



Fascism or ustashism? Ukrainian integral nationalism of the 1920s–1930s in comparative perspective[☆]



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ABSTRACT

Although considering Ukrainian integral nationalism as a variety of fascism is not without foundation (especially within the framework of the history of ideas), the fascist model has a limited heuristic value for the Ukrainian case. The proper designation for the ideology and practice of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and similar movements in stateless nations is not fascism, but rather *ustashism* (from the Croatian Ustaša), which can be defined as revolutionary integral nationalism developing under conditions of perceived foreign oppression and using violence for the purpose of national liberation and the creation of an independent authoritarian state.

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1. Introduction – the main argument

The period between the two world wars in Europe has rightfully been called the epoch of fascism (Nolte, 1966; Griffin with Feldman, 2004) – no other ideology, including Communism, competed with it in scope and dynamic of influence. Not only some nation-states, but also the nationalist movements of stateless peoples became voluntary prisoners of the fascist myth. The case of the organizations of stateless peoples like the Ustaša – Croatian Revolutionary Movement (before 1941) or the Organization of the Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) presents a typological and terminological problem. Some authors regard them as fascist or fascistic, but is it by definition possible for a stateless nation to generate its own fascism?

As early as the late 1960s, John A. Armstrong drew parallels between the three nationalist movements – the OUN, Ustaša, and the Slovak People's Party (Armstrong, 1968). He showed the differences between Eastern European integral nationalist movements and fascism, arguing that the basic motivation of the former's collaborationism during World War II was ethnic rather than ideological. Unfortunately, the idea, which was implicitly present in Armstrong's article, that movements such as the OUN, Ustaša, and the Slovak Populists should be considered within a separate type of integral nationalism¹ in stateless nations has not received a thorough development in historiography.

Although there is a plethora of studies of interwar and wartime Ukrainian nationalism, and some of the works are of high quality, one can find in the field a lot of myths and misinterpretations curiously mixed with considerable factual material and

[☆] In this text, some excerpts are used from a related article by the author, translated into English by Stephen D. Shenfield (Zaitsev, 2013b).

¹ Here I understand integral nationalism as a form of authoritarian nationalism that regards the nation as an organic whole and demands the unreserved subordination of an individual to the interests of his or her nation, which are placed above the interests of any social group, other nations, and humanity as a whole. The term was first used by the French royalist and leader of *Action Française*, Charles Maurras in 1900 (Buthman, 1939: 111). Carlton J. H. Hayes introduced it into academic usage as a generic concept in the late 1920s (Hayes, 1968: 164–224). The first, who in the 1950s applied the term to Ukrainian nationalism, was John A. Armstrong (1955, 1990). On authoritarian nationalism and its different “faces” see Payne (1995: 14–19).

well-grounded interpretations. Two contradictory and almost mutually exclusive trends still compete in historiography: one emphasizes the liberation character of the nationalists' struggle for an independent state, rejecting or ignoring extremist, xenophobic, and totalitarian elements in their ideology and practice (Vyatrovych, 2006; Mirchuk, 2007; Kvit, 2013); the other exposes the extremist, totalitarian, and "fascist" nature of the nationalist movement, denying any liberation and democratic elements in them (Poliszczyk, 2003; Grott, 2010; Rossolinski-Liebe, 2014). Some in-depth and impartial studies usually lack a comparative perspective (Wysocki, 2003; Kentii, 2005). After Armstrong's article, there were no comparative studies that would cover the Ukrainian case and other major cases of integral nationalist movements in stateless nations of Eastern Europe.

The main argument of this article is the following: integral nationalist organizations of stateless peoples like the OUN, Ustaša, and others constitute a separate genus of political movements and respective ideologies, different both from fascism and from the democratic trend in national liberation movements. Just in the frame of this genus the comparative historical approach can be the most fruitful. Unfortunately, there is no special term in historiography and political science for the designation of this type of movement. In some of my works I have chosen for this purpose the term *ustashism* (Zaitsev, 2012, 2013a, 2013b), which is sometimes used to denote the ideology and practice of the Ustaša of Croatia. Here I use the term in a generic sense, taking the Ustaša as a paradigmatic case. In this understanding, *ustashism* can be defined as revolutionary integral nationalism developing under conditions of perceived foreign oppression and using violence for the purpose of national liberation and the creation of an independent authoritarian state.

The OUN can be considered a second major example of "generic *ustashism*," along the lines of the paradigmatic case of the Croatian movement. Like the Ustaša, it is often labeled fascist. That is why below the juxtaposition of Ukrainian integral nationalism to generic fascism will be discussed at some length. In Section 2, I survey different approaches to the problem of "Ukrainian fascism." Next, I consider some definitions of fascism and the distinction between fascism and *nationalism in stateless nations*. In Section 4, I briefly describe the ideology of Dmytro Dontsov, who became the first popularizer of fascism among Ukrainians. He was often called a fascist, but, I shall argue, his ideas were much closer to another "third way" ideology – the "Conservative Revolution." In the fifth and largest section, I examine the influence of Italian Fascism on the ideology of the OUN and latter's ambivalent attitude to German National Socialism. In the sixth and crucial section, I point out to the fundamental difference between fascism and Ukrainian nationalism: the former was a means of reordering an already existing state, while the latter was primarily a means of creating a state. Also I compare the OUN to its closest "ideological relative" in Europe – the Croatian Ustaša. Finally, I briefly outline the typological implications of my argument. Although considering Ukrainian integral nationalism as a variety of fascism is not without foundation, the proper designation for the ideology and practice of the OUN and similar movements is not fascism, but rather *ustashism* in generic sense of the word.

