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## THE UNDERGROUND AND PARTISAN MOVEMENT IN THE SOUTH OF THE UKRAINIAN SSR DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR (1941–1944) IN THE WORKS OF MYKOLAIV REGION HISTORIANS

*The article examines the regional historiography of Mykolaiv related to the underground and partisan movement in the south of the Ukrainian SSR during the Second World War (1941–1944).*

*It has been established that the activities of partisan detachments and underground groups in Southern Ukraine during the Second World War (1941–1944), the unarmed resistance in the form of sabotage of the economic and military measures of the occupation administration, as well as the struggle of the national underground and the OUN's marching groups, became the subject of numerous historical studies by Mykolaiv scholars.*

*It has been established that within the Soviet historiographical tradition there existed a rather powerful thematic narrative on this issue; however, the party-centered approach and ideological bias significantly diminished the scholarly value of the works produced during the Soviet period.*

*It has been demonstrated that Mykolaiv historians continue to conduct a systematic analysis of many aspects of the problem, and the Resistance movement in Southern Ukraine (1941–1944) is generally assessed very highly. The complete failure of the German-Romanian occupiers' plans to exploit the economic, industrial, and human resources of such a strategically important region as Southern Ukraine is attributed by contemporary historiography precisely to the Resistance movement during the temporary occupation of the region's territory. This movement, in turn, is presented as one of the decisive factors in the liberation of Ukraine and the Victory in the Second World War.*

**Key words:** *Second World War, historiography, Mykolaiv region, Resistance movement, Ukrainian SSR.*

**Statement of the problem.** At present, a substantial range of questions concerning the history of Ukraine during the Second World War remains underexplored in historiographical discourse. Among these unresolved issues is the Resistance movement in Southern Ukraine (1941–1944). The activities of Soviet partisan detachments and clandestine groups, unarmed resistance manifested through the sabotage of the occupation administration's economic and military measures, as well as the struggle waged by the national underground and the OUN's marching units, have been addressed in numerous historical, political science, and legal studies. Consequently, there arises the necessity of synthesizing historiographical insights and undertaking a critical reassessment of the principal achievements in the study of this problem.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Among the scholarly works whose specific historical subjects of research are indirectly related to the topic of our article, it is worth highlighting the studies of

V. Stetskevych [1; 2], O. Marushchenko [3], and D. Nefodov [4–7].

**This article seeks** to provide a historiographical analysis of the Mykolaiv region's scholarship on the underground and partisan movement in the south of the Ukrainian SSR during the Second World War (1941–1944).

**Outline of the main material of the study.** The scholarly inquiry into the Resistance movement in the region was effectively inaugurated immediately after the conclusion of the war. A defining characteristic of this early historiographical stage was the training of young researchers through postgraduate programs. In 1948, in Kyiv, S. Hertzman defended his dissertation "The Struggle of the Working Masses of the Mykolaiv Region against the German-Fascist Invaders" [8], which became the first dissertation specifically devoted to the Resistance movement in the southern region. Hertzman devoted considerable attention to portraying the Nazi occupation regime, the so-called "new order," and outlined the conditions

under which the underground and partisan movement began to take shape in the Mykolaiv region. As with subsequent dissertations of this period, the study was characterized by a weak evidentiary base, relying primarily on the materials of a single party archive in the Mykolaiv region, newspapers, and reports of the Soviet Information Bureau. The lack of a wider range of archival documentation stemmed from the fragmentation and dispersal of records across various state institutions in the immediate postwar years. Overall, it should be emphasized that Hertzman was not yet able to fully elucidate the theme of the underground struggle in the Mykolaiv region, with his research focusing more extensively on an analysis of the occupation regime..

A landmark in the development of regional historiography was the publication in 1964 of the documentary collection "Mykolaiv Region during the Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945: Documents and Materials" [9]. The preparation of this compilation engaged numerous Mykolaiv historians and local scholars. Although marked by a certain degree of ideological selectivity in the choice of documents, the appearance of this volume constituted a historiographical milestone, particularly within the scholarly discourse of Southern Ukraine.

