

## INTELLIGENCE AND OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE SECURITY SERVICE OF THE UKRAINIAN NATIONALISTS' ORGANIZATION: HISTORICAL AND LEGAL ASPECT



### *Liubomyr Ilyn*

*PhD (History), Associate Professor, Associate Professor of the Department of Theory and History of State and Law King Danylo University, Ivano-Frankivsk, Konovaltsia St. 35, Ukraine*



### *Dmytro Sposib*

*Postgraduate student of the Department of Theory and History of State and Law of the Educational and Scientific Legal Institute of the Precarpathian National University named after Vasyl Stepanyk, Nezalezhnosti St. 136/5, Ukraine*

**UDK 340.11**

**Abstract. Objective.** The objective of the publication is to determine the historical and legal aspects of the research organization and operational activities of the Security Service of the Ukrainian Nationalists' Organization as a public authority with special powers, which, even in the absence of national statehood, carried out effective activities and opposed the Soviet and Nazi intelligence agencies of the time. **Methodology.** The methodology involves a complex analysis and generalization of the theoretical and initial material and the further formulation of corresponding conclusions and recommendations. For the research objectivity, a complex of general scientific, special and legal, special and historical and philosophical methods of scientific knowledge, the principles of objectivity, systematicity and comprehensiveness were used. **Results.** It was established that the OUN Security Service was formed in February 1939 and for the next years it was organizationally issued as the separate executive body possessing numerous functions and powers. The main functions were intelligence and operative which were intended to resist to the Soviet, German and Polish intelligence agencies and also to fight against the «melnykivtsi» and other Ukrainian political movements that were antagonistic to the OUN. Intelligence activities were accurately structured and were guided by the NKVD Soviet bodies in their organizational structure. Operational activity also included preparation and conducting interrogations and the execution of the relevant documentation. **Scientific novelty.** The article describes the experience of conducting intelligence and operational work of the SB OUN which emerged before World War II, managed to resist to the German, Soviet and Polish special services effectively, and became an example of the effective model of the safety power body organization the experience of which can be used today.

**Practical importance.** The results of the research can be used in further historical and legal and philosophical and legal researches and the preparation of special courses.

**Keywords:** *Ukrainian Nationalists' organization, security service, national movement, nationalism, statehood, national state, operational activity, intelligence activities.*

## Introduction

**The Problem Formulation.** The Ukrainian tradition of state formation is extremely interesting, ambiguous and poorly researched. Even in the 20th century, many «dark spots» have formed the distorted idea of the past and have a powerful ideological impact on the present. The events of the World War II times and the activity of the Ukrainian Nationalists' Organization which adhered to the frank and radical nationalist views are of particular interest and had the only purpose – the revival of the independent Ukrainian state. It was difficult to implement it in view of several reasons. First, after World War I, Ukrainian lands were included in the structure of the USSR, Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia. Secondly, the government of each of these countries, except for Czechoslovakia, pursued chauvinistic policy toward the Ukrainians which characteristic feature was terror and repressions. Thirdly, Ukrainians, first of all representatives of political emigration, did not pursue active international policy of the national statehood directed to the revival or providing the Ukrainian nation with political self-determination. On the other hand, in 1939 objective and subjective factors of the national state revival were formed. The Germany's frank expansion policy was objective and did not deny the possibility of creating a separate Ukrainian state during the negotiations with the OUN representatives. Following Germany's invasion of the USSR in June 1941, it was the easiest way to realize these promises. The subjective factors were - an internal split in the OUN environment into a conservative, pro-German current of «melnykivtsi» and a radical, state one «banderivtsi». For the last ones the struggle for the Ukrainian statehood restoration was crucial even providing the opposition with Germans, Bolsheviks and the Polish nationalist underground.

In these circumstances, the establishment of SB OUN in February 1939 was justified, and after declaration on June 30, 1941 of the Act of the Ukrainian statehood restoration and the implementation of the idea of the Ukrainian Independent Cathedral State, usual safe body turned into the effective institute of executive power, uniting intelligence, counterintelligence, organizational, operational, ideological and judicial functions.

**The analysis of the latest researches and publications.** The problem of the SB OUN activity is new to Ukrainian historical and legal science. There are several reasons for this. First, the Soviet scientific opinion took the OUN as the collaborators, and the Ukrainians' right to the national state, as well as the concepts «Ukrainians» and «Ukrainian nation» were denied a priori. Secondly, for the years of independence, the Ukrainians' liberation movement before, during and after World War II, gained political coloration that interfered with objective studying of the problem. Thirdly, it was noticed that there was a lack of sources, which were referred to the category of confidential in the Soviet period. The SBU promulgation of a number of archival funds has allowed scientists to investigate the nationalist underground on the basis of a thorough empirical base. A positive exception to this is Ukrainian historians' research whose were the only source of the realization of the Ukrainian state formation processes of the

middle of the 20th century until recently. However, they are rich in facts and analytical conclusions of the publication, they do not reveal the specifics of the OUN legal status, the functions and legal field of SB OUN activity, etc. Such situation causes scientific relevance of our research.