2. Ukrainian fascism?

The arguments of the fascist interpretation of the OUN can be briefly summarized by the words of John-Paul Himka

OUN was indeed a typical fascist organization as shown by many of its features: its leader principle (*Führerprinzip*), its aspiration to ban all other political parties and movements, its fascist-style slogan (Slava Ukraini! Heroiam slava!²), its red and black flag, its raised-arm salute, its xenophobia and anti-Semitism, its cult of violence, and its admiration of Hitler, Mussolini, and other leaders of fascist Europe. What's not fascist here? (Himka, 2010: 87).

As if answering to Himka's rhetorical question, though a few years earlier, Heorhii Kasyanov wrote

If we take into account a certain set of external and functional features in a certain period of the organization's existence [...], we can identify, with equal success, the OUN, for example, with the ideology and practice of Soviet totalitarianism of the 1930s or with fundamentalist religious movements. Recognizing the obvious fact that the OUN had much in common with Italian Fascism and German National Socialism in terms of world view, ideology and some political practices, we cannot include the OUN neither into Fascism, nor into National Socialism (which, after all, were independent historical phenomena)... (Kasyanov, 2005: 459–460).

Thus, the opponents of the identification of the OUN with fascism, although mostly do not deny their common characteristics, still consider these features as not specifically fascist, but attributable to any movements of the totalitarian or fundamentalist type. The main difference is often seen in the national liberation goals of the OUN's struggle (Motyl, 1980, 2010; Hrytsak, 1996: 207–208).

The view of Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytsky, as set out in his encyclopedia article "Nationalism," is still authoritative in academic circles. According to him,

the closest relatives of Ukrainian nationalism were not German Nazism and Italian fascism, which were the product of industrialized and urbanized societies, but similar ideologies of parties among agrarian peoples in less-developed countries of Eastern Europe, including the Ustaše (Ustashi) of Croatia, the Rumanian Iron Guards, the Slovak L'udaks (supporters of A. Hlinka's Slovak People's party), and the Polish National-Radical Camp. Ukrainian nationalism was a

² "Glory to Ukraine! Glory to heroes!" It worth to mention that the greeting became very popular in Ukraine during the Euromaidan Revolution but without any fascist connotations.

uniquely generated phenomenon, although its development was decisively influenced by foreign models.” (Lysyak-Rudnitskyi, 1966: 1725; Lysyak-Rudnitsky, 1993: 553).

However, this concept was criticized by some historians (Hrytsak, 1996: 207; Bondarenko, 1997: 77–78). They argued that the “agrarian” character of Ukrainian integral nationalism, as of other similar East European movements, is not a serious reason to regard it as somehow fundamentally different from fascism. Interwar Italy, too, with the exception of its northern part, was a predominantly agrarian country – not to mention Spain and Portugal, where political movements of the fascist type also arose. In the opinion of authoritative scholars, at least one of the East European organizations mentioned by Lysyak-Rudnitsky – the Iron Guard – was also fascist. According to Constantin Yordachi, the Legion of the Archangel Michael (the Iron Guard) was “a third major example of a charismatic form of fascism, along the ‘paradigmatic’ cases of Italy and Germany” (Yordachi, 2004: 164). Many scholars also regard the Ustaša as fascist (Payne, 2006; Biondich, 2007; Yeomans, 2013). Finally, Lysyak-Rudnitsky did not insist all that strongly on the uniqueness of Ukrainian integral nationalism and at the end of his life wrote that a historian would have no difficulty in identifying it as the Ukrainian variant of fascism (Rudnitsky, 1987: 481).³

It is interesting that some scholars consider the alleged existence of fascism in Ukraine almost as a cause for national pride, since it refutes Ukrainians’ traditional impotence cultivated by historians and proves “that we are a normal European nation closely connected with problems common to all Europe, the nation which even in the years of statelessness kept pace with the rhythm of European life” (Bondarenko, 1997: 81).

3. Fascism and nationalism

To solve the problem, it is necessary to ascertain what fascism is. However, definitions are an arbitrary matter and debates about the nature of fascism have been going on for decades. In the 1990s, the so-called “new consensus” was outlined in the chaos of interpretations of fascism in the Western historiography. Some of the chief scholars came to a loose agreement about several fundamental postulates: fascism must be considered as a generic phenomenon; it was an “alternative revolution” – the “third way” between communism and liberal capitalism; it was not merely an “anti-movement” (anti-Marxism, anti-liberalism) but had its own social utopia inspired by the “palingenetic myth” that a period of perceived national decline and decadence is giving way to one of national rebirth and renewal in a post-liberal new order; it expressed itself ideologically in a revolutionary form of ultra-nationalism (Griffin, 1993, 1998; Payne, 1995; Eatwell, 2003).

The leader of this historiographic trend, Roger Griffin, proposed a new “ideal type” of fascism based on the following definition: “Fascism is a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism.”⁴ Griffin understands ultra-nationalism as “a form of nationalism incompatible with liberal democratic notions of the basic equality in civil rights and political autonomy of other nation-states or nationalities” (Griffin, 1993: 26, 241). Andreas Umland explains: “The notion of ultra-nationalism implies an ideological monism which downplays or even denies other components of human identity, and de facto views human beings not as individuals, but as cells within a national organism – however delineated. This organism does not need democracy, and is seen in a fight for survival, territory and dominance with other, similarly aggressive national organisms” (Umland, 2010: 195). In other words, “ultra-nationalism” means the same thing as “integral nationalism” in the works of Hayes and Armstrong (Hayes, 1968: 166; Armstrong, 1990: 13).

