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A Political and Methodological Necessity

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Oleksandr Zaitsev

HISTORY OF UKRAINIAN NATIONALISM THROUGH THE EYES OF A CZECH HISTORIAN

Book review: David Svoboda, *Jablko z oceli: Zrod, vývoj a činnost ukrajinského radikálního nacionalismu v letech 1920–1939* (Praha: Academia; Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2021), 1014 pp.

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The Czech historiography of Ukrainian radical nationalism has been much scunter than the Polish one, not to mention the Ukrainian. And this is despite the fact that interwar Czechoslovakia was the most important centre for the activities of emigrant Ukrainian nationalist groups, out of which the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) emerged in 1929, later becoming the centre of OUN proper. Therefore, the appearance of a very impressive, both in scope and content, book by Prague historian David Svoboda about the Ukrainian nationalist movement of the 1920s–1930s is a celebratory occasion.

In the epigraph, the author clarifies the title of the book, *An Apple out of Steel*:

The illustrious Czech journalist, Karel Havlíček Borovský, wrote back in his time: “Ukraine is an eternal curse imposed upon themselves by Poles and Russians; it is an apple of discord tossed by fate between these two nations”. At their time, the extreme fraction of the Ukrainian national movement, to which this book is dedicated, strived to make a piece of steel out of that ‘apple’ against which all enemies would break their teeth.¹ (p. 5)

I can’t help noting here that this title has sounded particularly appropriate since February 2022: Ukraine has in fact turned out to be a ‘steel apple’ that could not be swallowed by the Russian invaders.

A quote from Havlíček Borovský is given in full on page 38, where we find out that this fragment was written as early as 1846 and ends with the following words: “Thus, the suppressed freedom of Ukraine takes revenge on Poland and

¹ Here and further down, in brackets, I provide the page numbers of the reviewed monograph.

Russia". The idea of this Czech journalist is clear: the enslavement of other people inevitably turns against the subjugating nations – takes "revenge" on them. Havlíček Borovský's words turned out to be prophetic: in the twentieth century, Ukraine's suppressed freedom repeatedly "took revenge" on the states that divided the country among themselves. Actually, the very phenomenon of Ukrainian radical nationalism, representatives of which fiercely fought against both Poland and Russia/USSR, was generated, according to David Svoboda, by the long-term partition of Ukrainian lands between foreign states.

The first lines of the book clarify that the author had in mind not just a purely academic study of the past, but also a response to the challenges of the present. He gains momentum when speaking about the events of 2013–2014: the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity and the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, which "put an end to the European law and order that has existed since 1945" (p. 13). Concurrently with the military aggression, Russia

[...] has made the world feel the power of its propaganda offensive, the centrepiece of which is the resuscitated myths that were defiled long ago, the myths that distort the key events and processes of the 20th century in Europe. The central myth concerns the historical role of Ukrainian radical nationalism, which around the world is associated with the names of Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych, with such concepts as anti-Semitism and collaboration with the Nazis, and, in general, with a certain supra-category of "Ukrainian fascism". To a historian's surprise, this demagoguery fell on favourable ground not only in a spiritually devastated Russian society, but also in the Euro-American West. (p. 12)

However, there is nothing to be surprised about here, because the propaganda industry of "exposing the crimes of Ukrainian fascism" was not born in 2014. It was constructed in the Soviet times and already back then had some influence in the West. Many years of efforts formed the 'black legend' of the Ukrainian nationalist movement. In the 1990s, the legend was inherited by post-Soviet historians and political propagandists, who purged it of the class anti-capitalist rhetoric, instead strengthening its 'anti-fascist' trajectory. It is because of the connection between Ukrainian radical nationalism and the painful topics of fascism,

Nazism and anti-Semitism that the ‘black legend’ gained some popularity in Western historiography and historical journalism long before 2014.

