange for sexual services. A special report of the prosecutor's office of Lviv Oblast', addressing the Prosecutor of Ukrainian SSR dated 20 March 1946, described that on 14 February 1946, Matiukhin, the Chief of the Banditism division of Hlyniany raion NKVD division offered to the arrested 19-year-old Kateryna Mykhalska to have sexual intercourse with him in exchange for release from arrest. According to the survivor's evidence, he ordered to her to strip herself naked and sit on his lap. On the next day, the same situation took place but Kateryna refused. Then, Matiukhin undressed the woman naked and beat her with a rubber club, and then put the club into her vagina. After that, he beat her again and "suggested the latter [Mykhalska] kneeled, put his genital organ in her hands, and put it into her mouth."⁸⁵ When four of his fellow officers entered the room and saw that the woman's dress and face were covered in sperm, Matiukhin explained: "Look, what a little snorter she is, but she is not willing to tell anything about her links to the bandits." After three days, the woman was released on the grounds of unreasonable arrest. The investigation established that Matiukhin raped several more arrested girls,

⁸² Interview with Z. (b. 1925), recorded by M. Havryshko, 21 July 2017, Rohatyn, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast', Archives of the research project "The Social Anthropology of the Void: Poland and Ukraine after World War II" (Financed by the National Program for the Development of the Humanities in Poland, manager – Anna Wylegala).

⁸³ *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia*. Tom 3, 187.

⁸⁴ *Litopys neskorenoi Ukrainy*. Knyha 2, 281.

⁸⁵ *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia*. Tom 5, 89-90.

the youngest of them being 16 years old.⁸⁶ All of them were also released from prison. Sexual violence during investigation was one of the methods of torture to break a person psychologically, and thus impel her into collaboration with Soviet authorities. In addition to money rewards, women could be promised to have the punishment reduced or cancelled, to receive support in studies, employment, relocation to another place, protection from the revenge of the OUN underground for them, and for their families. The women who rejected the offers were sentenced to different terms of forced labor camps or imprisonment. Others, who agreed to be agents and informers of Soviet secret services, became hostages of the authorities and also targets of the SB OUN.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases as a “Weapon” of War on Women

A major consequence of raping women in Soviet prisons and in pre-trial detention centers was the exposure of women to sexually transmitted diseases. Despite shame and fear of stigmatization, women had to reveal their traumatic experiences as they required medical help. OUN medical services in charge of the sanitary condition in the regions who also offered aid to civilians thoroughly recorded such cases. For instance, the report of Ukrainian Red Cross (URC) in the Sokal raion of OUN, dated 31 October 1944, stated:

*Girls arrested from the area of Kamyanka raion who have been released from prison were raped by the NKVD and almost every one of them is infected with a sexual disease. They are undergoing treatment in Lviv.*⁸⁷

⁸⁶ *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia.* Tom 5, 90.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Tom 13, 380.

On 1 April 1945, the Lopatyn town prison (Lviv Oblast') released six girls arrested at their homes two weeks before who had venereal diseases.⁸⁸ In summer 1946, in the Bohorodchany raion (Ivanj-Frankivsk Oblast'), OUN recorded mass infections among former female inmates in Soviet prisons. For example in the village of Liamivka, there were four cases and in the village of Dobrova there were two cases.⁸⁹ The report of OUN for December 1946 states that many girls released from the prison of the town of Zhydachiv near Lviv were infected with syphilis after being raped.⁹⁰ A report of the URC dated 30 July 1946 states that, in addition to Soviet soldiers, persons released from arrest were the major cause of the spread of STDs in the Chortkiv raion (Ternopil' Oblast').⁹¹

The high prevalence of STDs among former inmates were grounds for OUN to admit that the exposure to infections was deliberate. The OUN leaders treated STDs as a form of biological weapon of the Soviet authorities against the underground and insurgents. This is evidenced by official documents of the underground and UPA. One of the orders of the command staff of the UPA detachment of “Yavoreyko” dated 6 November 1944 stated:

*To follow closely any cases of sexually transmitted diseases in the detachment and keep in mind that there are deliberate efforts on the part of NKVD who are trying to exterminate the Ukrainian people through infections.*⁹²

One of the insurgents' doctors, Bohdan Huk

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, Tom 22, 193.

⁹⁰ Richnyi zvit. Tretii Nadraion. ATsDVR, coll. 10.

⁹¹ HDA SBU, f. 62, op. 2, spr. 51, t. 10, ark. 449.

⁹² HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 372, t. 3, ark. 136.

("Skala"), wrote in his memories:

In the same year of 1946, several captured NKVD members in the district 1 of "Kholodnyi Yar" showed another mean method of Kremlin to fight the Ukrainian resistance. They revealed that the NKVD soldiers with STDs could obtain the right to receive treatment at public expense only after they managed to infect a specific number of so called 'politically unreliable' women and girls with these diseases. More privileged persons could carry out their tasks in 'prisons,' concentration camps, and during interrogations at the police stations.⁹³

A former underground member, Vanda Horchynska ("Domovyna"), recalled that along with the group of other OUN members she was supposed to commit a terror act on one Red Army soldier who was ordered to rape female members of the underground and its supporters during the military and security police operations around the town of Kopychyntsi in Ternopil' Oblast'. Information on this came from men who had been arrested and later released by NKVD.⁹⁴ A failed assassination attempt on a Soviet officer took place on 10 October 1944 in a district hospital of the town of Kopychyntsi where the man was undergoing medical treatment⁹⁵.