The publications of such scientists as Y. Antonyuk, G. Bystrukhin, D. Vedeneyev, S. Grabovsky, O. Ishchuk, V. Ilnitsky, I. Kachanovsky, V. Ogorodnik, Y. Yurchuk, etc. became a methodological basis of the research.

**The problem definition.** The purpose of the publication is to identify the historical and legal aspects of the organization of the Security Service intelligence and operational activities of the Ukrainian Nationalists' Organization as a state body with special powers which even in the absence of national statehood carried out effective work and

resisted to the Soviet and Nazi intelligence agencies of the time.

**The statement of the main research material.** Among contemporary researchers of the Ukrainian national liberation movement of the middle of the 20th century, and in particular the OUN, there is no unambiguous approach to the date defining the establishment of the OUN Security Service (further – SB OUN). We are inclined to hold the S. Grabovsky opinion that institutional registration of SB OUN took place in February 1939 (Grabovsky, S., [www.RadioSvoboda.org](http://www.RadioSvoboda.org)), and the guide of UVO-OUN Konovalets' murder committed by NKVD agent P. Sudoplatov (*Materials and Documents of the OUN...*, (2003), p. 46) was a reason for creation of the similar safety organization. It was for sure that the executive authority was not full-fledged and independent, but it satisfied solutions of a number of reasons that led to its establishment, in particular:

- the implementation of counterintelligence activities against the Soviet and Polish intelligence agencies, and after 1941 against the German ones;

- the protection of the nationalist movement leaders (hereinafter referred to the part of the OUN which was guided by S. Bandera and adhered to his political and legal views) against possible terrorist attacks, arrests, etc. The SB OUN separate division which was engaged in Bandera's personal protection was created for this purpose. It consisted of several dozen of people who had prevented 5 attempts on the Ukrainian nationalist underground leader's life for 15 years (Antonyuk, Y. (2018), p. 109);

- opposition to the Soviet totalitarian system, which since September 1939 launched a policy of Sovietization in western Ukraine with its inherent terror, deportation and murder of Ukrainians.

Since the end of September, 1939 the Soviet authorities began open fight against the Ukrainian, Polish, Jewish political movements and also political parties and forces that did not support the Bolshevik ideology. V. Ilnitsky, having processed archival funds, proved that retaliatory sentences and cases against supporters of national movements and opponents of the Soviet power were group and carried out

against several hundred people at the same time (Ilnitskyi, V. (2018), pp. 4-17).

For the OUN, there was also a practical need for its own security body, as also internal opposition between Melnik and Bandera's supporters escalated. The last ones adhered to radical methods of fight for the national state and were guided by military fight, and therefore intelligence and counterintelligence institutions had to be key. The split in the Ukrainian national lead that in O. Ishuk and V. Ogorodnik's opinion was a key factor of the OUN(b)'s own Security Service formation where «professional workers of special structures of the former unified OUN who were called «seven» went over» (Ishchuk, O., Ogorodnik, V. (2010), p. 4). The leaders of «seven» M. Lebed and M. Arsenych undertook the organization of SB OUN work, and later headed it.

In 1940, SB OUN formed into the separate speechwriting office of nationalist movement that gave the chance to carry out vigorous activity in many directions. For a short time safe and counterrevolutionary body turned into the full-fledged ministry (since June, 1941 it was issued from the legal point of view by the inclusion of SB OUN to the government, so-called Ukrainian Government, as the separate ministry).

By studying the published and unpublished materials, the Ukrainian and foreign scientists' researches, it is possible to distinguish several main directions and functions of the SB OUN which were naturally transformed under the influence of various factors, first of all the fight against Nazi and Soviet intelligence agencies. In our opinion, the main functions of the SB OUN which it carried out constantly were:

- organizational;
- secure;
- operative (operative and intelligence);
- intelligence;
- counterintelligence;
- judicial;
- police;
- military;
- ideological and educational.