A significant contribution to the study of the Soviet underground and partisan movement in the region and the oblast was made by the Mykolaiv historian V. Nemyaty, whose dissertation [10] was devoted to examining the activities of the party underground in Southern Ukraine within the territories of present-day Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts. According to the researcher, the specific conditions of steppe Ukraine determined that, in contrast to the northern districts, the predominant forms of Resistance here were the activities of clandestine party organizations and sabotage groups [10, p. 4]. The activities of the party underground were explored in greater depth by Nemyaty in his subsequent works, in which he devoted particular attention to demonstrating the organizing and leading role of communists in the underground struggle.

The source base of Nemyaty's studies was extensive, encompassing documentary materials from the Party Archive of the Institute of Party History under the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine, as well as from the regional party committees of Mykolaiv, Kherson, Odesa, Zaporizhzhia, and others, in addition to the archives of the Ministry of Defense of the USSR and various regional state archives. Drawing on these sources, the scholar was able to reconstruct in detail

the process of establishing and operating numerous underground organizations and groups, to identify the organizational structure of the party underground, to generalize the forms and methods of its activity specific to the conditions of Southern Ukraine, and to highlight the creation of a unified center for directing the actions of the underground.

At the same time, Nemyaty emphasized that the underground regional committee was created only in the second half of August 1941 on the left bank of the Dnipro and in practice had no connection with the underground district committees and groups that already operated in the occupied territories [11, p. 35]. He further stressed that from the very beginning of the occupation, the underground struggle in Southern Ukraine was most extensively manifested through the disruption of the occupiers' economic measures aimed at exploiting industry and plundering agriculture [11, p. 60]. According to him, industrial enterprises of the southern cities served as the foundation for establishing the party underground and for conducting sabotage activities. The historian devoted special attention to the activities of V. Liahyn, O. Sydoruk, F. Komkov, among others.

In subsequent years, Nemyaty continued to develop the subject of the underground and partisan movement in greater depth, defended his doctoral dissertation, became a member of the editorial boards of comprehensive collective works on the history of the "nationwide struggle" in the Ukrainian SSR, and participated in the problem-focused research group on the study of the history of the war.

An important component of V. Nemyaty's research was the problem of the underground and the popular masses struggling to disrupt the occupation authorities' plans for the economic exploitation of the Ukrainian SSR. His doctoral dissertation [12] and two monographs [13; 14] were devoted to this theme. The scholar reached the significant conclusion that the occupiers were able to exploit less than one-third of the oblast's economic potential [14, p. 209].

At the very beginning of the 1980s, a series of collective works devoted to the history of regional party organizations of the republic was published. In 1980, the first such "Historical Outline" among all the oblasts of the southern region appeared, dedicated to the history of the Mykolaiv Regional Party Organization [15]. In the section on the underground and partisan struggle in the oblast, the authors emphasized that industrial enterprises of Mykolaiv served as the principal base for establishing the party underground and carrying out sabotage activities; however, peasants also participated in

mass resistance by disrupting agricultural schedules, disabling equipment, refusing to fulfill compulsory deliveries, and concealing grain. In general, much of the information was not new, and the merit of the authors lay rather in systematizing and generalizing already known material.

During the same period, leading Ukrainian historians and local researchers compiled the fundamental multi-volume series “History of Cities and Villages of the Ukrainian SSR”, which also included coverage of the underground and partisan movement in the south of the republic. In 1971, the volume dedicated to the Mykolaiv region was published [16]. Its preparation involved the active participation of local historians, as well as experts and specialists in the history of the war in general and the underground and partisan movement in particular (V. Nemyaty, P. Mushchynskyi, among others). The authors provided data on the organization of two underground city committees, three municipal district committees, and twenty-six district committees of the party, along with the creation of thirteen partisan detachments. Considerable attention was devoted to the activities of the “Mykolaiv Center” and the underground organization “Partyzanska iskra” (“Partisan Spark”).

