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**Theoretical and Practical Motivations  
for Joining the Ukrainian Insurgent Army**

*The article discusses the reasons for joining the UPA based on oral history interviews. Initial activities of the UPA in the light of memoirs are characterized. Repressive and punitive actions of the USSR against UPA are analyzed.*

**Keywords:** *Ukrainian Insurgent Army, motivation, the Second World War, the Second Polish Republic, Soviet Union, Germany, nationalism, repression, incentives, rational choice wanderings.*

The Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) was formed during the Second World War. The UPA began operations in 1943 and spread throughout the whole of western Ukraine where it not only engaged in battles with the Germans but also the Soviet partisans and NKVD units. It formed an underground network of supporters and created secret hospitals, factories and even had its own currency. However, why did some many young western Ukrainians join the UPA? How did their personal experiences influence their decisions during the war – primarily how did their respective bonds to the UPA form? Motivations for joining any insurgency are complex because they stem from individual motivational factors; however, generalized factors among a specific group can also be detected. In order to explore these motivations, this article draws on theoretical approaches that include rational choice theory, deprivation theory, examination of mobilization incentives, realist theory and the more traditional explanations linked to nationalism and repression. It was because of a combination of these motivations that western Ukrainians joined the UPA rather than just one single reason.

Various insurgency studies use traditional state-led narratives that have always assumed that it was a state-sponsored repression or a certain political outlook that helped recruit willing participants into an active insurgency: recruitment is seen as a reaction to state action. However, they fail to pinpoint why

there was this state repression or how these willing recruits are drawn into that specific insurgency. It is true that state repression shapes the identities of those affected [1, p.30]. The identities of those Ukrainians who joined the UPA began in the interwar period under the Second Polish Republic. Historian Timothy Snyder has analyzed how a radicalized Ukrainian identity was linked to the actions of the Second Polish Republic's use of "public corporal punishment" against its Ukrainian minority along with the economic discrimination of intellectual Ukrainians [2, p.138, 144; 3, p.75, 136, 180]. Rogers Brubaker, Joseph Rothschild and Yaroslav Hrytsak have also analyzed the Polish state's actions toward its Ukrainian minority during the interwar years, and how these actions affected the Ukrainian population. All three identify that the Polish state's actions "nationalized" the Ukrainians and aggravated an exclusively Ukrainian identity through the policing activities of Ukrainian social, cultural and political activities [4, p.101; 5, p.43; 6, p.191, 197]. These historians have explained the increasingly radicalized outlook of many Ukrainian intellectuals. However, there is little explanation of the reaction of the local population to state repression. It is precisely this reaction to states' repressive and discriminatory policies that motivated some to join the UPA. Traditional analysis on insurgencies in general tend to emphasize this state repression theme [7, p.401, 418]. However, other historians and other motivational aspects need to also be explored in conjunction with oral history in order to ascertain a general understanding of the actions of certain western Ukrainians. Oral history is used in this article as an exploratory tool for the practical reasoning to explain the motivations of western Ukrainians before and during the war.

Nationalism is the other traditional motivational factor that many historians argue to be the reason why Ukrainians joined the UPA. However, this theory at times oversimplifies the motives of activists and thereby implies that one particular variant of nationalism is either good or bad: the bad being "caused by the displacement of ethnic hostility" and the good as "caused by illegitimately thwarted national aspirations" [8, p.64]. The importance of nationalism and

Nationalist organizations (such as the OUN) has been the basis of many (if not most) of the literature on the Ukrainian national movement, including one of the leading historians on this topic – Volodymyr Viatrovyh [8, p.12]. However, although his works have been regarded as some of the most impressive on the history of the Ukrainian Nationalists, they primarily deal with a more political history (the outlooks and interactions of the OUN and UPA) rather than examining the reasons why Ukrainians joined their ranks [8, p.32–33, 38, 70–79, 136]. Yuri Shapoval has also examined the varied aspects of the Ukrainian national movement during the Second World War. He too explores some of the darker events that occurred in Ukraine and emphasises the role (or the lack of a role) Germans played in the Polish-Ukrainian massacres while exploring the geopolitical environment that created the atmosphere of mutual extremism [10, p.165, 170, 177, 182]. Roman Wysocki and Gzegorz Motyka have also examined the influence of Nationalist organizations within the Ukrainian social youth organizations. Wysocki recognizes that the “task of the nationalists was to ‘attract, organize and educate the young generation’” [11, p.108, 146]. Grzegorz Motyka examines the influence of the OUN among the youth and student organizations prior to the war [12, p.174]. While the above mentioned historians are renowned in their fields, they examine the reasons why the UPA came into existence in a limited way. While their work is certainly useful in exploring the political and military aspects of the Ukrainian Nationalists, they refer only to the national movement itself and not the reasons why these men and women filled UPA ranks.