The large numbers of infected women resulted in special security measures in the underground. Almost all women who had been in Soviet prisons were treated by the OUN leadership as sources of a possible threat. In order to take control over the

93 Bohdan Huk, *Likari i medychnyi personal taktynohoho vidtynka UPA "Lemko," Litopys UPA Kn. 1: Medychna opika v UPA*. Tom 23. (Toronto; Lviv: Litopys UPA, 2001), 165.

94 Interview with Vanda Horchynska (b. 1924), recorded by M. Havryshko, 11 November 2016, Kopychyntsi, Kopychynets'kyi raion, Ternopil' oblast', author's private archive.

95 AUSBu u u Ternopil'skii oblasti, spr.8308 P., ark. 15 zvorot (reverse).

situation, the underground leaders tried to conduct medical examinations of the women released from prisons to detect any STDs, and take a thorough record of the infected ones. This is mentioned, in particular, in the decree of the "Moryak," a raion headman of SB in Kolky district dated 25 September 1944.⁹⁶ In the case of a breakout of STDs epidemics in a certain locality, the OUN underground leaders informed the local population and isolated the infected persons.⁹⁷ They also increasingly tried to raise awareness. For example, meetings were organized for insurgents and the local population (the so called "hutirka," "small talk" meetings), where they discussed sexually transmitted diseases, their peculiarities, and prevention methods.⁹⁸

Since STDs were treated by the OUN leadership in terms of security aspects, in many cases they conducted a thorough investigation for each case. The investigation of cases of infecting and disseminating the STDs was typically within the competence of the SB OUN. It can be confirmed by the notes in the diary of raion headman "Davyd" liquidated by NKVD in 1945. In particular, it records the content of a secret order dated 12 November 1945. One of the provisions read as follows:

To combat sexually transmitted diseases. To identify venereal patients of both genders and notify Ukrainian population. To report about the venereal patients to the Ukrainian Red Cross and Security Service.⁹⁹

Since the Secret Service investigators were

96 HDA SBU, f. 2, op. 65, spr.7, t.1, ark.78.

97 Ibid., f. 13, spr. 372, t. 20, ark. 27.

98 *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia*. Tom 2: Volyn i Polissia: UPA ta zapillia. Dokumenty i materialy, Litopys UPA, eds. O. Vovk. I. Pavlenko (Kyiv; Toronto: Litopys UPA, 1999), 63.

99 HDA SBU, f.13, spr. 372, t. 23, ark. 81.

mostly men, it could be assumed that the investigation process was very humiliating for women and caused repeated trauma. During the investigation, investigators tried to clarify the circumstances of being infected as well as the potential number of infected persons. For instance, during the interrogation on 23 September 1946, the SB OUN questioned the village lady Milya Mota (Tomaszow district, presently in Poland) and asked her about her biography, how she entered “the young lady status,” how she started her sexual life, and about all her sexual partners, such as the insurgents. It is notable that the 18-year-old Milya was embarrassed to admit that she had been raped by a soldier of the Polish Army during her arrest, which was most probably the reason for her disease (as remarked by the SB investigator). In the end of the record of the interrogation of Security Service, there is a “note” by Milya that runs as follows:

I am hereby informed that in case I allow intercourse upon signing this statement and infect anyone, I commit myself to the death penalty.

The analysis of other similar documents implies that such written commitments were a widespread method to control the spread of STDs.¹⁰⁰ In case the promise was breached, women were doomed to execution. A note to the interrogation report by the OUN Security of the Lviv oblast’ of the Ukrainian Red Cross regarding the nurse Oksan Pozniak, dated 26 October 1945, states the following:

The nurse was liquidated due to the fact that she was intimate with men while carrying the disease,

100 Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Warszawie, AIPN [Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw], zespól BU_1554-75, p. 79.

*while hiding from Bolsheviks, and thus behaved immorally while spreading the disease.*¹⁰¹

The content of the document does not clearly imply whether Oksana had been warned about the inadmissible conduct, or the underground members decided to kill her only due to the fact that she infected men who had had sexual contacts with her.

In addition to female underground members or insurgents infected with venereal diseases, the village girl posed another threat for the underground since insurgents would often contact local women lodging in different localities. Some commanders were rather loyal to romantic and sexual relations of their subordinates for recreation purposes. A former medical nurse of the UPA sotnia unit “Haydamaky,” Mariya Khovanets (“Marichka”) explained it in the following way:

*Village girls fell in love with the insurgents. It is not a secret... What would they [insurgents] have to do. Today, they are there alive, while tomorrow they might not be alive.*¹⁰²

The liberal position of some UPA commanders regarding the sexual behavior of the male insurgents was also mentioned by one of the headwomen of the Ukrainian Red Cross, Kateryna Havryliv, emphasizing that taking such liberties was inadmissible for women in the UPA.¹⁰³ Taking into account that some sexual relations of insurgents with local women

101 HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 376, t. 54, ark. 41.

102 Interview with Mariia Khovanets’ (b. 1928), recorded by M. Havryshko 24 February 2017, Burshtyn, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast’, author’s private archive.