During the perestroika era, dissertations were defended on various aspects of the Resistance movement. The scholarly value of the dissertation by the Mykolaiv historian M. Shytiuk [17] lies in the fact that he was the first to analyze the memoirs of war participants as a source for studying socio-political work among the population of the occupied territories of the republic, and he carried out a classification of memoirs according to the extent to which they reflected different aspects of this problem. Among the recollections of participants in the underground and partisan movement in Southern Ukraine, Shytiuk analyzed the memoirs of I. Vergasov, I. Henov, I. Herasymenko, I. Kozlov, M. Luhovyi, M. Makedonskyi, and K. Shamko. He concluded that the degree and completeness with which socio-political work was represented in memoirs places them on par with other historical sources for the study of this issue. The scholar emphasized that the memoirs of partisan detachment commanders and commissars, as well as secretaries of underground party organizations, are especially insightful and informative in this regard [17, p. 166].

The well-known events of the early 1990s, namely the attainment of independence and the democratic transformations, opened new horizons for Ukrainian scholarship, including that of researchers in Mykolaiv.

Contemporary historiographers interpret the heightened interest in the history of the OUN–UPA during this period as a genuine breakthrough and a kind of historiographical boom [18, p. 111]. Overall, the problematics of the national Resistance movement during the Second World War rather swiftly became one of the most topical issues in Ukrainian historical scholarship.

The well-known journalist V. Kipiani was among the first to raise the issue of the activities of the national underground in the Mykolaiv region, specifically the Southern Marching Group of the OUN [19, pp. 45–48]. In the same direction, research was carried out by S. Bilychenko [20, pp. 81–84; 21, pp. 19–25], V. Drumov, and Yu. Zaitsev [22; 23; 24, pp. 106–109]. By working extensively with a large body of materials from the regional archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), these scholars revealed previously unknown facts about the struggle of representatives of the national branch of the Resistance movement. According to S. Bilychenko, the OUN in the Mykolaiv region constituted a large, well-developed organization that encompassed more than 170 members.

In examining the activities of the marching groups in the South, researchers noted the actions not only of members of the OUN(b) but also of the Melnyk faction, in particular the Southern Marching Group of the OUN(m) led by B. Siretskyi. Historians argue that the primary objectives of the marching groups were to infiltrate as deeply as possible into the administrative organs of Southern Ukraine and, through them, to implement the OUN’s national-state principles [22, p. 192]. Particular attention was paid to propaganda and agitation, sabotage, and the liquidation of German agents. These scholars insist that nearly 90% of the participants in the national underground were drawn from the local population, citing examples of youth organizations that existed in many villages of the region.

Nevertheless, the works in question display a certain degree of bias and insufficient critical analysis of primary sources. For instance, V. Drumov and Yu. Zaitsev, in describing the activities of the OUN marching groups in the South, claim that they allegedly “found complete understanding and broad support among the people” [24, p. 107]. However, this assertion is somewhat inaccurate, since even former participants of the “march to the East” pointed to the ambivalence with which their ideas were received by the local population of the South, as well as to the occasional inability of OUN members to articulate a clear program of struggle. In turn, S. Bilychenko

contradicts himself: first he categorically asserts that there was “no Soviet underground at all” in the Mykolaiv region, and then he admits that one aspect of the OUN’s activity in the oblast was the struggle against Soviet underground fighters [20, p. 82].

Despite such shortcomings, these studies, based on newly opened archival materials, laid the groundwork for further scholarly investigation.

O. Zakharchenko [25, pp. 41–45] made an attempt to investigate the role of underground groups in organizing the sabotage of the occupiers’ agrarian measures in the Mykolaiv region. The researcher concluded that the most widespread forms of struggle carried out by underground fighters in rural areas were precisely the sabotage of agricultural work, the disruption of food deliveries, and acts of sabotage aimed at destroying warehouses and grain storage facilities.