This does not mean that Ukrainian radical nationalism of the 1920s–1940s had nothing to do with fascism and anti-Semitism. In fact, fascism had a far greater impact on the development of the Ukrainian nationalist movement than most Ukrainian historians are willing to admit. I will return to this issue and its analysis as it is presented in David Svoboda’s book. Right now, I will just note that the problem is not about the application of a theoretical model of generic fascism to studies of Ukrainian nationalism of the interwar and wartime era; rather, it is about the efforts of Russian propaganda to draw a direct legacy line between the contemporaneous “Ukrainian fascism/Nazism” and the contemporary political regime in Ukraine. It was this propagandistic lie that became a premise for the demand for ‘denazification’ of Ukraine, and Putin used it to justify the Russian invasion in February 2022.

Based on the aforementioned quote, one should not jump to the conclusion that the main goal of David Svoboda is to refute Russian propaganda myths and that, in terms of interpreting the history of Ukrainian radical nationalism, he is in complete agreement with that side of Ukrainian nationalist historiography which represents Bandera, Shukhevych and their associates as national heroes. In fact, we are looking at a serious study, the author of which is (almost) equally distant from both denigrating and glorifying its object. In his interview with the online newspaper *Istorychna Pravda* (*Historical Truth*), he describes his intentions as follows:

One of the main motives that compelled me to work was the desire to show an image like “Ukrainian nationalists and their epoch”. [I wanted] to understand the spirit of the time and its impact on the mentality of that generation of Ukrainians and to make the role of the two main emotions – frustration and violence – more pronounced. Without this look into the soul of the actors back then, we will not be able to understand the reasons for the emergence of Ukrainian radical nationalism, as well as its program.²

The very attempt to “look into the soul” of history’s actors lends a beneficial quality to David Svoboda’s book when compared with the works of many other historians who, having reconstructed the course of events and appointed some actors as ‘heroes’ and others as ‘villains’, consider their

² Radomyr Mokryk, “Jabluko zi stali”: Istorija OUN Davida Svobody, *Istoryčna Pravda*, 2 September 2021 <<https://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2021/09/2/160110/>> [accessed 5 April 2022].

mission accomplished. While it might be easy to judge from the standpoint of today's moral norms, it is much harder to understand the deep motives behind the actions of people of the past. To do so, a historian needs empathy that does not necessarily allow for justification of historical characters but involves an attempt to comprehend their thoughts, feelings, and mental states. Although I'm getting ahead of myself, I can say that David Svoboda has largely been successful in this task.

In the Introduction, the author also touches upon terminological issues while considering whether such concepts as "Ukrainian nationalism", "integral nationalism", "struggle for national liberation", and "terrorism" are suitable for his work. Reflecting on how to terminologically outline the phenomenon he has been studying, he prefers the optimal, in his opinion, concept of "integral nationalism", even though some historians consider it a euphemism created during the Cold War era to obscure the fascist nature of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists. According to David Svoboda, rather than the category of "Ukrainian fascism", the term "integral nationalism" is much better suited to highlighting the problematic activity of the OUN. I share this choice of terminology, with the caveat that "fascism" and "integral nationalism" are not mutually exclusive concepts. Therefore, in the case of the OUN and similar movements, one should clarify that we are talking here about integral nationalism in a stateless nation, while "full-fledged" fascism develops in nation-states. Characterizing the OUN ideology and practice as integral nationalism, Davide Svoboda agrees that the latter, by its very nature, contained potential for terror and ethnic cleansing (p. 25). This opinion requires further clarification. The reason is that integral nationalism imagines a nation to be a living organism, while separate individuals are its cells. If foreign "bacilli" enter a nation's organism and, furthermore, infect some of its "cells", it becomes morally justifiable and even necessary to rescue said organism, to clear its body of "bacilli" and surgically remove hopelessly affected tissues. Similar biology-inspired analogies can be frequently found in the writings of integral nationalists of the 1930s.

David Svoboda also considers the term "struggle for national liberation", which is preferred by fans of the OUN, while its critics deem the latter not worthy of such characterization, choosing instead to speak of "fascism" and "collaboration". The author reminds us that, from an ethical standpoint, the national liberation movements of the twentieth century were far from chaste purity, and the insurgent formations of the third world, as well as the leftist protest movements, were no more humane in terms of their methods of struggle than the excluded-from-decent-society "Banderites". In the end, David Svoboda does not refuse to use the word "liberation": he uses it only in specific contexts, but not as a general attribute of

the studied movement (such as in the title of the Lviv periodical *Ukrains'kyi Vyzvol'nyi Rukh* [*Ukrainian Liberation Movement*]).