Stanley G. Payne offered a more detailed definition, but fully compatible with Griffin’s one: “...Fascism may be defined as ‘a form of revolutionary ultra-nationalism for national rebirth that is based on a primarily vitalist philosophy, is structured on extreme elitism, mass mobilization, and the *Führerprinzip*, positively values violence as end as well as means and tends to normalize war and/or the military virtues.’” He also proposed a very useful “typological description of fascism,” distinguishing it from the other two “faces of authoritarian nationalism” – the radical right and conservative right. According to Payne’s typology, besides the Italian PNF, also the German NSDAP, the Spanish Falange, the Polish Falanga and the Camp of National Unity (OZN), the Romanian Iron Guard, and the Croatian Ustaša, in particular, were related to fascists (Payne, 1995: 7–15).

My theoretical approach has been influenced most of all by Griffin’s and Payne’s theories (Griffin, 1993, 2007; Payne, 1995). In particular, I apply Griffin’s concept of palingenetic ultra-nationalism to the study of nationalist movements in stateless nations. This concept properly describes the ideological content and practice of some political movements that emerged in Western Ukraine, Croatia, and Slovakia in the 1920s and in Lithuania in 1940.

However, in an attempt to potentially enhance our understanding of revolutionary ultra-nationalism (integral nationalism) in stateless nations, I depart from Griffin’s “new consensus” definition of fascism in one aspect: if we consider fascism as a form of nationalism, then the radical difference between the nationalism of nation-states and the nationalism of stateless nations does matter. In its goals and methods of struggle, the palingenetic ultra-nationalism in stateless nations is distinct from the palingenetic ultra-nationalism in nation-states or imperial nations (fascism).

Alexander J. Motyl explains the distinction between fascism and nationalism as follows:

Fascism’s two preconditions are an already existing state and an already existing non-fascist *type* of regime, political system, or state. Fascists do not build states *de novo*; nor do they build *types* of regimes, political systems, or states *de*

³ Ivan L. Rudnitsky is the same author as Ivan Lysyak-Rudnitsky (Lysyak-Rudnitskyi).

⁴ Later, Griffin reformulated the “new consensus” definition of fascism: “A revolutionary form of ultra-nationalism bent on mobilizing all ‘healthy’ social and political energies to resist the perceived threat of decadence and on achieving the goal of a reborn national or ethnic community” (Griffin, 2006: 2).

novo. Unsurprisingly, it is in fact the case that fascism and fascists are always found in already existing states with already existing non-fascist types of regimes, political systems, or states. [...] Nationalism's only precondition, both conceptually and empirically, is the non-existence of a state. Unlike fascists, nationalists build states *de novo*. Unsurprisingly, it is empirically the case that nationalism and nationalists are always found in stateless territories (Motyl, 2013).

Generally, I agree with Motyl's thesis, but with one clarification: in my opinion, this distinction is not between fascism and nationalism in general, but rather between fascism and nationalism in stateless nations.

In fact, there are various definitions of fascism and there is no reason for considering one of them “more true” than others. One can dispute only greater or lesser expediency, heuristic value, and the convenience of one or another definition within the limits of the tasks undertaken by a scholar. It is quite obvious that the problem cannot be solved *only* with the help of definitions. First, we have to look for answers to some concrete questions. Did fascism influence the forming of a new, integral Ukrainian nationalism? Did Ukrainian nationalists recognize themselves as fascists? What did fascist movements and integral (“active”, “organized”, “revolutionary”) Ukrainian nationalism have in common in their ideologies and practices? Were there differences of principles between them?

4. Dmytro Dontsov and fascism

The answer to the first question is obviously affirmative. Since the moment of its victory in Italy, Fascism provoked an enormous interest among many Ukrainian politicians as a source of ideas and a model to follow.

One should remember that the 1920–30s were for the Ukrainian nationalists a time of a search for an ally, which could help them to attain independence. True, the Ukrainian political leaders declared the slogan “Reliance on our own forces”, yet, one of them, Kyrylo Tryliovsky, darkly joked: “By our own forces we can only hang ourselves”. Until 1923, Galician Ukrainians gravitated mainly towards the Entente, but this orientation failed when the latter recognized Eastern Galicia as a part of Poland. During the next two to three years the orientation towards Soviet Ukraine prevailed. Even Colonel Yevhen Konovalyets, later the founder of the OUN, who has been considered generally as an uncompromising anticommunist, applied to Soviet Ukraine's leadership for subsidies for his Ukrainian Military Organization (UVO), and for a short time the UVO actually received money from the Bolsheviks (TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 16, spr. 1, ark. 10, 40–40 zv.; f. 269, op. 1, spr. 344, ark. 8). It soon became clear, however, that the hopes for the transformation of Soviet Ukraine into an independent state were groundless and that Bolshevism was the worst enemy of the Ukrainian liberation movement. Under such conditions there were only two great powers in Europe, which were interested in destroying the status quo – Italy and Germany – and thus only they could become allies of the Ukrainian nationalists. This was one of the reasons which stimulated their interest in Fascism and then in Nazism.

The founder of Ukrainian integral nationalism, journalist Dmytro Dontsov, became a first popularizer of fascism among Ukrainians in Poland and the diaspora. Hating Russian Bolshevism and, at the same time, admiring its successes, he aspired to oppose it with a movement equally energetic, uncompromising, and authoritarian but nationalist in spirit and aim. Dontsov saw the model of such a movement in Fascism that had just come to power in Italy. In January 1923, he published an article which compared Fascism to Bolshevism and analyzed the reasons for their success. Dontsov found four common features of the two movements. Both were anti-democratic and simultaneously populist, both were uncompromising and were led by initiative minorities. It was precisely the lack of these features in Ukrainian democracy and monarchism that caused, in the author's opinion, the defeat of their attempts to build a state (Dontsov, 2012: 77–78).