In practice they were often intertwined, that was caused by wartime conditions as well as the search by the OUN management of effective means and models of internal order organization and protection against external influences. From the legal point of view, the SB OUN combined law-enforcement, judicial,

military and information powers, and adjustment of wide network of agencies demonstrated the efficiency of such an approach. At the same time, it should be emphasized that after 1941, the experience of the Soviet intelligence agencies' work, in particular to the NKVS, was based on the organizational structure and, accordingly, on the functional orientation of the SB OUN.

In our opinion, the operational and intelligence functions are the most interesting ones in terms of studying the historical and legal content of the SB OUN work. First, the operational function was the main one and provided the effective functioning of this body until the early 1960s, that is, until the last days of the confrontation with the Bolshevik regime. Secondly, intelligence activities enabled to take preventive measures in the fight both with internal and external enemies. Thirdly, operational and intelligence activities became pledge to the nationalist underground functioning in the absence of the national state and the armed opposition with three opponents - the German and Red armies and with the Polish national underground.

**Intelligence function.** The implementation of intelligence activities by the SB OUN was its fundamental task and was proved from the ideological point of view. In 1944, one of the reviewers of the SB OUN by nickname Arkas wrote in an instruction to ordinary staff members of the service that every conscious Ukrainian should be an intelligence agent (*Vedeneyev, D. V., Bystrukhin, G. S. (2006).*, p. 192). These words are justified also from the practical point of view as the nationalist underground acted in the conditions of occupation of the Ukrainian lands and constant armed struggle. Actually, patriotism became one of the major factors in the selection of SB OUN staff and agents. Primarily women organized the wide intelligence network, which was formed on places, as most of men were a part of the fighting force.

Collecting data on the relocation of enemy military units, the facts of locals' possible cooperation with occupational forces and also an agency of NKVS (*Vedeneyev, D. V., Bystrukhin, G. S. (2006).*, p. 193) were the intelligence agents' main objectives. It was interesting to build a system of communication between intelligence agents, which in the absence of any technical means

relied on people and so-called «shronas». The Ukrainian researchers distinguish two types of the intelligence communication – «alive» and «dead» (*Vedeneyev, D. V., Bystrukhin, G. S. (2006).*, p. 193). The first one was carried out by couriers (women and men), and the second one – the information remained in secret places and persons who transmitted it did not meet and were not familiar. Such an approach allowed to avoid the possible victims and provocations. The available data on the intelligence activities of SB OUN organization allow creating the scheme of the structure and mechanism of information transfer obtained by intelligence agents, which included:

- 1) intelligence agents of the certain settlement or object;
- 2) the commandant of the settlement intelligence;
- 3) district and subdistrict referent;
- 4) intelligence headquarters.

The first two links reported to the district referent daily, and he prepared summary information to the headquarters on the 5th, on the 15th and on the 25th each month.

The efficiency of information transfer and also the avoidance of informants' personal contact were the keys to intelligence activities success. The informants and intelligence agents themselves were subjected to high requirements, which were registered in numerous instructions and orders. Respect for the ideas of the OUN and patriotism were the main of them. Besides I.Q., memories level and a moral and psychological state were estimated (*Vedeneyev, D. V., Bystrukhin, G. S. (2006).*, p. 194). It was natural as the obtained information should have been analysed, remembered in details and transmitted in the most precise way. The special contract was signed with the person who was accepted in ranks of intelligence agents. That is intelligence activities was based on a clear legal basis.

The contract signing with the intelligence agent was also caused by a wide range of work which assigned to the informant. The analysis of the available resources suggests that the main focus was placed on the Soviet power – the relocation of the regular army, guerrilla formations, the work of the NKVS bodies, local administration, the control of migrants from the eastern regions, who came to the West in the fall of 1939. Great attention was also paid to the relocation of German troops and the work of the occupational local

authorities. The separate block of intelligence work was the struggle against the Polish nationalist underground, «melnykivtsi» and other patriotic and political movements, acting in the territory of Western Ukraine. Much attention was paid to the monitoring of the population's mood, their support and the relation to the OUN, the position of religious communities, factory and plants' workers. The moral and psychological state of underground members was studied (Vedeneyev, D. V., Bystrukhin, G. S. (2006)., p. 195). The only thing that did not manage to be realized for all the time of SB OUN existence – to include the agent in the ranks of the Soviet NKVS. There was a lack of experience and time to train the staff. Instead, a large network of agents among the ordinary list of Red Army men, guerrillas, and even militiamen was formed. It managed to be reached thanks to the fact that many of the soldiers and guerrillas became militiamen after the war, had relatives among the OUN members, and held nationalistic views. The practice of the intelligence network organizing in the ranks of the Soviet paramilitary bodies was the most successful (Antonyuk, Y. M. (2013), p. 84).