Since the book addresses one of the most debated topics in the history of Ukraine, one would expect the author to provide an overview of the historiographic discussion around the OUN, in either the Introduction or a separate chapter, but the author does not do so; instead, he has inserted his critical remarks regarding certain historical works in the relevant fragments of the main narrative, often resorting to polemics. This somewhat unusual approach has both its benefits and shortcomings.

Although the chronological framework of the monograph covers the years 1920–1939, the author begins his account in 1908, with the murder of the Governor of Galicia, the Polish Count Andrzej Potocki, by Myroslav Sichyns'kyi – an event that twenty years later was characterized as the beginning of the Ukrainian revolution by the Ukrainian socialist-revolutionary Mykyta Shapoval. However, even this date is used to step further into the past, describing the development of the Ukrainian national movement and its relationship with the Polish national movement of the nineteenth century. Thus, in the first three chapters, David Svoboda describes the years preceding World War I (1908–1914), the evolution of the Ukrainian movement during the war, and the beginning of the Ukrainian Revolution (1914–1918), followed by the unsuccessful attempt to create and protect the Ukrainian state (1918–1923). The subject of the Polish-Ukrainian struggle runs through these chapters with a golden thread. It is only in the fourth and longest chapter, entitled “Irreconcilable, 1923–1930” (pp. 227–546), that the author finally reaches his main theme: the Ukrainian nationalist movement of the inter-war era. Such an extended introduction into the subject may seem excessive, but it is quite justified since the book is addressed to Czech readers who are, perhaps, getting familiarized with the modern history of Ukraine for the first time with the help of David Svoboda’s book. However, the Ukrainian reader will find a lot of new material here as well. This applies, in particular, to the Czech perception of the Ukrainian issue and its international aspects, as reflected in quotations from the articles and speeches of Czech politicians, journalists, and public figures. These Czech narratives are frequently present in the introductory chapters (I–III). They demonstrate that the liberal Czech figures of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sympathized with the Ukrainian movement, seeing it as a fair “plebeian” struggle against the Polish “lords” (pp. 55, 71, etc.). It is not surprising that Ukrainian emigrants were later welcomed in Czechoslovakia, under the presidency of Tomáš Masaryk. Little-known (or completely unknown to the experts) Czech topics appear once more in the last chapter, which describes the dramatic events in the Carpathian Ukraine of 1938–1939 (pp. 774–860).

As the author of a book whose subject almost completely overlaps with the subject of the reviewed monograph, I was mostly interested in chapters IV–VI, which are devoted to the history of the Ukrainian nationalist movement in the interwar period. It turned out, however, that despite the similarity in terms of titles and the chronological span, our books are very different. I was interested in the intellectual history of Ukrainian integral nationalism, so I focused mainly on its ideology and ideologues (Dmytro Dontsov, Mykola Stsibors'kyi, Mykola Shlemkevych, etc.), trying to fit them into the European historical context. David Svoboda has written, for the most part, about the history of the organizations and developments within Ukrainian radical nationalism, while understanding the latter as a political movement rather than an ideology. Only the last four subsections of chapter IV are devoted to questions of ideology; these subsections analyse Dontsov's work, the OUN's attitude to fascism, enemy states and nations, and the "Jewish problem".

The content of David Svoboda's monograph is simultaneously wider and narrower than the subject declared in the subtitle. It is wider because, as I have already mentioned, chronologically the book reaches far beyond the timeframe of 1920–1939. And it is narrower because, out of the three main directions that Ukrainian integral nationalism took, the author describes in some detail the history of only one: so-called "organized nationalism", which found its embodiment in the OUN in 1929. One subsection focuses on Dmytro Dontsov's "nationalism of the deed" to explain the extent of its impact on the OUN, while the ideologist of the "creative nationalism" of the Front of National Unity, Mykola Shlemkevych, is mentioned only twice – not as an ideologist and politician of the interwar era, but as the author of the book *Halychanstvo (Galicianism)*³ that was written in emigration, after World War II. However, narrowing down the subject matter exclusively to "organized nationalism" seems to be justified. The history of the OUN as the main embodiment of Ukrainian radical nationalism presents a completely self-sufficient object of the research; if the author had tried to describe the story of Dmytro Dontsov, the circles of his *Vistnyk*, and Dmytro Paliiv's Front of National Unity with the same amount of detail, this already humongous book would have become impossible to digest.