Western Ukrainians made the rational choice to join the UPA. This collective action was based upon a pre-existing community which shared a common interest in its own survival and which already had existing links to an organization that furthered those interests [13, p.77–78, 84]. The Ukrainians who joined the UPA lived in communities that were well-integrated and provided a “social organizational foundation for mobilization” [14, p.149]. This community was linked together by “linguistic nationalism” in which every nation (or communal grouping) was linked together by its own specific language and culture which, in

turn, reflected the spirit of the people [15]. This principle of a national collective identity was also fostered by a high degree of patriotism that many felt during the interwar years in western Ukraine [16, p.7, 20]. Members of the UPA were nationalists – a meaning that has been confused and confounded by many but has most clearly been defined by Alexander Motyl as “a political ideal that views statehood as the optimal form of political existence for each nation” [18, p.80]. There has been evidence that supports I.K. Patryliak’s assertion that the interwar generation was brought up “in the cult of fallen heroes...[where] their possible deaths and the death of their friends were looked upon as a necessity during the fight for independence” [18, p.18]. This process began after western Ukraine was incorporated into the Second Polish Republic. However, how was this collective identity fostered during the interwar period in order for these young men and women to identify themselves with the certain Ukrainian nationalist variant that would lead them to join the UPA?

After the fall of the Ukrainian National Republic, thousands of Ukrainian men were demobilized and sent home. These men, the veterans of the Ukrainian Galician Army, the Ukrainian National Republic Army and the Sich Riflemen, became the founders of a new Ukrainian paramilitary campaign and more importantly they became the new Ukrainian intelligentsia of the interwar years. It was their beliefs, accomplishments and frustrations that were passed onto the future generation of Ukrainians – those Ukrainians who joined the UPA during the Second World War. They believed that the democracies of Europe ignored Ukraine’s national aspirations and the glorified principle of self-determination did not apply to the Ukrainians after the Versailles Peace Treaty was signed. Alexander Motyl believes that for these men, the only solution was “to withdraw into the nation, close ranks, mobilize all available forces and ruthlessly pursue Ukrainian interests with no regard for other nations” [19, p.52]. In 1920, the Ukrainian Military Organization (UVO) was formed as a resistance movement to Polish occupation. By 1922, the UVO launched wide-spread “sabotage actions” against Polish landowners and colonists and by 1923 there was an influx of young

Galician Nationalists joining the organization [19, p.110, 126]. This generation of Nationalists were, as Volodymyr Viatrovykh identifies, the first generation in Ukrainian history that were divorced from everyday life and were entirely devoted to the fight for Ukrainian independence [20, p.130]. This generation, who created the foundations of the Ukrainian political nationalism, was also the same generation who promoted and expanded the Ukrainian national movement into wider Ukrainian society.

After the war with Poland ended, many Ukrainian veterans were given educational opportunities in Czechoslovakia and Poland [19, p.94]. Those who took these opportunities came back frustrated by the military defeat, but more importantly, they also became the new leaders of the Ukrainian social and political community. Their contributions to Ukrainian cultural nationalism throughout western Ukraine are instrumental in the pragmatic, everyday spread of the conscious national identity that ingrained Ukrainian nationalism among the young interwar generation. The UNR veterans are the ones who built the Prosvita reading rooms, opened the National Schools, ran the cooperatives and helped young people get involved with the community [21, p.11]. Lubomyr Poliuha recalled that his father, a Galician National Army veteran, was responsible for creating the Ukrainian Underground University in L'viv. The majority of the prominent figures of the Ivano-Frankivsk Prosvita reading rooms from 1920-1930, for example, were veterans of the Galician National Army [22, p.60–72]. Myroslaw Bihus' father, a veteran of the Ukrainian Galician Army, became the head of the cooperative movement and the National School in Rohatyn [23]. These veterans were clearly very active in their communities and that activism was influential for the younger generation of Ukrainians.