103 Interview with Kateryna Havryliv (b. 1920), recorded by M. Havryshko, 21 January 2017, Bolekhiv, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast’, author’s private archive.

were forcible,¹⁰⁴ and also due to low sexual education levels in the Western Ukrainian society in those times, it might be assumed that some women were unconsciously the sources of infection.

If several infected persons were detected in the UPA detachments, an isolation period was prescribed, while other soldiers were checked, as well as local people in the lodging area.¹⁰⁵ Some underground members were discharged from their duties. During the interrogation of MGB on 21 August 1951, a member of Carpathian regional directorate of OUN, Petro Ivanyshyn (“Kuriava”) testified the following:

*Initially, there was an idea to banish all venereal diseases from the underground, but since the disease has a mass scale in the Nadvirna raion, and such eliminations would largely reduce manpower, it was agreed to leave the persons with STDs in the underground.*¹⁰⁶

In the first stages of the disease, patients were given chances for survival. Under the conditions of the underground, treatment was complicated. There was a noticeable lack of qualified medical staff and medications. That is why some improvised means were used. A doctor of the “Bira” sotnia unit, Ivan Bohuslavskyy (“Spivak”) recalled that he injected hot cow milk into the venereal patients for 10 days and gave them vodka with oil, in equal quantities, to drink chased down by sauerkraut. He also recommended to his patients to drink large amounts of water.¹⁰⁷ When chances for survival were terrible,

patients would most often risk death. The guidelines for the raion headmen of SB dated 16 March 1947, mentioned the need to kill the incurably ill and “demoralized” persons.¹⁰⁸ We can find similar directions in the guidelines for underground members dated 27 March 1949.¹⁰⁹ In the letter of “Bohun” to “Zov” dated September 1946, great attention is dedicated to the issue of the spread of STDs among the OUN members and supporters, insurgents, and the local population. The addresser underlined:

*If the disease is in an advanced stage – you give a gun and a grenade to him, let him go and kill the Bolshevik leaders. He is lost for the nation anyway. Let him wipe out the disgrace at least this way.*¹¹⁰

Patients in the terminal stage of the disease were also given dangerous assignments with high risks for their lives. A former insurgent Andriy Kordan (“Kozak”) recalls that a commander “Zalizniak” organized a special unit made of five seriously ill patients who were assigned “to get hold of medications on any occasion.”¹¹¹

The UPA doctor Modest Ripetskyi recalls that the head of the “Lemkivshchyna” kurin subdivision, Vasyl Mizernyi (“Ren”), was steadfast on such issues and gave an oral command to immediately liquidate all STD patients. Since Ripetskyi did not support such tough measures, he hid the disease with the three UPA soldiers who were undertaking the training in a military camp at Bukovyi Berd in

104 See more: Marta Havryshko, “Choloviky, zhinky i nasytstvo v OUN i UPA u 1940–1950-kh rokakh,” *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal*. 2016. No. 4: 89–107.

105 HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 376, t. 28, ark. 179.

106 HDA SBU, f. 65, spr. 1746, ark. 27.

107 AtsDVR, coll. 9, vol. 12, spr. 62, ark. 1.

108 AIPN w Warszawie, BU_1554/15.

109 HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 376, t. 29, ark. 322.

110 HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 372, t. 22, ark. 27.

111 Andrii Kordan, *Odyn nabii z nabinytsi. Spomyny voiak UPA z kurenia “Zalizniaka,”* ed. Mykola Dubas, Biblioteka Zakerzonnia. Spohady. Tom. 4 (Toronto; Lviv: Vyd-vo “Lvivska politekhnik,” 2006), 112.

the Carpathians that “Ren” was in charge of.¹¹² In his memories, Ivan Lyko describes in detail the fate of the commander of the combat unit nicknamed “Zyma.” Lyko received the order to kill him as terminally ill:

I was going there under a huge nervous strain, and I have already tried several times to take out my pistol, but “Zyma” would look back at me every time, while keeping an active conversation. Suddenly, the path got bumpy, it was easy to stumble, so “Zyma” would watch his step in front of him. In no time, I put the end of the pistol right to the back of “Zyma’s” neck, a dozen of centimeters away, and pressed the trigger with my shaking finger... a slight click, and the pistol failed to shoot.¹¹³

Being aware of the practices to liquidate the STD carrying men, some underground members and insurgents hid the information about their disease as far as they could. After being revealed they could desert. The materials of the investigation of Security Service against Vasyl Malyk (“Bohdan”) conducted from June to September 1949 stated, among other things, that he fell ill several months after joining OUN in December 1946. First, he tried some self-treatment, and then in April next year he went to see a doctor in Lviv where he stayed for a month. Upon return to his area “afraid lest the insurgents liquidate him because of his troubles (a trip to Lviv, and a STD) he arbitrarily left the ranks of the underground and hid independently. The investigator states

that ‘Bohdan’ had a ‘psychosis of fear.’¹¹⁴ Eventually, on 27 September 1949, “Bohdan” was executed based on a sentence of the distance court, but not for the STD rather for ignoring the orders and hiding away.