The appearance of the Lviv weekly *Zahrava* (Crimson Sky) edited by Dontsov on April 1, 1923, marks the beginning of Ukrainian integral nationalism. The *Zahravites* unequivocally rejected the democratic trend of the Ukrainian national movement, demanded “reform of nationalism,” and defined their credo as follows: “This Credo knows one absolute – the nation, one categorical imperative – its will to life” (Hunchak and Sol'chanyk, 1983: 58). The *Zahrava* group was called fascist in the contemporary press. The weekly responded with the editorial “Are We Fascists?” (*Chy my fashysty?*). The anonymous author (probably Dontsov) claimed: “We do not consider Fascism something bad. Quite the reverse!” However he thought the mechanical transference of Fascism onto Ukrainian soil impossible for the following reasons: “In one of his speeches the leader of Italian Fascism said: ‘Fascism is purely an Italian matter. Any imitation in foreign country is, therefore, impossible and would be only an aping. A fascist world union is nonsense.’ We subscribe to this declaration with both hands. Properly speaking, because we stand not on an international but on a national platform, just like Fascism, we cannot be fascists.” Nevertheless, on the next pages, setting the main principles propagated by *Zahrava* – the priority of the national rebirth before the social one, the hostility to internationalism, nationalism as a practice of everyday life, the author repeats the burden: “If this is the program of fascism, then, according to me, we are fascists!” (*Chy my fashysty?*, 1923).

In 1924 the first integral nationalist party was formed around *Zahrava* – the Ukrainian Party of National Work (for initiates – Party of National Revolution). Initially, it also manifested pro-fascist sympathies; however, the idea of unification with national democratic forces soon prevailed in the party. Finally, this idea was embodied in the Ukrainian National Democratic Alliance in 1925.

In contrast to the majority of his colleagues from the *Zahrava* group, Dontsov continued to work on the ideology of totalitarian-type nationalism. The connection of this ideology with fascism has often been denied (Kvit, 2013), nevertheless, facts disprove this denial. Dontsov's articles in his *Vistnyk* (The Herald) in the 1930s are replete with quotations

from Mussolini and Hitler; time and again he expressed his admiration of both dictators. Dontsov published in his *Library of Vistnyk* and *Quarterly of Vistnyk* biographies of Mussolini, Hitler, the leader of Belgian fascists, Léon Degrelle, and the leader of the French Fiery Cross, Colonel François de La Rocque. He greeted with enthusiasm the victory of National Socialism in Germany, considering it a force able to annihilate Bolshevism by the methods of the latter. In 1933, Dontsov wrote: “For us the most important thing in Hitlerism is the commandment of a decisive struggle against Marxism. It is important that finally there has been found a regime in Europe, which decided to treat Bolsheviks in a Bolshevik manner. It is a highly gratifying circumstance which will not remain without repercussions all over the world where the Soviet gangrene has penetrated.” Dontsov saw in Fascism and Nazism the manifestations of a new spirit, which would sanitize Europe:

This spirit has awakened in Italy, it has awakened in Germany, awakens in France, awakens in the Dnieper Ukraine. The movement, which has begun in Italy and now goes on in Germany, will sanitize the spiritual atmosphere of Europe poisoned by Ludwigs, Einsteins, Romain Rollands, Marguerites, Barbusses, and Gorkys, will create a new public opinion, a new scale of public and personal values which will not tolerate the gangrene of Marxism in its midst” (Dontsov, 1933: 304, 308).

Nationalist historians argue that Dontsov endorsed only the fascist methods of fighting Bolshevism and not their ideology. However, it is not difficult to find a number of parallels with fascism in Dontsov’s “active nationalism”: the cult of struggle, the ideas of hierarchical society, initiative minority, ruling caste, expansion, order principle contrary to party principle, the martial anti-Marxism and anti-liberalism. The “palingenetic myth” also played a significant role in his ideology. In his work *The Spirit of Our Antiquity*, Dontsov adopted the theses of “racial science’s” theorists of the Third Reich, about the inequality of human races and the superiority of the Nordic race (Dontsov, 1944: 187–200). True, the author of *Nationalism* (Dontsov, 1926) had never stated his ideas in the form of a consistent doctrine. He appealed to emotions rather than to reason, but the same could be said of fascism, especially at the early stage of its development. Dontsov himself emphasized the consonance of his thoughts with the statements of Mussolini and Hitler and derided those of his critics, who alleged “that the ideas of Hitlerism are something quite different from those propagated by idiots from *Vistnyk*” (Dontsov, 1936: 53). Lysiak-Rudnytsky was right when he asserted: “Dontsov by all his authority directed Ukrainian nationalism into a fascist channel” (Lysiak-Rudnytskyi, 1994: 493).

From 1923 on, Dontsov was often called a fascist, but in fact his ideas were much closer to another ideology of the “third way” – the German “Conservative Revolution,” whose most prominent ideologues were Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, Carl Schmitt, Oswald Spengler, Edgar Julius Jung, and Ernst Jünger.

Aleksandr Dugin,⁵ although he too freely interprets the historical content of the concept of the “Conservative Revolution,” gives quite a good explanation of the meaning of this paradoxical expression.

