

# Documentary Evidence of Underground and Guerrilla Activities During the Nazi Occupation of Kiev and the Kiev Oblast'

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From the State Archive of the Kiev Oblast (GAKO) comes a collection of documents pertaining to underground and guerrilla activities during the German occupation of Kiev and the Kiev Oblast (*Fond P-4*). This collection was put together in the archives of the Kiev Oblast committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine CPU) in the late 1970s and early 1980s based on documents found in the stacks of the Kiev Oblast [party] committee, the *oblast* industrial committee, city and town committees of the CPU and ? LKSMU (Communist League of Youth) of Kiev and Kiev *oblast'* and the party committee of MVD USSR. The collection was transferred to GAKO in 1991 together with the other *fonds* of the Kiev Oblast CPU Committee.

*Fond P-4* has six *opisi* systematized on the structural-chronological principle. This collection includes documents from the first, second and fifth *opisi*.

There is not a single example in the history of warfare where a guerrilla movement and underground war effort played such a big role as it did during the last world war. The guerrilla (partisan) movement and the Resistance Movement in Russia, Poland, the Balkans, France and Italy had a substantial impact on the nature of WWII. This epic had both heroic and tragic pages, including in Ukraine, where tens of thousands of partisans and members of underground organizations died fighting the enemy. This was largely the result of the atmosphere of suspicion, mistrust and intolerance typical of Soviet reality in the late 1930s.

In 1937-1938, the authorities discontinued the selection and training of personnel for fighting behind enemy lines and thousands of ranking and ordinary operatives were repressed. The authorities scaled down the development and production of special equipment, scrapped all partisan bases and all dead-drops. Matters of guerrilla warfare were not discussed at all shortly before the war. The Soviet defense doctrine said that, in the event of aggression, a retaliatory blow would be struck and the enemy's final defeat would be accomplished on its own territory.

Combat operations had been going on for longer than one week and the enemy pushed forward hundreds of kilometers before the USSR SNK [Council of People's Commissars] and the VKP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)] Central Committee directive was issued on 29 June 1941 with calls and recommendations to party and government bodies in front-line areas to offer resistance to the enemy. It recommended the creation of partisan detachments and commando raiding forces in areas captured by the enemy. Stalin announced a similar idea in his radio address of July 3.

The Ukrainian leadership responded rather quickly to Moscow's directives. On July 5, the KP(b)U Central Committee passed a special resolution on the organization of partisan war and the forming of secret party organizations to guide the struggle behind the enemy lines. Kiev, Kharkov, Stalino, Voroshilovgrad, Chernigov, Sumy, Poltava and other cities opened short-term schools and courses to train partisan unit commanders, demolition and communications experts and so on. It was, however, impossible to train good specialists in partisan and underground warfare in a hurry in the absence of highly skilled instructors.

If we consider the dramatic situation on the fronts, the lack of experience in those people who were organizing work behind the enemy lines, the absence of the very elementary (to say nothing of special) weapons, gear other than weapons and clothing, communications equipment, it becomes clear why most guerrilla units and groups were being put together in a hurry with meager logistical and technical support.

Things were no better with regard to forming underground resistance movements. Specialists were few; most of them had been repressed while others were inducted into the army. Insufficient attention was paid to setting up secret addresses, appointment of liaison agents, the making of documents for underground operatives. Betrayals committed by those left for operating behind enemy lines were a big problem. Thus, the Nazis destroyed dozens of underground party committees and hundreds of anti-Nazi organizations and groups in a matter of several months. Nearly 2,500 people tried to cross the frontline before the end of 1941. Most of them died.

In 1941-1942, nearly 11,000 solo spies and members of raiding parties tried to cross behind the enemy lines. Most died or got lost in the attempt. Leaning on Soviet traitors and the potentials of their special services, the forces of the occupation focused on destroying the underground resistance. In October 1941, the Germans captured 36 leaders of the underground resistance in Kiev. Their special services destroyed in Kiev 617 patriots, 129 of whom were women, between 1941 and 1943. Only 10 percent of the existing underground operatives remained active by the summer of 1942.<sup>1</sup>

Despite all the difficulties and failures of the organizational period and the terror unleashed by the occupation authorities and special punitive units, the situation changed for the better by the end of 1941. As early as the first days of the occupation of Kiev, members of the underground blew up the goods rail station in Kiev, two production shops at the steam locomotive factory, two shops at the locomotive repair works, the main rail workshops, the building of the rail station postal department, the Solomenskii and Vozdukhoflotskii bridges and destroyed 280 rail cars with various supplies. Underground operatives Lebedev and Tatskov torched the Darnitsa rail depot and disabled all the steam locomotives there. The Darnitsa rail station stayed disabled for 25 days and nights. Members of the underground organizations in Borodianka and Mironovka did a considerable damage to 20 supply trains in the fall and winter of 1941. Eight rail tanks with oil and lubricants and hundreds of rail cars burned for several days. A man named I. Naberezhnyi destroyed, at the cost of his life, a train with gasoline at the rail station of Stanishivka. His comrades Tsarenko and Kadashchuk staged at the same station a collision of trains loaded with

ammunition. 14 railcars and 2 steam locomotives burnt up. Underground operatives in the village of Polianka caused the derailment of a train carrying military personnel. The occupiers rescued more than 100 of their men and officers from out of the wreckage.<sup>2</sup>

