

Bandera, Stefan

(1909--1959), Ukrainian nationalist leader. Bandera joined the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in his twenties, and quickly became one of the organization's leaders in the western Ukraine, which was under Polish rule at the time.

During the early 1930s Bandera took control of the OUN, which encouraged armed revolt for the cause of Ukrainian independence. When the Polish Minister of the Interior was assassinated in 1936, Bandera was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment. However, when the Germans invaded Poland in September 1939, he was set free by the Soviets and he moved to German-occupied Poland.

At the 1940 national OUN conference, Bandera caused a breach in the organization; his supporters, the group's majority, wanted to bring about an armed revolt. Before the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, Bandera helped the Nazis set up two Ukrainian intelligence battalions within their army. He also organized units that accompanied German troops into the Ukraine to form the local government and police. Bandera and his people considered the Soviets and the Jews their main enemies.

After the German invasion of the Soviet Union, Bandera's representatives declared the establishment of an independent Ukrainian government in LVOV on June 30, 1941. The Germans were completely opposed to this, so they deported Bandera to Sachsenhausen. He kept in contact with his comrades, and was finally released in September 1944. He led the OUN until his assassination in 1959.