While leftists seek to radicalize the theses of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity by extending them simultaneously to the broadest and lowest sociological realities, ‘conservative revolutionaries’ insist on the opposite approach and, on the contrary, seek to return to the order that preceded not just the revolution but the emergence of the causes that led to it. In this sense, supporters of the Third Way are much more right-wing than the rightists themselves. Nevertheless ‘conservative revolutionaries’ must not be equated with ‘extreme rightists’ because the ever widening abyss between the crisis-ridden post-revolutionary and prerevolutionary worlds, on the one hand, and the ideal crisis-free or pre-crisis world of the Tradition, on the other hand, makes quite inevitable not ‘conservatism,’ not efforts (even of the most desperate kind) to preserve what used to exist, but precisely revolution – total, all-renewing, radical, but aimed in a direction totally opposite to the revolution of the leftists (Dugin, 1994).⁶

Dontsov’s ideology was precisely of this kind. He called for a return to the idealized world of Ukrainian tradition – a hierarchical social order of princes and their retainers, hetmans and their Cossacks, ruled by a caste of the “best people.” As the contemporary world was separated from these ideal times by a widening chasm, it was possible to return to them only by means of a total national revolution. These ideas are presented in their most finished form in the book *The Spirit of Antiquity* (Dontsov, 1944).

However, it is difficult not to agree with Andreas Umland that an oxymoron “Conservative Revolution” is rather a proper name and can not be used as a generic concept in classificatory schemes of modern right-wing extremism (Umland, 2006). Dontsov belonged to ultranationalist ideologues, whose palingenetic visions of a new society were close to fascism, but who had never attempted to become one of political activists, so as to implement their ideas. Griffin considers such “literary fascists” (Giovanni Papini, Pierre Drieu de La Rochelle, Julius Evola, and Alain Benoist) as proto-fascists in terms of their elitism and indirect impact on events (Griffin, 1993: 51). In this sense, Dontsov, especially between 1933 and 1944, also could be classified as a proto-fascist.

⁵ Aleksandr Dugin (born in 1962) is a Russian ultranationalist political thinker and, by his own words, geopolitician, the author of the doctrine of Neo-Eurasianism and ideologue of Russia’s imperial rebirth (Shekhovtsov, 2009).

⁶ Translated by Stephen D. Shenfield.

5. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists

Dontsov's works exerted an enormous influence on the Ukrainian nationalist movement and became one of the chief sources of the ideology of the OUN, which was much less conservative, more revolutionary, and paid greater attention to the problems of the future state structure of Ukraine. The OUN accepted the concept of the "third way" and came under the influence of Fascism both through Dontsov and through Italian primary sources. Like Dontsov, the founders of "organized nationalism" enthusiastically watched the successes of Fascism in Italy. In 1928, the prominent nationalist journalist, Yevhen Onatskyi, acknowledged that

young Ukrainian nationalism has already adopted some things from Italian Fascism and, first of all, the recognition of the need for an iron hierarchical organization and the subordination of all private, party, and class interests to the interests of the fatherland – 'Fatherland above all'. Furthermore, [it has adopted] the recognition of the superiority of the strength of the spirit over the strength of matter. In their time, Italian Fascists and now Ukrainian nationalists do not subject their cause to calculations – they know even without calculations that a huge, materially superior force stands against them (Onatskyi, 1928: 96).

The OUN's ideology recognized the nation as an absolute value, "the highest type of human community." The main goal was to establish Ukraine as an independent united state. The conception of state order was influenced by the corporate system of Fascist Italy, but as a whole there were few direct adaptations from fascist ideology in *The Order of the OUN*, accepted by the founding Congress in 1929.

During the 1930s, the influence of fascism on organized Ukrainian nationalism steadily grew. Perhaps, it most affected the conception of *nationocracy*, elaborated by the OUN's leading ideologue Mykola Stsiborsky. In his chief theoretical work, *Nationocracy* [Natsiokratia], Stsiborsky examined and completely rejected democracy, socialism, and communism, while expressing high praise for fascism and its historical achievements. He considered that the example of fascism may also be a guiding thread for enslaved nations: "For those who turn away in fright from the imperative precepts of fascism due to their blind uncritical attachment to the narcotic of democratic and socialist prejudices concerning 'peace, accord, prosperity,' and Internationals will never have real peace and freedom. It is the destiny of such nations to serve as manure for others!" (Stsiborskyi, 1935: 58).

Many of the theses of *Nationocracy* – imperialism, the counter-position of a uniquely true nationalist worldview to all others, the rejection of "universally human" ethical norms, the understanding of the essence and tasks of the state, the concept of a socioeconomic order, state syndicalism, and the concept of an elite – have direct counterparts in fascist doctrines.

At the same time, Stsiborskyi criticized fascists for considering dictatorship not a temporary but a permanent principle of state organization: "As a rule, a permanent dictatorship is prone to fill life with excessive governmental statism and create a cult of a sort of "police state"; this puts a brake on the development of society and the individual. We suppose that the fascist order is also marked by these features." The author of *Nationocracy* thought that the Ukrainian nation was obliged to use the ideas, doctrine, and experience of the nationalist-authoritarian dictatorships – in particular, the fascist and national-socialist dictatorships: "Nevertheless, Ukrainian nationalism does not confine its creative work to the mechanical copying of foreign models. The future Ukrainian state will be neither fascist, nor national-socialist, nor 'Primo-de-Riverist'⁷" (Stsiborskyi, 1935: 72).

As an alternative to permanent fascist dictatorship, Stsiborskyi proposed a special Ukrainian model of totalitarianism called "nationocracy," which would replace the national dictatorship once the latter had accomplished its tasks. He described nationocracy as a "regime in which the nation rules its own state through the power of all socially useful strata, united – in accordance with their socio-productive function – in representative bodies of state governance." At the head of the state was to stand "the Leader of the Nation," elected by the National Assembly – "the best of the best of the nation's sons, who by virtue of the general trust of the nation and his own inner qualities holds in his hands the power of the State." Elective bodies of local self-government were to be created and a legislative institution or state council elected, the candidates for which were to be nominated by state-controlled syndicates. Political pluralism, however, was not envisioned: "Parties will exist neither during the period of national dictatorship nor under the permanent state order" (Stsiborskyi, 1935: 114–116).