Understanding the circumstances of infecting women in prisons, the underground leaders tried to soften their attitude to them and not apply the death penalty. This is reflected in the respective orders.¹¹⁵ However, in practice, things were sometimes different. The above mentioned Vanda Horchynska recalls that among a dozen of girls infected by Soviet troops with syphilis during the mentioned military security action around the town of Kopychyntsi, there was a young lady, a liaison of UPA, Teklya. After she infected two underground SB members, she was shot down.¹¹⁶ The materials of the Briukhovychi raion division of MGB dated 1946 have information about a liaison lady of OUN, Akseniya Chorniy, who was arrested by Soviet special services and managed to escape, further joining the underground. After some time, SB shot down Akseniya as well as two other underground members, whom she infected with STDs according to SB.¹¹⁷ The case materials do not directly indicate that Akseniya was infected in a Soviet prison but this version may be possible because such practices were rather widespread.

The execution of the venereal patients in the underground can be explained not only by the lack of medications or impossibility to stop the patients’ suffering. The underground leaders believed that due to the patients’ scarce chances

112 Modest Ripetskyi, *Sanitarna sluzhba UPA v kureni V. Mizernoho (“Rena”): narys, Litopys UPA Kn. 1: Medychna opika v UPA*. Tom. 23 (Toronto; Lviv: Litopys UPA, 2001), 116.

113 Ivan Lyko, *Na hrani mrii i diisnosti: spohady pidpilnyka; Na hrani dvokh svitiv: Spohady. 1945-1955*, ed. M. Terefenko (“Medvid”), *Litopys UPA*. Tom. 37 (Toronto; Lviv: Litopys UPA, 2002), 210.

114 HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 372, t. 22, ark. 401.

115 HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 372, t. 20, ark. 27.

116 Interview with Vanda Horchynska (b. 1924), recorded by M. Havryshko, 11 November 2016, Kopychyntsi, Ternopil’ oblast’, author’s private archive.

117 Arckhiv AUSBu u Lvivskii oblasti, spr. 24034, ark. 10-11.

of recovery in the underground settings they were prospective traitors as they were ready to give away to Soviets any information in exchange for qualified medical aid in Soviet medical facilities.¹¹⁸ Moreover, while searching for medication, the sick persons could break the principles of conspiracy and establish contacts with unreliable people, or stay in dangerous localities with a great risk of being arrested and killed. Soviet special services induced persons who offered medical aid to the sick underground members into collaboration. On 17 June 1950, the MGB troops killed the liaison lady, Lidiya Pirey and her headman of the Dubno raion leadership of OUN Yuriy Dzetsko ("Hroza"). It took over two months for Soviet special services to prepare the operation, after they found out that "Hroza" had already been undergoing treatment for gonorrhoea at the chief of the feldsher's station in a village of Velyki Zhabokryky (Rivne Oblast') Havryil Taranko. Taranko was visited by a venereal patient Lida to ask for medication. MGB recruited the doctor under the operational nickname "Radekhovets" and ordered to him to call the patient to come to the station. During one such meeting, "Hroza" and Lida were killed.¹¹⁹

Venereal diseases were an important factor of everyday underground life and were one of the causes of indirect (non-battle) casualties of UPA and the armed underground. Women infected with STDs who were staying in prisons were turned against their will into a counter-insurgency tool for Soviets.

Soviet Special Groups and Gender-Based Violence

In autumn 1944, Soviet authorities started

118 HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 376, t. 28, ark.179.

119 Ibid., spr. 372, t. 81, ark. 224.

fighting on a large scale with the underground and the UPA the so called special groups (surveillance and combat groups) created pursuant to the directive of the NKGB of Ukrainian SSR No 1697/c dated 3 August 1944.¹²⁰ They were established in the oblast' and raion units of NKVD-NKGB¹²¹. They were subordinate to the Main Board of Anti-Banditry operations of NKVD and after 1946 to the unit 2-H of MGB. They usually consisted of former OUN and UPA members who had turned themselves in or had been arrested. They also included staff officers of NKVD-NKGB. Numerically, the combat groups had 3 to 50 persons.¹²² As of 20 June 1945, there were 156 special groups in western regions of Ukraine with a total of 1783 persons.¹²³ As of 20 February 1950, only 19 such special groups numbering 130 persons remained.¹²⁴ The key tasks of the special groups were to capture or kill leaders of the underground or UPA, to destroy small groups of underground members and insurgents, or to chase them into the combat operations of the units and troops of NKVD, to collect intelligence data, to destroy the system of communications in OUN and UPA, and to reveal and destroy the storage shelters.¹²⁵ Special groups acted under the pretense of the SB OUN or insurgent combat groups, thus trying not to be different from them in appearance, manners, weapons,

120 Dmytro Viedienieiev, Hennadii Bystrukhin, *Dvobii bez kompromisiv*, 288.

121 One of the institutions called upon to fight the underground and the UPA was a secret interdepartmental institution - the Main Department for Combating Banditry, subordinate at first to the NKVD (MVD), and since January 1947 - to the MGB.