By the summer of 1942 there were 136 underground organizations and groups totaling 2,634 people active in Kiev and the Kiev *oblast'*. By the summer of 1943, there were in the Kiev *oblast'* 3 combined partisan units, 44 detachments and 13 combat groups numbering up to 13,000 fighters.<sup>3</sup>

During the occupation period, the underground organizations based in Kiev and the Kiev *oblast'* carried out 490 combat operations, blew up 26 rail and highway bridges, 21 trains, disabled more than 100 steam locomotives and 800 rail cars, cut 188 km telephone and telegraph communications lines.

The partisans did even greater damage on the occupying forces. Documents in the *fond* say that a "Victory or Death" guerilla unit under S.P. Osechkin began combat operations as early as July 1941. Together with local defense force volunteers, the detachment fought defensive combats near Kiev. At the end of the month, it was redeployed to the Dymyrskyi district to operate behind the German lines. On August 7, the partisan unit dealt a surprise blow at an enemy supply train destroying 17 Nazis, capturing carts with ammunition and military equipment.<sup>4</sup> On August 17, when on a reconnaissance mission, a combat team smashed a party of paratroopers who had landed in the vicinity of the village of Mirotskoe. Five German parachutists led by an officer were captured and two were killed.

On Aug. 22, a partisan unit engaged a German units on its way to the front in the forest between the villages Nemeshaevo and Kicheevo. In fighting that went on for six hours the partisans killed more than 300 German men and officers.

On August 27, the partisans crossed the Dnieper and smashed a German garrison in the village of Vypolzov, Ostior district, Chernigov *oblast'*. By Sept. 10, 1941, the partisans had carried out about 20 combat operations inflicting substantial losses and casualties on the enemy. They smashed 16 truck convoys and destroyed more than 800 men and officers. On Sept. 24, the partisans, together with the Red Army men who joined them, knocked the Nazis from the village of Berezan'. The Germans fled, leaving behind a train with captured Red Army men who subsequently joined the detachment.

The enemy command committed a considerable infantry force against the detachment. The punitive force managed to encircle the partisans in the hamlet named for T.G. Shevchenko, Yagotin district. The Nazis attacked at 11 a.m. Sept. 11. The detachment fought gallantly against very heavy odds. Its commander, S.P. Osechkin, died along with 400 of his men, Red Army men and Dnieper Flotilla sailors who had joined the detachment.

The "Victory or Death" partisan unit fought the enemy in five districts of the Kiev, Chernigov and Poltava *oblasts*, carried out 30 combat operations destroying more than 2,000 enemy men and officers, 4 tanks, 54 motor vehicles, 60 bridges, 10 garrisons and police stations, 15 rail cars, cut 320 km of telephone and telegraph wires and captured much equipment.<sup>5</sup>

By the end of 1941, there were 883 detachments formed for the purpose of fighting behind enemy lines in Ukraine, and more than 1,700 raiding and reconnaissance parties totaling 35,000 men. According to the estimates of I. G. Starinov, deputy chief of staff of the Ukrainian partisan movement in charge of raids and subversions, Ukrainian partisans and members of underground resistance blew up 224 enemy trains, disabled about 2,000 motor vehicles, demolished 650 highway and rail bridges before the end of 1941.<sup>6</sup>

German historian G. Teske wrote: “The Wehrmacht suffered the first defeat in WWII in combating Soviet partisans in the winter of 1941-1942. This happened above all because the initiative right from the start belonged to the partisans and they retained it till the end of war.”<sup>7</sup>

The formation of partisan and underground forces continued into the summer of 1942 - that is to say, until the whole of Ukraine became occupied. When the situation grew critical on the fronts in August, Stalin decided to use the partisan movement to fight the enemy. Moscow began to summon commanders of partisan units from various occupied areas. Representing Ukraine were Kovpak, Saburov, Strokach, and Fedorov. The meetings and conferences went on for nearly whole weeks. Right on the heels of the Sept. 5, 1942 conference, there came an order of the People’s Commissar for Defense entitled “On the Tasks of the Partisan Movement.” It said in part: “The principal tasks of partisan actions are: the wrecking of enemy rear services, the destruction of its headquarters and other military establishments, the demolition of railways and bridges, the torching and blowing up of supply dumps and barracks, the destruction of enemy personnel, the capture or destruction of German authorities’ representatives.”<sup>8</sup>