I will not comment in detail on the content of the last chapters of the book, which are devoted to the formation and activities of the OUN; suffice to say that David Svoboda's analysis is very thorough and is completely free of the myths accumulated by both nationalist and 'denunciatory' historiographies about the OUN. This is the most detailed critical study

³ From Eastern Galicia (Halychyna).

of the interwar history of “organized nationalism” that I have ever read. I will dwell only upon a few points that are of particular interest to me.

Although Dmytro Dontsov is a secondary character for David Svoboda, in comparison with the first leader of the OUN, Yevhen Konovalets', as well as Stepan Bandera, Dontsov's doctrine – one of the ideological sources of the OUN – is given due attention in the subsection *Evangelist from Melitopol. Teachings and Contributions of Dmytro Dontsov* (pp. 418–42). The author convincingly demonstrates the complexity and ambiguity of Dontsov's teachings, which are difficult to incorporate into classification schemes such as “totalitarian nationalism”. In particular, contrary to the widespread stereotype of Dontsov as a fierce anti-democrat, the author concludes that “Dontsov was perhaps even more impressed with democracy represented by strong individuals than authoritarian but unstable regimes. Therefore, Dontsov paid homage to the great democrats of his day, among them the French statesmen Poincaré, Clemenceau, or the American President Theodore Roosevelt” (pp. 433–34). This is an entirely apt observation, but it should be clarified to which period it refers. Until the early 1930s, Dontsov could still use the word “democracy” in a positive sense and even wrote a genuine eulogy to American democracy in 1929.⁴ At the time, he did not consider dictatorship (*Napoleonism*) the optimal form of government – for him it was a necessary transitional state of affairs which later should yield to the permanent state system, as exemplified by the American one. However, for the ideologist of the “nationalism of the deed”, the most important thing was not this or that political regime but the strength of a particular nation, its vitality, desire for power and expansion, regardless of the political form in which this strength manifested itself. According to Dontsov, the British and Americans could be considered as examples of strong and healthy nations, while Italian fascism was seen as a successful revival of a nation undergoing a state of extreme decline. Therefore, in his articles fascination with Theodore Roosevelt and Winston Churchill may have come hand in hand with reverence for Benito Mussolini. Dontsov finally rejected democracy in 1932–1933, when – under the noticeable influence of fascism and Hitlerism – he formulated the Order concept of national leadership. Dontsov's anti-democratic evolution reached its completion in his totalitarian theory of the “caste of lords”, first formulated between 1938 and 1944 and later finalized in his book *The Spirit of Our Antiquity* (1944).⁵

⁴ Dmytro Doncov, ‘Duch amerykanizmu’, *Literaturno-naukovyj vistnyk*, 28.4 (1929), 357–71.

⁵ Dmytro Doncov, *Duch našoji davnyiny*, 2nd edn (Mjunchen, 1951). In his comments on the question of the totalitarian orientation of Doncov's views, David Svoboda writes that Oleksandr Zajcev finds totalitarian characteristics in Doncov's writings, while Mychajlo Čuhujenko, “on the contrary”, finds a conservative and traditionalist component. I should note that, contrary to Čuhujenko's assessment, Doncov's totalitarianism did not contradict his conservatism and traditionalism – these concepts generally lie in different planes. The conservatism of the ideologist was closer to the German “Conservative Revolution”, one of the sources of Nazism, than to, say, British conservatism.