122 HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 372, t. 82, ark. 84.

123 Ibid.

124 *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia*. Tom 4, 26.

125 HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 372, vol. 72, ark. 14-15; HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 372, t. 82, ark. 110; Ivan Bilas, *Represyivno-karalna systema v Ukraini*, 461-462.

and practices. The special groups disclosed by the population lost their efficiency in their fight against the underground and UPA.¹²⁶

The use of tough methods by the special groups resulted in uncontrolled violence against civilians, which was remarked both by party and Soviet functionaries in official documents. In particular, the instructor of TsK KP(b)U, S. Krykun, reported in February 1947 that the special combat groups “were not worth it, and sometimes they would even commit robberies and beat citizens, thus undermining the authorities and causing discontent among the population.”¹²⁷ The deputy chief of the board 2-H MGB, Pastelniak, reported in May 1949 that some members of the special groups would regularly rob people in different areas. They seized cattle, lard, bread, meat, and other food from villagers.¹²⁸ The internal report of a military prosecutor of MVD regarding a Ukrainian military command by H. Kosharsky dated 15 February 1949, stated the following:

[...] *gross provocative and reckless activities of some special groups and arbitrary violence committed by the group members against the local population not only deteriorates the fight against banditism but also complicates it even further.*¹²⁹

Furthermore, the document lists the crimes committed by special groups in different localities, most frequently cases of robbery, torture, and murder among civilians.

Another widespread practice of special groups included interrogations under the disguise of the combat groups of SB OUN. One of the most notorious groups practicing this method was a

special group of the chief of Ternopil’ regional board of NKVD, major Sokolov.¹³⁰ In order to not evoke any suspicions, false interrogations took place with account of the methods of real combat groups of the Security Service (SB). For instance, the interrogations of the arrested persons took place in safe apartments in remote localities, far from the settlements, in the woods, in the basements, or in abandoned houses, or in bunkers (*kryivka*).¹³¹ Special groups acting under the disguise of SB would often use torture. The Kosharskyi report mentioned above states that on 23 July 1948, in the village of Pidvysotske (Kozyn raion, Rivne oblast’), a special group took the 17-year-old Nina Repnytska to the woods, beat her hard during interrogation, “hung her upside down, inserted a club into her genital organ, and raped her afterwards one by one.”¹³² After the torture, she was left in the woods, where a man found her and sent her to the hospital. In the next internal report to the secretary of TsK KP(b)U, Z. Serdiuk-Kosharskyi reported that the group of the militant operative Zborovskyyi raped Nadia Tryhub.¹³³

The materials of investigation of the SB OUN imply that after the arrest of Mykola Dolia for collaboration with the underground in April 1946, the Kozliv raion division of MGB (Ternopil Oblast’) offered to him to take lead of the special militant group with five members. It functioned under the pretense of UPA. The militant group members robbed the population and applied torture during

130 Ivan Bilas, *Represyivno-karalna systema v Ukraini*, 435-447.

131 HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 372, vol. 84, ark. 8; HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 372, t. 85, ark. 85-88.

132 *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia*. Tom 3, 357.

133 *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia*. Tom 7: *Borotba proty UPA i natsionalistychmoho pidpillia. Informatsiini dokumenty TsK KP(b)U, obkomiv partii, NKVS-MVS, MDB-KDB 1949-1959. Knyha 4: 1949-1959*, eds. V. Lozytskyi, M. Derkach, I. Pavlenko, A. Kentii (Kyiv, 2003), 151.

126 HDA SBU, f. 2, op. 55, spr. 3, t.1, ark. 106.

127 Volodymyr Serhiychuk, *Ukrainskyi zdvyh. Volyn’. 1939-1955* (Kiev, 2005), 339.

128 HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 372, t. 83, ark. 279-281.

129 *Litopys UPA. Nova seriia*, Tom 3, 356.

interrogations. During his operations as head of the special group, Dolia raped four women in different localities. One woman whom he raped was also raped by two other operatives of the raion division of MGB who were members of the special group.¹³⁴ Crimes by special militant groups, including sex crimes, against civilians resulted in the defamation of the underground and the UPA in the eyes of the local population, thus reducing support for them.

Soviet Agent Network: Instrumentalising Women's Sexuality

One of the effective methods to fight the anti-Soviet movement in Western Ukraine was to create a wide agent network subordinate to NKVD-NKGB. It consisted of fixed post spies, agents (internal agents, guides, liaison persons, propagandists, militants), and informers. In 1944, there were 725 agents and 5,628 informers in Western Ukraine, as of July 1, 1945 – 1,200 and 10,000 respectively, whereas as of 1 November 1946, covert agents totaled 664 fixed post spies, 2,249 covert agents, and 18,165 informers.¹³⁵ Available sources do not allow a quantitative estimation of the gender distribution among the members of the agent network but they give due grounds to affirm that local women played an important role in the secret activities of Soviet special services against the nationalist underground.