To counter the partisan movement, Hitler issued on Aug. 18, 1942, Directive No. 46 (Instructions for Intensified Action Against Banditry in the East). Another document issued Nov. 11, 1942 and signed by the führer contained instructions on how to fight “banditry in the East” and became a supplement to the Wehrmacht’s ground forces field manual. It consisted of six sections dealing with the organization of partisan forces, their tactics, logistics and weapons, methods of combating the partisans, measures for the pacification of the population and so on. The section dealing with banditry stressed:

With regard to the bandits and those who assist them, one should show implacable determination. Tough measures and fear of inevitable punishment should hold back the local population from assisting the bandits. ... Every commander is personally responsible for seeing to it that all captured bandits and civilians (including women), who took part in combat operations, should be shot, or better still, hanged.<sup>9</sup>

The Nazis destroyed civilians en masse, in addition to partisans and members of the underground. The partisans’ retribution was as severe. The captured invaders were sentenced to death. They made exception for those who were of interest for Soviet special services.

According to the operations section of the Ukrainian partisan movement headquarters, Ukrainian partisans and members of the underground organizations put out of action more than 50,000 enemy men and officers by the end of 1942, derailed some 260 trains, damaged 270 rail and highway bridges and destroyed dozens of military and other facilities of the enemy.

Following the so-called "Stalin raids" at the start of 1943 carried out by partisan task forces led by Kovpak and Saburov in Right-Bank Ukraine, a qualitatively new phase opened in the history of the partisan movement. By that time the Red Army crushed the German handpicked units and launched large-scale offensive operations. The frontline was moving closer to occupied Ukraine. The partisans' main objective now was to destroy enemy lines of communication. The summer of 1943 marked the beginning of the giant Battle of Kursk. The Central HQ of the Partisan Movement issued on July 14 the order "On Partisan Rail War along Enemy Lines of Communication." The operation involved 167 combined units and brigades, 8 independent detachments and raiding parties totaling about 100,000 men. The total length of railways in Ukraine at that time was about 5,000 km. To guard the railways against partisans, the Nazis used, in addition to security units, replacement units and even aviation. They built defensive positions along the rail tracks, cut down forests, built barbed-wire fences and laid road mines. But, despite all those measures, the Ukrainian partisans managed, as early as in the middle of 1943, to paralyze traffic along the main enemy communication lines by demolishing the rail bridges and interchanges in Shepetovka, Kovel', Zdolbunov, Korosten', Sarny and so on.

Whereas the partisans blew up 403 trains during the first six months of 1943, they blew up 3,263 during the subsequent six months, or eight times as many. The traffic capacity of the railroads in areas where partisans operated was down by 72 percent. Statistics confirmed the superiority of Soviet mine-laying techniques, wrote the British historian B. Holmstone. He went on to say that the appalling casualty figures are historical evidence of combat successes of the partisans on the mine-laying front. Mines were the decisive tactical weapons of the "smaller war."

The "rail war" played an important part in improving the position of Soviet forces during the defensive and subsequently during offensive operations. Owing to the fact that the numerous protection force of police and other units in addition to 30 divisions that fought against partisans was proving too small to protect the railroads against attacks, the Nazis were compelled to transfer to their rear areas additional 10 divisions totaling about 300,000 men; three of them were for the protection of lines of communication in Ukraine.

In 1941-1944, Ukrainian partisans carried out nearly 5,000 major operations and many minor commando raids on the rail lines. As a result, rail traffic was held up for nearly 2,000 days [24-hour units].

The partisan forces radically changed their strategy and tactics in the closing phase of the war. Whereas their previous task was to inflict on the enemy as much damage as possible and distract from the front its big and small units, their main mission during the wide-scale offensive operations of the Red Army was comprehensive and effective help with launching and carrying out combat operations. During the battle for the Dnieper alone, the partisans captured and transferred to the

troops of the Voronezh and Central fronts 25 sections of river crossings (12, on the Dnieper; 10, on the Pripjat; and 3, on the Desna), making hasty crossings of the water obstacle possible for the troops. Operating in coordination with the commanders of field army units or on their own, the partisans liberated 45 towns, rail stations and big built-up areas.

Under the impact of the Red Army 1944 winter and spring offensive, the occupiers were dislodged from a sizable part of the USSR. The last built-up area in the Kiev *oblast'* was liberated on March 10, 1944. After this, a considerable part of partisans joined the army in the field, and many others went on to rebuild the national economy ravaged during the war years.

