



Ukrainian Genealogy Group

National Capital Region

The Ukrainian Genealogist

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February 28th UGG-NCR Webinar

The title of Prof. Myroslav Shkandrij's presentation was '*The Disputed Legacy of the Waffen-SS 'Galicia' in War and Positive Accounts*'.

The presentation was an introduction to his recent publication, *In the Maelstrom: the Waffen-SS 'Galicia Division and Its Legacy*. He researched this book for many years and recognized that the history of the Galicia Division remains a controversial subject with two basic narratives: the Division was a military organization created for political and patriotic reasons to defend the Ukrainian people against the potential chaos after the possible defeat of the German military and a contrary narrative that the members of the Division were servants of Hitler and active participants in the Nazi German military machine.



Dr. Myroslav Shkandrij, our February Speaker

Regarding the first narrative, they were patriots who were motivated by events at the end of the First World War and followed the example of

the Sich Rifleman who formed the core of the Ukrainian Army at that time and fought for the independence of Ukraine. According to the second narrative, they were guilty of war crimes committed during the Second World War.

The Ukrainian Central Committee was involved in the formation of this military unit. After the defeat at the battle of Stalingrad, the Germans became desperate for more manpower and began to conscript Ukrainian men into the German Army. The Ukrainian Central Committee, essentially a refugee and welfare organization, attempted to control this conscription and in 1943, negotiated the formation of the Division as a motorized unit with military chaplains, a Ukrainian character and that they would serve only on the eastern front. According to some reports, over 60,000 men volunteered but about 25,000 served.

Prof. Shkandrij also mentioned the enlistment of Ukrainian teenage boys and girls mainly into the German anti-aircraft (flak) units that served in Germany. In addition, some girls were trained as medical personnel, propagandists and worked in factories. This aspect of the war requires further research.

Prof. Shkandrij mentioned that after the Battle of Brody in July, 1944, where there were heavy losses in the Division, a new enlistment campaign brought in more recruits. But this was similar to conscription because the young men in western Ukraine were given the choice of working in Germany as forced labourers in agriculture, mining or factories, in Organization Todt (military construction) or joining the Division to avoid their possible conscription into the advancing Soviet Army.

Many chose to serve in the Division as a form of survival. After the Division surrendered to the British Army at the end of the Second World War, they were held in internment camps in Bellaria and Rimini in Italy. While in Rimini, they developed a remarkable cultural life with trade and academic schools, orchestras, choirs and an active religious life. Several Division members took this opportunity to write their memoirs and produced creative and scholarly literature that presented their interpretation of their military experiences.

Prof. Shkandrij also discussed the controversies that followed the Division members after they were transferred to England and were 'civilianized' in 1949. Accusations that the Division was responsible for 'war crimes' led to investigations in Canada, England and Australia in the 1980s. These investigations did not discover evidence of criminal activity although some individuals who joined the Division at the end of the war were suspects prior to joining the unit. Division veterans who were allowed to immigrate to Canada after the war had to appear before a security panel. Prof. Shkandrij concluded his presentation with a discussion of their legacy including the veterans' organizations and monuments in Canada and in Germany and primarily the extensive literature created by the Division veterans that contributed to their 'heroic narrative'. The presentation was followed by a 'question and answer' segment.

Prof. Shkandrij earlier discussed his book on October 24, 2022 on the 'Galicia' Division on Facebook:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHQEc_kykoQ

Those who wish to acquire a copy of this book can contact the publisher, McGill-Queen's University Press:

<https://www.mqup.ca/in-the-maelstrom-products-9780228016533.php>

Community & Genealogy Events

Saturday, April 1, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Ukrainian Catholic Women's League of Canada Easter Bazaar

Ukrainian foods and Easter baking will be sold as well as gifts, Easter cards and many other items. Bazaar proceeds will be used to help with church renovations and to support Ukrainians. For more information call 613-744-1417 or contact oaktree3236@gmail.com.

Where: St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Shrine, 952 Green Valley Crescent, Ottawa

Saturday, April 8, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Ukrainian Easter Bazaar

Take home Ukrainian Traditional foods & baking, Ukrainian Easter Egg making kits & supplies. Locally made artisan products. Imported Ukrainian handicrafts. Ukrainian inspired street wear. For more information contact: uoc.market@gmail.com

Where: Ukrainian Orthodox Hall (1000 Byron Ave, Ottawa)

Thursday, April 20, 7:00 am – 8:00 pm

NashiPredky@Home Virtual (New York City's Ukrainian Downtown)

Alexander Motyl will discuss how New York's Ukrainian neighborhood--the Downtown--has changed over the years and what its future is likely to be.

Alexander Motyl is an American historian, political scientist, poet, writer, translator and artist-painter. He is a resident of New York City.

This is a free event; however, you must register to attend.

Click [here](#) for more information and to register