Soviet special services actively kept track of the wives and lovers of the underground members, arrested them and tempted into collaboration.¹³⁶ At the same time, Soviet special

services believed that in the context of covert activities there was a huge potential in young women related with family or friendly bonds to the underground members, or women who supported/were in favor of the underground, or were OUN and UPA members themselves. The underground leaders also paid attention to this. The guidelines for the OUN members dated March 1950 stipulate that:

In order to cultivate certain insurgents, MGB keeps a close eye on all ladies having links with insurgents (MGB has lists of ladies who have intimate relations with insurgents, are married to them, or have children from them).¹³⁷

The grounds to recruit women were “compromising” facts received during the collection of information, interrogation of witnesses, or coming from the statements of the suspected women themselves. Women who agreed to collaborate with the Soviet authorities were thoroughly briefed about their further covert activities. In particular, they were offered an invented story, a “legend,” a plausible explanation of how they had been released from arrest without

underground in the Ukrainian SSR was frequent the summoning of relatives (including the wives), and beloved ones of the OUN and UPA members for interrogations to NKVD-NKGB. It bred mistrust among the underground members and resulted in cleansing (murders of the underground/UPA members and their families) at the slightest suspicion of collaboration with Soviet authorities. For instance, in January 1946, operatives of Ludvypil' district division of NKGB summoned for the interview Fedora Dudar, the wife of the head of a local combat group of Security Service “Karmeliuk.” Several days after her return, Fedora had visitors at her house – the combatants of Security Service who gunned her down, along with her four children, and a sister. As a result, according to the internal report of NKGB, “Karmeliuk” started his revenge against other underground members whom he suspected of killing his family (HDA SBU, f. 16, spr. 558, ark. 96.).¹³⁷ HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 376, t. 29, ark. 378.

¹³⁴ ZKM 1, AtsDVR, Arkhiv referentury SB OUN, found in Berezhany raion of Ternopil' oblast'.

¹³⁵ Dmytro Viedienieiev, Hennadii Bystrukhin, *Dvobii bez kompromisiv*, 277.

¹³⁶ One of the methods of fighting the OUN

any signed promise to cooperate with NKVD-NKGB, and also other invented facts about the interrogation process. It was done in order to avoid the disclosure of the agents and their liquidation by the SB OUN. In addition, every woman received a customized list of assignments. One of the most important tasks was to collect information about the armories and food storage facilities of OUN, specific persons, combat groups, locations of the UPA units, and also about people assisting them. Some women received orders to kill an underground or UPA member, or to add some soporifics into the insurgents' food or drinks. An important, if not major, precondition for executing the assignments was to win the complete trust of the underground leaders. The erotic resources of women were considered to be an important tool to win such favors. The training materials for the Security Service staff ran as follows:

*When police are aware that the underground member they want to exploit is fond of women, they try to send to him a beautiful girl as a liaison lady or a typist. They expect her to win his trust and affection to be able to better exploit him. Such a lady agent could steal or copy the instructions with no risk of being caught, as the agent is commissioned to steal one copy.*¹³⁸

A letter of the OUN headman "Bohun" of September 1946, reads as follows:

NKVD also resorts to the following practices: they send women and girls agents who are assigned to flirt with the combatants, and even with headmen, and try to bring this "flirtation" even directly to intimate dates. Bolsheviks obviously engage beautiful and, more importantly, whores truly

138 HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 372, t. 21, ark. 53.

*"skilled in their craft." This way, in a sweet talk or in a minute of pleasure the agent can find out from her "lover" utterly everything, such as about his position, his friends, his links, his most secret assignments, etc. Thus confiding to his mistress, he confides to the district or regional NKVD. There are many such cases in the area.*¹³⁹

The booklet "On Methods to Deal with Young People that Bolshevik Agent Network Use and How to Resist Them" specifies the following: "Beware of the "boyfriends" or "girlfriends." When MGB gets wind of you being engaged with the insurgents, they would immediately send such a "boyfriend" or a "girlfriend" to you."¹⁴⁰

Women were not merely ordered to develop romantic relations with men holding high positions in the administration of the underground or UPA, but also to have sex with them. According to the liaison lady Olha Palamarchuk, who was arrested by the NKVD on 1 December 1944, she was ordered "to most often make love with Romko and keep track of where he was hiding in order to give him away to NKVD."¹⁴¹ At the time, "Roman" was one of the underground leaders in the Torchyn raiionin Volynia. During the regular briefing of a 23-year-old MGB informer, the liaison lady Yevheniya Skushka, the special service officer emphasized:

*Accept anything from him [headman "Yar" — M. H.], even to have sexual intercourse with him. You are a young girl, it will not do you any harm.*¹⁴²

139 Ibid., f. 65, spr. S-9079P, t. 53, ark. 50.

140 Ibid., f. 372, t.21, ark. 402.

141 Ibid., f.13, spr. 372, t. 52, ark. 154.

142 *Litopys UPA. Osnovna seriia. Tom 44. Knyha 2. Borotba z ahenturoiu: Protokoly dopytiv Sluzhby Bezpeky OUN v Ternopilshchyni 1946-1948*, ed. P. Y. Potichnyi (Lviv: Litopys UPA), 2006, 140.