There was a link between Ukrainian intellectualism, Ukrainian paramilitarism and the Ukrainian youth. Those who took a vital interest in the workings of the UVO and the education of the future Ukrainian generation were noticed by the Polish police. In a 1929 intelligence report from Dobromyl, for example, it was pointed out that there was a “large amount of Rusyn-Ukrainian

intellectuals who were sympathetic to the UVO” including Piotr Dutko who was an “extreme nationalist and Prosvita organizer” [24]. In another report from the same region, numerous Ukrainian veterans were identified as being UVO “agitators” but were also the founders of numerous cultural and sporting organizations in the city: Michal Bendzar, for example, founded the Prosvita society while Stefan Bachowski was an instructor for the sporting club “Sokil” [25]. The Polish police reports warned that the Ukrainian youth was being mobilized and trained under the guise of the “Luh” sporting organization and “Sokil” shooting club. It also concluded that the center of UVO activity was in the Prosvita society and that all Ukrainian organizations were active supporters of the Ukrainian national movement in the countryside [26]. In this conclusion, they were not wrong.

Within Prosvita, young Ukrainians were given the opportunity to learn about their history from those who participated in it. It provided this generation with their first “university education”, as Yevhen Shtendera jokingly described it [27]. Orest Vaskul recalled that the active members of the Prosvita society were all UVO and Galician Army veterans (his father included) [28]. For the majority of UPA veterans their connection to the UNR veterans was personal – many had relatives who fought in the ranks of the Ukrainian National Republic Army, the Ukrainian Galician Army or in the Sich Riflemen. Personal family histories about the heroic battles of the Galician National Army were influential to UPA veterans from an early age. Most of these personal histories were of fathers and grandfathers and included a rich understanding of the Ukrainian nation’s struggle for independence. Maksym Wowk’s memories of his father’s exploits were typical for most veterans:

My father fought, my father’s brother too. His brother died in 1918 and father went to Italy [with the Austrian army]. And when he came back he went into the Sich Riflemen and was wounded and came home. ...The older generation talked to us about [the battles] and even those who fought, and some who didn’t fight, [they] still had weapons, and when they were needed like in 1943 they were given to the self-defence groups [29].

The romantic heroism of the Galician National Army and the Sich Riflemen cemented a lineal history to the actions of the UPA generation – they had a recent example of Ukraine’s autonomy and were willing to see that same historic experience come into fruition once again. Anna Vasylyk recalled that her father was a “big patriot” who talked about Ukrainian history to her and her friends regularly [30]. Yurii Stupnyts’kyi, Lubomyr Poliuha and Anna Martyniuk all grew up listening to tales of their heroic fathers during the time of war – “my father was a member of the Galician National Army. He was in L’viv on 1 November [1918]” [31, p.15-16] were only a few quotes from UPA veterans. These memories allowed them to be more susceptible to the ideal of Ukrainian independence because they already had a clear image of what Ukrainian independence could be.

The children of these UNR veterans were certainly enthused by these stories of heroics and patriotic passion: Stepan Borsch described how his father told him stories about fighting the Poles and how “it was very fascinating for us children” [32]. Anna Bajlak recalled that her uncle was a Sich Riflemen veteran who regularly read her books about the 1918 battles; he was so passionate about it that his feelings “resonated through her because he loved his country so much” [33]. This passionate reshaping of Ukrainian history – moulding it into a heroic battle for Ukrainian independence – affected all those men and women who joined the Ukrainian Nationalist underground. Stepan Stebelskyi, whose nom-de-guerre was “Khrin”, recalled with fondness the memory of his father:

Some time in 1918, I, a four year old boy, was lifted up by my mother into her arms and saw people gathering by the school. ‘What is this mother?’, I asked. ‘This, son, are the villagers who are going to conquer Kalush, their leader is your father. They are going for Ukraine, so that little children like you can live in peace.’ [34, p.64]

Liudmyla Foya – one of the first OUN (B) activists in Kyiv – had a father who fought for the Russian Tsarist Army during the First World War and later joined the UNR Army [35, p.9]. There was certainly a high degree of romanticism associated with the escapades of those Ukrainians who joined the UNR Army.

However, those veterans also worked tirelessly to resist the Polish government's attempts to "undermine their national distinctiveness" [36, p.206] with their work in the cultural, political and social spheres of Ukrainian life.

