

A number of modern neo-Nazi groups have claimed to be the political heirs of the historically important Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), including Svoboda and Right Sector, two of the paramilitary groups that drove the US-backed coup in Kiev in February 2014.

Republican US Senators announced on Wednesday that they were introducing a new bill to further sanction Russia by targeting state-owned enterprises.

The bill is called the Halting Enrichment of Russian Oligarchs and Industry Allies of Moscow's Schemes to Leverage its Abject Villainy Abroad Act, an unwieldy title the acronym for which is HEROIAM SLAVA, a Ukrainian nationalist phrase that translates to "Glory to the Heroes."

"The HEROIAM SLAVA Act would deny companies controlled or owned by Moscow, like Rosneft, Gazprom, Rosatom, Aeroflot, and RT, access to critical American capital," reads a [statement announcing the bill](#).

"Heroiam Slava" has been uttered numerous times in recent days by Western leaders seeking to show support for Kiev following Russia's launching of a special military operation in Ukraine, including European Commission President [Ursula von der Leyen](#), New Zealand Prime Minister [Jacinda Ardern](#), and UK Prime Minister [Boris Johnson](#). However, it's not just some bog-standard slogan evoking national pride - it's long been a rallying cry of some of Ukraine's most far-right groups, including those who collaborated with the Nazi invasion and aided in the Holocaust.

Any Ally Against Communism

The slogan first arose in the 1920s, when the Legion of Ukrainian Nationalists, a predecessor to the OUN, adopted it as a response to the cry "Slava Ukraini" (Glory to Ukraine), according to US state media outlet [Radio Svoboda](#). The right-wing nationalist group was formed in Czechoslovakia to resist socialism in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (UkSSR), which in 1922 formed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) as a founding member republic.

In 1929, the OUN was formed in Vienna when the Legion merged with several other far-right groups. There's an expression in Germany from this period that says "if someone sits down with 11 Nazis, there are a dozen Nazis at the table," and this situation was no different. When Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, the OUN declared an independent Ukrainian state and pledged its allegiance to Nazi leader Adolf Hitler.

However, this relationship was at times uneasy, as the Ukrainians wanted to collaborate with the Nazis but not give up statehood. For example, OUN leader Stepan Bandera was placed under house arrest by the Gestapo and later held in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp before being released in 1944 to fight the advancing Soviet Red Army. The OUN also fought both Soviet and Nazi troops for a time, before switching to solely fight the Soviets in 1944, welcoming Nazi German aid to their forces.

The Ukrainian Insurgent Army, the OUN military wing, collaborated with the Nazi massacres in the Holocaust and carried out its own massacres, including most notoriously the [killing of 60,000 Volhynian Poles](#) in 1943 and 1944, but also pogroms against Jewish communities, such as [in Lvov in 1941](#).

"The Jews in the USSR constitute the most faithful support of the ruling Bolshevik regime, and the vanguard of Muscovite imperialism in Ukraine," the OUN party program declared. "Moskali [an ethnic slur for Russians], Poles, and Jews that are hostile to us are to be destroyed in struggle."

During the period of Nazi collaboration, "Slava Ukraini/ Slava Heroiam" was said accompanied by a "Roman salute," i.e. the full-arm Nazi salute, [according to Deutsche Welle](#). The slogan was banned in the Soviet Union, as were all forms of fascist ideology and expressions of racial hatred.

After the Red Army liberated Ukraine from Nazi occupation, the OUN/UIA continued its guerrilla and terrorist war against the Soviets until a combination of counterinsurgency operations and extensive government investment in rebuilding the region weakened them and they were defeated by 1948. Some went underground, but others fled to the west, including OUN co-founder Mykola Lebed, who was [given shelter by the CIA](#), for whom Lebed gathered intelligence on the Soviet Union through a front group called Prolog Research Corporation.

A [CIA report declassified in 2007](#) revealed that Prolog, as a research arm of the OUN-formed Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council (UHVR), "publish[ed] periodicals and select books and pamphlets which seek to exploit and increase nationalist and other dissident tendencies in the Soviet Ukraine."

"In an effort to achieve Ukrainian independence, the ZP/UHVR has collaborated with the CIA in clandestine operations since 1949," the report states.

"During the early years of its association with the CIA, ZP/UHVR re-established communications with resistance forces in the Ukraine [...] in its distribution operations, Prolog has utilized the services of Ukrainian emigres in various countries who are sympathetic to the ZP/UHVR. Since the Fifties, Ukrainian collaborators in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia have infiltrated a great amount of Prolog material into the USSR ... Prolog has been more able than other CIA assets to ferret out and approach dissident Soviet Ukrainians in the USSR."

Post-Soviet Resurgence

After the Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991, the slogans "Slava Ukraini" and "Slava Heroiam" again gained popularity with nationalists. During a 1995 visit to Kiev, then-US President [Bill Clinton uttered the phrase](#). It gained more popularity after the US-backed coup in 2014, in which far-right nationalists stormed the Verkhovna Rada and overthrew President Viktor Yanukovich after he rejected an EU association deal that would have forced large loans on Kiev.

The coup effort was [explicitly directed by the United States](#) and spearheaded by neo-Nazi groups Right Sektor, Svoboda, and the Ukrainian National Assembly – Ukrainian People's Self-Defense (UNA-UNSO), who hold bigoted views of Russians, Jews, and other non-Ukrainians in Ukraine and who attempted to force some of the most radical aspects of "Ukrainization," including the [attempted removal](#) of Russian as one of the national languages of Ukraine. The groups also led an assault on Russian-speaking regions of Ukraine, including the Donbass, but also the anti-coup protests in largely-Russophone Odessa, the crushing of which culminated in the torching of the Trade Unions House and the deaths of 46 people trapped inside.

In 2018, then-Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko [made it the official greeting](#) of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and later of its national police as well.

On Tuesday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky appointed Col. Maksym Marchenko to be the new head of the Odessa Administration, [according to the Kyiv Post](#). Marchenko [was once commander](#) of one of the neo-Nazi army formations that fought Russian separatists in the Donbass, the Aidar Battalion, which was [accused of war crimes](#) in the Donbass in an [Amnesty International report](#) in September 2014.