In the process of training the agent to fulfill the task assigned to her, she was briefed in detail which methods to use to win the affection of men.

You must be on good terms with Buryan, be good to him, when he comes back from somewhere, you shall ask him about everything necessary in the meantime. You shall ask how he feels, and check whether he is idea-driven. All of this should be closely intertwined with love scenes, so that he does not have a chance to think over the answers to the questions asked. [an MGB operative instructed the agent "Bura" in March 1950]¹⁴³

When I meet him, I must start the conversation with some love topics, and he gave me detailed instructions how to lead such conversation, he taught me some sensuous words and expressions that I had to use in such conversation.

This was told during SB interrogations in August 1948, about the instructions of the MGB colonel Sheremetyev to the 20-year-old underground member Maria Kaliandruk ("Odarka"). She was ordered to get into a sexual relationship with the UPA sotnia's commander, "Pavlo."¹⁴⁴ At the same time, women assigned with such tasks were cautioned against any emotional bonds or feelings of love for men who were presumed to be "targets" of the secret service.¹⁴⁵ Such emotions would obviously put at risk the

¹⁴³ Litopys UPA. Nova seriia. Tom 23: Zolochivs'ka okruha OUN. Dokumenty i materialy referentury SB. 1945–1951, ed. M. Romaniuk (Kyiv; Toronto: Litopys UPA, 2013), 519.

¹⁴⁴ Interrogation report for Maria Kaliandruk, ATsDVR, coll. 79 (Archives of the Records Office of SB OUN found in Berezhany district of Ternopil' oblast').

¹⁴⁵ See, for instance, the interrogation report for Anna Hrytsuliak, January 1948, ATsDVR, coll. 79, ark. 13.

implementation of secret agents' plans and tempt the female agents into going over to the OUN underground side.

Sometimes Soviet special services forced a woman agent into various sexual contacts with different men, especially when it took too long for her to give the information they wanted. During interrogations in the town of Zoloty Potik (Ternopil Oblast') in April 1945, Anna Vasyliv ("Marta") gave her consent to cooperate with the NKGB. Then, the operative of the NKGB Board in Ternopil Oblast', major Vivchurov impelled her to have a sexual relationship with the SB headman "Taras" and other underground members nicknamed "Veles" and "Hai."¹⁴⁶ Based on the SB materials of investigation, "Marta" failed to implement Vivchurov's plan as she had been dismissed from work in the OUN underground on suspicion of secret agent activities. After almost three years, she was recruited as an agent of the raiion division of MGB in the Tysmenytsia raiion. Under duress from the senior lieutenant Murehin, "Marta" undertook the commitment become involved in an intimate relationship with one of the underground headmen "Baydenko."¹⁴⁷

Violence was required to impel a young lady brought up on the principles of premarital virginity and chastity to fulfil the sex-based tasks. It can be assumed that sometimes, the NKVD and MGB officers raped women when recruiting them. It was a demonstration of power by means of sexual control. As a result, women experienced not only humiliation but also incapability to withstand the will of their offenders. That is why they could have agreed to any assignments, including those going against their beliefs or moral standards or

¹⁴⁶ Interrogation report for Anna Vasyliv, January, 1948, coll. 79, ark.4.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., ark. 24.

which were extremely risky.

The documents imply that it was prohibited for Soviet officers of law-enforcement and state security bodies to have intimate/sexual/marital relations with the “foe” women who were members of the OUN underground or UPA, or supported them. Soviet authorities assumed that any affinity to such women could become an obstacle in the professional activities of Soviet officers. The trespassers were penalized in different ways and had to bear disciplinary sanctions. In spring 1945, the commander of regiment 62, lieutenant Pavlo Timofeyev was expelled from KP(b) U for having an “intimate relationship with the daughter of the “sotnia gang commander of UPA.” In response, he petitioned the local division of NKVD not to displace her family to the remote areas of USSR.¹⁴⁸ The rules for the state security officers who worked with the female agents were even more rigid. Dmytro Shyvandronov, an operative of the Zbarazh raion division of MVD, captured by SB OUN, in January, 1949, gave testimony about the ban on sexual relations with the arrested women or agent women. He told that the head of the division for combatting banditry within the raion division of MDB was dismissed when it was revealed that he had sexual contacts with a female secret agent and was transferred to the position of senior operative in the raion division of MVD.¹⁴⁹ However, the sexual exploitation of agent women by Soviet special service officers was rather widespread. According to the documents of SB, Solovyov, an operative of the regional NKGB in Rivne oblast’ built a broad covert agent network around the towns of Zdolbuniv, Mizoch, and Ostrih. After Solovyov was killed, the SB staff

reported on 7 December 1945:

Almost every young woman who was arrested and engaged by Solovyov to perform the covert agent activities was used by Solovyov in a physical sense. He appointed all the best girls to be his personal contacts who had to please him every time they delivered mail.¹⁵⁰

Information on the facts was received by SB staff from the female underground members who had been arrested by Solovyov. One of them, Liuba Staliuk, revealed during the interrogation of SB on 20 December 1944 that Solovyov threatened to shoot her for working in the underground and promised to save her from punishment if she agreed to give sexual services to him and work with the NKGB.¹⁵¹

