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# Mykola Lebed

**Mykola Lebed** (Ukrainian: Микола Кирилович Лебідь or Ле́бедь; January 11, 1909 – July 18, 1998), also known as **Maksym Ruban**, **Marko** or **Yevhen Skyrba**, was a Ukrainian political activist, Ukrainian nationalist, and guerrilla fighter. He was among those tried, convicted, and imprisoned for the murder of Polish Interior Minister Bronisław Pieracki, in 1934. The court sentenced him to death, but the state commuted the sentence to life imprisonment. He escaped when the Germans invaded Poland in 1939.<sup>[1]:73</sup> As leader of OUN-B he is responsible for the genocide of Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia.<sup>[2][3][4]</sup>

In 2009, the United States Congress directed the National Archives and Records Administration to review declassified intelligence records pertaining to the activities of the Nazis and the Japanese Imperial Government that were not processed in time for the Nazi War Crimes and Japanese Imperial Government Records Interagency Working Group's (IWG) final report in 2007.<sup>:pref.</sup> The follow-up report from the IWG's Richard Breitman and Norman J. W. Goda included a discussion of Lebed's relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency during the Cold War.<sup>:pref.</sup> In 1949 he emigrated to the United States and lived in New York. Through Prolog Research Corporation, his CIA funded organization, he gathered intelligence on the Soviet Union as late as into the late 1960s. The CIA project name for the operation was AERODYNAMIC.<sup>[1]:85ff.</sup> The report stated that as late as 1991 the CIA, for fear of compromising the operation and triggering outrage within the Ukrainian émigré community, shielded Lebed from prosecution for war crimes by preventing the United States Department of Justice's Office of Special Investigations from learning about his wartime connections to the Nazis.<sup>:90–91.</sup> He died in 1998.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Mykola Lebed

Микола Кирилович Лебідь



Lebed in 1947

<b>Born</b>	January 11, 1909 <div><span>Novi Strilyshcha</span>,<span> </span><span>Bibrka County</span>,<span> </span><span>Galicia and Lodomeria</span>,<span> </span>Austria-Hungary</div>
<b>Died</b>	July 18, 1998 <div> (aged 89)</div> <span>Pittsburgh</span> , <span> </span> <span>Pennsylvania</span> , <span> </span> United States
<b>Nationality</b>	<span>Ukrainian</span>
<b>Other names</b>	Maksym Ruban, <span> </span> Marko or Yevhen Skyrba
<b>Occupation</b>	Politician

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## Early life

Born in Novi Strilyscha, a small town in Galicia, nowadays western part of Ukraine (at the time, Austria-Hungary), Lebed completed his studies in Lviv which during the Interbellum was part of the Second Polish Republic. In 1930-32 he took an active part in setting up youth groups of Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in the area around Lviv. From 1932 to 1934 he directed communications between the Ukrainian Executive and the Foreign Command of the OUN.

In 1934, he participated in the preparation of the assassination of the Polish Minister of Internal Affairs Bronisław Pieracki. After the assassination he attempted to flee through Gdańsk-Szczecin to Germany, but by order of Himmler was arrested by the Gestapo and handed over to the Polish authorities.<sup>[6]</sup> During the Warsaw Process (1934–36) he was given the death penalty which was later commuted to life imprisonment. He escaped in September 1939 while being evacuated from the Bereza Kartuska Prison due to the threatening Soviet invasion.

From November 1939 through March 1940 he served as the chief of the school of espionage and sabotage founded by the Abwehr in Zakopane.

## World War II

In 1940, during the internal conflict that erupted within the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) he supported Stepan Bandera, and, in 1941, became his assistant. In June 1941, he was one of the functionaries in the short-lived Ukrainian government.

Lebed assumed control of Bandera's faction of the OUN in western Ukraine, which would come to dominate the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) until 1943.<sup>[7]</sup>

In 1942, he was a participant in the 3rd Special Conference of the OUN, and headed the head council and the delegate for external contacts of the Direction of the OUN. In 1944 he became one of the founders of the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council (UHVR) and the general Secretary of International Policies of the UHVR. At the recommendation of the UHVR he traveled to the West where he contacted various Western governments. In 1948, he became a member of the OUN (Diaspora).

### Alleged collaboration with Nazi Germany

In a government reports publication, published by the National Archives,<sup>[1]</sup> Lebed is being suspected of having collaborated with Nazi Germany.

Lebed was described as a "Ukrainian fascist leader and suspected Nazi collaborator",<sup>[8]</sup> and later labeled as a "well-known sadist and collaborator of the Germans" by United States Army counterintelligence.<sup>[9]</sup>

On the other hand, it was also stated, that Lebed himself was persecuted by the Gestapo: "it (OUN/B) fought German rule, and the Gestapo put a price on Lebed's head."<sup>[7]</sup>

## Post-war activities



Gestapo wanted poster, 1941

From 1949, Lebed lived in the United States. During 1952–1974, he headed the research center "Prologue" in New York; in 1982–85, he was Deputy Chairman and since 1974 he was a Member of the Board of Directors of the institution. In 1956-91 he was a member of the board of the Ukrainian Society of Foreign Studies in Munich and Toronto, publishing committee "Chronicle of the UPA (1975). Author memories "UPA" (1946, 1987).

