

Ukraine premier's pro-Nazi version of World War II: USSR invaded Ukraine, Germany

By Lena Sokoll
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In a recent broadcast of “Tagesthemen”, the main newscast of Germany’s ARD public television channel, Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk grotesquely distorted the history of World War II, accusing the Soviet Union of having invaded Germany and Ukraine.

Remarkably, this brazen and thoroughly calculated falsehood, designed to promote the myth of a joint German-Ukrainian struggle against a Soviet-Russian aggressor, went unchallenged by the presenter. It has not been denounced by the broadcaster in retrospect.

The interview, conducted with Yatsenyuk during his visit to German Chancellor Angela Merkel on January 7, consisted largely of anti-Russian ranting. Presenter Pinar Atalay’s innocuous and unfocused questions remained unanswered, and only amounted to brief interruptions to Yatsenyuk’s castigation of Putin, Russia and the Soviet Union.

Yatsenyuk said, “Russian aggression in Ukraine is an attack on world order and order in Europe. All of us still clearly remember the Soviet invasion of Ukraine and Germany. That has to be avoided. And nobody has the right to rewrite the results of the Second World War. And that is exactly what Russia’s President Putin is trying to do.”

Atalay made no comment on this scandalous historical lie, i.e. that the Soviet Union—not Nazi Germany—had invaded Ukraine. The television station responded to a complaint about the programme from the Public Committee for Public Service Media, remarking that the quality of the simultaneous Russian-German translation was too poor for the presenter to question the statement during the ongoing interview. In fact, however, the “Tagesthemen” news item was a recording of the interview, and there was no critical response to Yatsenyuk’s lie from the

programme’s director or ARD.

Five days after the interview, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* newspaper attacked not Yatsenyuk and ARD, but the Russian foreign ministry, which vehemently rejected the Ukrainian prime minister’s account, citing the proceedings of the Nuremberg Trials.

“As to the Second World War,” wrote Russia correspondent Kerstin Holm in the *Blatt* newspaper, “the thinking of the Russians is set in concrete ... But disabused countrymen remember that Russia, in the wake of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, was an aggressor in World War II and was responsible for the Katyn massacre”.

Holm also claims that “Liberation could at best be said to apply to the expulsion of the Nazis, but not to the Sovietisation of reconquered areas”.

The German government did not distance itself from Yatsenyuk’s remarks or comment on his statements. Foreign office spokesman Martin Shepherd said: “Like anyone here in Germany—politicians, citizens or sports celebrities—the Ukrainian prime minister has the right to tell the German media whatever he deems appropriate. That is part and parcel of our extremely important right to freedom of expression”.

Thus, the results of the Nuremberg Trials and the denial of German guilt in the Second World War are declared to be matters of opinion. In fact, the German *Wehrmacht* (army) and *Waffen-SS* waged a war of extermination in Ukraine, whose barbarism still stands out among the countless atrocities and crimes of the Nazi dictatorship and the world war that it wanted and started.

On June 22, 1941, German *Wehrmacht* troops stormed across the borders of the USSR without any declaration of war, aiming to engulf the enemy in a

Blitzkrieg and push them far back into the interior of the country. While the northern and central sectors of the army had orders to capture Leningrad and Moscow, the southern army sector marched on Kiev. It was supported in this by two battalions of Ukrainian nationalists, code-named “Nightingale” and “Roland”, marching in German uniforms and under German army command.

These Ukrainian battalions were recruited from the rabid anti-Semitic and anti-Communist Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) under the leadership of Stepan Bandera. After the invasion and with the approval of the German occupiers, they took over management of police stations and launched pogroms. In late June 1941, the German occupiers incited the first major pogrom, in the Galician city of Lviv, which was carried out with the active support of the OUN. The public hunting down of Jews claimed at least 4,000 lives.

Many massacres and pogroms followed. The largest single extermination took place shortly after the sacking of Kiev on September 29-30, 1941 in the ravine of Babi Yar. Approximately 33,000 Kiev Jews were killed, including elderly people, women and children who had not been able to flee from the advancing army. The massacre was one of the crimes prosecuted at the Nuremberg Trials. Approximately 850,000 Jews were murdered in the German war of extermination in Ukraine.

Judaism and Bolshevism were synonymous in the propaganda of the Nazis and the OUN. The murder of Jews was seen and propagandised as equivalent to the anti-Soviet struggle. The brutal terror waged against the Jews and the determination to destroy particularly the Jewish people in occupied Ukraine flowed from the German Reich’s resolve to annihilate the Soviet Union and the impact of the world’s first socialist revolution.

The Wehrmacht’s conquest of Ukraine not only entailed a deep incursion into Soviet territory. It also cut off the rest of the USSR from Ukraine’s fertile agricultural land and large coal reserves. While the USSR was weakened by hunger, Nazi Germany exploited Ukraine’s resources, deporting over a million Ukrainians to work in German industry and agriculture as slave labour.

The German occupiers were therefore unwilling to tolerate any notion of an independent Ukraine. When

the OUN proclaimed Ukraine’s independence in Lviv on June 30, 1941, Bandera was taken into “protective custody” in then Sachsenhausen concentration camp. This was not the end of collaboration between the German occupiers and Ukrainian fascists, however.

OUN supporters remained active in administration and as an auxiliary police force in the organisation of the Holocaust in Ukraine. Tens of thousands of them served as volunteers in SS divisions, directly aiding the Nazis in combat against the Red Army.

The current Ukrainian leadership, which was backed by Germany in the coup d’état that brought it to power last spring, stands unashamedly in this bloody tradition of Ukrainian nationalists and fascists. They extol Stepan Bandera as a national hero and rely on an alliance with Germany against Russia as the basis of their political power.

Members of Yatsenyuk’s government maintain close relations with fascist elements and place them in key positions.

Interior Minister Arsen Avakov appointed the fascist, Vadim Trojan, chief of police for the Kiev region in November 2014. Trojan was commander of the extreme right-wing Azov volunteer battalion, some of whose members wear helmets with swastikas and SS runes in the fighting against pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Another commander of the Azov battalion, Andriy Bilezki, told the British *Telegraph* newspaper: “The historical mission of our nation in these crucial times is to lead the white races of the world in the final crusade for their survival”.

The installation of such violently reactionary forces in power in Kiev and the support given to them by the imperialist powers of NATO requires the rewriting and falsification of history. This is the significance of Yatsenyuk’s statements to ARD, and the silence of authorities in Germany on them.

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