As of 1944, the SB OUN succeeded in forming an effective secret service network that provided the nationalist underground with valuable information. The quality of an organized intelligence network can be evidenced by the words of the memorandum from the Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR, which referred to the Ukrainian nationalists' numerous underground network among the civilians of the western regions of the USSR, and the the OUN itself was defined as the primary enemy of the Soviet power (Vedeneyev, D. V., Bystrukhin, G. S. (2006)., p. 196). The fact that the SB OUN trained the operatives also for the opposition to Bolsheviks was the reason for this and thoroughly taught them the models of the NKVD work. Thus, in October 1944 «The instruction for the SB OUN about the structure and methods of the Soviet intelligence agencies' work and the fight against them» was published. The detailed information on the new body of NKGB structure created in 1941, so-called «political police» which work was directed to the opposition with the OUN was given in it. (*Materials and Documents of the OUN...*, (2003), p. 183-192).

Active intelligence activities led to the formation of its own system of the operational

activity, which relied on the results of the collected information. The well-established work on the formation of card file and written reports on the results of investigation allows modern researchers to understand the specifics and the directions of the SB OUN work, its practical progress and the possibilities of applying its experience today.

The scale on operational work maturity is confirmed by the scheme of the field investigator's report organization for half a month of work. The obligatory paragraphs of such a report were: «Organizational affairs»; «The Bolshevik Case»; «The German Case»; «The Polish Case»; «Ukrainian business»; «National Case» (Vedeneyev, D. V., Bystrukhin, G. S. (2006)., p. 199). Thus, the provided offers accurately corresponded to the directions of intelligence activities of SB OUN.

According to the results of the operational activity, the regional referents prepared the final reports, which provided information on the completed operational work volume, the number of persons detained and questioned. The submission of information on Soviet NKVS-NKDB bodies' work methods was a part of such a report. Thus, in the SB Kolomyia sub-district OUN leader V. Melnichuk «Ostap»'s report of October 5, 1948 it was mentioned that the attention of the NKVS bodies to the areas of OUN fighters' concentration, as well as the information obtained from the local resident M. Dranchuk about the arrival of the new operative group in the district of Kolomyia (*Litopys UPA. Tom 26.* (2016), p. 127) was provided. Accordingly, it was recommended that maximum security measures should have been taken and the nationalist underground soldiers who were hiding in the forests or villages around Kolomyia should have worn masks.

All collected information was subject to systematization compliance with the established standards. It was accepted to distinguish:

- 1) data on the opponent's agents;
- 2) suspected of the relations with NKVS;
- 3) personnel of the NKVS bodies and troops;
- 4) representatives of the bodies of the Soviet power, the Communist Party, the Komsomol, national education, cooperation;
- 5) the former intelligence agents of SB OUN who were revealed or compromised with



NKVS (*Vedeneyev, D. V., Bystrukhin, G. S. (2006).*, p. 200-201).

Besides, each of these groups of intelligence data had subgroups. Subgroups are interesting from a scientific point of view. So D. Vedeneyev and G. Bystrukhin identified 9 separate subgroups in which data about the following were stored:

- 1) the persons who confessed to cooperating with enemies, or the fact of cooperation was established by investigation;
- 2) the persons who escaped from prisons or pre-trial detention centers;
- 3) the persons who were under investigation and were released;
- 4) the repatriates who came back from Germany;
- 5) the persons who voluntarily admitted the fact of cooperation with the enemy;
- 6) the persons suspected of having fictitious documents;
- 7) the persons who worked in the authorities and the police until 1941;
- 8) the specialists who arrived from the eastern regions of Ukraine;
- 9) militiamen, fighters of destructive battalions, activists, handicraftsmen workers (*Vedeneyev, D. V., Bystrukhin, G. S. (2006).*, p. 201).

Such an approach was caused by need of rapid response on possible the anti-Ukrainian activity of the Soviet and German intelligence agencies that allowed to take preventive measures in case of identification of the facts

of cooperation with the opponent. Such quick was activity exemplary for the 20th century and even presently, in the conditions of digital technologies, it is striking in its coherence.

Considering such system approach to the organization of the operational activity, great attention was also paid to the investigators' and interrogating officers' training. In one of the instructions for SB OUN staff, it was noted that the investigator has to be able to organize interrogation correctly and according to the investigation interests (*Materials and Documents of the OUN...*, (2003), p. 182). This document is also interesting because the eyewitness' and the interrogating officer's rights and duties were clearly defined in it.