At the same time, it must be noted that women suspected by SB of covert agent activities could have experienced violent tortures at interrogations, also including sexual violence. At the interrogation of Soviet investigators in March 1948, the OUN contact Vira Melnyk recalled the torture one of the high commanders of UPA, Ivan Hrychan (“Pashchenko”), committed on a female underground member suspected of covert activities: “Then “Pashchenko” ordered her breasts to be cut off. The bandit “Tipka” cut off her left breast and she died. After that, Pashchenko talked to me and said: if you do not admit your guilt you will face the same fate.”¹⁵² Hence, it might be assumed that some female agents suffered sexual violence both from Soviet security bodies and from the OUN underground. Some of them died from

¹⁴⁸ Litopys UPA. Nova seriia. Tom 4, 430.

¹⁴⁹ Interrogation report for Dmytro Shyvandronov, ATsDVR, coll. 8, t. 2, ark. 59.

¹⁵⁰ Litopys UPA. Nova seriia. Tom 8: Volyn, Polissia, Podillia: UPA ta zapillia 1944-1946. Dokumenty i materialy, eds. O. Vovk, S. Kokin (Kyiv; Toronto: Litopys UPA, 2005), 324.

¹⁵¹ HDA SBU, f. 13, spr. 376, t. 52, ark. 153.

¹⁵² Ibid., f. 5, spr. 67835, ark. 232-235.

violence during interrogations. Moreover, many women suspected of covert agent operations for the OUN underground were executed as traitors.

Concluding remarks

In the first ten years after the World War II, a female bodies were the battelfields the battlefield for two different state projects in Western Ukraine – a nationalist one and a Soviet one. They both were trying to control and exploit women’s sexuality in their own interests. Hence, violence against women had taken on an incredible scale and form. It became a common phenomenon in the flywheel of punitive practices of Soviet authorities against the Ukrainian nationalist underground and insurgent movement. Soviet state gender-based violence had different manifestations (sexual harassment, forceful nudity, injuries of genitals, infection with sexually transmitted diseases, rape, including group rape, etc.). It took place in different stages of repression against women suspected/accused of links with the “enemies” of the Soviet state, (arrests, detention, interrogations, recruiting for covert agent activities). Abusers were mostly representatives of the counterinsurgency, military, and penitentiary systems of Soviet authorities. The survivors of sexual humiliation were equally both OUN female underground members and civilian women who would often have no relation at all to any anti-Soviet resistance. The ideological basis for violence and some kind of its legitimization was provided by numerous resolutions of the Political Bureau of TsK KP(b)U on the need to reinforce the counterinsurgency actions against the Ukrainian nationalist underground. The same function was fulfilled by different practices connected with avoiding

punishment for the abusers (covering up crimes, delaying investigations, protection from the NKVD and MGB leaders to the suspects, “soft” court sentences).

The political significance of state violence against women was huge. For Soviet authorities, it was a way to show their advantage over the adversaries. On the one hand, it was a tool for demoralization and a symbolic act of humiliation of the “enemy” men whose masculinity was based on their ability to protect their women. Hence, sexual violence against the female body became a tool to develop power relations between men on both sides of the fence and a way of communication between them. On the other hand, gender-based violence became a method to restrain and control “enemy” women. For women accused by Soviet authorities of relations with the OUN underground and UPA it functioned as torture, humiliation and punishment for their “disobedience” to Soviet men in power.

Some women were killed after rape. The survivors of sexual violence had to struggle with severe mental and physical consequences and searching for their own survival strategies, which most often was remaining silent. Silence resulted not only from the feeling of shame, fear and distrust of the Soviet justice system, but also the minor chance of having the perpetrators brought to responsibility. Silence was one of the protection mechanisms to avoid repetitive punishment, this time from “fellow” men who could doubt the abusive nature of sexual relations of women with enemies and accuse them of collaboration with Soviet authorities against the underground.

At the same time, sexual violence against women became a tool in the struggle of Soviet authorities and the underground of OUN and UPA to win over people’s loyalty. The use

of gender-based violence by Soviet special groups that acted disguised as OUN combat groups undermined local people's trust in the nationalist underground. In fact, open Soviet repressions against women had the same objectives. It was used as an argument to show that underground members were not able to protect their people from the violence of the state, but also enhanced it with their presence and activities in certain areas. Therefore, it might be assumed that fear of state-backed terror resulting from the experiences of local men and women in Western Ukraine would inevitably adjust their attitude towards the authorities and become an effective tool to shape "Soviet citizens."

The nationalist underground had different assumptions. The underground leaders believed that making the sexual violence public could be an effective tool of anti-Soviet propaganda and subsequently of supporting nationalist underground in the fight against Soviet authorities. The sexual violations of women's body that is encoded in nationalist narratives as the "political body" of the nation is treated as an attack against the entire nation's security and dignity, thus having huge capacity to shape the image of enemies and encouraging mobilization against them. Thus, in OUN propaganda material and in statements addressing people, the topic of

sexual violence of Soviet authorities against women was presented as a symbol of collective victimhood of the Ukrainian nation.

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