David Svoboda expresses some interesting and generally relevant considerations in the rather large *Ordinary fascism? Difficulties with the OUN Ideology* (pp. 443–98) subsection. He starts with a claim that the OUN has never become a unanimous army under a single leadership with a consistent strategy, as was the main characteristic of the fascist parties. He does not join the camp of those researchers who define the OUN as fascist; rather, he thinks it is more appropriate to describe it as a representative of integral nationalism. At the same time, he does not deny that the OUN and similar stateless Eastern European groups have gradually become more and more embracing of fascist ideology. Further on, he examines in detail the arguments of the participants of the debate on ‘fascism’ within the OUN; specifically, he comments quite favourably on my writings in which I distinguish the type of integral nationalism within non-state nations that is characteristic of the OUN from fascism, the full-fledged development of which is possible only within a state. David Svoboda also mentions my concept of ‘ustashism’, formulated on the basis of a comparison of the OUN with the Croatian Ustaša movement. Nevertheless, he maintains that I ignore the fact that “the two groups differed markedly in the aesthetics of rituals. The Ustaša cult of death bordered on necrophilia and was far more strongly imbued with Catholic religiosity” (p. 472). In fact, I do not ignore these and numerous other differences, but I do not consider them as such that contradict categorizing the OUN, Ustaša, and several other similar nationalist organizations under a single type of ideological and political movements – revolutionary integral nationalism within non-state nations, which I provisionally called ‘ustashism’.⁶

Summarizing the debate on the ‘fascist’ nature of the OUN, David Svoboda writes, “Although it is necessary to recognize the fairness of those who claim that, as a non-state actor, the OUN could not fully develop into a fascist formation, it cannot be excluded that such self-identification was prevented only by a coincidence” (p. 492). He then goes on to consider alternative history and speculates as to what the evolution of the OUN might have looked like had Hitler not been defeated on the Eastern front, and if the Wehrmacht armies had mastered the European territory of the Soviet Union. In this case, according to David Svoboda, Ukrainian radical nationalism would most likely have become a full-fledged version of fascism. However, he also allows for another possibility: that, despite the fashion for fascism, Ukrainian nationalism could have been dominated

⁶ See: Oleksandr Zaitsev, ‘Fascism or Ustashism? Ukrainian Integral Nationalism in Comparative Perspective, 1920s–1930s’, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 48.2–3 (2015), 183–93; Oleksandr Zaitsev, ‘On Ustashism and Fascism: A Response to Critics’, *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*, 7.1 (2021), 125–43.

by aspiration for the preservation of its original identity. I would add that the OUN would only have faced such a dilemma had Hitler given his consent to the creation of a Ukrainian state; however, there are good reasons to believe that this was not his intention. Ukraine was to become a German colony, part of the German *Lebensraum* in Eastern Europe. If this had happened, the OUN would have had to face a completely different dilemma: to engage in armed resistance against Nazism or to be satisfied with the role of collaborators in the colonial administration. Without a doubt, most Ukrainian nationalists would have chosen the first route.

Equally balanced and many-sided is the consideration of the 'Jewish problem' in the subsection titled *The "Problem" Named "Jews"* (pp. 517–46). Unlike some Ukrainian historians, such as Volodymyr Viatrovyč, the author does not take on the hopeless task of proving that "the OUN [...] did not allow itself to descend into anti-Semitism in the ideological and political plane".⁷ Instead, he carefully examines the causes and trajectory of the rise of anti-Semitism within the OUN ranks in the European context, and he comes to the following conclusion:

The Jewish problem [within the organization] was assessed for the most part not on its own terms but with Moscow's position in mind, although theoretical analyses based on the notion of race began to appear as well (Volodymyr Martynets', Yaroslav Stets'ko). This indicated the existence of a totalitarian trend within the OUN and the desire for a radical solution to the "problem". [...] The OUN's collective suspicions regarding the Jews testify not so much to the specifics of Ukrainian nationalism as to the fabric from which it was weaved – the broad pan-European current of nationalist and biased selfishness, with which Ukrainian nationalism was associated. (p. 546)

Among the unquestionable accomplishments of the author of the reviewed book, one should include the vivid historical portraits of the nationalist leaders Yevhen Konovalets', Andriy Mel'nyk, and especially Stepan Bandera, to whom a special subsection is dedicated (pp. 609–36). Transitioning from a strictly academic to a journalistic style, as in many other instances in this book, David Svoboda writes that there existed four Banderas: the first one – the head of the regional OUN in 1933–1934, who gained prominence thanks to the Lviv trial of the OUN members in 1936; the second one – a former political prisoner hardened by Polish prisons, who in 1939–1940