The logical question raised here is, "What place will organized nationalism occupy in this state? Having abolished all parties, will organized nationalism itself not turn into a party that 'seizes all posts'? 'No!'" Stsiborskyi answered: "Growing out of the depths of the nation and covering the whole life of the nation with its all-encompassing content, nationalism will be the guard and builder of the nation, its leading avant-garde" (Stsiborskyi, 1935: 117).

One is struck by the resemblance between Stsiborskyi's rhetoric and that of the Bolsheviks, who also asserted that the party's role as the avant-garde of the working class and the Soviet people served as a guarantee against its bureaucratic degeneration.

The OUN's ideology assumed its final (for the 1930s) form in the political platform adopted by the Second Great Assembly in August 1939. The platform stated that the "structure of the Ukrainian state will be based on the principles of nationocracy," understood to mean the "power of the nation in the state, resting on the organized and solidary cooperation of all social strata, united – in accordance with their social functions – in representative bodies of state governance." Social life was to be built on

⁷ From Miguel Primo de Rivera (1870–1930), dictator of Spain in 1870–1930.

hierarchical foundations, with the Leader of the Nation at the head of the social hierarchy. The supra-party principle affirmed in the documents of 1929 was replaced by the antiparty principle: “Political parties will be banned by law. The sole form of political organization of the state's population will be the OUN – as the foundation of the state order and a factor of national education and of the organization of social life.” (Hunchak and Sol’chanyk, 1983: 401–402).

The high point in the evolution of the OUN toward totalitarianism was the *Sketch for a Draft of the Fundamental Laws (Constitution) of the Ukrainian State*, which Stsiborskyi wrote in the autumn of 1939. Article 1 proclaims: “Ukraine is a sovereign, authoritarian, totalitarian state consisting of occupational estates and bearing the name the Ukrainian State.” The entire plenitude of state power was to belong to the Ukrainian nation and be exercised “through the head of state – the Leader of the Nation, who personifies its sovereignty and unity.” Article 7 of section 9 prohibits the “existence of political parties, groups, and organizations and ideological free associations,” while article 8 stipulates that the “sole ideology used to educate citizens of the Ukrainian state shall be the ideology of Ukrainian nationalism, and the sole form of political organization of society shall be the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists.” According to the draft, persons of Jewish nationality were to be deprived of civil rights and made subject to a separate law (Kucheruk and Cherchenko, 2002: 8–23).

As we see, despite claims of novelty, Stsiborskyi's concept of a totalitarian state was not original and was all too reminiscent of the model that by this time had been established in Italy and Germany.

It is worth mentioning that, learning from Fascism, Ukrainian nationalists treated German National Socialism rather critically. In particular, Onatskyi, comparing the two ideologies, condemned Nazism's racial theory: “National Socialism [...] identifies the nation with *race* and assumes as its basis only one element – the blood [...]. It is an axiom for National Socialism that just the German race is superior and that even Latin peoples, not to mention the Slavic ones, are of contemporarily inferior race, though as Aryans they are immeasurably higher than other non-Aryan peoples, not to mention the African Negroes.” Onatskyi warned that one ought to negotiate with the Germans with caution “in order not to fall, by accident, a victim of the people who sees its mission in domination over other peoples, inferior from a racial point of view” (Onatskyi, 1934a: 144–145, 147).

In another article, Onatskyi wrote

We have known (and have felt on our own back at the time of Ukrainian State, 1918) how little Kaiser's Germany took feelings of others into considerations. The racist theories of National Socialism witness how little also Hitler's Germany, which manifestly treats *all* peoples as “inferior races” and calls German people “a personification of highest humanity on the Earth”, took feelings of others into considerations ... And how National Socialism looks at the *enslaved* peoples, and specifically, at the *peoples enslaved by Moscow*. It will be to the point for us to learn from the following words of Hitler: “As a folkish man, who appraises the value of men on a racial basis, I am prevented by mere knowledge of the racial *inferiority* of these so-called ‘oppressed nations’ from linking the destiny of my own people with theirs” (Onatskyi, 1934b: 166; cf. Hitler, 1943: 659).

In spite of the critical attitude to Nazism, the OUN had increasingly oriented itself towards Germany. Since 1923 the UVO, and later – the OUN, had been closely cooperating with German military circles and intelligence. In 1932, contacts had been established between the OUN and the NSDAP. Their co-operation, especially close after 1937, was explained by not so much ideological as purely pragmatic reasons. Ukrainian nationalists considered Germany a natural ally in the struggle against the USSR and Poland, and believed that Hitler, acting in Germany's own interest, would help to create the independent Ukraine. But they did not agree to only be a tool of Hitler's policy.

The OUN never adopted Nazi racist theory and racial anti-Semitism as part of its political program.⁸ Admittedly, some OUN members shared the anti-Semitic ideology of the Nazis. The OUN's military theorist Mykhailo Kolodzynskyi wrote in his *Military Doctrine of Ukrainian Nationalists*: “... The more Jews will die during the uprising, the better for the Ukrainian state, because the Jews are a lonely minority which we must not embrace by our denationalizing policy” (Kolodzynskyi, 2013: 290). The head of the abortive Ukrainian government in 1941, Yaroslav Stetsko, wrote to Nazi leaders: “... I ... support the destruction of the Jews and the expediency of bringing German methods of exterminating Jewry to Ukraine, barring their assimilation and the like” (Berkhoff and Carynnyk, 1999: 171). Nevertheless, to Ukrainian nationalists, nation continued to be a more useful concept than race for interpreting history and contemporary issues.