In 1996, M. Shytiuk’s monograph “The Partisan and Underground Movement in the Mykolaiv Region in 1941–1944” was published [26]. The source base of this study was selected in a specifically defined direction and consisted exclusively of materials from previously closed collections of the regional archive. By introducing a large number of new documents into scholarly circulation, the researcher examined the activities of such underground organizations in the regional center as the “Mykolaiv Underground Center”, “Center”, and “Patriots of the Motherland”, as well as numerous organizations and groups operating in Pervomaisk, Voznesensk, Nova Odesa, and other towns and villages of the oblast.

The scholar insists that the principal form of struggle in the oblast was the mass resistance of the unarmed population against the political, economic, and military measures of the occupation administration, along with the activities of small underground groups. One of the central sections of the monograph is devoted to analyzing distorted historical data concerning the activities of particular formations. In particular, Shytiuk emphasizes the fact that after the liberation of the oblast, numerous reports—often quite detailed – were submitted concerning underground and partisan activities. However, upon verification by Soviet security services and party authorities, it was revealed that many of these units had never actually existed. The historian provides a list of such groups and detachments, which largely consisted of so-called “dead souls.”

In the course of his research, Shytiuk concludes that although the underground regional and district party committees did not function during the occupation, no unified coordinating center was established, and

some communists displayed weakness by prioritizing personal interests over public duty, nevertheless, in the Mykolaiv region an underground and partisan struggle emerged from grassroots initiatives. The failures of the initial stage and of the entire first period of the struggle, he argues, can be explained by a series of causes, most of which were subjective in nature.

M. Shytiuk devoted special attention to the history of the underground youth organization “Partyzanska Iskra” (“Partisan Spark”) [27]. Drawing on materials from newly opened collections of the SBU archive in the Mykolaiv region, the scholar outlined the activities of the Iskra members with greater objectivity than his predecessors, reconstructed in detail the course of their struggle, and identified the causes behind the exposure and destruction of most of the underground activists.

One of the first historians of the 2000s to initiate an analysis of the Resistance movement directly in the southern region was the Mykolaiv scholar Ye. Horburov, whose work includes a dissertation and a monograph [28; 29], along with several scholarly and publicistic studies. For the first time in Ukrainian historiography, the Soviet partisan and underground movement, as well as the activities of the national underground, were examined not within the confines of a single oblast, but across almost the entire southern Ukrainian region.

The scholar emphasized that the natural and climatic conditions of Southern Ukraine were unfavorable for the development of a partisan movement, which, in his view, never became truly widespread. Among the reasons for this, in addition to adverse environmental conditions, the historian identified the lack of adequate preparation, material resources, and experience in clandestine activity under the occupation regime. Nevertheless, Horburov positively assessed the effectiveness of the Soviet branch of the Resistance movement in Southern Ukraine, giving high evaluations to its combat, intelligence, and propaganda activities.

Horburov’s studies also gave broad coverage to the history of the national underground in the southern region. On the basis of criminal cases against members of the Southern Marching Group and representatives of the local national movement, the author succeeded in constructing a fairly comprehensive picture of OUN activities in the southern oblasts and in Crimea. The scholar traced the evolution of OUN positions from cooperation with the German occupation administration to confrontation with it. According to the historian, while Soviet underground fighters concentrated primarily on sabotage, terrorist, and

other destructive acts, OUN members considered such measures extreme and forced. He stressed that for the latter, propaganda and educational work with the population, the awakening of national consciousness, and the creation of structures for the future Ukrainian state were paramount.

In the course of his research, the scholar concluded that the leaders of both factions of the OUN – Bandera's and Melnyk's – understood the strategic importance of the southern Ukrainian region. At the same time, the specific ethnic composition and mentality of the local population compelled the OUN to develop distinctive forms of struggle adapted to the local context. The author substantiated his position with the argument that local OUN branches devoted more attention to socio-economic issues than to purely national ones, exposing the crimes of both totalitarian regimes and emphasizing the advantages of sovereign Ukrainian statehood [28, p. 182].