⁷ Volodymyr V'jatrovyč, *Stavlennja OUN do jevreji: formuvannja pozycji na tli katastrofy* (Lviv, 2006), p. 101.

led a revolt of young OUN members against Andriy Mel'nyk's leadership; the third one – a fanatic-nationalist who remained unbroken when the Nazis in 1941 demanded the renunciation of independence that had been declared; and finally, the fourth one – an emigrant during the Cold War era who could no longer cope with a world that was changing right before his eyes (pp. 613–14). We can only add that all these four sides of Bandera as a human have been superseded by a fifth: Bandera as a symbol, practically obscuring the real Bandera, whose historical portrait the Czech historian recreated quite successfully.

In the Conclusion, David Svoboda revisits the ideological characteristics of the OUN and offers a number of brief and apt generalizations, such as “Bidding farewell to universal ideals and focusing on the firm concreteness of the nation should have provided a cure [for Ukrainian nationalists] for the mistakes of the past and a key to achieving the goal of living in a free state” (p. 919). Explaining the influence of fascism on Ukrainian nationalism, the author draws an interesting parallel: “Just as Ukrainian revolutionary elites were influenced by the socialist ideals relevant within the international milieu before 1917, Ukrainian nationalists learned from fascists without necessarily adopting their ideology” (ibid.). Indeed, after World War I, a “fashion for socialism” changed to a “fashion for fascism”, and Ukrainian nationalists did not escape this predicament. David Svoboda reminds us that the OUN leaders’ bet on the alliance with revisionist states – Germany, Italy, and Japan – looked quite acceptable in the interwar period: “They played by the rules that gave rise to the international order after 1918. According to this order, the winning parties settled the fate of entire nations in the interests of the former, guided by not sympathy but cold calculation” (p. 920). These were the rules that Neville Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier espoused when signing the Munich Agreement in 1938, or that Joseph Stalin embraced when signing the notorious Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact a year later. The calculations of Ukrainian nationalists later turned out to be wrong, but this was difficult to predict in the late 1930s. The task that the OUN aimed to achieve – to create the Ukrainian state – was carried out by other Ukrainians at a different time and by other means (p. 922).

The shortcomings of the book under review are an extension of its virtues, and the main drawback is this volume’s enormous (over one thousand pages!) size. It is difficult for me to imagine even a proficient Czech reader, let alone a foreign-language reader, who would manage to read the entire work carefully. I think that making the book more concise would only be for the better.

Although I appreciate David Svoboda's monograph, in particular its polemical charge, I am not ready to agree with all the statements expressed by the author. Reflecting on the assessment of the historical path taken by Ukraine in the twentieth century, David Svoboda makes an interesting and controversial case against Andreas Kappeler and his like-minded supporters of taking a multi-ethnic and transnational perspective when studying the history of Ukraine and the politics of memory:

The assertion of the respected historian Andreas Kappeler that while assessing its past Ukraine cannot avoid the application of a multi-ethnic and transnational perspective is certainly based on noble motives. However, such noble calls are rarely heeded by the countries that promote their version of the past far more arrogantly than Ukraine (Russia, Poland, Hungary, and many others). In addition, such advice will remain empty talk until foreign advisers take into consideration the threat faced by Ukraine. And not only that: the statement regarding the insufficient adherence to the "multiple perspectives" and "transnationality" of Ukraine became a kind of justification for the Russian aggression against this country in 2014. At that time, there was a lack of understanding in the world of the fact that "multiple perspectives" in the hands of an aggressive state became no longer just a call but a diktat, and that Ukraine can walk along the postmodern route only when it has comfortable and peaceful conditions for its development, as is the case with societies that are not being threatened by anyone. An important prerequisite for this scenario is a society boasting a consolidated, indisputable national consciousness, and a sense of patriotism that is grounded in such consciousness. (pp. 104–05)

Thus, Kappeler and his like-minded associates (to whom I also belong) find themselves in the unattractive role of unconscious accomplices of Russian aggression. Here, David Svoboda repeats the arguments of those Ukrainian historians who insist on the need to establish a purely Ukrainian (in the ethno-national sense) historical narrative, considering a multi-ethnic and transnational approach an unacceptable luxury in the current Ukrainian conditions. I have no doubt that the considerations offered by the Czech historian are dictated by sympathy for Ukraine and its fight against the aggressor, but I cannot agree with them. In fact, they are based on the belief that each national community should assert only its own historical "truth", different from the "truths" of other communities.