Ukrainian integral nationalism of the 1930s did in fact have quite a lot in common with fascism, and it is not altogether groundless to identify one with the other. It fully satisfies many definitions of fascism (Griffin, 1993, 2006; Payne, 1995; Paxton, 2009). Using, for example, Payne's typological description of fascism (Payne, 1995: 7) one can find a row of common features in the ideology, goals, negations, style and organization of these movements.

Most existing definitions and typologies of fascism treat it as an extreme form of nationalism. Yet, they, as a rule, ignore a fundamental distinction between two kinds of nationalism – the nationalisms in state nations and in stateless ones.

⁸ Programs of the OUN of 1929 and 1939 contained no racist or anti-Semitic statements. According to the program regulations of the OUN led by Stepan Bandera (1941), the OUN “fights the Jews as the staff of the Moscow Bolshevik regime” (Dziuban, 2001: 11). On the OUN's attitude to Jews see Carynnyk, 2011; Motyl, 2013a.

6. Fascism or ustashism?

Just before the creation of the OUN, the well-known nationalist journalist Yevhen Onatskyi pointed out a fundamental difference between Ukrainian nationalism and fascism:

Many Ukrainian nationalists have enthusiastically begun to call themselves Ukrainian fascists and seek support from the Italian Fascists. They have not noticed that between Ukrainian nationalism and Italian Fascism yawns an impassable abyss that only time and tenacious effort can perhaps bridge. [...] Fascism is the nationalism of a state nation that is hostile to all irredenta and ready to make any sacrifice to the cult of its own already created state. Ukrainian nationalism is, on the contrary, the nationalism of a non-state nation that lives only by irredentism and is ready to make any sacrifice to destroy the cult of those states that do not allow it to live ([Onatskyi, 1928](#): 95).

Onatskyi drew attention to an important distinction between the two movements: fascism was a means of reordering an already existing state, while Ukrainian nationalism was primarily a means of creating a state. Ukrainians could not be real fascists, because they had not achieved an essential prerequisite of fascism – namely, a state. Only if state independence had been won might Ukrainian ultra-nationalism have turned into a form of fascism.

This distinction was even more clearly outlined in the editorial preface to the article “Fascism,” by professor Oleksandr Matsyuk, in the OUN's ideological journal, *Rozbudova Natsii* (Nation Building), in 1929:

... For our part, we emphasize an irrelevance of the name “fascism,” by which Ukrainian nationalists have been branded by their opponents. Fascism is a movement of a *state* people, a trend, born on a social ground, which fought for *power in its own state*. Ukrainian nationalism is a *national liberation* movement with the task of a *struggle for statehood*, to which it ought to lead the *broadest masses* of the Ukrainian people. Therefore, Ukrainian nationalism not only cannot be identified with Italian Fascism, but even cannot be compared to it ([Rozbudova Natsii, 1929](#): 262).

To be sure, in a private letter, the editor of *Rozbudova Natsii*, Volodymyr Martynets, admitted that, while the OUN can easily dissociate itself from Bolsheviks, in the case of fascism it is not so easy: “Meanwhile, we do have many common features with fascism: both movements are movements of nationalism, here and there are dictatorships, here and there are trade unions and us” ([TsDAHO](#), f. 269, op.1, spr. 174, ark. 16).

Another distinction, following the first one, was the different conception concerning the relationship between nation and state (it distinguished Ukrainian nationalism especially from Italian Fascism). In one of his speeches in 1924, Mussolini declared: “Without the State there is no nation. There are, merely, human aggregations, subject to all the disintegrations which history may inflict upon them.” And in the article “The Doctrine of Fascism” he wrote: “It is not the nation which generates the State; that is an antiquated naturalistic concept which afforded a basis for XIXth century publicity in favor of national governments. Rather is it the State which creates the nation, conferring volition and therefore real life on a people made aware of their moral unity” ([Mussolini, 1968](#): 12, 42).

The Ukrainian nationalists could not accept such a conception in full, because they had not their own state, but believed in the existence of the Ukrainian nation. Therefore, [Stsiborskyi \(1935](#): 79), accepting the fascist cult of the state, wrote with reservation: “The fact of a nation's existence is not obligatorily conditioned by its state independence (the non-state nations also exist and the Ukrainian nation is among them now)”. The OUN publicists maintained that the state was merely the most convenient form of national life, not an absolute value in itself, as was the nation ([Armstrong, 1990](#): 25).

Ukrainian integral nationalism was not an artificial transplantation of foreign models to Ukrainian soil. It grew from its own roots and differed from fascism in questions of principles. The main difference was the following – fascism was a totalitarian integral nationalism (or ultra-nationalism) of a *state* nation. It focused on re-organizing the existing state and establishing a “new order” based on the “new values” of the “new fascist man.” Ukrainian integral nationalism was an ideology of a *stateless* nation. It focused on attaining its own state, and therefore, first of all, was a national liberation movement, and only after that – a variety of totalitarianism.

The closest “ideological relative” of Ukrainian integral nationalism in Europe was the Croatian Ustaša before its transformation into a state party. Some scholars believe that the Ustaša was a fascist movement from the very beginning. Others reject the fascist nature of the movement. In their view, the Ustaše was a non-fascist, radical nationalist movement, whose ideology was Croatian ethnic nationalism ([Beliakov, 2005](#)). The movement began without any elaborately defined doctrine, starting as a radical, nationalist terrorist organization, similar to the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (VMRO). However, during the 1930s, the Ustaša, like the OUN, was increasingly influenced by fascist ideas ([Payne, 2006](#): 410). Before 1941, the Ustaša was a rather proto-fascist movement that became fully fledged fascist only after the seizure of power, when the problem of obtaining independence was replaced by the problem of which principles the new state should be built on ([Trifcovic, 1998](#): 38–39, 266).