The main positive of the SB OUN research is overcoming the negative stereotype about this organization and its activity in the majority of modern Ukrainians. Scientists themselves face the choice choice between two paradigms – the restoration of the past and the reconciliation with the past (*Yurchuk, Y.*, p. 130). Unfortunately, the choice of the correct paradigm took place only after 2014 – Russia's military aggression against Ukraine and the ideological motive of fight against so-called «Banderivtsi». It led to the formulation of one more ideological choice – the OUN is national heroes or terrorists (*Katchanovski, I. (2015), p. 218*).

## Conclusions

Thus, the analysis of the intelligence and operational functions of the SB OUN revealed that:

- the set of objective and subjective factors which led to the creation of the SB OUN caused the dominance of the intelligence and operational function of this security body, which was an independent executive body from the legal point of view;
- intelligence activities of the the SB OUN were directed to the opposition to the Soviet, German and Polish intelligence agencies, as well as to the fight against other political movements which were antagonistic to the nationalist underground;
- the main focus in the intelligence activities was on opposition to the Soviet Law Enforcement Agencies of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs-NKGB, from which the organizational structure and the principles of the operational activity were borrowed;
- operational activity included the existence of an accurate system of conducting interrogation and investigative actions with persons who cooperated with enemy intelligence agencies. The structured system of the accounting of the carried-out activity was the significant experience of the operational work.

## References

1. Grabovsky, S. Interviu z V. Kukom ta V. Ponamorovym [*Interview with V. Cook and V. Ponomaryov*]. URL: [www.RadioSvoboda.org](http://www.RadioSvoboda.org).
2. Materialy ta dokumenty Sluzhby bezpeky OUN (b) u 1940-kh rr. [*Materials and Documents of the OUN Security Service (b) in the 1940s*] / Uporiad.: O. Ye. Lysenko, I. K. Patryliak. K.: In-t istorii Ukrainy NAN Ukrainy, 2003. 254 s.
3. Antoniuk, Ya. (2018). Stepan Bandera's safeguards: achievements and defeats (1945 – 1959). *Skhidnoevropejskyi istorychnyi visnyk* [East European Historical Bulletin] / [holovnyi redaktor V. Ilnytskyi]. Drohobych: Vydavnychiy dim «Helvetyka»/ Vyp. 9. S. 108-118. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24919/2519-058x.11.170710>.
4. Ilnytskyi, V. (2018). Spotting and liquidation of ukrainian, polish and jewish organizations in Drohobych by soviet repressive units (1940). *Skhidnoevropejskyi istorychnyi visnyk* [East European Historical Bulletin] / [holovnyi redaktor V. Ilnytskyi]. Drohobych: Vydavnychiy dim «Helvetyka». Vyp. 7. P. 111-119. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24919/2519-058x.7.130646>.
5. Ishchuk, O., Ogorodnik, V. (2010). Mykola Arsenych – orhanizator ta kerivnyk Sluzhby bezpeky OUN(b) u 1941 – 1947 rr. [*Mykola Arsenych – the organizer and head of the OUN Security Service (b) in 1941 – 1947*]. *Mandrivets* [Mandrivets]. Ternopil: Vydavnytstvo «Mandrivets». №6. S. 4-17.
6. Vedeneyev, D. V., Bystrukhin, G. S. (2006). Mech i tryzub. Rozvidka i kontrrozvidka rukhu ukraïnskykh natsionalistiv ta UPA. 1920-1945. [*The sword and the trident. Intelligence and Counterintelligence of Ukrainian nationalists' Movement and UPA. 1920-1945*]. K.: Heneza. 408 s.
7. Antonyuk, Y.M. (2013) SB OUN (b) na Volyni ta Zakhidnomu Polissi (1946–1951 rr.): monohrafiia [*SB OUN (b) in Volyn and Western Polissya (1946–1951): monograph*]. Lutsk: Kliuchi. 270 s.
8. Litopys UPA. Tom 26. Kolomyiska okruha OUN: Dokumenty i materialy referentury SB (1945-1950). [*The Chronicle of the UPA. Volume 26. OUN Kolomyia District: Documents and Materials of speechwriting office of WB (1945-1950)*]. Kyiv–Toronto: Chronicle of the UPA, 2016. 568 p.
9. Yurchuk, Y. Reclaiming the Past, Confronting the Past: OUN–UPA Memory Politics and Nation Building in Ukraine (1991–2016). *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*. P. 107-137. URL: [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-66523-8\\_4](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-66523-8_4). DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-66523-8\_4.
10. Katchanovski, I. (2015). Terrorists or National Heroes? Politics and Perceptions of the OUN and the UPA in Ukraine. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Volume 48, Issues 2-3, June-September, P. 217-228. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2015.06.006>.