The UPA veterans took it upon themselves to glorify the fight for Ukrainian independence in 1943 by linking it to the struggle of the Galician National Army – the idea that independence was stolen from the Ukrainians after the First World War was not a mistake that the UPA generation would make. Anna Martyniuk's discussions with her father regarding his time in the war were a good example of this: "My father told me a lot of things. About how it was, about how they fought, why the Sich Riflemen lost. They didn't have anything to fight with, they didn't have any weapons. Help came from France to the Poles, they got weapons and won" [37]. The fight of the Ukrainian National Republic instilled the idea that Ukraine had unique characteristics and that it was entitled to its own state. Children grew up in an atmosphere where they envisioned their role in the future war of independence as pivotal. The UPA represented these ideals and allowed the imagery of the struggle for independence to be achieved. Stepan Stebelskyi had a dream from childhood that he was "to become a soldier of the national army and fight for the freedom of Ukraine...Just imagine what luck this is to be involved in the fight for Ukraine within the highest level of a national army" [38, p.13]. UPA veterans believed, and still believe, that they fought for a legitimate army of Ukraine – for its freedom and its sovereignty. This idealistic picture came from their youth when they fantasized about "my horse, my girl, Kyiv, Sofiiska Square and tears after the victory for Ukrainian independence" [ 39, p.1–2]. Maria Savchyn Pyskir theorized that it might have been her girlhood romanticism, her parents' example of working hard to achieve an end, or even the influence of her family's history that made her want to be heroic and join the UPA [40, p.7]. This heroic imagery was very influential to those young people who looked to the older generation for inspiration and who inherited that generation's frustration and political disappointments. However, the interwar generation of western Ukraine knew the difference between a political cause and a cultural identity that did not



correspond with a Nationalist “cult of fallen heroes”. While western Ukrainians certainly did have a particular political leaning, it is not the sole explanation for why people joined the UPA .

Historian Ryszard Torzecki has examined the Ukrainian intellectual’s economic deprivation prior to the war and suggests that underemployment of Ukrainians led them to be far more influenced by radical nationalism than by liberal ideologies [41, p.65]. This deprivation theory is further explained by Ekkart Zimmerman as asserting that an individual (or group) feels frustrated with the ruling authority if “the equity relation or the rule of distributive justice is violated” [42, p.31]. This feeling of inadequacy has been linked to social, political or economic differences between classes, ethnic groups or institutions. In the case of western Ukrainians, this disparity was among ethnic lines and economic classes and this poverty was “often considered a cause of political instability and political violence.” [42, p.94]. The Polish state of the interwar years perceived the radicalization of Ukrainians as a serious threat to the safety and security of Polish independence. Reports were created throughout the interwar and war years (including ones by the Polish government-in-exile in London) which suggest that Polish fears were widespread and were caused by state discrimination against Ukrainians “simply because they were Ukrainian” [43]. During the Second World War, the Polish Home Army also reflected back on the activities of the SPR and deemed their actions as a failure because they did not adequately deal with their minority issues [44]. The separation between ethnicities was so excessive that it was reported throughout western Ukraine in the three main Ukrainian territories (including eastern Galicia, Volhynia and the Transcarpathian region). These reports suggest that there were general fears regarding the Ukrainians who lived in the SPR: the Polish state used various repressive measures to manage their Ukrainian minority including exclusionism and assimilation. Exclusionism involved the clear delineation between the ethnic groups and is seen in almost every aspect of daily life for Ukrainians. Assimilation policies on the other hand, had religious overtones and were used primarily because the Polish state built its legitimacy around its

capacity to integrate diverse groups into a singular political entity [36, p.204]. During this period the Polish and Ukrainian ethnic identity was based on religious distinction – baptismal certificates from each church were important in identifying ethnic leanings. As Polish Home Army veteran Waldemar Lotnik stated, “if an Orthodox Ukrainian converted to Roman Catholicism then he automatically became Polish and vice versa” [45, p.15].

The attempted Polish colonization encouraged a divergence of society along ethnic lines – those considered Ukrainian were not considered Polish and this was one of the first main radicalizing influences for Ukrainians [2, p.146]. These exclusionary divisions stemmed from various influences like the monetary support the Polish government gave in the form of the Union of Settlers subsidy [46, p.63]. The contemptuous Land Reform Act of 1925 resulted in the redistribution of 800,000 hectares to new Polish settlers in Eastern Galicia and Volhynia [47, p.480]. Ukrainian reaction towards these colonists and government policies was governed by “grievances with the Polish settlers” due mainly to the Ukrainians belief that the Poles “stole their land” [48]. This in turn provoked a more radical sense of being Ukrainian in the eastern regions of Poland, because the majority of them were discriminated against based on their ethnic identity. The best example of this was written by Michael Hrycyszyn:

The move to the village [in eastern Galicia] was brought about by the fact that there were more Polish settlers coming into our area and all the government jobs were being allocated to Polish nationals, whilst Ukrainians were either being made redundant or pensioned off...The Poles wanted to convert Galicia and western Ukraine into part of Poland, hoping that we would gradually accept their Polish language and change [to] their religion. Officially, the Poles still called us Rusyn or Rusyni, but Ukrainians adopted ‘Ukrainian’, accusing the Russians of taking our historic name ‘Rus’...In the 1930s, anti-Polish agitation and sabotage began to increase, especially against the Polish settlers who had come to Galicia as part of the Polish government’s colonization policy. This programme in particular caused a great deal of bitterness and resentment...[The colonists] were also allotted land

when the Polish government sold off the big estates in the ‘parselatsiya’[parceling] from which Ukrainians were largely excluded. One summer many attacks took place against Polish property in Galicia [49, p.26, 46–47].