This approach has already caused a lot of damage to Ukraine, both in terms of the internal consolidation of the Ukrainian civic nation and in relations with its neighbours, especially Poland. Suffice to mention the damage to Polish-Ukrainian relations which was caused in the recent past by the opposition of the two national 'historical truths' in disputes about the Volyn tragedy of 1943. The failure of the Polish-Ukrainian historical reconciliation to resolve this and other difficult issues of common history was due to the inability, or unwillingness, to consider the problem from an inter-ethnic, transnational, and humanistic perspective. The fact that Putin, to justify his aggression, accuses the Ukrainian authorities of ignoring the territorial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Ukraine and the complexity of its historical formation by no means leads to the conclusion that Ukrainians should really ignore this diversity and complexity while trying to build some kind of an ethnic-national homogeneity. What David Svoboda proposes would mean the legitimization of an ethno-national historical narrative for many years to come since, with a neighbour like Russia, Ukraine is hardly in a position to expect "comfortable and peaceful conditions for its development" in the near future. I think that if Ukrainians want to be a civic, not an ethnic, nation and have reliable friends among their Western neighbours, it is necessary to affirm a multi-ethnic and transnational view of history right now, and not after the final consolidation of the national consciousness.

As I mentioned, David Svoboda denies the fascist nature of the OUN. However, not all his arguments are convincing enough. He argues, for example, that the rebellion of the younger generation of the OUN against its leader, Andriy Mel'nyk, in 1940 "was entirely 'non-fascist'", since by taking this action the Banderites "demonstrated free thinking which is hard to imagine within totalitarian systems" (p. 922). In fact, the struggle against the opposition and the splits are typical of totalitarian movements and regimes, both fascist and communist. The same "free thinking" was demonstrated, for example, by the Romanian fascists – members of the Legion of Archangel Michael – when, following the death of Corneliu Codreanu in 1938, a factional struggle for succession escalated within the Legion that was highly reminiscent of a somewhat later conflict between the OUN Banderites and Melnykites. Let us also remember the factional struggle within the Bolshevik Party after the death of Lenin, and the struggle for succession following Stalin's death. Even though I do not agree with the idea of including OUN among the fascists either, David Svoboda's argument does not work in this case.

Clearly, in a thousand-page-long book, some inaccuracies and inconsistent statements are inevitable. I will mention some of them.

When describing the role of Yevhen Konoval's in the founding of the Ukrainian Military Organization (UVO), the author is rather inconsistent. In the third chapter, he reports in passing that, in the summer of 1920 in Czechoslovakia, Konoval's founded the Ukrainian Military Organization, the predecessor of the OUN (p. 195). Here, David Svoboda adheres to the tradition of Ukrainian nationalist historiography, according to which the decision to create the UVO was made in July 1920 in Prague at the last meeting of the *Sich* Rifleman Council under the leadership of Yevhen Konoval's.⁸ Instead, in the fourth chapter, when describing the process of establishment of the UVO in more detail, the author reports that Konoval's joined its activities only in July of 1921, when he arrived in Lviv from Vienna, and until then he had had no influence on its formation (pp. 305–06). This second statement is closer to the truth, but it also needs to be clarified. According to a thorough study carried out by Mykhailo Koval'chuk which David Svoboda also references, Konoval's did not participate in the creation of the UVO (as Koval'chuk argues, the creation of an underground military organization was kept secret from the colonel). The actual founders of the UVO were Yaroslav Chyzh and Mykhailo Matchak (captains of the *Sich* Rifleman), as well as Osyp Naroc'kyj (a captain of the Ukrainian Galician Army). In July of 1921, Konoval's returned to Lviv, and in September he made the last attempt to revive the *Sich* Rifleman's organization under his leadership. However, the Lviv *Sich* Rifleman, having created the Military Organization, did not want to subordinate it to their former commander. The situation changed after the first significant military action of the Military Organization: the unsuccessful attempt on Józef Piłsudski's life during his visit to Lviv in September 1921. In a timespan of a few weeks, the police arrested almost the entire leadership of the Military Organization; only Yaroslav Chyzh managed to escape by fleeing abroad. It is probably at this time that the representatives of the decapitated organization appealed to Konoval's to become their leader.⁹