According to many researchers, Ukrainian partisans disarmed about 500,000 enemy servicemen, blew up 4,956 supply trains, 607 rail bridges and more than 1,500 highway bridges, destroyed 1,566 tanks and armored vehicles, 211 planes, smashed 467 enemy garrisons, disabled and put out of operation 461 works, 915 depots, 248 communications centers, 44 rail facilities, etc.

The damage done by the Nazi army to the partisans, according to British historians Dickson and Helbrunn, could not be counted in terms of the dead and wounded, destroyed field guns and supply dumps. The most important factor was the sagging morale of the men who were fighting in a country where any civilian could prove to be a partisan.<sup>10</sup>

The partisan casualties in the war are about 60,000; those of members of underground resistance, at between 40,000 and 45,000.

The courage and heroism displayed in fighting the Nazi occupiers earned many partisans and underground movement members in the Kiev *oblast'* government decorations. For example, Professor P.M. Buiko, who was a doctor; I. D. Kudria who was head of a raiding and reconnaissance party; commander of a partisan detachment V.I. Kudriashov; secretary of the underground Zaliznychi district party committee of Kiev A.S. Pirogovskii and First Secretary of the Kiev Oblast' party committee I.S. Sergiebko were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union posthumously.<sup>10</sup>

Documents of *Fond P-4* contain vast factual material. For example, *opis'* 1 contains information dealing with the setting up and activities of the Kiev *oblast'* underground KP(b)U committee during the Nazi occupation; records of meetings of the underground *oblast'* committee, letters, leaflets, appeals, instructions dealing with underground organizations and partisan units; a map showing the network of underground organizations and partisan units; Stalin's orders outlining the tasks of the partisan movement; lists of the personnel of underground organizations and partisan units; a list of built-up areas in the *oblast'* which the punitive units destroyed for resisting the forces of occupation; lists of those awarded the Medal "To a Partisan of the Patriotic War," lists of those recommended for government awards, character references of those recommended for government awards; transcripts of discussions with commanders, commissars and members of partisan units; leaflets, poems and appeals written in underground organizations and detachments; material describing operations by partisans and underground operatives in 48 *raions* of the *oblast'* (alphabetically arranged) and so on.

A sizable part of the documents contain information about the heroic and tragic activities of the Kiev underground *oblast'* party committee [*obkom*]. The *obkom* left in Kiev by the KP(b)U Central Committee for underground operations never started to work. Making sure that the underground *obkom* was not functioning, I.V. Saenko, who was put at the head of the Rozvazhevskii district party committee in August 1941 and who later was hiding from police, had to move to the village of Stavy, Kagarlyk district, and start organizing an underground *obkom* in Kiev.

The documents of *opis'* 2 comprise a progress report of underground organizations and partisan detachments of Kiev; personnel rosters; a list of participants in defending Kiev in 1941; certificates, applications and requests, reminiscences of Kiev defense participants; a report on the activities of people's volunteer corps and the anti-aircraft defense team; reports on combat activities of armored trains "A," "B," and "V"; lists of secret addresses; records of meetings and conferences held by the underground KP(b)U city committee; location of wire radios; information about weapons dispatched to partisan detachments and about traitors; lists and character references of underground organization members recommended for government awards; rosters, certificates, transcriptions of discussions, character references and other material descriptive of the operation of underground groups in Kiev; a list of Kiev underground members who died in Gestapo in 1941-1943; documents found among the files of former German commandant's office in the city of Kiev (translation from the German); copies of instructions issued by the Kiev city council, correspondence of village councils with the Gebietskommissar about agricultural works, leaflets praising the German rule; reports on the operation of underground organizations in Darnitskii, Zaliznychnyi, Leninskii, Moskovskii, Pecherskii, Podol'skii, Radianskii, Zhovtnevyi, Shevchenkovskii districts of Kiev, etc.

*Opis\_5* comprises documents of the party and Komsomol underground organizations and partisan movement of Kiev and the Kiev *oblast'* during the period of temporary Nazi occupation (the documents were not officially approved by the party *obkom*), decisions of the Kiev *oblast'* and city party committees, certificates, memos, reports, letters of recommendation, interrogation records and so on.

Documents are in the Ukrainian, Russian and German languages.

## Sources

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2. Ibid, p.225
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6. Bessmertie. Kniga Pamiati Ukrainy 1941-1945.- K.: izdatel'skoe agentstvo "Kniga Pamiati," 2000.- p. 230
7. Ibid
8. GAKO, P-4, *op.1, d.17, l. 1 ob.*
9. Directive No. 46. Instructions for Intensified Action Against Banditry in the East.
10. Bessmertie. Kniga Pamiati Ukrainy 1941-1945.- K.: izdatel'skoe agentstvo "Kniga Pamiati," 2000.- p. 394