For UPA veterans, this was the beginning of the radicalization of Ukrainian identity in the SPR – Ukrainians were in effect different because of the differing policies placed upon them.

This resentment towards the Polish state was also fostered by the seemingly prejudicial way in which the Polish police discriminated against specific Ukrainians. The Polish police targeted Ukrainian intellectuals such as professors, students, administrators and directors who were involved with the cultural life of the villages [50, p.5]. Ukrainian Greek Catholic and Orthodox priests were also victims as were the church institutions – the Polish police even confiscated the Greek Catholic Archbishop’s pastoral letters [51, p.9]. Along with attacks on the Ukrainian religious institutions there were also closures of Ukrainian schools and cultural centers and the destruction of Ukrainian libraries [52]. The situation certainly did not benefit from Deputy Bronislaw Pieracki’s comments that the “Ukrainians must be burned out with white-hot steel...Poland must continue to punish the entire population upon the principle of collective responsibility” [53, p.83]. This response to OUN tactics not only increased the segregation of the Ukrainian population but intensified the radicalization of Ukrainian society. This targeted Polish repression in turn increased the possibilities for nationalist mobilization and in this way, the work of the OUN became more pronounced during the interwar years.

Dmytro Tkach has also realized that there was a certain amount of disillusionment by all the western Ukrainian classes towards the various occupational states: the poor and peasantry were economically disadvantaged under the SPR and were disappointed with Soviet and German authorities while the middle and upper classes either had no social movement available under Polish rule or feared losing their property under the Soviets and Germans [54, p.151]. The Polish disillusionment was discussed above, however the Soviet authorities

enacted a mixture of repressive tactics in western Ukraine during its first initial occupational period between 1939 and 1941. Initially, “softer” forms of repression were used in their newly conquered territories with administrative restrictions (again based on ethnicity and political leanings) and social reconstruction attempts (primarily in education). First, there was a separation of nationalities: not only were the Polish children taken out of Polish schools but those schools were now depolonized. The Soviet system created language based schools in which varying nationalities (except the Polish one) created their own ethnic institutions. However, in all schools, history, religion, the Polish language, Latin and geography were banned. The second outcome of initial Soviet reformation was attempted secularization of society. Religious officials and symbols were generally regarded with disrespect under the new Soviet authority. Ivan Wasylycia recalled that the Soviets closed the local church and converted it to a military barracks while Wolodymyr Baziuk explained that his cross was yanked off his neck by a Soviet nurse during a medical check-up. However, these tactics were enhanced to include harsher measures against anyone assumed to be against the communist regime.

The beginning of the more extreme Soviet repression was the mass deportations and killings that corresponded with the Soviet use of coercive power to mould a socialist society. The first to be targeted for mass deportations were the Polish inhabitants of western Ukraine, however as many as 25,000 Ukrainians were also deported between 1940 and 1941. The deportations of untrustworthy elements of the population came very quickly for some: Poliuha recalled that those people who welcomed the Soviets into L’viv with their blue and yellow flags were also the first to be arrested. In this initial deportation were included Ukrainian communists – those who were usually members of the Western Ukrainian Communist Party prior to 1939 [22]. This was done because the majority of those involved with the communist party were intellectuals who were understandably disappointed with their eastern brethren. Wolodymyr Baziuk explained why the Soviets deported their fellow communists:

The first to get sent to Siberia were the Ukrainian communists because they saw the problems, the hypocrisy of the system. Instead of bringing independence to Ukraine, [the Soviets] brought more repression...One of my favourite professors; he taught Polish history and literature [before the Soviets]. His name was Prof. Paczynski. [He] was young and later under the Bolsheviks, we found out he was one of the leaders of the communist party in western Ukraine. When they formed one of the first Ukrainian high schools, he came in and began teaching Ukrainian [socialist] literature. He began criticizing this literature and called it all a farce. He thought he was safe because he was a communist and that they wouldn't do anything to him because of it...In the end...they shot him [55].