## References

1. Breitman, Richard; Norman J.W. Goda (2010). *Hitler's Shadow: Nazi War Criminals, US Intelligence, and the Cold War* (<https://www.archives.gov/iwg/reports/hitlers-shadow.pdf>) (PDF). National Archives. Retrieved 2010-12-12.
2. Lebed proposed in April to "cleansing the entire revolutionary territory of the Polish population," so that a resurgent Polish state would not claim the region as in 1918. (<https://www.archives.gov/iwg/reports/hitlers-shadow.pdf>) Richard Breitman, Norman J.W. Goda, *Hitler's Shadow: Nazi War Criminals, U.S. Intelligence, and the Cold War* page 75.
3. Timothy Snyder. (2004) *The reconstruction of nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999* . New Haven: Yale University Press pp. 164-165
4. *W świetle przedstawionych wyżej ustaleń nie ulega wątpliwości, że zbrodnie, których dopuszczono się wobec ludności narodowości polskiej, noszą charakter niepodlegających przedawnieniu zbrodni ludobójstwa.* - Piotr Zając, *Prześladowania ludności narodowości polskiej na terenie Wołynia w latach 1939–1945 – ocena karnoprawna zdarzeń w oparciu o ustalenia śledztwa OKSZpNP w Lublinie*, [in:] *Zbrodnie przeszłości. Opracowania i materiały prokuratorów IPN*, t. 2: *Ludobójstwo*, red. Radosław Ignatiew, Antoni Kura, Warszawa 2008 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20120323073558/http://ipn.gov.pl/download.php?s=1&id=19295>), p.34-49
5. Cristian Salazar and Randy Herschaft (12 December 2010). "Revealed: How the CIA protected Nazi murderers" (<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/revealed-how-the-cia-protected-nazi-murderers-2158071.html>). *The Independent*. Retrieved 12 December 2010.
6. Żeleński W. (1973). *Zabójstwo ministra Pierackiego* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=07EbAAAAMAAJ>).
7. The Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) was created in 1942 by a faction of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). The UPA fought mostly against the Armia Krajowa of Poland and the Red Army in Western Ukraine. The OUN-UPA men – who were also known as the "Bandera Men" – are accused of several crimes, including killing some 100,000 Poles, Czechs and Jews in the Western Volyn Region. Thousands of Ukrainians who refused to cooperate with them were also murdered. For those activities, Bandera is now considered to be a criminal and a terrorist in Poland. In 1941 UPA leader Bandera urged the Ukrainian people to help Nazis destroy Moscow and the Bolsheviks. In Western Ukraine, many people see Bandera as a hero. Streets in several cities have been named after him and a monument has also been recently erected in his name in Lviv. But in eastern, southern and central parts of the country Bandera is seen as a traitor and Nazi sympathizer Breitman, Richard; Norman J.W. Goda (2010). *Hitler's Shadow: Nazi War Criminals, US Intelligence, and the Cold War* (<https://www.archives.gov/iwg/reports/hitlers-shadow.pdf>) (PDF). National Archives. p. 74. Retrieved 2010-12-12.
8. Salazar, Christian and Herschaft, Randy (2010-12-11) *Declassified CIA Files Detail Ties Between U.S. And Ex-Nazis* ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/12/11/cia-report-us-nazis\\_n\\_795359.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/12/11/cia-report-us-nazis_n_795359.html)), *Associated Press*
9. Roberts, Sam (11 December 2010). "Declassified Papers Show U.S. Recruited Ex-Nazis". ([https://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/12/us/12holocaust.html?\\_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss](https://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/12/us/12holocaust.html?_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss)) *The New York Times*. Retrieved 13 December 2010.

## Further reading

- [Declassified CIA-files about Project AERODYNAMIC \(http://www.foia.cia.gov/search-results?search\\_api\\_views\\_fulltext=AERODYNAMIC+VOL&field\\_collection=\)](http://www.foia.cia.gov/search-results?search_api_views_fulltext=AERODYNAMIC+VOL&field_collection=) (3792 files as of May 2014)
  - (In Russian) Chuyev, Sergei - Ukrainskyj Legion - Moscow, 2006
  - [Ihor yeremeyev: The organizer of Ukrainian Special services \(https://web.archive.org/web/20071218011527/http://oun-upa.org.ua/personalities/lebed.html\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20071218011527/http://oun-upa.org.ua/personalities/lebed.html)
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