As I have already mentioned, one section of the book is devoted to an examination of Dmytro Dontsov's ideology; however, the author of the book does this based on the conclusions of his predecessors to a far greater extent than on analysis of Dontsov's texts per se. This tendency at times leads him to inaccurate conclusions. Following Anatol Bedrii, David Svoboda believes that the book *Nationalism* (1926) marked the stage when Dontsov abandoned the concept of the leading role of the peasantry, moving instead to the idea of a nation as a single supra-personal entity (p. 430). That is not

⁸ See, for example: Petro Mirčuk, *Narys istoriji OUN 1920–1939*, 3rd edn (Kyjiv, 2007), p. 18.

⁹ For more details, see: Mychajlo Koval'čuk, 'Bilja vytokiv ŪVO: vijs'kovo-polityčna dijāl'nist' Je. Konoval'cja u 1920–1921 rr.', *Ukrajins'kyj vyzvol'nij ruch*, 7 (2006), 5–78; Mychajlo Koval'čuk, *Na čoli Sičovyx stril'civ. Vijs'kovo-polityčna dijāl'nist' Jevhena Konoval'cja v 1917–1921 rr.* (Kyjiv, 2010), pp. 129–217; Oleksandr Zajcev, *Ukrajins'kyj integral'nij nacionalizm (1920–1930-ti roky)*. *Narysy intelektual'noji istoriji* (Kyjiv, 2013), pp. 241–43.

quite accurate. Indeed, in his *Nationalism* Dontsov viewed a nation as a single supra-personal entity that has common ideals. At the same time, however, when providing an answer to the question of “what class will embody these ideals?” he replied, “Without judging the further development of Ukraine prematurely, I will say that as of this moment, it is the class that represents the majority of the nation – the peasantry”.¹⁰ Thus, at the time of writing the book, Dontsov had not yet definitively got rid of his previous views, according to which he positioned himself as a peasant democrat. However, in comparison with his earlier works, the author of *Nationalism* no longer categorically adhered to the idea of the peasantry’s leading role, and he indirectly suggested that the further development of Ukraine could bring forward a different segment of society. This ideological evolution ended in 1929 with the article “*To the Cities*”, in which the ideologist of “nationalism of the deed” – contrary to his own repeated thesis about the leading role of the peasantry – put forward the idea of “conquering the city”, because “that city, your own city, does not allow foreign thorns to nestle in the living body of the people. These thorns destroy all attempts to organize the peasant crowd into a fully developed people with all its organs and functions”.¹¹ It is no coincidence that the idea of a special role played by the peasantry is no longer present in the subsequent editions of *Nationalism*.

However, these and some other minor inaccuracies are of little importance compared to the advantages of David Svoboda’s book. Still, one finds no sensational discoveries or conceptual breakthroughs that would force specialists to radically revise their ideas about the history of Ukrainian integral nationalism. And yet, the vast factual material, some of which is little known or unknown to historians, the well-grounded generalizations and conclusions, as well as the relative impartiality and the transnational perspective (whose application the author considers premature for Ukrainian historians) make the reviewed book a significant contribution to world historiography of Ukrainian radical nationalism. Let us also add a very impressive list of sources and historiographic grounding. A hard-working Czech historian used materials from as many as 23 archives located in several countries in Europe and the United States, and almost 90 periodicals; the list of published documents and the bibliography are 64 pages long! All these points prompt me to recommend David Svoboda’s book not only to specialists, but also to all those who are interested in the modern history of Ukraine (and who are not afraid of the humongous size of the book). It would be good if someone took on the difficult task of translating the book into Ukrainian, as well as Polish.

¹⁰ Dmytro Doncov, *Nacionalizm* (L’viv, 1926), p. 252.

¹¹ Dmytro Doncov, “Do misti!”, *Istoryčnyj kaljendar-al’manach Červonoji kalyny na 1930 rik*, 1 (1929), 53–54.