The greatest tragedy of the Soviet occupation was the mass killings of political prisoners in 1941 by the retreating Soviet authorities. Jan Gross describes the whole procedure as an unintermittent widespread and systematic killing method. The victims of this Soviet repression “did not necessarily speak a foreign tongue, have skin of a different hue, come from a different ethnic group or even belong to a distinct social class” [56, p.182]; yet, thousands died because they were deemed a political threat to the Soviet system. Some were genuinely Nationalist threats, yet the majority were usually Ukrainians who simply expressed their national consciousness. Stepan Babij's uncle for instance, was arrested by the Soviets for putting up the Ukrainian blue-yellow flag on his house [57]. The numbers involved were at time unimaginable: in the Lutsk prison, for example, out of roughly 3000 prisoners only 45 survived [58, p.164]. Within the walls of those prisons, inmates were no longer distinguished by nationality but were all treated in the same and equal way: their killings were indiscriminate and identical (usually a shot through the head). For those veterans who were directly affected by this shooting, this experience brought Soviet repression into reality.

The immediate effect of these killings upon the UPA veterans was the complete contempt against Soviet authority. This brutality and indiscriminate violence towards its own citizens culminated in the dissatisfaction of many in Ukrainian society towards the Soviet regime. The resentment that western

Ukrainians felt is described by Roger D. Peterson as a feeling “of being politically dominated by a group that has no right to be in a superior position” [69, p.40]. This frustration, which played a crucial role as a motivational factor for joining the UPA because it rationalized the risk associated with joining a violent and dangerous insurgency [54, p.155]. The return of Soviet rule and the experience of German occupation made this risk acceptable.

The greatest radicalization event that was recalled by many UPA veterans during the German occupation was the large deportations of Ukrainians to Germany. Not only did this symbolize the generalization of repression in Ukraine (for intellectuals and ardent political ideologues were no longer just targeted) but it now also began targeting young Ukrainians. By 1942, two-hundred thousand Ukrainians were working in Germany [60] and until the end of 1941 they were treated fairly well. Maksym Wowk, for instance, recalled that he received good food and good pay while working for “the industrial sector” near Düsseldorf [29]. Polish records also suggested that the Ukrainians were given more freedom compared with other Slavic people: Ukrainians only worked 8 hour days, had Sundays free and were given special passes to freely walk around the cities. They also received pay for their work: 25 Reich marks (RM) per month if one worked in the countryside and 1.20 RM per hour in the industrial sector. However, by the end of 1941 the situation changed when the German political attitude towards Ukrainians altered. The freedom that many enjoyed was taken away; food and clothing rations were reduced, and Ukrainians were considered “servants” who were regularly beaten, penalized and imprisoned for minor offences. Anelya Warvaruk, a Ukrainian forced worker, for example, recalled that her regular packages from home were taken away and she continued working the camp for several months without any shoes. She also recalled the severe beatings of the Germans and the solitary confinement she experienced for simply taking too many potatoes into the kitchen (rather than out of it) [61]. The Germans also stopped separating Ukrainians from Russians and called them “Soviet-Russians”; Ukrainians were under the classification of “Ost” and were treated the same way as

“the Poles and the Jews” [62]. The Polish Home Army report on Ukrainian workers in Germany suggested that the “Ukrainian workers led a miserable living with slow death from hunger and heavy work; or a rapid death from falling bombs” [63, p.394–395] Wowk also testified that after 1942 “the Germans began to shoot fifty young men in [his] area. Two of [his] cousins were killed there – Roman Wowk and Volodymyr Wowk” and this made him angry enough to escape and flee eastward. For him it made little sense in staying: “we’re working for you and you’re destroying our villages and people?” [29].

By mid-1942, with information coming from Germany about the dire living conditions, the physical abuse and threat of death, there were no more Ukrainians volunteering to work in Germany. This was when the Germans began forcibly “recruiting” from their occupied territories. In the last three months of 1942 for example, there was a 225,000 worker quota established [64, p.256, 259]. In order to fulfill these quotas the Germans held family members hostage and warned that if those sons and daughters who were in hiding did not “bring themselves in...they will start shooting” [65, p.30]. One UPA veteran who was sent to Galicia in an Ost battalion of labourers “became increasingly bitter against the Germans” there and was introduced to the nationalists who convinced him to escape and gave him clothing and safe passage through the territory [66]. These deportations were the initiative that some needed to take action against their fate, whether that be in the UPA or in other military institutions.