There are at least three reasons to consider Croatian Ustashism as a paradigmatic case for the revolutionary integral nationalism of stateless peoples. First, it is well known, especially after the assassination of King Alexander I of Yugoslavia in 1934. Second, it has been comparatively well studied, along with its European “relatives.” Finally, it has passed through all the developmental stages, from the formation of a small group of radicals and through the establishment of a national dictatorship up to the final, crushing defeat.

Other examples of integral nationalist movements in stateless nations (or nations that lost their statehood) include Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, especially its radical wing, led by Vojtech Tuka, the VMRO, the Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF, 1940–1941), and others.

All these movements at different times established contacts with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The close cooperation between the Ustaša and the VMRO, in particular, in the murder of King Alexander, is well known. Less is known about the relationship between the Ustaša and OUN. From the archives of the OUN in Kyiv, through subtle hints in the published parts of the notes written by the OUN's representative in Rome, Yevhen Onatskyi (Onatskyi, 1989) and from some memoirs, we have learned that around 1933, a secret agreement was reached about the cooperation between the Ustaša and the OUN with the Italian Fascists' assistance. A group of OUN members led by Mykhailo Kolodzynski trained together with the Ustaše in a special military training camp in Italy, and after a few months of study Kolodzynski even became an instructor in the theory and practice of guerrilla warfare. At that time, he met and became friends with the Ustaša leader Ante Pavelić, together making plans for future joint actions of Balkan and Ukrainian revolutionary nationalists. However, after the assassination of King Alexander, the Italian authorities interned the students and instructors of the camp, including several members of the OUN (Yashan, 1978: 636–638; Posivnych, 2012: 401).

The OUN had much in common with the Ustaša: extreme ethnic nationalism, the aim of the creation of an independent, nationalist, authoritarian state, anti-liberalism and anti-communism, the military structure of the movement, individual terror as the main method of the struggle, the exaltation of youth, emphasizing the conflict of generations, the tendency toward an authoritarian, charismatic, personal style of command, and their orientation toward the Axis powers. Both movements tried to use World War II to achieve their goals, but with different results. Both have often been regarded as fascist in historiography. Even chronologically, the main milestones in the history of the two movements synchronized: the two organizations arose at almost the same time, carried out their most infamous acts of terror in 1934, decided to cooperate with the Axis states, and in 1941 proclaimed their countries' independence under German occupation. But from the last point on, their trajectories diverge – Hitler recognized the Ustaša regime, while Stepan Bandera's OUN and the government created by it were suppressed. While the Ustaša became a ruling party and shared the fate of all collaborationist groups in Europe, the OUN was forced to return underground.

The Independent State of Croatia of 1941–1945 is a good model of what a Ukrainian state under the aegis of the Third Reich might have been like had the Nazis agreed to its creation. The Croatian experience shows that, under such conditions, Ustashism soon turns into full-fledged fascism. Thus, by breaking up the Ukrainian government that Yaroslav Stetsko had created in Lviv, the Nazis saved Ukrainian nationalism from such a fate. “Paradoxically, – wrote Alexander J. Motyl – repression proved to be the best thing that could happened to the OUN, saving it from the collaborationist fate of the Croatian Ustasha or the Slovak People's Party” (Motyl, 1993: 95). The Banderites' conflict with the Nazis gradually pushed them away from proto-fascist ultra-nationalism and toward a more democratic ideology, but this evolution was still incomplete when the nationalist underground in Soviet Ukraine was suppressed in the early 1950s.

7. Conclusions

The conception according to which Ukrainian revolutionary nationalism had nothing in common with fascism (with the exception of some unessential adoptions) is not corresponding to facts. It would be grossly inaccurate to argue that the former developed independently of the latter during the 1920s–1930s. Although Ukrainian nationalists, with rare exceptions, did not identify themselves as fascists, a historian would have no difficulty in drawing a number of parallels between the two ideologies.

Although considering Ukrainian integral nationalism as a variety of fascism is not groundless (especially within the limits of the history of ideas), the fascist model has limited heuristic value for the Ukrainian case. It does not help for understanding of either the origins of revolutionary nationalism or of its ideological and political evolution since 1943.

The more appropriate designation for the OUN's ideology and practice is not fascism but rather *ustashism*, in the generic sense of the term described above. The following interpretation seems to be the most acceptable: fascism and ustashism are separate species within the same type of political ideologies, which can be defined as a revolutionary form of ultra-nationalism (integral nationalism). Just within these species, rather than between them, the comparative approach can be especially useful.

The main differences between them arise from the existence or absence of the nation state. Considering this criterion, we can formulate the following working definition.

Fascism is a revolutionary form of ultra-nationalism in state nations bent on national rebirth through mass mobilization and reorganization of the state on the principles of totalitarianism, hierarchy, leadership, and militarism.

Ustashism is a revolutionary ultra-nationalism developing under conditions of perceived foreign oppression and using violence for the purpose of national liberation and creating an independent authoritarian state.

The history of the Croatian Ustaša movement shows that under “favorable” conditions ustashism can develop into proto-fascism and in the case of finally having won an independent state – create a fascist type regime. Unlike the Croatian experience, the OUN's conflict with the German occupation authorities in 1941–1943 prevented the crystallization of Ukrainian fascism and prompted revolutionary nationalists to substantially revise their ideology.

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