The outcome of Ye. Horburov's further scholarly investigations in this field was the publication of two co-authored monographs – one with M. Shytiuk [30] and another with Yu. Kotliar [31]. In these works, the researchers raised the issue of the strategic importance of the activities of the Southern Marching Group, noting that it was in the South where “the decisive battle between nationalist and communist ideologies was to take place” [30, p. 13].

In the course of their analysis, the scholars concluded that, despite the establishment of local centers of the national movement in all oblasts of the South, a cohesive OUN network in the region never emerged. Separate groups operated that were only hypothetically part of a unified structure. At the same time, the researchers gave a positive assessment of the effectiveness of these groups' activities and their

overall contribution to the Resistance movement in the southern region.

In their monograph “Southern Ukraine: June 1941 – November 1942” [32], the Mykolaiv scholars M. Shytiuk and A. Pohorielov addressed several issues directly related to the Resistance movement in the region. In the authors' view, perhaps the most decisive reason for the failure of the underground and partisan movement at the beginning of the occupation was the considerable “credit of trust” extended by the local population to the occupiers [32, p. 203]. According to the researchers, it was precisely this factor – rather than a lack of experience, haste, or miscalculations in choosing organizational structures – that proved decisive and led to the virtual defeat of the Resistance movement in the South during the initial period of the occupation.

Some of the most recent achievements of regional historical scholarship were also summarized in comprehensive works such as “Mykolaiv Region during the Great Patriotic War: 1941–1944” [33] and “Mykolaiv Region in Modern History” [34].

**Conclusions.** Thus, contemporary Mykolaiv historians continue to conduct a systematic analysis of many aspects of the problem, and the Resistance movement in Southern Ukraine (1941–1944) is generally evaluated very highly. The complete failure of the German-Romanian occupiers' plans to exploit the economic, industrial, and human resources of such a strategically important region as Southern Ukraine is attributed in modern historiography precisely to the Resistance movement during the temporary occupation of the region's territory. In turn, this movement is presented as one of the decisive factors in the liberation of Ukraine and in the Victory in the Second World War.

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### **Нефьодов Д.В. ПІДПІЛЬНО-ПАРТИЗАНСЬКИЙ РУХ НА ПІВДНІ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ РСР В РОКИ ДРУГОЇ СВІТОВОЇ ВІЙНИ (1941–1944 РР.) В ПРАЦЯХ ІСТОРИКІВ МИКОЛАЇВЩИНИ**

*У статті розкриваються особливості регіонального історіописання Миколаївщини з проблематики підпільно-партизанського руху на півдні Української РСР в роки Другої світової війни (1941–1944 рр.).*

*Встановлено, що діяльність на території Південної України в роки Другої світової війни (1941–1944 рр.) партизанських загонів і підпільних груп, неозброєний опір у вигляді саботажу економічних та військових заходів окупаційної адміністрації, а також боротьба національного підпілля та похідних груп ОУН стали предметом численних історичних досліджень миколаївських науковців.*

*Визначено, що в радянській історіографічній традиції наявний достатньо потужний тематичний наратив із зазначеної проблеми, хоча, безумовно, партійний підхід та заангажованість значно знизили рівень праць науковців радянської доби.*

*Доведено, що миколаївськими істориками продовжується системний аналіз багатьох аспектів проблеми і загалом високо оцінюється рух Опору в Південній Україні (1941–1944 рр.). Цілковитий провал планів німецько-румунських окупантів щодо використання економічних, промислових та людських ресурсів такого стратегічно важливого регіону як Південь України пов'язується новітньою історіографією саме з рухом Опору під час тимчасової окупації території регіону, який, у свою чергу, подається як один з вирішальних факторів звільнення України та Перемоги у Другій світовій війні.*

**Ключові слова:** Друга світова війна, історіографія, Миколаївщина, рух Опору, Українська РСР.

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