The German repressions reinstated the view that Ukrainians needed to fight for their own survival; relying on others was no longer an option. As Anna Buryj stated in her interview: “no one was willing to help us, so we helped ourselves” [67]. Instead of willingly accepting their fate, many young western Ukrainians took the risk of joining an insurgency which actually guaranteed their right of freedom and life. This pull into the nationalist underground however did not occur without a certain level of German repression: because of this repression, the UPA drew from a variety of social and political groups. The majority of these soldiers were farmers, with only the highest level of command being incorporated through

military trained professionals and intellectuals (about 15%). However, there was also a large number (roughly between 20-25%) of workers who joined – the majority of these volunteers were young (between 18-28 years of age) [68, p. 444]. While gaining an insight into the political leanings of many of the UPA veterans is difficult due to a lack of sources, one can ascertain from oral testimonies that UPA recruits did not necessarily have to have a nationalist ideology: Iryna Kozak was adamant in her testimony that Nationalist ideology was never a prerequisite for joining the UPA, she was rather annoyed at the misconception that only OUN members were UPA recruits [69]. In western Ukraine, the UPA fought the Germans because the behaviour of the occupational authority towards them; a Polish report stated that “Germany’s actions try to destroy the Ukrainian nation. There are exports to the Reich for work, work camps, persecutions, arrests, concentration camps, collection quotas, famine –this is why Ukrainians fight Germany” [63, p.7].

A last motivational theory that should be explored in examining western Ukrainians’ reasons in joining the UPA is the incentive theory. This theory suggests that there were certain social, political and economic goods and rewards are used to mobilize individuals “to do their part toward achieving the group goal” [70, p.60]. This theory is used to help explain the importance of survival for western Ukrainians as a key feature in the appealing image of the UPA – the German and Soviet threat had to be real enough for western Ukrainians to consider joining the UPA. In this way, the basic need to live was a reward for joining. Polish historian Wlodzimierz Medrzecki has understood this incentive based system and concluded that the actions of the Polish state nullified any hope of compromise between Ukrainians and Poles during the war, and as a result UPA recruitment was possible because it was seen as the only organization that was dedicated to Ukrainian interests [71, p.14–15].

The article links the incentive theory with the deprivation model – if one takes away the incentives that should be available to everyone equally (be they political freedoms, social rights or economic profits), there is a good chance that there will



be many forms of collective action that aim to re-attain those goods [72, p.33]. For many western Ukrainians, the lack of respect, equality and freedom they experienced during the SPR were then exaggerated by the occupational policies of the Germans and Soviets. This idea that people strive to attain the same basic rights within a society are encompassed in the original tenets of Hobbes' Social Contract. However, one has to understand that in order for groups of people to congregate together and rationally and voluntarily join a certain and specific organization they have to have some previous interaction and shared emotion with the group of people they intended to join [72, p.33, 118]. For many western Ukrainians it was the importance of collective identity that allowed them to choose the UPA: the Ukrainian Insurgent Army represented a defined "we" that resonated with "the understandings and expectations of [the] heterogeneous audience" [8, p.79].

In the eyes of the Ukrainians in the area, the UPA was their protector. Historian Timothy Snyder has pointed out that the UPA's simplistic nationalist message "brought intellectual order to an otherwise incomprehensible situation" [73, p.225]. Oleksa Konopadskij stated that in "Volhynia, the UPA became the defence for the Ukrainians against German-Gestapo, Moscow-Bolsheviks and Polish terror" [74, p.17]. Dmytro Shumuk recalled that in the spring of 1943, the UPA units were accepted into the Ukrainian villages as "honourable guests...they didn't fear [them] because the Nationalists were already powerful in the area, the Germans feared to go there" [75]. This idea was also repeated by other UPA soldiers, their leaders and even German officials. Yurii Stupnyts'kyi, for example added that towns and villages in the interior of Polissia and Volhynia were under UPA control while the border towns were under constant UPA attacks because these had a large German presence. "After a while, the Nazis decided to give up and moved to Kostopil" [31]. Some villages were so protected that the Germans did not venture into them for fear of insurgent reprisals. Yaroslava Levkovich, for example, described an encounter with German and Ukrainian soldiers: while the Germans "were excellent soldiers at the front" they were no insurgents. In her village, some Germans came asking for "milk and eggs...They came by and the

[insurgents] were sitting there and in a moment they fled and left the village” [76]. German reports echoed these claims believing that they only had control of the cities of Stolín, Sarny and Kostopil, while the Nationalists controlled the whole southern part of Volhynia [77].

The UPA installed their own form of stability amongst the Ukrainian population in western Ukraine. This stability included not only caring for Ukrainian citizens in the area, but also creating a form of economic mobilization that shadowed pre-war industry. For example, Harasym Hvylyja, was in charge of creating factories and did so in a village Kusnychah in Volhynia. This factory produced sweaters and mittens by the village girls spinning wool into yarn, which in turn was then made into the final products [65, p.34–35]. Along with this economic stimulation came material protection for UPA-members’ families. These included not only physical protection from Soviet partisans, but also material help in the form of bread, cattle and wood [78, p.461–462, 464]. Along with protection, the UPA gave the youth of their respective regions an opportunity to further their own development. In one Ivano-Frankivsk region for example, there were 218 people at an UPA training camp in July 1944 [79]. This gave them the opportunity to become a part of the military organization and to further their own military training. In 1943, Evhen Blonsky joined the UPA and was given the opportunity to join the medical training camp and became an orderly for the Ukrainian Red Cross [80]. The UPA offered protection, but also offered services for the young Ukrainians that were otherwise unimaginable. Higher educational opportunities were denied to Ukrainians under German occupation due to Hitler’s insistence on keeping Ukrainian education to a “bare minimum” in order to create a “colonial people” in the east [81, p.138, 141]. The UPA became alternatives to this educational barrier.

The same can be said about the UPA activity in Lemkivshchyna after 1944 when it became fully active in the region. Yuriy Borets-Chumak stated that while, “in the cities and by the main roads, the army was moving and the war was raging, in the small villages of Lemkivshchyna there was a different atmosphere. Here, far

away from the main roads, the partisan life was flourishing” [82, p.44]. Commander “Khrin” called this new stable state his “UPA Republic” [34, p.177]. It helped that the terrain in the region was mountainous and was difficult to navigate by traditional motorized means: Anna Shumada’s village, for instance, had an UPA kitchen and members left their horses there because it “was tucked away and not that many people came there” [83]. It was not until September when two Polish army divisions moved into the area that the UPA had to completely move into the forests [84, p.90]. This sentiment was also multiplied by other UPA veterans who all thought that in those early months of 1945 (and in some villages even until 1946), the UPA was the sole protector of Ukrainian identity and people; as one veteran described it: “we at one time, had a Ukrainian autonomy for about 6 months...it was our Republic” [85]. In this republic there were special committees set up to reinforce manufacturing of weapons, food, material and other essential items for the insurgents. Those citizens who were deemed “most liked and trusted” were even given access to the UPA food stores and the Ukrainian population of the region as actively encouraged to have their own food storage in hiding [86, p.37]. There was also a reinforcement of administrative responsibilities. This UPA “Republic” managed registry information such as death and birth certificates, travel papers in order for inhabitants to be able to freely and safely leave and enter the “Republic” zone and even printed money [87].

The effect of years of repression created a section of the Ukrainian population who felt not only frustrated with the lack of political independence but was also frustrated by their exclusion from everyday aspects of life. There was resentment against the Polish, Soviet and German state because Ukrainians were not viewed as “good enough.” The Second Polish Republic separated its Ukrainian minority both economically and politically from wider Polish society, influencing the manner in which Ukrainians both reflected upon themselves and viewed their national interests as distinct from those of the Polish state. The ostracism of Ukrainians sowed the seeds of self-determination, which was encouraged by uniquely Ukrainian national identity and fostered by a Ukrainian national consciousness. In

addition to the development of a national consciousness, the dislocation caused by the Second World War and the suspension of the norms of society heightened the increasing need for individuals to determine their own survival. The nature of the Soviet occupation compounded the general atmosphere of resentment with foreign occupation whilst German rule was little better. Motivations for joining cannot not be reduced to one simple explanation – various experiences and influences need to be identified to explain why western Ukrainians joined the insurgency, experiences that cannot not be attributed only to the Second Polish Republic or to the Soviet Union or Germany, but rather experiences that need to be analyzed both individually and in conjunction with one another in order to determine why the UPA was viewed as a viable choice.

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### **Теоретичні та практичні мотивації для вступу в українську повстанську армію**

*У статті розглянуто причини вступу до УПА на основі усноїсторичних інтерв’ю. Охарактеризовано початкову діяльність УПА крізь призму мемуаристики. Проаналізовано репресивно-каральні дії СРСР проти УПА.*

**Ключові слова:** Українська повстанська армія, мотивація, Друга світова війна, Друга Річ Посполита, Радянський Союз, Німеччина, націоналізм, репресія, стимули, раціональний вибір, поневіряння.

### **Теоретические и практические мотивации для вступления в украинскую повстанческую армию**

*В статье рассмотрены причины вступления в УПА на основе устноисторических интервью. Охарактеризована начальная деятельность УПА сквозь призму мемуаристики. Проанализированы репрессивно-карательные действия СССР против УПА.*

**Ключевые слова:** Украинская повстанческая армия, мотивация, Вторая мировая война, Вторая Речь Посполитая, Советский Союз, Германия, национализм, репрессия, стимулы, рациональный выбор, лишения.